

This is the bi-monthly newsletter of the Lichfield, Sutton and Tamworth branch of CAMRA.

Contact us at

LST.Camra@gmail.com

or see

www.LSTCamra.org.uk

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CAMRA membership in January: 149,240

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LAST Orders

The magazine of the Lichfield, Sutton and Tamworth branch of CAMRA, also serving the Nuneaton & Bedworth branch.

6 issues per year, issued at the beginning of the months of Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec. The magazine is free and circulated widely through the branch areas and beyond.

Contributions are welcomed, pub news particularly. Contact the editor.

4,000 circulation

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PER-ISSUE ADVERTISING RATES:

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| Full page: | £80 |

You can provide your own artwork (around 300 dpi for the best results) or we provide a free design service. Contact the editor.

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The opinions expressed in Last Orders are not necessarily those of the editor, CAMRA Ltd or its branches



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& Tamworth CAMRA:
www.LSTCamra.org.uk

Check out the website for
pubs, maps, news & more!

Pub feedback? Contact our Pubs Officer:
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Want to rate the quality of ale in your local or
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Lichfield Sutton Tamworth CAMRA

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Missing out on Last Orders? We distribute the magazine widely throughout the branch areas, but if you would like to sign up for email delivery (PDF format, approx 3MB per issue) then please email us

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And if you know of a branch pub which would like to stock the magazine, then please let us know!



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Chairman/Branch contact:
Barry Everitt info@nuneaton.camra.org.uk

Chair Chat

Happy new year readers! I hope you had a good Christmas and wish you a very happy new year.

This time of year doesn't tend to offer up much in the way of news. Sadly what has been reported has involved the closure of more breweries or their being rescued by big investment companies, or the cancellation of beer festivals such as GBBF and Coventry.

On a more positive note and by way of an update, our local branch continues to buck the national trend with an increase in membership and LST branch continue to top the region with the most members. Our meetings too are very well supported, even when we have the pleasure of visiting our more rural branch pubs. It's all down to your incredible support! If you enjoy ale, making new friends and would like to contribute, we'd love to see you at the next meeting at the **Whippet Inn** on February 5th at 7.30pm.

It's the time of year that we are conducting branch pub surveys for inclusion in the next *Good Beer Guide*. You can join in by enrolling on the survey trips (contact us at LST for details – spaces are limited) or by contributing through submitting beer scores. The National Beer Scoring System plays an important part in the selection process so remember to score your beers when surveying each eligible establishment.

Until the next edition.

George Greenaway, LST Chairman



Missing out? Keep in touch!

There's a lot going on in LST branch, and we like to keep our members in the loop on what's happening. Aside from the annual Tamworth Beer Festival – in it's 30th outing this year! – the branch organises many other events throughout the year, including local crawls and a range of very popular coach trip socials to ever-changing destinations. We're also keen to promote and support relevant pub events, particularly festivals.

We're very active on our publicly-available Facebook page (link on page 3) but we also email branch members directly, roughly once a month depending on what's going on. Are you a branch member but missing out on these emails? It could be that branch emails are not selected in your CAMRA membership record – easily done for newer members as the need to opt in when joining can be overlooked.

Want to opt in and find out what's going on? It's easy enough to opt out if you find it's not for you! You can either:

log in to your membership area at camra.org.uk and change your communication preferences (Marketing Preferences button, enable Branch email button). There are various other button options but Branch is all that is required to hear from us.

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Nantwich Stroll

Nantwich is a very attractive Cheshire town and not as far, or as difficult to get to, as you may think. We took the train to Crewe, then a 15-minute stroll to the number 84 bus route to Nantwich, and 20 minutes later our bus arrived in the town centre. Directly across from the stop is the **Red Cow**, a Robinson's tied house featuring ales from their Unicorn Brewery in Stockport. Their *Dizzy Blonde*, a refreshing pale ale, and *Unicorn*, first brewed 100 years ago as *Robinson's Best Bitter*, were on tap and enjoyable first drinks of the day.

It is just a short walk to the High Street, where you cannot help but be impressed with the number of striking Tudor and Georgian buildings, not to mention independent shops. Among these the Grade I-listed **Crown Hotel**, pictured right, is unmissable. This magnificent and massive three-storey black and white timbered building was rebuilt in 1583 when a great fire destroyed much of the town centre. On entering the comfortable beamed bar you pass the staircase with a sign for the upstairs ballroom, which is well worth a sneaky look. We were pleasantly surprised to see three very different cask ales on offer. I really enjoyed 4Ts *Stout Detectives*, a 5% chocolate and fudge treat. Tiny Rebel *Tommy Two Peaks*, a dark fruit IPA, didn't go down so well, maybe the Spitting Feathers *Honey Trap* would have been a better choice. For such an iconic building the prices were very fair.



Just off the High Street is Mill Street and the **Wickstead Arms**. This street-corner pub has two warm and welcoming bars and five real ales. Beartown *Glacier* was tempting, but we went for Titanic *Plum Porter* and also their 3.8% *Steerage*, a session pale which was fruity and slightly sweet.



On then to the **Vine Inn**, left. The narrow frontage is deceiving as the pub extends back on three different levels, with the first being slightly below street level. It has recently been refurbished and was very busy. Hydes of Manchester own the pub, and their range of beers were on the bar. The 4.7% *Lowry*, a golden ale in tribute to the Manchester artist, was very good.

Further down the street opposite more timbered buildings is the **Boot and Shoe**, named as a nod to Nantwich's history as a thriving footwear manufacturing town in the late 19th century. Entering under the elaborate pub sign revealed that the old pub had two favourites on offer, *Landlord* and *London Pride*, both in good order.

