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From the editor

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Make mine a pint of UNESCO.

Beer is one of the UK's most iconic drinks, and it is sold for drinking in thousands of pubs across the nation.

In this issue's lead feature, author Jacopo Mazzeo examines the challenges which will have to be faced if we are to improve the status and image of cask beer.

CAMRA members weren't old when the Campaign was founded. Many were young revolutionaries who wanted to achieve a profound change to the way people thought of beer and how it was sold.

Time blunted the aspirations of these young tyros. Beer often suffers from the reputation of being an old man's drink, shackled by arcane debates over cellar temperatures, the number of pubs selling it while the volume and value of sales have all dropped dramatically in recent years.

Some weeks ago, a petition was launched to protect the "historic and traditional serving method" that was "unique to the UK". It called on the government to recognise the production and serving of cask beer as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. To cut through the word salad, Intangible Cultural Heritage is the knowledge and traditions inherited from previous generations and passed on to our descendants. It's a heritage that's part of everyone's life in some way. It's a heritage that promotes cultural diversity and creativity.

Now is the time for cask ale to take its place centre stage and in the limelight.

No British product yet holds the status, and the UK only ratified the 2003 UNESCO convention for the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in March 2024.

Good cask beer is the envy of the world. Yet we often laud American, Belgian and Germans brews. Too often we forget British brewing heritage. A fabulous pint of cask ale is at the heart of what makes a great British pub. It's the very essence of being British.

The incredibly skilled brewers producing cask beer and the places where it is sold deserve to have their artisan trade respected and protected. It's time to make beer great again.

Tim Hampson

GUEST CONTRIBUTORS

Christian Gott seeks out some favourite haunts on the island of Jersey

Joe Phelan tracks the links between railways and beer

Laura Hadland joins in the celebration at the Campaign's Pub of the Year

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BEER is the quarterly magazine of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA). CAMRA campaigns for pubs, pints and people. It is an independent, voluntary organisation with more than 145,000 members and has been described as the most successful consumer group in Europe. *BEER* is available online to all CAMRA members. To receive a hard-copy version every three months, members need to opt in. Our campaigning newspaper, *What's Brewing*, is now online at wb.camra.org.uk. To join CAMRA, help preserve Britain's brewing and pub industry, get *BEER* and *What's Brewing* updates – and a host of other membership benefits – visit camra.org.uk

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CASK BEER: A SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT

Britain's real ale is a heritage worth recognising and preserving, says **Jacopo Mazzeo**, as he looks into what it would mean for Britain's cask beer culture to gain UNESCO recognition

In December last year, the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association announced that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had officially recognised 'Traditional knowledge and skills of sake-making with koji mold in Japan' as an Intangible Cultural Heritage.

This isn't the first alcoholic beverage to receive such recognition. In 2013, Georgia's 8,000-year-old *qvevri* (clay jars) winemaking method was inscribed, followed by Belgium's beer culture in 2016 and, more recently, the expertise of Cuba's light rum masters in 2022. These acknowledgements are both significant achievements for these traditions and a source of immense national pride for their respective countries. Georgians, for instance, have been capitalising on this achievement through masterful self-promotion, never missing an opportunity to celebrate their country as the true cradle of wine. Last year, they even commissioned an €8,000 collectible banknote to mark the European Council's decision to grant Georgia EU candidate status, the denomination nodding to the country's 8,000 years of uninterrupted winemaking heritage, with *qvevris* prominently featured in the design.

Making sake in Japan

Georgia's ancient *qvevri* clay jars

But as grand as a UNESCO listing sounds, its meaning and implications

ALAMY; SHUTTERSTOCK

Moët & Chandon in Champagne, France

'These acknowledgements are both significant achievements for these traditions and a source of immense national pride for their respective countries'

are often unclear to the uninitiated. Officially, UNESCO is a specialised agency of the United Nations, established in the aftermath of World War II to promote world peace and security through international cooperation in education, arts, sciences and culture. It pursues this mission across various programme areas, from education to human sciences, with lists such as the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger and Global Geoparks playing a significant role in the process. For booze, the most relevant lists are the World Heritage Sites and Intangible Cultural Heritage.

"The nomination of an element for inscription on UNESCO's... lists is first and foremost a national and local process," a UNESCO spokesperson explained. "The preparation of the nomination file – which can take several years – is led by the communities that bear this living heritage, in collaboration with the national authorities."

National authorities may then submit these nominations to UNESCO, which reviews them annually, approving only a select number of listings each year.

The World Heritage Site list contains most of UNESCO's drinks-related entries, primarily regions with deep-rooted winemaking traditions. These include Portugal's Alto Douro, the heartland of port wine; Champagne's hillsides, houses and cellars; the terroirs of Burgundy; and Hungary's Tokaj region, renowned for its legendary sweet wine. Also featured are the hills of Conegliano and Valdobbiadene in Italy's Veneto, responsible for some of the finest prosecco.

The value of a UNESCO listing for these regions is undeniable. Since Conegliano and Valdobbiadene ☞

were added to the World Heritage List in 2019, tourism has skyrocketed in the region. Last year alone, arrivals increased by an astonishing 26.2 per cent, with overnight stays up 18.7 per cent, and the positive impact is even more pronounced among international visitors.

While most of the drink-related UNESCO World Heritage Sites are wine regions, beer has its place on the list as well with the Czech Republic's Žatec and the Landscape of Saaz Hops inscribed two years ago. Located in the north-east of the country, the area encompasses fertile hop fields along the Ohře River, which have been cultivated for centuries, as well as historic villages and buildings dedicated to hop processing.

"The listing of the cultural landscape Žatec and the Landscape of Saaz Hops consists of two component parts," said Olga Bukovičová, World Heritage coordinator in UNESCO's Education and Culture department. "A rural one, which documents hop cultivation and primary processing, and an urban one, where the architectural heritage associated with further hop processing – such as packaging, certification and trade – has been preserved. What sets this area apart is its unique connection between rural and urban heritage."

The urban component of the property is represented by the medieval centre of Žatec, along with its southern extension, known as the Prague Suburb (Pražské předměstí), which includes numerous distinct 19th- and 20th-century industrial structures. Together, these elements showcase the evolution of agro-industrial processes and the socio-economic system surrounding the growing, drying, certifying and trading of hops, spanning from the late Middle Ages to today.

ALAMY; SHUTTERSTOCK

'The most significant benefits of UNESCO recognition, however, often come from the actions taken by local communities'

World Heritage Sites play a crucial role in preserving traditional beverages by highlighting the deep connection to the land where they originated and evolved. The Czech Republic's historic Saaz hop cultivation and processing area is not only a prime example of this historical association, it also showcases the region's rich brewing heritage and shines a spotlight on beer's agricultural origins, an aspect of beer often overlooked by both enthusiasts and the general public.

The Intangible Cultural Heritage list serves an equally important purpose, by demonstrating how beverages can be central to the identity of human societies while helping them look after their culture and traditions. For any listed heritage, UNESCO provides practical and tangible support to safeguard these cultural elements through initiatives such as financial assistance, training for industry professionals and guidance for authorities in implementing protective legislation. Over the past two decades, the organisation has funded more than 150 safeguarding and development projects across 83 countries, with a budget exceeding £10m.

The most significant benefits of UNESCO recognition, however, often come from the actions taken by local communities and governments. By leveraging the listing's promotional potential, they can drive preservation and development efforts, ensuring the cultural heritage is not only protected but also nurtured and shared with future generations.

Inscribed in 2016, Belgian beer culture is currently the only beer-related entry included on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The recognition has reinforced Belgian beer's global reputation

From field to pub – UNESCO will take into account the culture and skills in every step when considering an application

by greatly enhancing its visibility at local, national and international levels. Industry stakeholders claim that it has also deepened appreciation for its cultural and social significance, supported the transmission of this living heritage, spurred economic development in local communities and facilitated resource mobilisation efforts from governments, communities and other stakeholders, thus enhancing its long-term viability.

"The benefits are so many," explained the director of the Interfaculty Centre for Agrarian History at KU Leuven, Yves Segers, who was involved in the application process. "People knew that a UNESCO listing would bring media attention to Belgian beer culture, not just benefitting the well-known brands but also the smaller ones. In Belgium, we are going through challenging times. Fewer people, especially younger generations, are going to pubs, and the UNESCO recognition provides motivation for the government and authorities to invest in café culture, renovating and modernising small village pubs. This is crucial for villages, as these pubs are at the heart of community life."

'Beyond benefitting the brewing industry and its stakeholders, UNESCO recognition has also had an impact on beer enthusiasts'

Beyond benefitting the brewing industry and its stakeholders, UNESCO recognition has also had a broader impact on beer enthusiasts by strengthening the community, creating more and better jobs through the demand for greater expertise and, most crucially, reinforcing a shared sense of identity

"UNESCO recognition provides motivation for the government and authorities to invest in café culture and modernising small pubs"

in a country marked by cultural and political divisions. The application process itself required collaboration between Belgium's three linguistic communities (Flemish, French and German), fostering a rare instance of unity. This cooperation resonated beyond the political sphere, contributing to a stronger collective identity among the Belgian people.

Krishan Maudgal, CEO of Belgian Brewers and the mastermind behind the recently opened Belgian Beer World museum in Brussels' iconic Bourse building, stresses that this sense of unity wasn't just symbolic, it had practical implications as well. "Politically speaking, culture is a regional responsibility, so in Belgium, we first had to secure approval from each of our different community governments before applying," she said. "Since only one application could be processed per year, we had to go step by step. The first approval came from the French-speaking community, and by the fourth year, it was actually the German-speaking community that submitted the application to UNESCO on behalf of the entire federal structure."

With many of the social shifts affecting Belgium also playing out in the UK, cask ale could undoubtedly benefit from UNESCO recognition, too. Indeed, while the nuances may differ, the core challenges manifest themselves in strikingly similar fashions, most notably with a declining interest in traditional brewing techniques and styles, and the waning appeal of traditional pubs among the younger population.

In 2021, Britain's leading beer-focused YouTube vlog the Craft ☞

Beer Channel partnered with Japanese brewing group Asahi (which had acquired historic London brewer Fuller's just two years earlier) to produce *Keep Cask Alive*. The docu-series sought to highlight the neglected state of cask beer, claiming its long-term goal was to have it recognised by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. The series (still available and well worth a watch) had a notable impact at the time – "I've lost count of the number of comments we've had on our documentaries saying we've inspired a renewed love of cask ale through our videos," said Jonny Garrett, co-founder of the channel.

The push for UNESCO recognition, however, faced significant hurdles, the biggest of which being primarily regulatory. At the time, Britain was one of the few countries worldwide that had not ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. As such, it was unable to formally nominate elements of its intangible cultural heritage for recognition. This changed last year when Britain officially became the 183rd state to join the convention following a public consultation in January 2024, opening the door for the country's intangible heritages to be considered for UNESCO listing.

"The next step is to persuade the government to put cask ale on its national 'living heritage' list. Applications should open this spring, and we'll be applying on behalf of the industry," said Jonny, whose recently released second season of *Keep Cask Alive* will play a central role in supporting the process. "If our application is successful, we'll be afforded certain rights to advice and support from the government on protecting cask ale culture, but the main aim is to then achieve UNESCO recognition. The UK government can submit one example of intangible heritage to UNESCO each year, so the task will be to lobby the government to choose cask ale over everything else. That will likely be the toughest part of the journey."

'While the legal groundwork is now in place, the road to UNESCO recognition for cask beer remains anything but straightforward'

Cask beer itself is not sufficient for a listing; the application must also show the culture and craftsmanship involved

While the legal and regulatory groundwork is now in place to begin the application process, the road to UNESCO recognition for cask beer remains anything but straightforward, a key challenge lying in the very definition of 'intangible cultural heritage'. Cask beer is, after all, a physical product, and with UNESCO's emphasis on knowledge and practices, an application for it would need to highlight the culture surrounding it and the craftsmanship involved, rather than the tangible product itself. This means focusing on elements such as traditional brewing methods, the art of cellaring, and the role of pubs as social and cultural hubs, all of which contribute to the unique identity of cask ale and its cultural and social value in Britain.

"If you ask brewers to define what needs safeguarding, they often focus on the physical aspects of beer, but that's not what UNESCO is looking for, so looking at it from an industry standpoint isn't a very wise strategy," said Krishan. "The application must translate beer culture into its significance for the community. We, for instance, framed our application as 'the art of diversity in brewing and

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"Very often, the recognition process begins when something is perceived to be at risk: it rings the alarm bell and prompts discussions"

its appreciation in Belgium'. By emphasising not just the brewing itself, but how this craft is valued and passed down through generations, we were able to extract the intangible from the tangible."

In this sense, British cask ale holds a significant advantage over arguably any other notable beer culture worldwide. With cellaring at the pub being an essential part of the production process, and with its dedicated dispensing methods, cask ale is uniquely connected to the place where it is enjoyed, making it inseparable from the community that gathers around it. Cask ale is, essentially, the ultimate community beverage, its value lying in the intangible societal significance it holds.