Just a few steps away is the wonderfully named Gullet, a street that reduces to a passageway leading towards St Mary's Church with its fine octagonal tower. Along here is the **Bowling Green**, previously a private club but now a popular pub. The lanterns over the front and back doors feature the now-defunct Wilsons brewery of Manchester, good to see that they have been retained. Inside, the large comfortable rooms are wrapped around a central bar. *Abbot* and *Old Speckled Hen* are well kept here.

We retraced our steps along Gullet for a later opening bar, **Six**, a bright, modern craft beer

Nantwich cont.

bar, full of stainless steel and tiles but with a large outdoor seating area. Castle Rock *Oatmeal Stout* was rich, full bodied and creamy, worth coming back for.

Working back towards our bus, another later opener was **Ebenezer's Craft Beer Emporium**, approached down a narrow cobbled lane. Up two flights of steps, it is a good-sized bar selling lots of bottled beers from around the world. I noted a couple of my Belgian favourites but went for one of the eight KeyKeg beers on offer. Yonder *Black Forest Gateaux Pastry Stout* was hard to imagine and almost harder to describe. You may have seen their beers in brightly coloured cans, and they push boundaries with their blended brews. This one, a 5% pastry-inspired milk stout with chocolate, vanilla and cherries, was sweet and syrupy but I really enjoyed it. As we did our trip to Nantwich!

Bernard Lucas

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The TAMWORTH TAP wins again!

Well we hardly dared to hope that lightning would strike twice, but strike again it did when in January the fabulous news came that the **Tamworth Tap** had once again taken CAMRA's highest accolade – National Pub of the Year, for the second time in a row! The presentation took place on a frigid and gloomy day, but the weather was no match for the warmth of the buoyant and joyous crowd that turned out to celebrate this truly outstanding achievement – only the second time in the award's history that a pub has won it in consecutive years (Sheffield's **Kelham Island Tavern** is the other member of this exclusive club).



Our massive congratulations go to George and Louise Greenaway (pictured above with the coveted award) who, in a mere six years, have turned the Tap into a sumptuously gorgeous pub (part of the interior pictured below). But it's not all about the fabric of the building or even the quality of the real ales and ciders – the pub also is at the centre of its community, supporting a range of causes and groups across the town, and providing a wealth of popular events throughout the year. The effort and dedication is phenomenal.

Also deserving full recognition are the splendid staff ('Team Tap') who are key to making the Tap the warm and welcoming place that it is. And of course that group without whom the pub could not be the success that it is: you the customers, both loyal regulars and visitors from near and far who complete the picture.

Here's to another busy year for both the Tap and the town, as we're sure to see plenty more visitors making a pilgrimage to the Tap and the many other splendid pubs in town!

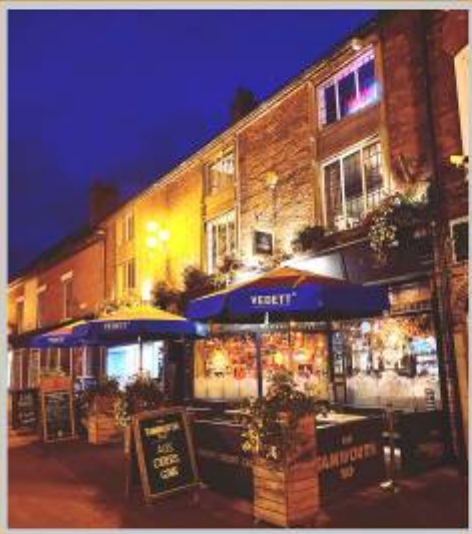


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Started back in 1988, CAMRA's National Pub of the Year competition is a celebration of the best of Britain's pubs, all the way from the winners decided by branches across the land – around 220 of them – to the final winner which goes through the various stages to become overall national champion. To quote the words of CAMRA, “this illustrious award helps to showcase quality pubs around the nation that are worth seeking out and visiting.”

It's important of course to remember that there are many pubs worth seeking out and visiting, but if visiting the winners floats your boat, then here's a map of the national winners over the years from the beginning! While visiting them all would be a hell of a task, it's certainly far simpler than for example visiting every JD Wetherspoon as attempted by some (a never-to-be-completed task, even if you never need worry about opening times or where you can eat).

There are two cautions for potential visitors to the national POTYs, although the first eases the task somewhat. Sadly and surprisingly, the first-ever winner, the **Boars Head** at Kinmuck, no longer sells real ale. As it's hidden away in the wilds of Scotland about 15 miles from Aberdeen, that's sort of understandable, though it's also quite a tribute to the place in winning the inaugural competition in the first place! So you may choose not to visit there, but you also should not bother with 2003's winner, the **Crown & Thistle** at Gravesend. This closed in 2015, seemingly by a developer determined to pursue the site's development potential. Happily the latest plan for conversion to residential (August 2023) has been refused.

The final bit of load reduction comes with the fact that no winner was declared in 1992 (though this was followed by the only case of joint winners, in 1993!), and Covid knocked the competition on the head in both 2020 and 2021.

One surprising thing about the revered list of national winners is that so few are in major cities. While Sheffield and Norwich fare well (with double winners the **Kelham Island Tavern** and **Fat Cat** respectively), London can only summon up one from its thousands of pubs (the **Harp** way back in 2010). And while we can happily celebrate this clear demonstration that the award is not London-centric, many big beer-friendly cities that come to mind are notable by their absence. No sign of Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds or Newcastle? Or north of the border, Glasgow or Edinburgh? One factor which may mitigate against city centre pubs is the emphasis that the award places on community, a factor always harder to cultivate in busy pubs with lots of passing trade.