Correctly identifying the intangible element, however, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a successful application, which must also be framed in a way that aligns with UNESCO's language. "They have specific buzzwords they want you to use (or avoid), and understanding this is crucial for success," said KU Leuven's Yves. "For example, it's unwise to use concepts like authenticity because, from a cultural perspective, authenticity is never a fixed concept. Heritage is not meant to be frozen in time: traditions and craftsmanship always evolve as society does. UNESCO recognition is about ensuring these practices continue and adapt, not about preserving them in a static form."

Indeed, while demonstrating the need for preservation is a key criterion for applying, it must go hand in hand with showcasing how the tradition is actively cherished, supported by a strong community and proactively passed down to future generations. Emphasising how the tradition adapts and evolves to ensure its survival is just as important as highlighting the threats it faces.

"Very often, the recognition process begins when something is perceived to be at risk: it rings the alarm bell and prompts discussions on what can be done," said Yves. "But you can't stop there. You have to demonstrate that the tradition is still alive and will be in the future. This is why the broadest possible community participation is essential for any intangible heritage to achieve UNESCO recognition."

While this requirement may pose a significant challenge at first, it is also the key to ensuring the long-term survival of a cultural heritage threatened by societal changes. By fostering community engagement and shared responsibility, it strengthens the tradition's resilience and adaptability for future generations.

In Belgium, the need for collaboration – bringing together people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to work towards a shared goal – is widely seen as the most valuable outcome of UNESCO recognition for the country's beer culture. "The application process forced people to collaborate toward a common goal, and that was a crucial first step in safeguarding our beer culture, even before the application was submitted," said Krishan. "It brought people together to discuss these traditions, share knowledge and pass them on. When that happens, mutual respect grows, and in turn, it fosters peace, which is, after all, the very mission of UNESCO."

'Cask ale is, essentially, the ultimate community beverage, its value lying in the intangible societal significance it holds'

With the regulatory framework now in place, the path is open for Britain's cask beer culture to seek UNESCO recognition. It will be a challenging journey, requiring a clear definition of what needs safeguarding: not the product itself, but the intangible aspects including the craftsmanship of brewing and serving it, and the unique communal spaces where it is enjoyed.

Most importantly, however, this journey requires a moment of self-reflection to understand what cask beer truly means to the wider British culture, and how it can foster dialogue and constructive discussions both within and beyond our borders. While the final decision may lie with an appointed evaluation body at UNESCO, the responsibility for defining what needs preserving and determining how to protect it in practice rests with us. It is our ability to come together as a stronger, more unified community that will ultimately shape the very survival of cask beer.

Jacopo Mazzeo is a freelance journalist, photographer, consultant and former sommelier. He regularly contributes to leading wine, beer and spirits publications, and judges international competitions.

Great connections

Joe Phelan investigates the enduring bond between pubs, railways and how that link has developed over the years as both have changed with the times

For centuries, Britain's pubs and railways have been intertwined, shaping how we travel, socialise and enjoy beer. This connection, born during the Industrial Revolution, transformed drinking habits and has left a lasting imprint on pub culture.

The expansion of Britain's railways didn't just revolutionise transport – it redefined the role of the pub as a social hub for travellers and locals alike, and tells a fascinating story of community, innovation and tradition.

BrewDog Waterloo is a behemoth of a pub nestled within the bustling confines of London's Waterloo train station. As the UK's largest pub, it is a far cry from the traditional railway boozer. Its sleek design, vast beer selection and sprawling spaces reflect the demands of a modern, urban clientele. While unlikely to be a regular haunt for CAMRA members, it nevertheless showcases the enduring link between beers and railways.

BrewDog's flagship London venue is a stark contrast to the cosy, traditional railway pubs of old, yet its location echoes a long-standing tradition of serving travellers. This massive venue, which includes a microbrewery, co-working spaces and 60 beer taps, illustrates how pubs have adapted to the times while maintaining their role as social hubs.

But, for the true beer connoisseur, the area offers other rail-and-ale connections that are worth exploring.

Just a stone's throw from Waterloo is the first stop on the infamous Bermondsey Beer Mile, a stretch of breweries and taprooms that has become a mecca for beer enthusiasts. This collection of independent breweries, many of which are nestled within the brick railway arches that snake through South London, is yet another testament to the connection between ales and rails. The Beer Mile is home to some of the UK's most exciting craft breweries, including Kernel, Mash Paddle brewery and Anspach & Hobday. These spaces blend industrial charm with a passionate community of brewers dedicated to crafting exceptional beer.

A standout example on the route is Southwark Brewing Co. Situated within a classic railway arch, it is the only brewery on the Mile dedicated to cask ales. The set-up is simple,

Station bars come in all shapes and sizes

with visible brewing equipment that lends an authentic, no-frills charm.

Among its cask beers, London Pale Ale (4 per cent ABV) is worth highlighting. A modern brew with light malt textures and tropical citrus notes, it has been designed to be a refreshing, easy-drinking pint. For a more traditional experience, its Potters' Field Porter (4 per cent) delivers a dark, malty body with hints of coffee and liquorice, staying true to the style's London heritage. Porter, developed in London in the early 18th century, is deeply intertwined with the city's brewing history, earning its name due to its popularity among porters working in the capital's markets and docks.

Much like the railway pubs of old, the taprooms along the Mile serve as hubs for community and camaraderie, drawing locals and visitors to enjoy fresh beer, all within earshot of the trains overhead.

The 19th-century railway boom transformed Britain, connecting cities, towns and villages. It also reshaped social and drinking habits. As stations sprang up across the country, pubs quickly followed, catering to a burgeoning audience of passengers, rail workers and tourists.

"It's probably fair to say that the railways were a big influence on the siting of pubs in towns. The continued existence of many 'Railway Taverns' or 'Station Hotels' is testament to that," explained Tim Hedley-Jones, executive director of the Railway Heritage Trust.

For travellers, these pubs provided a convenient spot to rest before, during or after journeys. For railway workers, they became vital community hubs, with many offering meals and simple accommodation in addition to beer, serving the needs of a transient clientele.

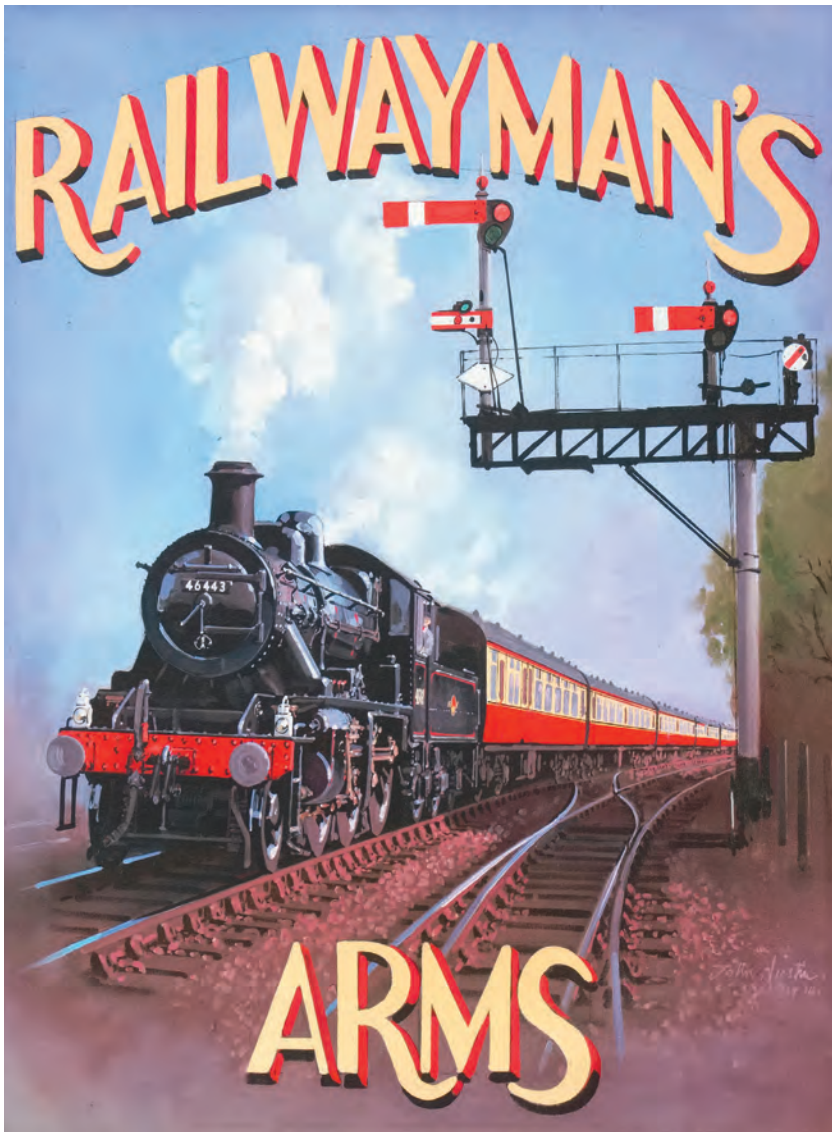
But expansion of the railways didn't just bring people closer together – it transformed the beer industry. Prior to rail transport, breweries relied on horse-drawn carts and waterways to distribute their products, limiting their reach. Railways changed everything, enabling breweries to transport vast quantities of beer quickly.

BrewDog Waterloo is a massive pub within London's Waterloo train station

ALAMY

'The expansion of Britain's railways didn't just revolutionise transport – it redefined the role of the pub as a social hub for travellers and locals alike'

Burton upon Trent, the epicentre of Britain's brewing industry, was one of the biggest beneficiaries. The town's brewers, known for their pale ales, took full advantage of the railway network to distribute their beer nationwide. By the mid-1800s, huge quantities of beer were transported annually by rail, cementing Burton's reputation as a brewing powerhouse. Indeed, Burton Albion, the town's football team, proudly carries the nickname 'the Brewers' as a nod to its brewing heritage. ☞



"St Pancras Station [in London] was built with an undercroft which was solely designed to store beer transported by the Midland Railway from Burton," noted Peter Thorpe, senior archive and library assistant at the National Railway Museum.

"Of course, the advantages of rail transport were not unique to Burton. Many small breweries around the country would also have a rail connection, so it wasn't just a case of the major centres benefitting.

"It also meant that anthracite coal, which was used for fuelling the drying of hops, could be supplied to maltings and oasthouses across the country, and enabled labour from cities to rural areas like Kent, which meant more people could pick hops," Peter added.

This accessibility contributed to the standardisation of beer styles. Rail transport allowed for consistent quality and availability, popularising styles like cask beers, making them a staple in railway pubs, and further solidifying their place in British drinking culture.

In stark contrast to the modernity of BrewDog Waterloo, the Signal Box Inn offers a more authentic glimpse into the long-standing relationship between pubs and railways. Nestled beside the Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway, this tiny pub, measuring just 8 x 8 feet, proudly carries the title of the UK's smallest pub. Used as a store for many years, it became a pub in 2006, and serves a fantastic, ever-changing range of the very best real ales, lagers and ciders from across the country.

'Burton upon Trent's brewers, known for their pale ales, took full advantage of the railway network to distribute their beer nationwide'

Despite its modest size, the Signal Box Inn is a tribute to the history of railway taverns, paying homage to the deep connection between the railways and their pubs. Its cosy interior and railway-themed décor transport visitors to a bygone era, while its location within a historic railway setting honours the deep-rooted connection between trains and taverns.

The Signal Box Inn opens seasonally from the first Friday before Easter until mid-October, with potential weekend extensions until mid-November, and makes a point of supporting UK microbreweries, with a special focus on those based in Lincolnshire.

This diminutive venue is a fine example of how railway pubs continue to leave a mark on British culture. Others, like the York Tap at York Station or the Head of Steam across from Newcastle Central Station, have become landmarks in their own right, celebrated for their architecture, beer selections and historical significance.

These pubs traditionally served as informal waiting rooms, offering warmth and comfort to passengers, while also featuring a selection of quality refreshments. This reliance on transient, non-local patrons,

The tiny Signal Box Inn sits beside the Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway

however, made them particularly vulnerable when rail travel declined, particularly following the Beeching cuts of the 1960s, which saw 2,000 stations close and 250 train services cancelled. With fewer passengers passing through stations, many of these pubs struggled to maintain their viability, and were eventually lost as the railways underwent significant changes.

The resurgence of interest in heritage railways and beer scenes has sparked the rise of guided tours, which is helping to preserve the connection between railways and brewing traditions. These tours, often hosted by heritage railways, offer a unique opportunity to experience both the charm of vintage trains and a selection of locally brewed ales.

For example, the Rail Ale Trail offers beer enthusiasts the chance to travel along the 12-mile route of the East Lancashire Railway. Passengers can hop on and off at some of the oldest and most popular pubs in the Irwell Valley, enjoying local beers.

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'The resurgence of interest in heritage railways and beer scenes has sparked the rise of guided tours'

Similarly, the Watercress Line's Real Ale Train, affectionately known as the RAT, serves real ale from its bar car while travelling through the picturesque Hampshire countryside. Passengers can enjoy a selection of local ales from Hampshire and the surrounding counties, with all beers priced affordably.

Another example is the Kent Real Ale Train, where guests can enjoy a pint or two while travelling through the High Weald. This train ride offers a selection of local ales from Kent breweries such as Westerham, Harvey's and Pig & Porter.

The story of Britain's railways and pubs is a tale of innovation, adaptation and community. They have provided solace to weary travellers, opportunities for social connection and platforms for showcasing the nation's beers.

In turn, the railways facilitated the distribution and popularisation of beer, helping to create the vibrant pub culture Britain is still known for.

Whether you're enjoying a pint at the giant BrewDog Waterloo or the miniscule Signal Box Inn, relaxing in a quaint railway inn or sampling a beer on board one of the growing number of heritage rail tours, the connection between Britain's railways and its pubs remains strong.

Joseph Phelan is a writer and journalist who has written for a variety of publications, including *Whisky Magazine* and *The Observer*. He lives in London.

Old Brewery finally opens its doors

Glynn Davis makes a rare visit to the Sam Smith's brewery in Tadcaster

Maybe it is not quite on the scale of Howard Carter entering the tomb of Tutankhamun for the first time or Charlie Bucket finally making it through the iron gates of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory, but as a beer lover I had held a visit to the brewery of Samuel Smith in Tadcaster, Yorkshire, as nearly on a par and certainly as unattainable.

It had been impossible to penetrate the confines of the Yorkshire brewery that has been fiercely protective of its activities since its origins as the Old Brewery in 1758. It then took on the name of the Samuel Smith brewery in 1886 following some family ructions that ultimately led to the odd situation of two breweries running in the town – the other being John Smith's. The two businesses still sit side by side on the high street.

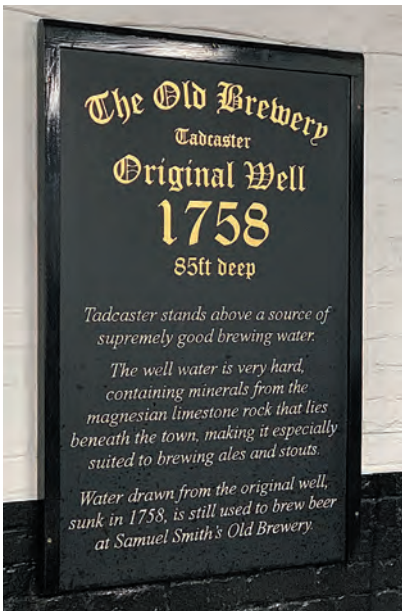
The door into the brewery had finally been prised open by the Brewery History Society (BHS) and its president Miles Jenner, head brewer of Harvey's in Lewes, East Sussex. This followed an earlier successful tour around the Melbourn Brothers All Saints brewery at Stamford, where Samuel Smith produces its range of fruit beers.

While entry into the brewery is through a rather unprepossessing side door, visitors are quickly met by some rich history. Gavin Scoresby, head brewer at Samuel Smith, pointed to the pipework that stands directly above the well that from 85 feet below the surface has been supplying water for the brewing process since day one in 1758.

"All the ales use untreated water, although the stout and lager use reverse osmosis to strip out the minerals and we add in the relevant ones. Yorkshire Water charges us a set fee," he joked, which is a pleasant surprise because such is the serious perception of the company from the outside that fun does not necessarily spring to mind when its name crops up.

'Gavin's overarching message is of a brewery that has changed very little in terms of the production process'

Fun aside, Gavin's overarching message throughout our visit is of a brewery that has changed very little in terms of the production process since the first generation of Smith's tapped the well. This is reflected in the building that is a traditional Victorian tower brewery involving multiple steep-pitched steps to reach the top floor and two malt mills date-stamped 1906 that continue to grind all the malt used in the brewery's output.



Clockwise from far left: Deliveries are still made by horse-drawn drays; newly qualified cooper Ethan Fairweather; well-served with water; brewery uses tower design

"We don't do things for the sake of tradition, we do it because it works. They look old but they are well looked after," he said, highlighting that they are so integral to the brewery that they are the first place that is investigated when there are any issues with production.

This commitment to the traditional ways is evident in the management of the mash tuns on the next level down. "There are no computers, just temperature gauges. The brewers can hit the precise temperatures just by turning the taps. It's a fine art. New brewers are lost for two years as everything here is done by hand. Our quality control is the smell, the steam and the look of the grain. If everything is behind closed doors – controlled by computers – then you can't see what's happening," said Gavin.

The mash tuns, along with the copper kettles, fit with this traditional narrative and date back to the early 19th century. But this comes with the downside that they are very much showing their age. Gavin said previous head brewers have put off replacing these big beasts but, as a relatively young employee, he suspects this major task will inevitably fall into his hands at some point. The company will have to make some big decisions on investment at that time.

At the moment the decision-maker is Humphrey Smith, who retains close control over the business, with his likely successor being his son, Samuel, who runs the company's pubs in the south of England. Although exceedingly low profile, like his father, I interviewed Samuel in 2016 for this publication and he undoubtedly will make his own mark when that time eventually comes.

For the foreseeable future, though, it seems unlikely we will see an array of new beers rolling out of Tadcaster. Even though the US – which the firm has been supplying since 1978 – represents a big market for Samuel Smith, it has not pandered to the ☞

ALAMY

"If every head brewer put their twist on the beers then we'd move away from what we are"

whims of American drinkers, according to Gavin.

"They always want something new. Our reps over there are asked 'what is new?' and they reply 'nothing'. We're never going to have different brews every week. I've got a [brewing] bible and my job is to stick to it. If every head brewer put their twist on the beers then we'd move away from what we are. We're not suddenly going to put Citra hops in our beer," he said.

This stance is clear as we enter the hop store and he suggests we won't find any US hops as he prefers not to have them in the brewery. Even the relatively new beer India Ale (5 per cent ABV) relies on the more subtle traditional English hops rather than more punchy overseas varieties. "We won't even entertain hybrid hops. We stick to what we do well," he added.

The newest beer in the portfolio is the alcohol-free Sam's Brown Ale and Gavin revealed more alcohol-free beers could be on the cards. On our visit, the company's other brown beer, its acclaimed Nut Brown Ale (5 per cent), was in the brewery's famed Yorkshire squares for fermentation. The 10 squares are impressively placed in a line with the beer sitting in these unique slate-lined vessels for four or five days with yeast bubbling away and working its magic.

They are the traditional alternative to modern stainless steel tanks and are cooled simply by cold water circulating around the room. There are no other temperature controls. "We use our own yeast strain and if we put it into steel, then it would just not work. The beer would not be the same. It's not cheap to run Yorkshire squares and we don't shout about it, but it works."

Among the beers that spend time in the squares is the brewery's sole cask output Old Brewery Bitter (4 per cent) that now sadly only accounts for a modest percentage of overall output. But Gavin confirmed cask is still very important to Samuel Smith: "We're fully committed 100 per cent to cask. Never say never to a new cask being launched... but a second one would, with sales of cask currently declining, slow down sales of both products."

What potentially contributes to the lesser sales is the brewery's insistence on only putting cask into wooden barrels – mainly 18 gallons with the odd 36-gallon vessels – and only supplying its own pub estate because it can guarantee it will be served in premium condition.

"We would absolutely not put cask in steel. We also would not have

spent money on training a cooper," said Gavin, who is rightly proud of the company's commitment to supporting the tradition of coopers in the brewing industry. Whatever your thoughts, it is certainly an impressive site surveying the scene of the racking room where the barrels stand in a regimented line with their red trim.

The newly qualified Ethan Fairweather is one of only two such brewery coopers in the UK along with Euan Findlay at Theakston. He is

Clockwise from far left: If it works, why change it?; head brewer Gavin Scoresby; only wood vessels for cask beer; long-serving Yorkshire squares; no computers here, just gauges

'Helping oversee these rare vessels is the stipulation that all beer deliveries are handled in-house'

unusual in that he both creates new barrels from scratch – using German oak as it has a lower sap content, so less flavour is imparted to the beer – and also repairs the existing stock.

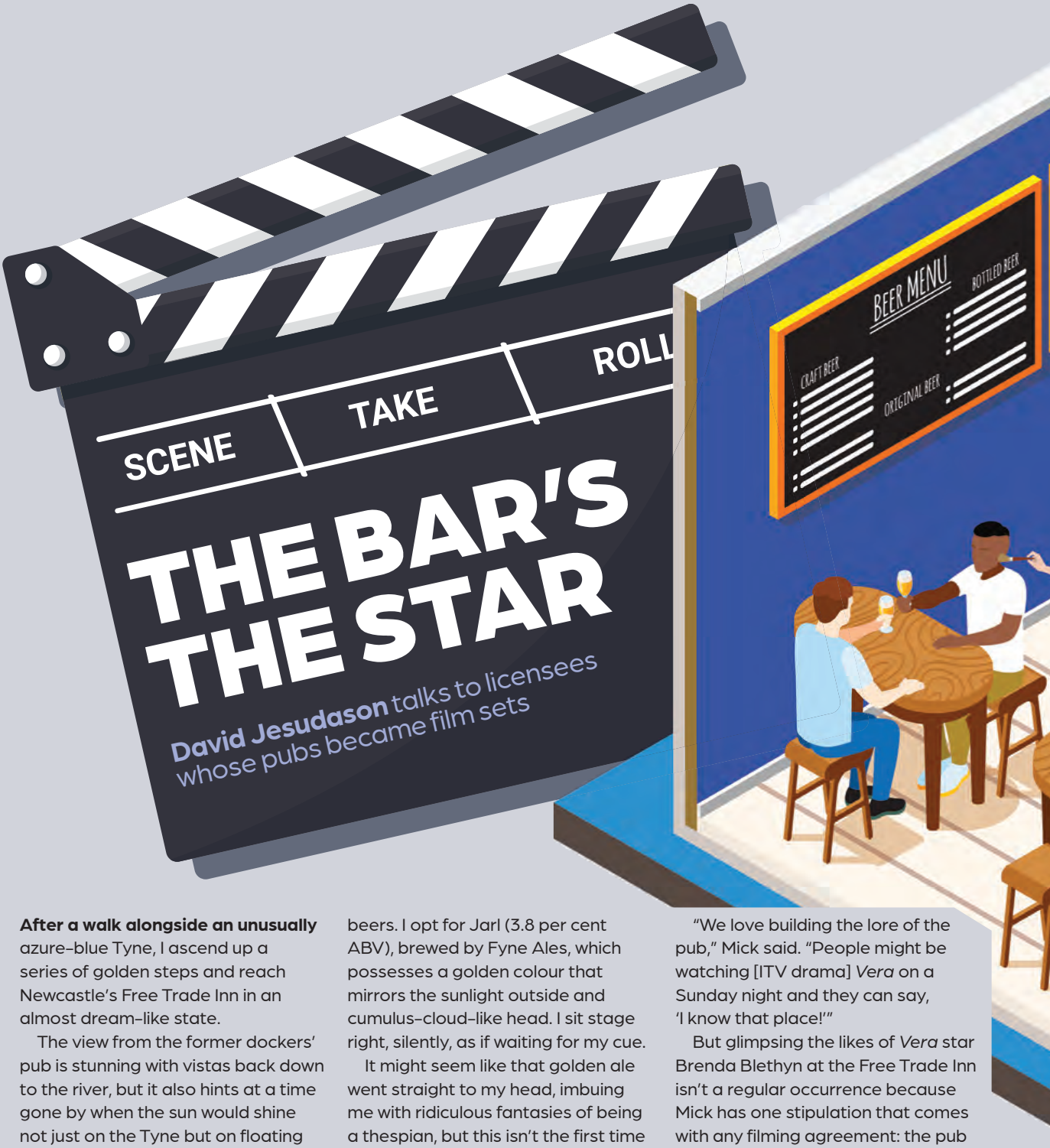
Rather esoterically, Samuel Smith still keeps track of these barrels in a handwritten ledger, which might just be a step too far in keeping with the 'way it has always been done' mantra. Although it does seem to work because some of the barrels have been in circulation for 70 years. Also helping oversee these rare vessels is the stipulation that all beer deliveries are handled in-house. This proud keep-it-in-house policy is prevalent across the whole business.

This also includes the handling of the most traditional of delivery methods, horse-drawn drays, which are pulled by stately, grey shire horses. The brewery currently has three but has had as many as a dozen in the past, when it participated in fairs and shows. Today, they deliver beer five days a week in round trips of five miles to a total of 15 pubs each week.

One of the routes involves taking the road out of Tadcaster, over the bridge and up the hill, and stopping at the Royal Oak where Old Brewery Bitter is served in peak condition. Two handpulls deliver a perfect-looking pint with a tight head and a flavour that if you concentrate hard enough, then you can just about convince yourself there is a hint of oak. There is definitely a touch of astringency, though, but that balances out the beer and fuels the desire for another sip.

It is a shame the beer, in this optimum condition, is not more widely available even across the Samuel Smith estate where, down south, it is a rare sight. Not as rare as a brewery tour, though. But that could change because Gavin said there could be further visits on the cards, depending on what BHS visitors write.

Business journalist **Glynn Davis** is a recognised authority on pubs and brewing. His work can be found in *The Retail Bulletin*, *Caterer*, *Propel* and *Computer Weekly*.