Another point of note is that while the West Midlands CAMRA region has taken the award six times, the East Midlands has yet to have a winner despite some excellent candidates – though given that each of the 16 CAMRA regions generally produce outstanding winners, it can be thought of as a bit like throwing a 16-sided dice to win national. That said, the West

Midlands did have a flurry of beating the odds in the 1990s (with winners in 1991, 1993, 1995 and 1999) – but that was then followed by a 21-year drought before the **Tamworth Tap** brought it back to the region!

For all the joy that the Tap's second win has brought to both the people of Tamworth and members of LST branch, let's remember that there are plenty of other splendid pubs out there. We can't make them all winners, but we should all support them as much as we are able – use them or lose them!



Warrington Wander

The beer scene in the Cheshire town of Warrington was once dominated by Greenall Whitley brewery, which meant there was little of interest to the real ale drinker. In more recent times a number of independent brewers and companies have opened or acquired pubs in the town, and in the surrounding area. A midweek visit revealed an excellent choice of real ale pubs. A day ticket on the Warrington bus network for £5.90 enabled me to reach some of the village pubs.

My first call was the **Swan With Two Nicks** at Little Bollington, right, a few miles west of Altrincham. This welcoming traditional pub had three real ales available. My choice of the house beer, Dunham Massey *Little Bollington*, was a pleasant session ale. Next up was the **Barn Owl** at Agden Wharf, a modern canalside pub. On arrival it was packed with diners, and there was a “please wait to be seated” sign at the door, making the place seem more like a restaurant than a pub! However, Moorhouse’s *White Witch* was on good form.



The picturesque village of Lymm is situated on the Bridgewater canal, popular with walkers, just a few miles east of Warrington. There’s also an historic landmark known as Lymm Cross. All very interesting to be sure, but I’m only here for the beer! There were a number of pubs, but I opted for the **Brewery Tap**, left, with a wide range of Dunham Massey beers available. Dunham Massey *Lymm IPA* was my choice here.

A short bus ride took me to the **Little Manoir** at Thelwall, an upmarket Brunning & Price pub. From a choice of seven cask ales I sampled the house beer from Brightside (*Brunning & Price Original*), Moorhouse’s *Dotty Pale* and Beartown *Hula Hops*, all in excellent condition. Heading back towards Warrington, my next stop was **Costello’s**, a modern bar in the trendy suburb of Stockton Heath. Dunham Massey *Castle Hill* was in good condition.

It was now time to visit the pubs in the town centre. I had not been in the **Lower Angel**, right, for many years, and it hadn’t changed that much. This very traditional pub is now managed by Liverpool Brewing, and I tried their *Session IPA*. A short distance away is the **Tavern**, with a fantastic range of eight cask ales available. 4Ts *Geronimo* was chosen here.



There were now two modern town centre bars to visit. Firstly, the **Hop Emporium** is situated in the indoor market, the tables being shared with the neighbouring food vendors. With a wide range of cask and keg available, I opted for Good Chemistry *Lil’ Ripper*, an excellent pale ale. Finally, across the square is another branch of **Costello’s**, this one also having a wide range of Dunham Massey beers. Their *Porter* finished the day off well.

So an excellent visit to Cheshire, and I passed many other pubs in the countryside between Warrington and Altrincham, some owned by Manchester-based brewers Lees and Hydes, which would have been worth trying.

Adrian Smith

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Spotlight on ... The Office

In 2013 two of the three pubs in the North Warwickshire village of Warton were closed. They were the Boot Inn (which had opened and closed several times in the preceding years) and the Hatters Arms, located right next door on Church Road. The Hatters never re-opened and is now housing. The former Boot however fared much better, when in 2013 it was purchased by three entrepreneurs with a vision for the pub's future. After an extensive refurbishment the pub reopened in the same year, reborn as **The Office**. The question was, would it fare any better under a new name?

Ten years on and the answer is a resounding yes. The Office has become a popular community-focussed place to be, hosting live music, party nights, quizzes, trips and Christmas Fayres as well as charity events. The most notable charity event is The Office Abbot Run which in 2023 raised over £14,000 for Cancer Research UK. And in November 2023 The Office celebrated its 10th anniversary under the stewardship of the current owners.

When you step inside you're straight into the cosy bar featuring plenty of seating, a welcoming open fire, and large TVs that show live sports events. Wooden flooring throughout gives the place a clean, modern feel. Venturing further inside, up a few steps, is the more relaxed lounge area with plush seating. There's a dart board in here too with a further large TV. Leading off from the lounge are stairs up to the next level where you find further seating and a pool table. This level has one of the access points to the large beer garden, right, which extends over three levels.



Since opening, the owners have not only been continually improving the interior and exterior but also the real ale offerings. From one mainstream ale in 2013 there are now three hand pulls. Three real ales are always on with the regular being *Bass*, joined by a changing LocAle from the Church End range, and an interesting guest beer, such as Abbeydale *Winter* on a recent visit. The real ale offering has been developed over the years, becoming more and more popular with the customers. The popularity and quality of the real ales has culminated in The Office's deserved inclusion in the CAMRA *Good Beer Guide* for 2023 and 2024.

The pub is open seven days a week (check Whatpub for opening hours) and serves a good range of other drinks including real cider. It's well worth a visit to this North Warwickshire outpost – now the only pub in the village!