THE BAR'S THE STAR

David Jesudason talks to licensees whose pubs became film sets

After a walk alongside an unusually azure-blue Tyne, I ascend up a series of golden steps and reach Newcastle's Free Trade Inn in an almost dream-like state.

The view from the former dockers' pub is stunning with vistas back down to the river, but it also hints at a time gone by when the sun would shine not just on the Tyne but on floating steel beasts carved out in the now vanished shipyards.

It's a film scene that makes me feel like an A-list actor, especially as when I get to the bar I'm treated royally by bar manager Mick Potts, who offers me a choice of eight cask beers. I opt for Jarl (3.8 per cent ABV), brewed by Fyne Ales, which possesses a golden colour that mirrors the sunlight outside and cumulus-cloud-like head. I sit stage right, silently, as if waiting for my cue.

It might seem like that golden ale went straight to my head, imbuing me with ridiculous fantasies of being a thespian, but this isn't the first time Mick has hosted a player, and the Free Trade Inn's a stage.

Film crews have regularly begged him for access to set up cameras here and when he's agreed, the subsequent experience has lived on in the hearts and minds of his regulars.

"We love building the lore of the pub," Mick said. "People might be watching [ITV drama] *Vera* on a Sunday night and they can say, 'I know that place!'"

But glimpsing the likes of *Vera* star Brenda Blethyn at the Free Trade Inn isn't a regular occurrence because Mick has one stipulation that comes with any filming agreement: the pub has to stay open and the regulars are now your (background) actors.

"It's a pub," Mick said, "and it's a public space. [With *Vera* in 2014], they conceded it was fine."

Mick was newish to the job in those days, but he worked out that he ☞

SHUTTERSTOCK

'Film crews have regularly begged him for access to set up cameras here and when he's agreed, the subsequent experience has lived on in the hearts and minds of his regulars'

could keep the locals sweet if he offered them the chance to be an extra during the filming and by giving back most of the fee ITV offered in free drinks. The bar tab proved to be just as much of the lore of the pub as Brenda sitting on a bar stool gazing at the Tyne.

"The regulars just drank it away in the afternoon," Mick said, "and things got a bit more lively later on. The volume went up and it wasn't easy to keep people quiet at the required times. It was beautiful in the day, but it got a bit harder to control in the night.

"We put £300–£400 behind the till, which effectively goes back into the till anyway. It was a little reward for our regulars."

I imagine all of Newcastle headed there on a Wednesday afternoon but, even in these social media days, the offer was kept discreet by design because if the pub was too busy with 'extras', then the film's low-key scene would've been ruined.

As in the case of all things media, the reality was not as glamorous as you'd imagine with cameras, including a mini-railway track around the bar, taking six or seven hours to set up for a few minutes of footage.

For other publicans, though, the upheaval of filming is too great as it risks upsetting locals, especially if the pub has to be shut.

The Pelton Arms in Greenwich, South East London, for example, has regular requests turned down for filming (and weddings), although the *Only Fools and Horses* spin-off, *Rock & Chips*, used it as a location outside of licensing hours.

"It's a locals' pub. I can't close the door," owner Geoff Keane admitted. Which is very admirable because it's a tough time to run a pub and he could cover a lot of expenses with a payout from a TV or film company.

ALAMY

'It's perhaps better described as Landlord Country with the beer weaving its magic on anyone who picks up a pint'

"We're doing a lot more for a lot less money – the overheads are through the roof, but if you don't spend it, you're not going to make it," Geoff said. "We get the fires going, make it look pretty for Christmas and spend a fortune.

"It's constantly putting money in, but we retain the custom because if people go to the Pelton, they know we make the effort and there will always be something on."

And, I guess, if there wasn't anything on, as it was closed for filming, then many wouldn't return. But if you want another example of how taking the studio pound (or buck) can work for a pub and its regulars, then we need to cut to the next scene in Yorkshire.

Knaresborough is one of those British towns that I remember in green hues. The lens would love its verdant trees, woodlands and well-kept gardens. It also is the kind of place that has pubs that location directors adore, especially if they're fond of a post-shoot pint of Timothy Taylor's in the town's many locals – at one time it was said there was one on each corner.

Because, as much as people like to think this market and spa town is in God's Country, it's perhaps better described as Landlord Country with the remarkable cask beer weaving its magic on anyone who picks up a pint. Therefore, it's almost ironic that the film crews arrived at the one boozer that doesn't serve it.

The Mitre was taken over by Brew York in May 2024 much to the bemusement of a few hardcore regulars used to their pints like Landlord (4.3 per cent) and Theakston Best Bitter (3.8 per cent). "They walked in," Greg Ruddy from Brew York said, "saw Maris the Otter [3.9 per cent] and were sceptical but, once they tried it, it went down well.

It's a traditional bitter with a craft twist – hints of toffee and biscuit."

The Mitre does, though, have six cask lines and a sun-trap beer garden (similar to the outdoor space at the Free Trade Inn). It was the latter that entranced film producers who wanted exterior shots for a Netflix film called *Tinsel Town* starring Danny Dyer, Kiefer Sutherland and Meera Syal.

The plan was to film only outside the pub to minimise disruption, but the film crew liked the Mitre's downstairs function room so much it became part of the festive movie.

Despite all this, Greg said there was minimal disruption and filming was worth it because of how great a marketing tool the resulting film will be. And not just for the Mitre, but for Knaresborough itself.

Greg did have a slight fear that these fleeting shots of pubs might mean that the Mitre (or Knaresborough) is not recognised by most viewers, but that in itself leads to some fun for pub geeks like me, who are happy to search on the internet if we can't recognise a boozy location. As a side note, it's very sad that series such as *Inspector Morse* aren't filmed any more, while other TV shows rely heavily on adding in pub settings in post-production.

Mick, though, is happy to help us pub geeks. He allowed the Free Trade Inn to be used for a 2019 film called *Muscle* and the glimpse of the pub in one scene he calls an Easter egg for any drinkers who happen to be watching the Craig Fairbrass thriller. Mick was even in it himself.

"I watched it last night," he told me, "and I'd forgotten they filmed the inside of the pub, and there I was pouring a pint in the background."

'Greg did have a slight fear that these fleeting shots might mean the Mitre is not recognised by most viewers'

'For Mick, it helps keep the pub in the public eye and maintain the lore that he's so proud of'

The Free Trade Inn is also used regularly by BBC News for interviews (outside of opening hours) and for weather reports – again, it's that view of the Tyne. For Mick, it helps keep the pub in the public eye and maintain the lore that he's so proud of. Not that they need the business with the pub now being busy all year round thanks to the beer, welcome and the much-mentioned view.

"When people used to say, 'I'm only here for the view'," Mick added, "it really used to grate with me as a younger, more headstrong person. But that was just youth and after a while you realise it's a package. It's the people. It's the beer. It's the view."

For anyone who thinks the key to gaining the attention of film crews is to have a classic pub interior – in my mind this is lived-in wooden floors and a traditional curved bar – then you might be wrong because this isn't what the Free Trade Inn is like.

It's certainly lived in, but it doesn't fit the template exactly, unlike the Pelton Arms, which oozes charm. For Mick, his conclusion neatly sums up what film producers look for. And it's pretty much what anyone feels when they fall hard for the Free Trade Inn (after seeing that view).

"It looks like a classic pub," Mick concluded, "which is funny as it doesn't look like many classic pubs. It's a pretty unusual building for a pub. Everyone is very complimentary about the inside, but it's not a pretty place – it's dark but with a classic look from the outside. It's an old ramshackle dockers' pub."

David Jesudason is the author of *Desi Pubs: A Guide to British-Indian Pubs, Food & Culture*, published by CAMRA Books.

IMPECCABLE SERVICE

REAL ALE HEROES
NUMBER 50: SUE NOWAK

Pub food has been transformed thanks to the efforts of a couple who have toured the country to find publicans marrying cask ale with fine traditional regional dishes using local ingredients, as **Roger Protz** reports

Sue and Fran Nowak have performed a remarkable feat, turning pub food from the awful to the memorable. For some 40 years, they toured the country, clocked up 100,000 or so miles and visited around 1,000 pubs to unlock the secrets of memorable dishes.

And for a large amount of that time, they operated from a house in St Albans, Hertfordshire, opposite a pub that has gone down in CAMRA history. It's the Farriers Arms, where the longest-surviving branch of the Campaign, South Herts, was formed in the early 1970s.

Sue said her mission was to prove to beer lovers there was more to pub food than boil-in-a-bag rice, chicken in a basket, sausage and chips and veggie lasagne. Unheralded, there were publicans throughout the country beavering away to produce delectable regional dishes using the finest local ingredients.

The aim of Sue and Fran was to bring those dishes to national attention and to encourage other publicans to dump the microwave and follow the lead of the pioneers.

Susan Nowak, née Berry, was born in Huddersfield, but her family moved to London where she passed the 11 Plus exam and won a place at the prestigious South Hampstead High

'Sue said her mission was to prove to beer lovers there was more to pub food than boil-in-a-bag rice, chicken in a basket and veggie lasagne'

School. Surprisingly, it didn't have a domestic science course, but Sue took a part-time job in a sandwich bar, where she learned to make pastry and cook apple pie. She was on her way.

Fran is short for Franciszek. He was born in Leuchars, Fife, on a RAF station where his Polish father was based in World War II and married a local woman. Fran describes himself as a Scottish Pole. He became an architect by trade and both a keen photographer and real ale drinker. He also enjoys driving, which proved very useful when he and Sue started out on their pub food crusade.

Sue was keen to write as well as cook and she signed up for a journalism course at Regent Street Polytechnic in London. She made her mark there by interviewing Jimi Hendrix for the student magazine.

With a distinction in newspaper law, Sue went to work in Hertfordshire, first for the *Watford Post* and then the *Herts Advertiser*, which took her to St Albans. She then joined a new paper, the *Review*, where she became business editor and then overall editor.

Fran was also working in the St Albans area. They met, got married and in 1978 they moved to Lower Dagnall Street opposite the Farriers. Sue was pregnant and gave birth to their son, Tadeusz, a Polish name shortened to Tad.

Sue wrote about local pubs and restaurants, which brought her to the attention of CAMRA head office based in St Albans. She had several convivial meetings with this writer and the result was the first edition of the *Good Pub Food Guide* in 1988.

"I thought if we asked CAMRA branches to nominate pubs doing ☞

PHOTOGRAPHY: JIMMY SWINDELLS


PROPER
JOB
ST AUSTELL

'Sue and Fran learned there was a pub serving 20 cheeses, one with its own smokehouse, another where the landlord had his own fishing boat'

good food we'd be told food had nothing to do with campaigning for beer," Sue said. "But the response was overwhelming and I had a frantic call from CAMRA head office asking me to empty my pigeonhole as the contents were overflowing."

Fran added: "I designed a form that asked members to check on how food was made for regional dishes, where ingredients came from, if vegetarian dishes were available and did publicans cook with beer and cider. We also asked for recipes."

From the tip of Cornwall to the Highlands of Scotland there came a flood of replies. Sue and Fran learned there was a pub serving 20 cheeses, one with its own smokehouse, another where the landlord had his own fishing boat. A Welsh publican collected laver bread from the beach – Sue later went with him – and many pubs grew their own fruit and veg.

From that mountain of forms, they unearthed such regional delicacies as Cumbrian tattie ash, lample pie and Suffolk pond pudding.

The first edition of the guide caused a media storm and Sue found herself on TV. For the launch, David and Susan Richardson of the Star Inn at Weaverthorpe in North Yorkshire brought a raised game pie and Mary Jane's herb pudding.

The guide sold like – what else? – hot cakes, but there was an immediate downside. CAMRA received a letter from solicitors acting for the Consumers' Association (CA). The CA was best known for *Which?* magazine, but it also published the *Good Pub Guide* and it said the CAMRA title was too similar, caused confusion, loss of sales and it had to be withdrawn.

A top-level team led by national chairman Rob Walker hurried to the palatial CA offices near Regent's Park. It expected fisticuffs but the tone was friendly and CA said it would be satisfied if CAMRA dropped 'guide' from the title.

It even offered to cover half the cost of the reprint. *Good Pub Food* went ahead and the revamped first edition sold out.

It had a foreword by the celebrity chef Keith Floyd. Sue met him and encouraged him to buy the Maltsters Arms in Tuckenhay, Devon. The result was excellent cask beer alongside steamed fish with coconut and galangal, a "seriously hot" Thai green curry, and Malaysian beef rendang, along with soups, pâtés and English cheeses.

Pub food, you could say, was on a roll. In the Scottish Highlands the Nowaks found an American couple, Jim and Anne Anderson, running the renamed Anderson in Fortrose, where they featured such dishes as New Orleans seafood gumbo, rarely, if ever, seen in the British Isles.

'From that mountain of forms, they unearthed such delicacies as Cumbrian tattie ash, lample pie and Suffolk pond pudding'

Clockwise from main image: Ship Inn, Plymouth, is now a Nowak favourite; teamwork – Fran and Sue travelled the country sampling great beer and food; Sue was the first woman to chair the Guild of Beer Writers; mug shot – Sue sampling the local beer in Munich, Germany

In the West Midlands, Sue and Fran discovered Asian pub landlords making true and superb curries washed down not with fizzy lager, but cask beer.