John Rowling



Then: the closed Boot



Now: the present-day Office







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Gnomes From Home

In the UK gnomes in gardens are the norm but in Wrocław, Poland they do things differently. Scattered throughout the city are small bronze gnomes in various amusing poses. There are over 800, many of which we spotted on our beer jaunts. **Browar Prost** was our first stop which features gnomes on its logo and beer taps and bottle labels. Gleaming copper brewing vessels greet you on entry into this modern building, situated on an industrial estate. It is spacious and airy with seating and dining areas on two levels. Polish and Germanic food was on offer, plus seven beers on tap in a variety of styles, and a good choice of bottled beers. The draught *Experimental IPA* was particularly good amongst the several beers sampled.



The street-level outdoor area of the **Spiz** brewery tap leads down to its atmospheric basement bar with brewing vessels, though it's somewhat spoilt by the numerous TVs playing unnecessary music videos. Ignoring these, we concentrated on their nine beer choices. Feeling fruity I had a flight of four different fruit beers. Honey, banana, cherry and caramel variants were all enjoyable, with the caramel one standing out due to its additional coffee notes. Complimentary home-made bread and lard was better than it sounds and an enjoyable added bonus.



AleBrowar, left, has a modern L-shaped room with quirky murals and artwork on its walls, giving you the impression that you may have imbibed too much. Seventeen taps offered a bewildering array of beers. *Smoky Joe's Peated Stout* stood out from the many sampled before moving on.

On the way to the rail station is an interesting sculpture collection known as 'the disappearing pedestrians', featuring a mix of figures in various stages of disappearing below the street level and reappearing on the other side of the street. It commemorates people who disappeared when the country was still under communist rule.

Our next destination was the many bars situated in the railway arches. We visited **Pub 12 Krok** first, a small bar on two levels with exposed brickwork and a low ceiling on the upper level with more comfortable seating including armchairs and sofas. Of the seven beers on tap a Mosaic-hopped American IPA hit the mark. Adjacent was **Czeski Raj**, on one level with sturdy wooden tables, a rustic bar and a good choice of beers on eight taps. Yet another arch rival was next door, **U Augusta**. It again had a rustic charm and ten taps to tempt us. An American IPA was a good example of its style. There was a final below-the-rails bar which was a brief walk away, called **Lamus**. This place had a different feel, more dimly lit than the others. It had a good selection on eight taps, and our last beer of the day was a spiced imperial stout. A range of flavours tantalised the taste buds, with cocoa, orange, vanilla, cinnamon, ginger and cloves in the mix. A very enjoyable and suitable nightcap.

The next day, some thirst-inducing sightseeing included a 300-step climb up the tower of St Elizabeth's church for yet more gnomes, right, and elevated views



Gnomes From Home cont.

of the city. It was then on to **Kontynuacja** for a beer or two. This long, shop-fronted bar has a modern and brightly lit interior with an arched and vaulted ceiling. There is also an atmospheric brick-arched drinking area in what was obviously an old cellar beneath. An excellent selection of beers on sixteen taps gave plenty of choices. Mine were a mango & orange sour, and an American rye stout.

Nearby, **Browar Zloty Pies** is a brewery tap, with an outdoor area and an upper floor bar and restaurant where the brewing kit is situated. The name translates as Golden Dog, and outside it has a dog and gnome toasting each other with mugs of beer to entice you in. Six varied beers were available in measures from half to three litres. Some smaller measures were sampled before moving on.



Situated beneath the Hala Targowa market hall is the **Targowa** basement bar, with old brick pillars and arches offering craft food and beer. Sixteen taps tempted us, with a thirst quenching blackcurrant sour to start and an excellent coconut oatmeal stout to finish on.



Pod Latarniami has an impressive wooden bar and bar back with shelving and mirrors. Some striking and colourful murals adorn the walls, including the one pictured left. Ten taps included a grape Gose, a banana & blackcurrant sour, and an Irish-style dry stout.

A brisk walk took us to **4HOPS**. This has a modern interior and sixteen beer choices of varying styles including a fiery ginger ale. A further walk took us to **Marynka**

Piwo I Apertivo, accessed via a passage off the street. This has a small and atmospheric brick-vaulted bar with two adjoining rooms, plus an outdoor area. From the sixteen taps we tried a hazy DDH IPA and a rich and warming Baltic porter.

We then visited **Szynkarnia**, a three-level place with a modern, laid back feel, and mellow music to accompany the beer and food offerings. It also has a deli counter where you can buy items to take away – try one of the excellent cheese or meat platters if you visit. This place had the best selection of beers on this trip, with varied choices shown on its beer board, right. This included an impressively cucumbery cucumber sour, and a decadent oatmeal stout. We returned here for an enjoyable late breakfast on our final day, and tried more beers including a coffee-infused black IPA.

Since our last visit in 2018, new beer venues have opened, and many existing ones have increased their offerings. So if you enjoy your beer and don't want to be gnome alone, then a visit to Wrocław should be on your wish list. For ardent gnome spotters, there are online location maps and apps available, plus paper maps from tourist offices.



Eric Randall

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE

A significant anniversary went quietly unnoticed by us last year, with **The Office** at Warton celebrating 10 years since its opening. It was previously the Boot, but had stood closed for over two years before its rejuvenation in November 2013 – see the Spotlight article on page 14 for more. It’s sobering to consider that the other two pubs in the village have disappeared since then, the Hatters Arms and the Fox & Dogs.