"In some cases we would stay overnight," Fran recalled, "in order to go through the menus and ingredients in great detail in the morning."

Sue spread her wings. As well as *Good Pub Food*, she wrote *The Beer Cook Book* in 1999, published by Faber & Faber. The book was the result of meeting such celebrity chefs as Delia Smith, Rick Stein and Keith Floyd, and garnering their recipes.

It was also thanks to touring Europe with Fran to discover the cuisines of other countries. Belgium was a revelation.

"They treat beer as seriously as wine there," Sue said. "They don't just serve beer with food, but they cook with it as well.

"If you can cook boeuf bourguignon with wine, then you can do the same with beer for the Belgian dish carbonade flamande."

She found that Belgian fruit beers were also fine companions for such dishes as duck.

"Beer is as good as wine as a marinade. It's good for basting and makes a fine salad dressing with chutney and mustard"

Building on that experience, she devised recipes for the French-style stew cassoulet cooked with stout or strong Belgian dark beer, while back home fish is enlivened with a dash of India Pale Ale.

"Beer is as good as wine as a marinade," Sue said. "It's good for basting and makes a fine salad dressing with chutney and mustard – but watch out for hops as they can make dressings too bitter."

In the late 1990s, Sue became the first woman to chair the British Guild of Beer Writers, and she used her skills and experience to devise the menus for the guild's annual awards dinner.

She wrote regularly for *What's Brewing* and when CAMRA launched *BEER* magazine, she became a top columnist. Her recommendations of pubs close to the venues for CAMRA's Members' Weekends proved especially popular.

Sue and Fran, who moved to Plymouth, compiled the final *Good Pub Food* in 2006, working with fellow beer writer Jill Adam. Sue said the *Good Beer Guide* now has so many entries for pubs with good food that their guide is no longer needed.

But they have not stopped enjoying food and beer. They can get on the ferry in Plymouth and make the short trip to Brittany to enjoy the cuisine and beer and cider there.

Sue said she's reluctant to pick out some of their favourite British pubs "as each one is different with their special menus".

But from their new home they regularly make the arduous journey to the Warren House Inn at Postbridge, Devon, one of the highest pubs in the country, which is often snowed in, in winter. The drive is worth it, they say, to tuck into the rabbit pie.

Closer to home, the Ship Inn in Plymouth serves outstanding fish and chips, the former caught fresh every day, while the Anchor Inn at Cockwood on the banks of the River Eske has its own mussel banks.

The research carried out by the Nowaks over many years has opened people's eyes to the joys of good pub food. Former CAMRA chairman Rob Walker said: "In focusing on food in pubs, Sue was very much ahead of her time.

"Her championing of good pub food was long overdue and filled a gap in CAMRA's pub recommendations. We tended to overlook the fact that good beer, although vital, was not the only prerequisite of a good pub and Sue helped to change that."

And far from retiring, Sue has just finished a novel. She's tight-lipped about the content, but will say it features a beer expert who writes books, judges competitions and devises beer lists.

She promises some violence along with pub food and recipes for cooking. It sounds like a fascinating mix of fact and fiction.

HEAD'S ABOVE THE REST

Roll out the bunting, strike up the brass band! The Bailey Head in Oswestry has been named Pub of the Year, writes **Laura Hadland**

CAMRA's annual search for the best pub in the UK was founded in 1988. It doesn't matter what kind of hostelry it is, the size or location, all are in the running. Sadly, that number continues to decrease – there are now fewer than 39,000 pubs, down more than 17 per cent since 2019. Yet, it's still hugely impressive that this number is carefully whittled down to identify the excellence through rounds of branch, then regional competitions to discover four Pub of the Year (PotY) finalists. Those four are then carefully judged according to several criteria:

- Quality and condition of real ale, cider and perry
- Promotion and knowledge of real ale (and cider and perry where applicable)
- Cleanliness and staff hygiene
- Community focus
- Service and welcome
- Style, décor and atmosphere
- Sympathy with CAMRA's aims.

This year, the pub that came out on top was the West Midlands' regional champion, the Bailey Head. Run by Grace Goodlad and Duncan Borrowman, the pub has been transformed from a failing business into a shining beacon for the industry over their nine years at the helm.

Grace and Duncan were already experienced club managers, living in Kent. At the Orpington Liberal Club, Duncan was the chairman and Grace was a committee member. That

'They called their dream Plan P – a pub and a puppy. Sadly, the puppy has not yet materialised'

establishment was twice a CAMRA Club of the Year finalist during their tenure, and has made the finals once again since they left, no doubt in part due to Grace's role in initiating the move away from a Greene King tie to a freehouse.

It was a family inheritance that prompted the couple to look to buy a pub of their own. They called their dream Plan P – a pub and a puppy. Sadly, the puppy has not yet materialised, although the Bailey Head is known for its dog-friendliness.

The pair wanted to find somewhere that had an untapped market for quality real ale and craft beer, and that they had to be able to live in. Determined not to take on debt, their budget was set, but their search was not limited by geography. They watched all the big industry seller's

Low ceilings, beams and dark wood serve to make Duncan and Grace's pub feel cosy and warm

agents and bided their time. Initially, they made an offer for a pub in Cumbria, but were gazumped. Luckily for them, but not so much for the gazumping new owners, that building flooded three weeks later.

Having seen a listing for the sale of the Grade II listed building in Shropshire – then known as the Castle Tavern – they were keen to investigate further. They'd never visited Oswestry before, although they knew a couple of people from the area. They emailed the agent who replied saying that they already had an offer, but if Duncan and Grace could pay cash, they could have it there and then for £5,000 less.

Within 12 hours of seeing the advert, they'd had an offer accepted and contracts were ready to be signed on a pub they'd never visited. As soon as they could, they went to Shropshire and had a look. The building and the bar were generally sound, but business was bad. There were no customers. The business was taking less than 10 per cent of what they now take in a week. But they saw the potential and were determined to see it through.

'It would have been devastating to lose a building that had served Oswestry as an inn for more than 200 years'

The pub itself had been struggling for a long time. The local CAMRA branch ran a campaign to have it listed as an Asset of Community Value in 2015, for fear that it would be sold off for housing. It would have been devastating to lose a building that had served Oswestry as an inn for more than 200 years.

"The first two years were sheer living hell," Grace reminisced. "Very tight cash. Working 100-plus hours a week each. Working seven days a week each. Changing the reputation of the business."

But that hard work has paid off.

Just a year after opening, the improvements Grace and Duncan made were getting recognised. They reached the finals of the first Hospitality Social Media Awards and were named Shrewsbury and West Shropshire CAMRA's Market Town Pub of the Year. The pub was recognised for the fantastic quality of beer and cider on offer. That range has now expanded to an ☞

MIRRORPIX

'People who don't like beer (I know, but apparently they do exist) are also well catered for with an extensive spirit collection'

impressive run of six cask beers and up to 15 other draught beers, along with five ciders and a perry on handpull. And that's without mentioning the huge range of bottles and cans available. You'll always find something to suit your tastes – be that dark beer, something gluten- or alcohol-free or perhaps a vegan-friendly offering.

People who don't like beer (I know, but apparently they do exist) are also well catered for with an extensive spirit collection. There are brands you know, and plenty you don't – high-end, handmade gins from copper stills, and a quality offer of rums that is constantly updated.

The accolades have just kept coming. It's not just the amazing range and quality of the drinks that the Bailey Head offers. It's the true community focus that it has, creating a welcoming vibe that cannot fail to impress. The key tenet of the Bailey Head is that everyone is welcome.

"Any person should feel happy and comfortable coming in by themselves and enjoying a drink, either on their own or chatting to other customers," Duncan told me. "We are at our best being a heart of the community and a place where people gather to celebrate or commiserate."

It is noticeable when you visit that the pub makes space for marginalised groups which can find barriers to access in other venues. The LGBTQ+ community, for example, finds the Bailey Head offers a safe space and any abuse directed towards them will not be tolerated. Also, people with mobility issues are encouraged to visit, with the premises made as welcoming as a historic building can be, and help is always readily available if needed to those crossing its threshold.

The Bailey Head is also an important piece in the puzzle of the local economy. It supports local brewers as well as national ones – Oswestry's Stonehouse Bitter (3.9 per cent ABV) is a permanent line on the bar, for example. While it doesn't serve hot food, you can get a range of bar snacks including the most delicious beer sticks from Shropshire Salumi. Punters are welcome to bring food in, and Duncan and Grace have built strong relationships with the town's food traders thanks to this cross-pollination of businesses.

The low ceilings, beams and dark wood serve to make the pub feel cosy and warm – a sanctuary away from the world. The higgledy-piggledy décor of breweriana, beer mats and art across every wall and ceiling could feel cluttered and over the top, but it doesn't – it feels charming.

There are many reasons why the Bailey Head has been crowned the best pub in the land, but central to them all is the hard work of Grace, Duncan and their team behind the bar. They pay incredible attention to detail in sourcing a dizzying array of beers and ciders – rarely offering the same cask ale twice (excepting the permanent line) means they have

'The LGBTQ+ community finds the Bailey Head offers a safe space and any abuse will not be tolerated'

Grace and Duncan have served more than 2,500 cask beers in their time at the Bailey Head

served more than 2,500 real ales during their tenure. And the level of service they offer cannot be underestimated. It is attentive and genuinely warm, without being over the top or intrusive. The pub is full of humour, wit and intelligence, without ever being snide or exclusive.

And how has becoming PotY impacted them?

In the month after their award was announced, the Bailey Head saw just over a 20 per cent increase in takings. People have been travelling from all over the country to visit.

"Which is amazing given we aren't the easiest place to get to," Duncan said. However, it's not all good news. "Our bank balance is the worst it has been for ages, as I have had to massively increase stock and the invoices are now being paid!"

'Many Salopians, who weren't aware of the gem they had on their doorstep, have now been educated'

Sounds like there are worse problems to have. They are hopeful that they will be able to increase staffing on the shifts that are getting busier, offering more valuable employment opportunities for local people. The increased trade is also helping to shield them, to some extent, against the rise in minimum wage and business rates that has come with Spring 2025.

There may be a few regulars upset that they can't get their usual seat, but on the whole the Bailey Head has received a positive reaction from its community. Many Salopians, who weren't aware of the gem they had on their doorstep, have now been educated thanks to the widespread press coverage of the win.

It looks like CAMRA's biggest annual pub award is doing everything you'd hope. As well as recognising talent, passion and dedication, it's also giving a much-needed boost to quality establishments in difficult economic times.

Laura Hadland is a food and drinks writer, and author of *50 Years of CAMRA*. She writes about beer, among other things, on her blog *The Extreme Housewife* (**extremehousewife.com**)

THE STORY BEHIND THE BEER

Fyne Ales Jarl

Jeff Evans discovers how a family brewery's new strategy led to the creation of a hugely successful brew

The best of both worlds, that's how Jamie Delap explained the philosophy behind Jarl, the hugely successful pale ale from Fyne Ales.

The Delap family opened Fyne Ales on its farm, gloriously set at the head of Scotland's Loch Fyne, in 2001. Like most small breweries at the time, it focused initially on cask ales. By 2010, however, Jamie – assuming the role of managing director from his late father – had developed a new strategy, one that would combine the most interesting ideas from the emergent craft beer scene with Britain's great cask ale heritage. And, as it happened, the Delaps had a great opportunity to test this new way of thinking when they hosted their first FyneFest beer festival the same year.

For the event, they decided to create a new 3.8 per cent ABV session pale ale, thinking it might become a replacement for an existing beer named Piper's Gold (also 3.8 per cent). "Piper's Gold had worked well as a good, solid golden ale – brewed with a little Crystal malt and traditional Golding, Pioneer and WGV aroma hops – but it didn't fit the new strategy," said Jamie. "We wanted a new pale ale that would showcase brighter, fresher US hops – notably Citra, which we had heard about."

Even though Fyne Ales had already enjoyed success with Avalanche (4.5 per cent) and Hurricane Jack (4.4 per cent), which were hop-forward pale ales using American hops, this would be the first time it had brewed with Citra, so it decided to follow a very simple recipe, which would allow it to understand what the new hop brought to the party.

"We stuck with our extra pale base malt – Maris Otter at the time – and some torrefied wheat for head retention and body. That was it on the malt bill," Jamie explained. "Given Citra's high alpha percentage, we decided to use it for bittering also, so we could understand how it compared to Magnum, which we were using in other beers. The mid-boil and end-of-boil additions were 100 per cent Citra leaf, so, again, we could see clearly what Citra could do for the beer."

"The beer was very much brewed as a trial to see how the hops would work"

Water was kept equally simple. "We have very soft water, collected from the burn behind the brewery, so we added just enough salts for a healthy fermentation, but otherwise kept the addition as low as possible." Yeast, too. "We had been having good results using our house yeast with US hops. It was a known quantity to us, so we decided to stick with it."

The beer was fermented for two to three days and then crash-cooled to 10°C in open fermenters to stop the fermentation, leaving in some fermentable sugars. After a week, the yeast was skimmed and the beer moved into conditioning tanks for a week of secondary fermentation.