December saw a planning application to convert the currently-closed **Three Tuns** (also recently known as Bar B93) in Atherstone to retail use. It’s been a keg-only pub for over a decade so is arguably no great loss in a town which is reasonably well endowed with pubs. But it would still mean the loss of a slice of history, as the building has been a pub for around 200 years if not more; it was known as the Black Boy Inn in the 1850s.

Church End Brewery had a fine finish to 2023, winning a hatful of awards for their beers at the West Midlands regional awards ceremony held at the ever-enjoyable **Bartons Arms** in Aston. Star player was *Stout Coffin*, which not only took gold in the session stouts and porters category, but also overall gold across all categories. Other category high flyers were *Fallen Angel*, *Goats Milk* and *Gravediggers Ale*, all taking silver, and *Vicar’s Ruin* and *Rest In Peace* taking bronze.

STAFFORDSHIRE

So we should kick off Staffordshire news by noting that Beowulf Brewing – just outside LST branch area – also had a commendable run at the awards, with three category silvers for *Finn’s Hall Porter*, *IPA* and *Killer Stout*. Our congrats to brewer Joe Dash.

Just too late to feature in the last issue, the **Green Man**, right, at Clifton Campville re-opened in mid-November, after a worrying closure of two years. New gaffer Jack Edwards has somewhat returned to his roots, as his family ran the pub for a spell in the 1990s. The place has been splendidly refurbished, and the bar room has been opened out without destroying its intimate character. There are three regular ales of *Landlord*, *Bass*, *Doom Bar*, plus a changing guest which was *Tiny Rebel Cwtch* on our most recent visit. A CAMRA discount (see page 29) on ales is offered too!



As usual, Tamworth’s **Moat House** was closed for an extended break after Christmas, with normal service to be resumed on the 16th of February.

We’re pleased to note that the **King’s Ditch** in Tamworth has extended its opening hours; see the advert on page 23, and as ever, keep up with any changes on WhatPub or Facebook.

There was mild anticipation in early December when the refurbishment of the **Jolly Sailor** bar in Tamworth (on Silver Street, formerly known as Dares) included window decoration promising “real ales”. After the opening in mid December, it soon became clear that the beers on offer are “real” only in the sense of “not imaginary” – fill yer boots on keg offerings including *Carling*, *Coors* and *Worthington’s*. It’s a comfortable-looking TV sports bar.

The **Old Bank House** in Tamworth is now closing on Tuesdays. Gaffers Jim and Jon would

FEAST WITH HEROES

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Tippie Tattle cont.

no doubt prefer that it be a day of rest, but part of their plan is to use the downtime to get on with some planned refurbishment work! So no peace for the wicked, but you will still have six days a week to enjoy the choices in this splendid town venue. It's hard to believe that the place is still less than three years old; it opened in April 2021, although the plan was to open in late 2020, with the small matter of Covid 19 throwing a spanner into the works ...

The former Crown in Lichfield will be re-opening as the **Quill & Scholar**. It is now part of Heartwood Inns, a small chain of 20-plus pubs mostly located in the south of the country. The stated re-opening was at the end of January but that didn't look hopeful just before we went to press. Based on the other pubs in the chain, we're hoping to see real ale, but it does look like the emphasis will be very much on posh food.

WEST MIDLANDS

We say goodbye to the **Fox & Dogs** at Four Oaks, which closed its doors in mid January in preparation for its conversion to a restaurant in the Ego Mediterranean chain. There are 30-plus Ego restaurants across the nation, some of which serve real ale, so we look forward to seeing what materialises at Four Oaks.

Also driven by food are changes under consideration for the **Toby Carvery Sutton Park**, with owners Mitchells & Butlers planning to turn it into one of its Browns Bar branded restaurants. Other than ditching the carvery element for more upmarket food, there's likely to be little to interest the average ale drinker.

Wine Whine

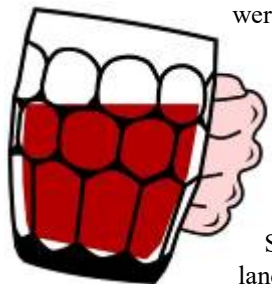
WHAT DO WE WANT? Wine by the pint! WHEN DO WE WANT IT? Not any time soon by the sound of it.

In a classic example of fiddling while Rome burns, the Government chose the end of last year to announce that wine could be sold in pint bottles. Really? In an era when the pub trade is facing a whole host of problems requiring Government action (business rates, duty rates, record staffing shortages to name but a few), issues consistently brought up by CAMRA and the trade bodies, this is the best they can come up with? The non-entity minister involved – it's not worth remembering their names these days – dug the hole deeper by stating that "Our exit from the EU was all about moments like this, where we can seize new opportunities." Is this really what the "sunlit uplands" of the post-Brexit world look like?

It seemed that the 900-odd vineyards across the UK that would "benefit" from the decision were singularly unimpressed. Why change to 568ml measures when most of the rest of the world uses metric? Why waste money retooling for an archaic measure when pubs will continue to use 125/175/250ml glasses?

The pub trade seemed to be equally underwhelmed too, with one pub owner describing the news as "another example of a tired Government scraping the barrel to try evince some benefit to Brexit".

So while "mine's a pint" will continue to be heard in pubs across the land, it seems that nobody will be asking for a pint of vino.



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Nuneaton & Bedworth Roundup

2024 sees **Church End Brewery** embarking on a year of celebration as they mark their 30th year of production. In every month, they will recreate one of their early brews, starting with *Altar Ale* (3.6%, January), followed by *Pews Porter* (4.5%, February).