"The beer was very much brewed as a trial to see how the hops would work," said Jamie. "We were delighted with the flavours, so we released the first batch. Wil Wood, our head brewer at the time, had confidence in it from the start, while I saw it as potentially

"In this new beery version of history the Vikings won. Somerled was vanquished from our beer list!"

the first step in a development process, depending on feedback.

"We poured it alongside beers from Thornbridge, Oakham, Dark Star and Salopian at the first FyneFest, which was just about 250 people in a marquee in the courtyard of the brewery – a lot less than the 3,000 people we hope will be joining us for FyneFest in June 2026. We were able to see directly what customers thought compared to those beers. We were delighted with the feedback, so we released it into trade. Once the first brew sold out, we brewed another, then another and within 12 months it had become one of our core beers."

For the name of this exciting new beer, Jamie delved into Scottish history. "Until 2010, our summer special had been Somerled [4 per cent], named after the first king of Argyll and the Isles who had largely kicked the Vikings out of our part of Scotland," he explained. "We decided this time to rerun history and named the new beer Jarl – pronounced *yarl* – after the Viking jarls or earls, who ruled this part of Scotland before Somerled. In this new beery version of history the Vikings won. Somerled was vanquished from our beer list!"

The recipe for Jarl has remained basically unchanged since that first brew. However, in 2014, Fyne Ales invested £2.5m in a new brewery that, Jamie said, was explicitly designed to brew the best pint of Jarl possible. This involved significant changes, adding a Steele's masher to improve its quality and an external wort boiler to reduce any caramelisation that might be caused by steam coils in the copper. Perhaps most importantly, it also introduced a hop back where whole-leaf hops could be added after the boil, keeping in all the aroma rather than losing some up the chimney.

Refreshing, zesty and highly quaffable, Jarl has won numerous awards. Today, it is available in cask, keg, bottle and can. It is obviously a beer that Jamie and the team feel close to. "It is central to who we are as a brewery," he confirmed. "It expresses our philosophy clearly – the marriage of the best of craft beer with the best of British brewing heritage – and it has been successful commercially, accounting for around half our sales. The fact it was first on the bar at our first FyneFest and will be still the best-performing beer at the festival 15 years later is testament to how well it has done for us."

Busman's holiday

Chris Gott took a short trip to Jersey to discover what's on the menu of the island's pubs and bars

I worked as a full-time chef in the Channel Islands for nearly 20 years before hanging up my apron to sell beer and wine plus write about food and drink when given the opportunity. So, when I was asked if I'd like to hunt down some pubs serving real ales and delicious food, I thought about taking a busman's holiday and see what Jersey has to offer for people who like a decent pint with their lunch or dinner. After some planning with CAMRA's online guide, I set out over a couple of sunny spring days to track down some good food and great ale.

I determined that my last stop would be close to the centre of St Helier, Jersey's capital with a wealth of cafés, bars and restaurants. It would also be the shortest walk home after two days of indulging. I would head to the Post Horn, a gem hidden in the centre of town. As Jersey is relatively small, just nine by five miles and well served with a decent bus network, you don't have to worry as a visitor about who is going to drive. You just pick up a three-day pass and enjoy unlimited travel, and you get to enjoy some amazing coastal and countryside views as you roam.

I was very excited about my first choice as I had heard great things about a new young chef having taken over the kitchen. The Royal, St Martins, is a former coaching inn situated by the village church on the eastern side of the island. It is not too far away from Jersey Zoo, created by author and conservationist Gerald Durrell. Inside, there is a cosy local's bar, plenty of seating in a light, airy restaurant and a large outdoor area.

The Royal is managed by one of the two large pub companies on the island which is owned by descendants of the Greenall family, one of the UK's most famous brewing names. Unfortunately, the company ceased brewing on the island in 1992, although it did create a 200-year anniversary beer with Hook Norton in 2023. The single cask ale on offer on my visit was London Pride (4.7 per cent ABV) which, although it was well kept and correctly served, was a little frustrating. Perhaps the number of cask beers will increase during the summer. However, if the choice of beer available was a little disappointing, the food was not.

You're never far from the sea on Jersey, so it's no surprise that fish and shellfish are often on the menu

The menu is not too big, offering a wide range of what I would call good pub food classics, a twice-cooked souffle and ham hock terrine in the starter section and main courses including battered cod with triple-cooked chips, a great-sounding burger and a beef-and-ale suet pudding, which I would have loved to try but I was pacing myself. I started with the interesting-sounding soft-boiled duck egg with sesame chicken soldiers and celery salt. The egg was perfectly timed and nice and runny, great for dunking the crisp, tasty sesame chicken – a nice twist on the usual Cantonese prawn toast.

'The egg was perfectly timed and nice and runny, great for dunking the crisp, tasty sesame chicken'

The plate was quickly cleared after I finished, and I ordered another pint of the Pride.

For mains, I chose chargrilled tikka sea bass, served with a masala sauce, spiced Jersey royals, Bombay mix and a coriander yoghurt. The fish was well cooked if perhaps lacking a bit of char and a crispier skin, and the sauce was packed with flavour. The potatoes were nicely spiced and well seasoned, and the Bombay mix added a nice texture. The Pride went down a treat and paired well with the flavours of the dish.

ALAMY

After a wander around the zoo to build up an appetite, the next stop was the very picturesque Rozel Bay and the independently run Rozel Pub & Dining. It's worthwhile checking the opening times as you don't want to miss this one. Dating back to the 1870s, the recently refurbished pub is contemporarily decorated with a large glass conservatory. The downstairs bar is well stocked with a range of local beers from the island's largest brewer.

Being so close to the quaint harbour and the sea, I settled for half a dozen Jersey oysters grown and harvested just a bay or two away, and a haddock and chips washed down with two cracking pints of Herm Gold

'Being so close to the sea, I settled for half a dozen Jersey oysters grown just a bay or two away'

(4.2 per cent), named after another of the Channel Islands. This was a perfect combination – the sweet malty beer tempered with light citrus and floral hoppiness matched the briny oysters and the crisp batter and sweet flaky fish. Looking at the menu and the dishes going out to the nearby tables, the chef here certainly knows what he is doing, and the Rozel is well worth a visit.

Next day, and my first pint was in the busy Lamplighter pub which offers a wide range of guest ales. Unfortunately, the pub stopped serving meals a couple of years ago, so I contented myself with a locally produced black pudding pork pie and pickle. This seems to be common on the island, with the pubs serving really good beers not offering food and vice versa with the notable exception of the Liberation brewery.

Its pubs and bars across Jersey and Guernsey offer a range of its own ales and some of its sister brewery, Butcombe. It was its Post Horn that I visited for my last meal. Tucked away behind shops, the pub has been recently refurbished. Run by ex-chef Keith and his friendly team, the menu has a range of small sharing plates including some delicious chicken wings. It has a range of pub favourites, but what I wanted was one of the great pies. I went for a smoked ham, leek and mustard pie, with buttery mash, peas and lots of gravy. The food was delicious and was accompanied by a couple of perfectly served Liberation ales, which was a wonderful match. It was a great end to my adventure. Now I just have to persuade a few more venues about matching more of their fabulous food with a great pint.

Chris aka An Island Chef regularly writes a blog about food; he loves to cook using top ingredients and local produce. His recipes appear regularly in *What's Brewing Online*.

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OCTOBER BEER

The history and success of India Pale Ale

The autumn historically has played a key role in the evolution of beer. As the leaves were turning to gold in the early 19th century, brewers were fashioning a new style of ale first called October Beer.

It soon became better known as India Pale Ale (IPA). It went on to dominate not only the great subcontinent then controlled by Britain, but also nations as far apart as Australia and the United States.

Burton-on-Trent became famous as the major centre for pale ale brewing in the 19th century, but the story of IPA begins in London. A brewer at Bow Bridge in East London, George Hodgson, learned from drinking in pubs with local dock workers that ships sailing to India left half empty and the costs of transport were low. They also told George that 'the Raj' – the top army officers and civil servants running India – were desperate for a more refreshing beer than the dark milds and stouts sent there.

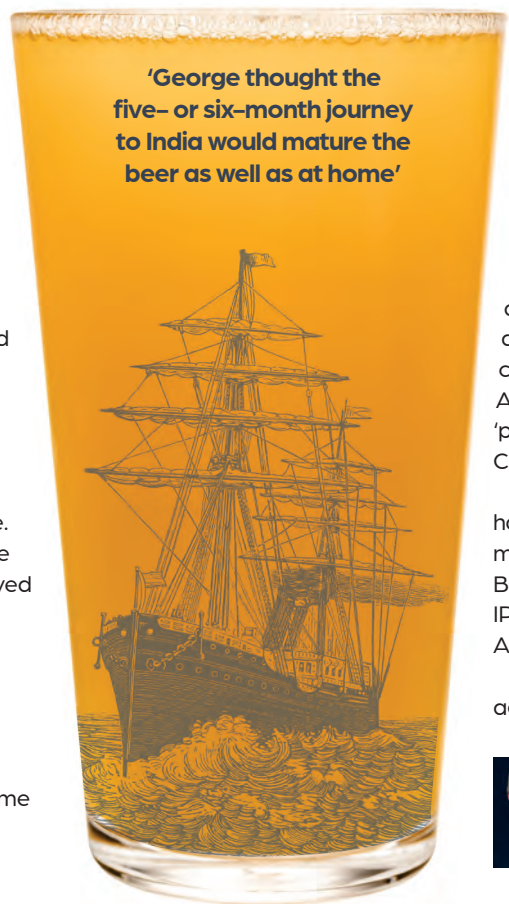
George hit on the idea of exporting October Beer, a strong ale brewed with malts and hops fresh from the harvest and matured for a full year before it was served with all the solemnity of the latest vintage wine from Bordeaux.

George thought the five- or six-month journey to India would mature the beer as well as at home. With sharp changes of temperature and often rough seas, the beer arrived in Bombay and Calcutta – as they were then known – in fine form and needed only a short time to settle.

In January 1822, the *Calcutta* *Gazette* recorded a shipment that included "Hodgson's warranted prime picked pale ale of the genuine October brewing, warranted fully equal, if not superior, to any received in the settlement".

Other London brewers followed in George's footsteps. In 1898, Waltham Brothers' brewery in Stockwell said of its IPA: "This Ale is heavily hopped with the very best Kent hops, and nearly resembles the fine Farmhouse Stock Beer of olden times." Stock ale was another term for October Beer or a brew that had been aged for some time.

George's successors built a lucrative trade of 4,000 barrels a year but made the mistake of cutting out the East India Company (EIC) that ran trade with the subcontinent. Outraged, the EIC called on brewers in Burton to supply India. The mineral-rich waters of the Trent Valley were ideal for brewing pale ale and soon Allsopp's, Bass and other brewers in the town were outselling Hodgson's, which went into decline and was eventually taken over.



'George thought the five- or six-month journey to India would mature the beer as well as at home'

SHUTTERSTOCK

By the end of the 19th century, Bass was briefly the biggest brewer in the world, producing close to one million barrels a year, much of it for export.

But the India trade was brought almost to a complete halt by German and American brewers which started to send lager there. The Americans cleverly sent not just beer but ice packed in the ships and used to cool the beer when it arrived.

And crippling increases in excise duty in Britain during World War I meant it was no longer profitable to make beers that were 6 or 7 per cent ABV. As a result, IPA all but disappeared until the end of the 20th century, when brewers in both Britain and the US revived the style. It took off like the proverbial steam train, and now there are thousands of interpretations worldwide.

In this country, such revivalist beers as Thornbridge Jaipur (5.9 per cent) and St Austell Proper Job (4.5 per cent) are fine examples of IPA. American brewers, true to style, have 'pushed the envelope' with West Coast and New England IPAs.

The success of American versions has had an impact here. I've a beer mat on my desk from Brewpoint in Bedford for its Foghorn Hazy Session IPA (4.3 per cent) described as an American-style portrayal of the beer.

Second time round, IPA has once again conquered the world.

Roger Protz's book, *World's Greatest Beers* (2022), is on sale from CAMRA's online bookstore. Follow him at **@RogerProtzBeer**

Ale aboard

The bicentenary celebration of the world's first railway is happening in the North East this year. **Steve Hobman** took the train to check out the treats that await beer lovers

Railways and beer have long cosied up. This summer, 200 years of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) will be celebrated and well toasted in the small South West Durham town of Shildon, and particularly in a small brewery at the bosom of its history.

This is where Father of the Railways, George Stephenson, began his 27-mile journey through to Darlington and Stockton, rolling into the history books with *Locomotion No 1* as the first steam locomotive to haul both passengers and freight, marking the birth of modern railways. The nine-month celebrations are already under way, peaking with a three-day re-enactment in September around the main commemorative day – 27 September.

But what are the beer prospects? Well now, on alighting at Shildon's two-platform station from the Darlington to Bishop Auckland train, the dilemma is whether to turn left for a 10-minute stroll to the imposing Locomotion National Railway Museum, or right to seek the promise of a pint at the rather less imposing, but very enticing, George Samuel Brewery Canteen Bar & Kitchen.

A tough call. We do the right thing, we turn left, to be greeted at the museum by big men playing with small trains. It's a quiet Friday afternoon, so we look around the exhibits at leisure, including *Locomotion*. It is impressive, to say the least.