Tim Healy, former landlord of the **Prince of Wales** in Bedworth has now taken stewardship of **Stockingford Sports & Social Club**, off Arbury Road. He's replaced at the Prince by Nakkima Harrison. We believe that the Prince underwent a long overdue, minor refurbishment before reopening on 9th December.

Pub group Admiral Taverns have decided to reallocate the **Hare & Hounds**, just off Heath End Road, to their Proper Pubs division, a move that was not necessarily welcomed by licensees Tom and Karen who only took control of the pub at Easter last year and had re-established the community pub. However, and luck may have been on their side, they have been offered the opportunity to run the **Lime Kilns** canal-side pub on the A5, across the border near Hinckley. Also associated with the move, **Buswells Brewery**, located at the Lime Kilns have been asked to vacate the site.

A planning application has been submitted to Nuneaton & Bedworth Council for change of use of the **Mount Pleasant** in Bedworth, to 10 self-contained flats. In recent times the pub has attracted the wrong sort of attention for the activities of its clientele.

With great sadness, we heard about the deaths during December of three well-respected local members of the CAMRA community: Steve Edwards, treasurer of the Coventry branch and West Midlands Regional Finance Officer; and from Hinckley & Bosworth branch, Diane Bates, festival stalwart, and Colin Scott, former membership secretary and branch chair.

Members are reminded that the selection processes for both Good Beer Guide and Pub of the Year are nearing their conclusion, with voting for both taking place until 14th February. Members who have opted in to receive e-mails from Nuneaton & Bedworth CAMRA should have received details by now of the nominations and voting instructions. Details can also be found on the branch website.

Nuneaton & Bedworth Diary

| | | |
|--------------|------------------------|---|
| Tue 6th Feb. | GBG / PoTY Voting | Felix Holt , Nuneaton (6-8pm) |
| Wed 7th Feb. | GBG / PoTY Voting | Bear & Ragged Staff , Bedworth (6-8pm) |
| Thu 8th Feb. | GBG / PoTY Voting | Lord Hop , Nuneaton (6-8pm) |
| (TBC) Mar. | Annual General Meeting | Lord Hop , Nuneaton |

See the branch website for up-to-date details: nuneaton.camra.org.uk

CAMRA discounts in Nuneaton & Bedworth :

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Acorn, Horeston Grange | 10% with membership card |
| Attleborough Arms, Attleborough | 10% with membership card |
| Bear & Ragged Staff, Bedworth | CAMRA 50p vouchers |
| Chase Inn, Higham Lane | 10% with membership card |
| Crows Nest, Attleborough | 10% with membership card |
| Felix Holt, Nuneaton | CAMRA 50p vouchers |
| Fox Inn, Attleborough | 10% with membership card |
| Horseshoes, Nuneaton | 10% with membership card |
| Silk Mill, Nuneaton | 10% with membership card |

All discounts are at the discretion of the licensee and may be withdrawn at any time.

lordhopnuneaton.co.uk



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To Crown It All

Are we ever likely to see the crown stamp re-appearing on beer glasses across the land? Until 2006, the fondly remembered crown stamp was used by trading standards officers to ensure that glassware conformed to the legally allowed measures for beer dispense. This in turn gave customers confidence that they were not being sold a short measure of beer (leaving aside the ever-contentious issue of the head on your pint).

Crown stamps on drinking vessels, based on an image of St Edward's Crown, can be traced all the way back to 1698 – so why did they disappear? Well, it's all down to Johnny Foreigner of course, when the crown stamp was replaced by the CE mark, a new conformity marking (Conformité Européenne) required by EU legislation. CE applied to a whole raft of products, allowing them to move freely across EU countries with no additional checks. It's a nice story – the EU telling us what to do once again – but it's complete tosh. Nothing in the EU rules stopped the UK from having the crown stamp on glasses as well: it was simple pragmatism by UK bureaucrats to replace one marking by another.

½ pt. to line
festival

CE M19 0846

This didn't stop Boris Johnson's Downing Street stating that one of the "key successes" of Brexit would be "proudly restoring the crown stamp to the side of pint glasses." Which – like all those other "key successes" that everyone struggles to name – we haven't actually seen yet. Instead we have – tada! – the UKCA mark. The UK Conformity Assessed mark is a splendid illustration of how well "taking back control" is working. Like CE, which it essentially replicates, UKCA applies across a range of products. UK firms have spent time and money preparing for the new standard, while EU exporters to the UK – those that thought it worth the effort – have had the same costs. And the icing on the cake of nonsense is that there is no actual difference between UKCA and CE standards. For all the talk of "liberating deregulation", the UK dare not lower its standards, or raise them for that matter.

Which is why, thankfully, a bit of post-Brexit realism has crept back into government thinking. After extensive lobbying from industry and manufacturing over the ongoing costs of the transition to UKCA – a standard which would not have been recognised in the EU in any case – UKCA has essentially been scrapped (or 'indefinitely delayed' in the face-saving language of Whitehall). CE standards will remain the gold standard in both the EU and the UK, although UKCA markings can still be used by those manufacturers too fatigued to switch back to CE. And if glass manufacturers want to reinstate the crown stamp, then go right ahead – there was never anything stopping you, whatever the Brexiteer fantasists said. There is already guidance on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website for the use of the stamp, stating that it may be placed anywhere on the glass and be of any size, as long as it does not interfere with the UKCA or CE markings.



½ pt. to line

UK CA **M23**

0846 festival

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The shortest day of 2023 brought damp and dull weather – so all the more reason to beat the grey day blues with a nice little pub crawl. Beeston and its burgeoning beer scene was the destination this time. The obvious starting point when arriving by train is the trackside **Victoria Hotel**, right, an imposing red brick boozer dating from 1899. Inside is a series of spacious rooms decorated with brewery memorabilia (sadly, mostly from long-gone breweries), and pristine etched-glass windows which appear original. Ten ales are offered with a good variety of styles, though it has to be said that the choices are mostly traditional with little that you'd describe as cutting edge. Still, it's a lovely pub and my Charnwood *Three Kings* impressed a fresh palate.



Heading into town, the **Crown Inn**, left, is another classic place. The strikingly plain exterior hides a splendid boozer and an outstanding choice of ales. Inside is a warren of low-ceilinged and dimly lit rooms. Next to the tiny bar room is a miniscule snug, which at a push would accommodate six people. Eleven cask ales feature, including offerings from Shiny, Neptune, Arbor and Oakham. Shiny *Citra Type Beats* is first class, and so hoppy that it gives Oakham *Citra* a run for its money.



My palate is still zinging with hops after the five-minute walk to **Totally Tapped**, so an antidote is called for in the shape of Welbeck Abbey *Cocoa Noël*, pleasantly soothing and chocolatey to a hop-ravaged tongue. The venue is straightforward, an ex-shop with a narrow but longish bar room, plus a small garden area to the rear, unused on this dismal day. There are four interesting ales plus an esoteric range of craft ales from keg and can. This was a tap for Totally Brewed until the brewery sadly closed in March 2023, another Covid casualty.

Minutes away is the roomy **Star Inn**, a pub previously in the estate of Shipstone's of old (not to be confused with the resurrected Shipstone's, once again brewing in Nottingham). This history is evident in the sparkling etched-glass windows of the main bar room, right. On the bar are ten interesting ales (correction – nine interesting ales plus *Pedigree*). Both of my choices in here do that rare thing of living up to expectations: Little Critters *Christmas Quackers* is billed as a 'clementine pale ale' and delivers a distinctive orangey edge, while Lenton Lane *Good For Yule* ('dark chocolate stout') has a lovely chocolatey punch, grainily reminiscent of Saltaire's *Triple Choc*.

Just next door is the **White Lion**, made all the more inviting by the grim weather. Inside it has clearly had a recent refurbishment, tastefully done with plenty of honey-coloured wood



and a smattering of old brewery trays amongst the décor. Now run by the Lincoln Green brewery, it had a good range of their beers on eight handpulls. Both their *Tuck* porter and *Archer* American pale were very quaffable, and given there are guests too (from Bath and Dark Star on this occasion), it would be easy to spend longer in here. The place also has a separate large lounge to the rear, dubbed the Blackshale Kitchen; as the name suggests, this is aimed more at diners, but the same choice of ales are available.

Even if fizzy craft beer is not your thing, it's well worth a visit to **JG Barbers** in the centre of town. It is both a barbers and craft beer bar, with three barber chairs complemented by seating for 20. Drinking in the chair (right) is clearly encouraged! The same guy that serves your beer will soon have trimmers in action and be making small talk with a punter receiving the latest absurd toadstool hairstyle. Five craft taps were in action, plus a whole range of cans (so that the question of "anything for the weekend sir?" takes on a new meaning). An orange sour from Vault City on draught proved to be surprisingly good. Beer'n'barbers is not a unique concept of course; **Gallaghers** of Birkenhead successfully reinvented itself as a pub with haircuts, which did so much for trade that the barbering was ditched some years ago to make more room for drinkers!



Just around the corner is **Pottle**, very much a micropub. The inside would fit something like 30 people, and even then punters share space with towers of bag-in-the-box ciders for which there is presumably no room in the back. There are six gravity-served cask ales plus a couple of keg choices. The claim to have Beeston's widest selection of craft cans and bottles looks unlikely until you pass the ranks of fridges on the narrow path to the upstairs toilets. I stick with cask but don't make clever choices because my two selections (from Milestone and Shiny) are fine but both in the hazy-hoppy style and virtually indistinguishable.



Final port of call is the nearby **Commercial Inn**, left, an inviting double-fronted pub. Unfortunately it's that bit too inviting, as the place is packed, though it's hard to tell how many of the customers are those once-a-year types that only rediscover the pleasure of pubs during the Christmas period. Still, sharp elbows can get you places, so once past the picket line of Christmas jumpers at the bar, service is prompt. Ten ale choices, but with both palate and discernment somewhat overwhelmed by this point, I finish off with the easy choice of Beermats *Father Christmas*.

Next LST
Branch
Meetings

Mon 5th Feb, 7.30pm, Whippet Inn, Lichfield
Mon 4th Mar, AGM, 7.30pm, Brew House, Streetly
Wed 3rd Apr, 7.30pm, Blue Boar, Mancetter

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The LST branch pubs listed here kindly offer real ale discounts to CAMRA members. We offer them our thanks. Show them your support and get the most out of your membership! For further info on the pubs, consult WhatPub



Offering a discount in your pub, or know of one that does? Let us know at LST.Camra@gmail.com and we'll mention it here.