Nevertheless, the brewery beckons and we backtrack to search it out. Locating Locomotion the museum was easy, unearthing Locomotion the pint trickier. En route we pass the long-defunct Masons Arms, where the town's second station was opened in 1837. It doubled as a ticket office for some years. Hard times saw it more latterly rejoice in the rather exotic, though somewhat incongruous, title of the Cape to Cairo restaurant – now also defunct. Did George ever make it to the pyramids, we briefly ponder.

The Shildon Wagon Works – the Shops – grew out of the S&DR to become the town's lifeblood, in its heyday the largest wagon-building centre in the world and described as "the jewel in the crown" of British Rail Engineering Ltd (BREL), just before it was shut in 1984 with the loss of some 2,500 jobs.

The *Locomotion No. 1* replica on the Weardale Railway

The *Flying Scotsman* at the Locomotion National Railway Museum

GRAEME WATT ON BEHALF OF S&DR200

We find the George Samuel Brewery Canteen Bar & Kitchen residing inconspicuously in the space where generations of those workers enjoyed their 'bait' with past scenes recorded in black and white photographs. We also find a pint of smooth, blond ale Locomotion No 1 (4 per cent ABV) along with a warm Shildon welcome.

The brewery is something of a shining light that sprang from the dense dark of Covid-19. In 2015, owners Andrew and Laura Ferriman had left the Duke of Wellington in Welbury, North Yorkshire – a pub they kept for 11 years and where the former also brewed. Returning home to Spennymoor, Andrew brewed on a 2.5bbl kit before joining Black Storm, creating a new range, prior to becoming head brewer with Play Brew in Middlesbrough. But he yearned for his own brewery. Then serendipity knocked – he found Unit 3

Andrew and Laura Ferriman provide top-notch food and brews at the George Samuel Brewery Canteen Bar & Kitchen

in Norland House. An inauspicious building, once Wagon Works offices, nowadays a business centre – a CB radio specialist is a neighbour!

Ready with an 8bbl kit they found on eBay, on the very brink of the UK's lockdown they received the keys to the brewery's new home and faced a formidable challenge.

Andrew said: "It was a gruelling project as the unit is a historic railway building which once housed the canteen for Shildon railway works. It was in quite a dilapidated state requiring a lot of work, but we wanted a home with some character rather than a standard industrial unit." Well, they certainly got that.

'George Samuel is a name which smacks of the Victorian railway age, but is the middle names of sons Thomas and James'

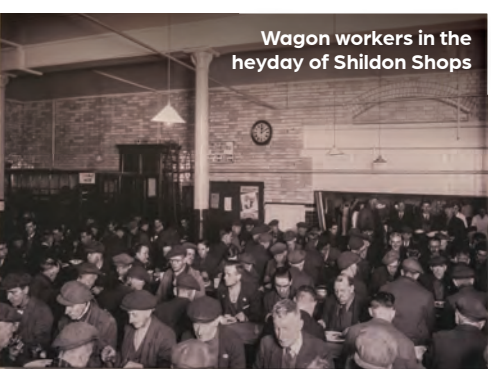
Months of work saw a major transformation of the space into the smart-looking bar and kitchen which will welcome visitors seeking beer and food during the rail bicentenary celebrations. Thousands are expected to visit Locomotion throughout the year, but just how many will reach the brewery is uncertain, as many of the events are happening in Darlington and Stockton. "If there had been a cavalcade like 1975, then it would be a different story. But we do have help which can be called upon if required."

However, Andrew does hope to create the brewery's own event with a beer festival in July "if the council approves our plan". At the time of writing, he is frustrated after many attempts to discuss funding with Darlington Borough Council: "They are not returning any of my calls or emails. So, unfortunately, having crunched the numbers, without the funding it wouldn't be economically viable to stage the festival."

Running festivals before, he knows well they can lose money.

George Samuel is a name which smacks strongly of the Victorian railway age, but is coined from the middle names of sons Thomas and James. A rebrand, from local designer Lemon Top, created a new logo based on a locomotive wheel. ☞

DAVID YOULL



Wagon workers in the heyday of Shildon Shops

Andrew brews a range of traditional and craft beer named after Shildon's rail heritage

Having survived the pandemic pub closures with sales of bags and bottles, these days, Andrew single-handedly brews a range of cask and craft beers, from pale ales and hazy IPAs to traditional porters and flavoured stouts. With many named to reflect the North East's industrial heritage, accolades aplenty have come his way. He now supplies pubs as far south as Doncaster and northwards to Alnwick, brewing every two weeks or so split between cask, kegs and bottles. The brewery's bottle range is sold nationally.

Alongside the brewery and the four-handpull bar, Laura runs the catering, her comprehensive full English something the Shops' lads would no doubt have eagerly devoured. They might have been pretty keen on the ale, too. The Wagon Works men built up fearsome thirsts and similar reputations, known, putting it politely, as a rumbustious lot "not famous for tolerance or sobriety" it was recorded.

A typical tale from the archives, supplied by veteran North East journalist Mike Amos from his *All Change: The years that rocked the Cradle of the Railways* book on Shildon records one night in a town pub: "On this occasion a passer-by heard what he supposed to be a riot within, looked through the window and saw in progress a curious sort of gambling game centred upon whose pocket watch would keep going longest when dipped into a hot frying pan." Another chronicler said: "What percentage of the family income got beyond the walls of the Globe is questionable."

Well, life was harsh, amusement needed and there was a host of pubs. Since the Shops' closure with a town population now around 9,500 – many of those have joined the forsaken masons. The George Samuel then is a very welcome addition to the beer scene. Richard Skilton, 65, started work as a Shops apprentice and is still among the Canteen regulars. He said: "I meet up with old mates here, and we really enjoy being in the place."

The ales have established an impressive pedigree. Last year Chocolate Honeycomb Milk Stout (5.2 per cent) was overall winner at the Liverpool Beer Festival, held in the Catholic Cathedral Crypt and was the first to sell out. A once popular style, but with his own interpretation, Andrew is reluctant to share it secrets: "I don't want to give too much away regarding the brew. It's all British malts, including Maris Otter, Chocolate and Crystal malts. With lactose for sweetness."

'Laura runs the catering, her comprehensive full English something the Shops' lads would no doubt have eagerly devoured'

There's a raft of other brews he has created: Harvey Porter (5.2 per cent), a strong porter named for a local coal seam; Terminus IPA (5.5 per cent), a British-style IPA – would have been ideal for the ill-fated Cairo maybe; Leaves On The Line (4.2 per cent); Coal Drops Stout (4.2 per cent), a full-bodied session stout; the dry-hopped Snowplough American wheat beer (4.2 per cent); Firebox (4.5 per cent), a copper session ale; and Travelling Light (4.5 per cent), a premium blond.

For the bicentenary, beer festival or not, Andrew has worked on new brews to mark the milestone. Hope (5 per cent) is named after an early loco from George Stephenson's son, Robert, and brewed with wheat, flaked barley and oats, then dry hopped with Citra, Mosaic and Amarillo hops. Black Diamond (4.5 per cent) – another Robert loco – will be a full-bodied stout brewed with British

DAVID YOULL

The Canteen Bar & Kitchen sits within the building that was once the canteen for the railway workers Inset: George Samuel logo is based on a locomotive wheel

'Clubs were born from industrialisation, originally to help the working man "improve" themselves – and keep them out of the pub'

Maris Otter, oats, flaked barley and Cara malt, subtly hopped with Nugget hops. Unfined New Shildon Bitter (4.2 per cent) will be put into keg. Plenty then for that bicentenary toast.

Only a short stroll from George Samuel is the Shildon Railway Institute, another world first, set up to benefit rail workers. Only eight years junior, the club grew up with the S&DR. Revered locomotive engineer Timothy Hackworth was the inaugural president. Officially a Methodist teetotaller, he nevertheless had a pub named for him.

Here we find just one handpulled ale but it's a good 'un: Consett Ale Works White Hot (4 per cent), brewed at the back of the splendid Grey Horse in tribute to the steel-industry heritage of North West Durham, it's a pale blond ale with a citrus, bitter finish that would have slayed any furnace thirst. Clubs were born from the 19th-century industrialisation, originally aimed to help the working man 'improve' themselves – and keep them out of the pub, they thought. Like pubs, in recent years, many clubs have shut, but Shildon author and chairman Dave Reynolds keeps the flame alive here as a community benefit society.

There's enthusiastic support for both the Locomotion and the celebrations, including a Bicentenary Variety Concert in November. Visitors will get a very decent pint and that warm Shildon welcome.

Steve Hobman is a beer writer and founder of Beer Tours UK. **beertoursuk.com**

Next stop...

- Durham CAMRA is working with Friends of the S&DR on a guide for pubs within easy walking of stations on the line. Two of those for Bishop Auckland are the **Green Tree** just over the station bridge, and **Pollards** a short walk away serving five ales.

- In Darlington, where events will be centred on the Hopetown museum, there's plenty to check out. A short walk will take you to the **Railway Tavern Inn**, Northgate, Grade II listed and said to be the first railway hotel in the world. It's not far from the **Darlington Snooker Club** and the six-pump **Half Moon**. In town the **Quakerhouse** is a gem in Mechanics' Yard, with its own microbrewery. Round the corner you will find **Number Twenty 2**, with six handpulls.

- In Stockton there's the modern **Hope & Union** in Silver Street. Just off the High Street is the traditional **Sun**. Here you will find 'banked Bass' – a way of serving peculiar to the North East with a big foaming head. When Teesside still had workers, umpteen banked pints were prepared for the 4.30pm rush. These days, you can witness the *Stockton Flyer*, an automated kinetic depiction of *Locomotion No 1*, kicking off daily at 1pm with hooting and steaming.

- In Yarm there's the **George & Dragon** in the High Street, sporting four handpulls and a plaque recording it hosted the first meeting of the S&DR in 1820. Nearby is the Grade II listed, former ticket office **Union Arms**, which is now a Greene King sports house with ales.

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LIGHTS, CAMRA, ACTION!

CAMRA is making a film series about community-owned pubs

CAMRA is partnering with Plunkett UK to produce a new three-part documentary film series celebrating communities which have banded together to save much-loved pubs for its Learn & Discover platform.

The series will highlight the stages and challenges faced by campaigning groups, shedding light on the process of securing and running a community pub. CAMRA hopes the documentaries will encourage people to see community ownership as a viable option for their local.

The film's production team of Katie Greenhalf (*pictured right, on left*) and Rachel Auty (*right*) have documented the highs and lows of groups that have fought to save the Travellers Rest in Skeeby, North Yorkshire, the Antwerp Arms in Tottenham, London, and Yr Heliwr in Nefyn, Wales.

CAMRA's Alex Metcalfe said: "Following the success of CAMRA's award-winning documentary, *Desi: A Pub Story*, I cannot wait for the next addition to the exciting library of Learn & Discover content.

"Pubs are more than a place to enjoy cask beer and real cider and perry, they are social hubs for the local community, bringing people together to help tackle loneliness and social isolation.

"Once a pub is gone, they never come back. The effort volunteers put in to save their locals from closure, to bring a pub into community ownership, should be put into the spotlight. Viewers will enjoy learning more about community-owned pubs and all the trials involved in keeping them alive, from organising fundraising activities to forming a community group.

"With a huge catalogue of entertaining videos, engaging articles and audio clips about beer, cider and perry, plus the pubs and clubs which serve them, CAMRA's award-winning educational platform Learn & Discover is the perfect place for this new project."

Plunkett UK chief executive James Alcock added: "As a national charity supporting people in rural areas to set up and run a wide range of businesses in community ownership, Plunkett UK is delighted to be partnering with CAMRA on this important documentary series that highlights the important role community pubs have to play.

"Pubs are more than a place to enjoy cask beer and real cider and perry, they are social hubs for the local community"

"At Plunkett, we see time and time again how crucial it is to save local assets such as village pubs from closure. When such businesses close, they leave people without access to vital supplies and services, and increase the risk of isolation.

"By transforming them into community businesses, we know they can be truly inclusive and benefit everyone who lives and works there. They are highly effective at acting as multi-service hubs that proactively reach out to support those most vulnerable in a rural community, tackling issues of poverty, isolation and loneliness."

Learn & Discover is CAMRA's award-winning educational platform, home to a large library of guides, articles, videos and audio material from esteemed writers, educators and industry experts, exploring everything there is to know about beer, cider, perry, social clubs and pubs.

COUNTING ON INVENTORIES

Dave Pickersgill looks at what makes a pub eligible for Local or National Inventory status

Local Inventories (LI) are the lowest tier in our structured statement of national pub-preservation priorities. Above LI is the National Inventory (NI), which identifies the country's best-preserved historic pub interiors, graded in three tiers (Three, Two and One Star).

Many pub interiors have been changed too much to qualify for the NI but retain parts of their traditional planform or some historic features. Such fragments are of heritage interest and deserve recognition, and respect.

In addition, many pubs retain much of their original exterior despite major changes to their interior. They may, for example, have original brickwork, entrance doors, plasterwork, stained windows and tiling.