NEW below means new since the previous issue

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Acorn, Lichfield | 50p CAMRA vouchers |
| Amington Inn, Amington | 10% off |
| Angel, Lichfield | 20p/pint, 10p/half |
| Angel Ale House, Atherstone | 20p/pint, 10p/half |
| Beerbohm, Lichfield | 10p/pint, 5p/half |
| Beggars Bush, New Oscott | 10% off |
| Bishop Vesey, Boldmere | 50p CAMRA vouchers |
| Bitter-Suite, Lichfield | 10p/pint, 5p/half |
| Bole Bridge, Tamworth | 50p CAMRA vouchers |
| Bottle Of Sack, Sutton Coldfield | 50p CAMRA vouchers |
| Bowling Green, Lichfield | 20p/pint |
| Brewhouse & Kitchen, Lichfield | 10% off |
| Brewhouse & Kitchen, Sutton Coldfield | 10% off |
| Bulls Head, Shenstone | 20p/pint |
| Crown, Four Oaks | 20p/pint |
| Duke of York, Lichfield | 20p/pint, 10p/half |
| Fox & Dogs, Four Oaks | 20p/pint |
| Fox Inn, Coton nr Tamworth | 10% off (or 50p CAMRA vouchers) |
| Gamecock, Birchmoor | 10p/pint |
| George & Dragon, Lichfield | 10p/pint |
| Green Man, Clifton Campville | 10% off NEW |
| Hardwick Arms, Streetly | 20p/pint |
| Hedgehog, Lichfield | 20p/pint |
| Holly Bush, Little Hay | 10% off |
| Horse & Jockey, Sutton Coldfield | 20p/pint |
| Mare Pool, Mere Green | 50p CAMRA vouchers |
| Market Vaults, Tamworth | 10p/pint |
| Moat House, Tamworth | 20p/pint, 10p/half (until 6pm) |
| Oak, Walmley | 10% off (or 50p CAMRA vouchers) |
| Old Bank House, Tamworth | 10p/pint or half |
| Old School House, Mere Green | 10% off |
| Penny Black, Tamworth | 10% off (or 50p CAMRA vouchers) |
| Phoenix, Tamworth | 10% off (or 50p CAMRA vouchers) |
| Queens Head, Lichfield | 10% off |
| Queslett, Streetly | 20p/pint |
| Railway Inn, Whitacre Heath | 10p/pint |
| Sheriff of Tamworth, Tamworth | 10p/pint, 5p/half |
| Sir Robert Peel, Tamworth | 10p/pint, 5p/half (until 6pm) |
| Station, Sutton Coldfield | 10% off |
| Tamworth Tap, Tamworth | 20p/pint, 10p/half |
| Whippet Inn, Lichfield | 50p/pint, 25p/half |
| White Horse, Curdworth | 20p/pint |
| White Horse, Whitehouse Common | 10% off |
| Wigginton, Wigginton | 10% off |



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FRIDAY : 2-11.30
SATURDAY : 12-11.30
SUNDAY : 12-10



Local Festival Diary



Festivals with a **bold heading** are CAMRA festivals, where entrance is either free or discounted to CAMRA members. Why not join? See page 28 or go to camra.org.uk/join

1-3rd Feb, Tewkesbury Winter Ale Festival 2024

The Watson Hall, Barton Street, GL20 5PX
70+ winter ales, ciders and perries. Thu 7-11, Fri 11-11, Sat 11-8.

8-11th February, Hucknall Beer Festival

John Godber Centre, Ogle Street, NG15 7FQ
90+ real ales & ciders. Hot & cold food. Thu 6-10, Fri 11-11, Sat 12-11, Sun 12-3.

15-17th February, Great British Beer Festival Winter

Burton Town Hall, King Edward Place, DE14 2EB
Hundreds of cask and craft beers, ciders, perries and gin. Thu 12-11, Fri 11-11, Sat 11-10

7-9th March, 47th Loughborough Beer Festival

Polish Club, True Lovers Walk, LE11 3DB
60+ real ales plus ciders and perries. Hot & cold food, Sat eve music. Thu-Sat 12-11

Holding a beer festival? Let us know and we will advertise the event here free of charge.
Details to LST.Camra@gmail.com

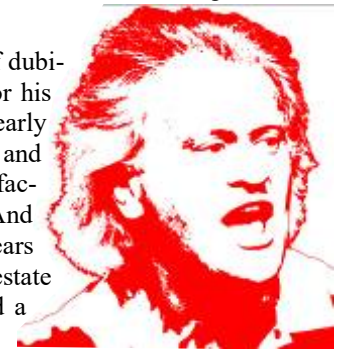


Arise Sir Tim Martin



So the new year brought with it some surprising news – or maybe not that surprising – Arise Sir Tim Martin! The outspoken JD Wetherspoon founder and cheerleader for mullet haircuts will be receiving his gong for “services to hospitality and culture.” Not sure what the culture bit is about, unless that’s the mullet, but it’s impossible to deny that he’s drastically shook up the pub scene in the 44 years since he opened the first Wetherspoon. He’s also something of Marmite figure, with a loyal fan base of customers, but also plenty who feel that the extremely low prices in the chain are an existential threat to the many pubs that are unable to offer anything similar. Not to mention the small matter of Brexit, where Sir Tim was a staunch supporter of the case for leaving the EU, using the in-house *Wetherspoon News* as an effective way of putting his views across.

Still, in an honours system awash with too many recipients of dubious credentials, let’s hail Sir Tim as a deserving candidate for his knighthood. Not only has he championed real ale from his early days, he’s also been a big supporter of CAMRA and its aims, and the generous voucher scheme for members has been a major factor in the increase in member numbers over the decades. And while many big pub companies have floundered over the years due to viewing their pub estate as just a highly leveraged real estate portfolio with trapped tenants to exploit, Sir Tim has steered a pretty sure and savvy course. Arise Sir Tim!



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Next edition: 1st April 2024.

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