LIs are therefore being developed to raise awareness of these pubs. They are driven by branches, with the Pub Heritage Group (PHG) maintaining an arm's length oversight and setting the inclusion criteria.

As with the NI, the cut-off point for LI pubs is 50 years: the interior must contain some elements that originated before that date. However, while NI pubs are expected to retain significant elements that are more than 50 years old, with LI listings, that criterion is more relaxed and a few features will suffice. Some examples of LI pubs are illustrated here.

The PHG would like to see all CAMRA branches working to create local inventories, which:

- increase our heritage knowledge of pubs and clubs
- lead to proposals for additions to the national pub heritage listings
- increase the number, and quality, of local heritage articles and publications – this could be as quick and simple as additions to our pub listings; it could be detailed publications like flyers, leaflets and books; such additions to pub listings will grow into detailed heritage books
- increase interest in the heritage aspects of pubs and clubs.

Several branches have now developed LIs while others have started theirs. As information arrives, we're adding links to local listings in the Historic Pubs Interiors section on the CAMRA Experience: **camra.org.uk/heritage-pubs/local-inventories-19**, where there is also LI criteria and other information.

Dave Pickersgill is pub heritage officer for Sheffield and District CAMRA. He was a CAMRA Campaigner of the Year 2025 runner-up.

Doctor Duncan's, Liverpool

Doctor Duncan's, Liverpool
Grade II listed, Doctor Duncan's occupies the former Pearl Assurance Building, now known as St John's House. This was designed by local architect Alfred Waterhouse and constructed during 1896-98. After going through many incarnations, it was opened as a pub in 1988 by Cains brewery, which named it after William Henry Duncan, the UK's first medical health officer, a native of the city, hence inclusion of an authentic Victorian pharmacy cabinet. Shortly after opening, the pub received a high commendation in the best refurbishment category of the CAMRA/English Heritage Pub Design Awards. Judges declared the tiled bar to be "one of the most impressive rooms in any pub in the country".


Miners Arms, Hundall


Falcon, Nottingham

Rutland Arms, Sheffield


Steamboat, South Shields

'Cains brewery named it after William Henry Duncan, the UK's first medical health officer, hence inclusion of a Victorian pharmacy cabinet'

Falcon, Nottingham

The Falcon was opened by local brewery Shipstone's in 1853. In 1919, it was extensively altered including the addition of distinctive green-striped faience tiles and a fine porch. The pub has seen several managements, including Greenall's brewery and the Punch pubco. After a period of closure, it reopened in October 2013, thanks to the efforts of Anthony Hughes of the Lincoln Green brewery and Adrian and Tina Draper of the Fellows, Morton & Clayton pub.

Miners Arms, Hundall

Grade II listed Miners is a long-established, stone-built, traditional village pub. Originally Tennants/Whitbread, it came into private hands in the 1970s. In 1979, it was sympathetically renovated and enlarged with the left room, originally a private area, now with the bar fronting opened out, increasing the public space. Since then, little has altered. It is redolent of its time.

Rutland Arms, Sheffield

The Rutland was built by local brewery Gilmours, in 1936, on the site of its original 1902 build. It was opened up in 1952 and altered again in 1988. However, you can still discern the 1936 layout with the taproom and servery on the left and the lounge on the right. One original Gilmours window remains along with much art deco-style interior glasswork. The pub also has a very impressive tiled exterior.

Steamboat, South Shields

Grade II listed and known originally as the Locomotive Inn, this ex-Vaux pub opened in 1850. Its name changed in the late 1970s, and, in 2019, it extended into the next-door post office. The interior displays copious memorabilia including maritime artefacts.

'One Gilmours window remains along with much art deco-style interior glasswork. The pub also has an impressive, tiled exterior'

Are you hopeful for cask beer's future?

According to a research project for the trade paper the *Morning Advertiser* (*MA*), "There are shoots of hope with a handful of brands having a better time of it. And with initiatives and innovation coming from brewers to support the category there is scope (and hope) for some positive movement here in the coming few years." Are you hopeful, and what more could be done?

It makes me nervous! Does cask need "initiatives and innovation" or just better promotion? I worry that the *MA*'s idea of "initiatives" is things like fresh ale.
Ian Stamp

Cask ale will only survive if there is sufficient demand for it, and obviously, in places like Norwich, there still is. But with so many good-quality keg beers around, it may be hard to persuade new generations of drinkers that cask ale is what they want.
John Butler

I think the future for cask ale is difficult, mainly because of two factors: the much-improved quality of keg/craft beers alongside the difficulties in the hospitality sector labour market, making it more challenging to keep the more work-intensive cask ale. That said, there will always be room for cask ale specialists.
David Halliwell

I'm optimistic about cask as a whole.

Yes, it may become a smaller market as the big boys move away from it and into more profitable dispense methods.

I think a lot of people's perception of cask is driven by their first dreadfully kept pint of mid-range mass-produced cask in a badly managed pub.
Colin Hill

I'm hopeful because people are involved, and throughout history people have achieved great things.

The major threats remain as the burden of tax on pubs compared with cheap supermarket booze, coupled with punters not having so much money in their pockets; limited market access for non-global brewers; combined with the 'fresh ale' keg handpump hijack; and one we don't talk about so much – the appeal of the pub, while a haven for someone like me, is slow and not immediate, with perhaps lower instant stimulation for many in today's hyper-sensory world.
Graham McCarthy

I think cask ale, or real ale as I still prefer to call it, has a steady future. It is restrained by the number of pubcos all contracted to the big and medium brewers with no space for the microbrewer to grow. So, our position will depend on how many freehouses survive as an overall percentage.
David Lloyd

ALAMY

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
Send your thoughts to wb.editor@camra.org.uk

All comments are taken from a discussion on CAMRA's online forum at discourse.camra.org.uk


"With so many good-quality keg beers around, it may be hard to persuade new generations of drinkers that cask ale is what they want"

Southern Belles

Des heads to Sussex to sample beers from the new breweries opening up in the coastal county

My quest for bottle shops with a good regional range has taken me to Sussex. The region's various attractive towns on or close to the sea have become a refuge in recent years for young professionals escaping London, and this evolving population, alongside an established pub scene, is fertile ground for new breweries. Bottle & Jug Dept in Worthing (bottleandjugdept.co.uk), a neat little shop and home-delivery service opened in 2018 by former food writer Tom Flint, stocks the best of them. All beers reviewed below are unfiltered, unpasteurised and canned.

Former cuckoo Beak added its own brewery in Lewes in 2000. It's since proved itself a worthy neighbour of the almighty Harvey's, its range including scrupulous versions of European classics. One such is **Déšť Pils** (5 per cent ABV), an exquisitely balanced and thoroughly drinkable Czech-style pale lager with grassy noble hop, grain and light toffee aromas, a crisp but creamy and very lightly sweet palate with notes of orange, lemon and green herb, and a decently bitter finish that's finally powdery dry. The name, pronounced something like *dayshtyuh*, means rain.

I've wanted to feature a low-alcohol beer here for a while and Bottle & Jug offers a good choice. Merakai's **This is a Thirst Trap** (0.5 per cent) is from another former cuckoo that took over the old Abyss site at Framfield

ALAMY

near Uckfield in 2020. It's a contemporary hazy pale ale with plenty of tropical fruit notes from Mosaic and Citra hops and added mango, but not too sweet or thin (a flaw I often find in low-alcohol options), with a lingering piny finish. My sample would benefit from a more persistent head, though.

Lost Pier tips its hat to Brighton's ruined West Pier but only finally gained its own brewery in the city last year after cuckoo brewing since 2017. Brewer Dan Gale and his other co-founders are from a wine background, but **Beach** (4 per cent) is a great example of a straightforward well-made session IPA. With a pillowy soft texture supporting complex notes of citrus, seedy passion fruit, mango and pine, and a decent slightly earthy bitterness, it's a refreshing delight worthy of its name.

Much-loved Brighton pub the Hand in Hand claims to house the world's smallest tower brewery, installed in 1989 as Kemptown brewery. Jennifer and Clark Left took over in 2016 under the Hand name, adding a bigger production site in Worthing in 2020. Unsurprisingly, they brew traditional as well as contemporary styles, like deep amber best bitter **Bird** (4.2 per cent). This malty, toasty beer has plenty of roast hazelnut biscuit and toffee alongside softer malt and orange peel, with a pleasant throb of classic East Kent Golding and Fuggle hops on the finish.

I'm rarely a fan of strong-flavoured stouts, but UnBarred's **Stoutzilla** (10 per cent) uses coffee, cocoa, vanilla and ex-bourbon casks with admirable restraint. There's room for rich, roasted malt alongside bitter chocolate praline, light coffee and a fruity-malty note more reminiscent of rum than bourbon, with oak on the finish. Jordan Mower started the brewery as a home operation in Hove in 2014 and, since taking over Brighton's former Holler brewery in 2019, has become one of England's most interesting and consistent new producers.

Des de Moor is one of the country's leading writers on bottled beer, and author of *Cask: The real story of Britain's unique beer culture*. Follow him at **@desdemoor** and read more from him at **desdemoor.co.uk**

YOUR SHOUT

Write to *BEER*, CAMRA 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 4LW
or email editor@camra.org.uk

Replying to Roger Protz's article on brewing museums (*BEER*, summer), I worked at Webster's in Halifax, Ruddles in Langham, and Boddingtons in Manchester, and the only one where I saw any equipment worthy of keeping was at the last. When it was closing, I contacted the Institute of Brewing, but nobody was interested in any of the equipment.

When I was at Boddingtons, Whitbread was closing its offices in Luton/Dunstable and I arranged for a mash tun that was in its reception to be displayed in the offices at Boddingtons.

Finally, I inspected the archives at the University of Glasgow for brewing records of the Heineken site in Manchester where I worked, which had some fantastic records, but again no appetite for building on any heritage. I tried!

Andy McKnight, by email

I enjoyed Roger Protz's (*BEER*, summer) piece on brewing museums. Did you know that Hertford, until very recently, had a very good McMullen museum, full of weird implements but very well explained?

The access was through Sainsbury's café. Surprise bonus with a cup of tea. I suppose when the café closed, the museum went, too. Shame!

Dan O'Hara, by email

Just a quick note to say how much I have enjoyed the 'social' articles in *BEER*. In the latest this was about music, in previous issues it covered pubs on housing estates and at lunchtimes before that.

While I have some interest in the drink-related articles, it's the articles exploring the wider societal benefits of pubs and drinking that I've really enjoyed. Keep up the good work.

Andy Beverley, by email

I was moved to share this by your articles about British beer abroad, full pints and the brewer in mid-Wales from Spain (*BEER*, winter and spring).

My wife and I toured northern Spain last summer and found many good craft beer bars, a couple

selling English-style real ale on handpumps. One was in San Sebastian. It was served in a 'pint' (500ml) soft plastic glass as most drinkers were going outside into the sun. It was modelled on an old-style bitter, so the flavour was passable if a bit sweet.

The 'pint', however, was a good third froth. While cracking on about English beer, I observed part of the tradition would be to have the beer nearly to the top. The barman's response was, "Yes, but you are in Spain now!" We will put that one down to experience...

Roger Kennington, Newcastle upon Tyne

In 1972 I was in a pub in Barcombe, East Sussex, when a man asked for a pint of Red Barrel.

Landlady May said: "Sorry, we don't serve that."

"Then why do you have an illuminated Red Barrel sign outside?" demanded the thirsty customer.

"Oh. That's just advertising," replied May. Bless her.

Bruce Mackay, by email

It was surprising to read Dick Morgan's statement that "a well-run pub is very much a middle-class place". Perhaps he needs to visit more pubs outside London and the South East. A visit to any Wetherspoon would show him cheap beer outside Tesco. In fact, most pubs serve beer much cheaper than London prices!

It sounds like he would get on well with chef Tom Kerridge, who seems to think that anything served in his expensive restaurant counts as 'pub grub' simply because the place is attached to a pub.

James Spriggs, Cannock, Staffordshire

Pubs are forever

Comedian Rajiv Karia talks stand-up shows, the Edinburgh Fringe, radio and TV, and pub carpets

A lot of my origin story in comedy comes from a pub I worked at in Harrow where I started running my first open-mic night. I was 21, I was at uni and I worked there when I was back home in the holidays. I booked Phil Wang, Ahir Shah, Rhys James and Mat Ewins, quite a decent bunch of people that have all gone on to do good stuff. It was good fun, and it was on home turf.

I grew up in Hillingdon, but if you ask anyone who grew up between Harrow, Watford or Uxbridge about Trinity Bar, they'd all be like, "I know that place". It's an institutional kind of late-night pub. There's still a handful of them dotted around London like the George Tavern in Stepney or quite a few spots in Camden that are tied to the live-music scene and are really important for locals and late-night pubbing, rather than being drowned out in a club.

After uni I just kept going. I did the Edinburgh Fringe a few more times in a group called Fish Finger Fridays, and what I'm doing this year is my second solo hour, *Man Alive!*, at the Pleasance Courtyard. It's about getting married, a growing disdain of lime bikes and how uncles should be your biggest role models.

My first show, *Gallivant*, was at the same theatre and went really well; it was a dream debut to be honest. I proposed during that Fringe because my wife and I met in Edinburgh. We got married the year after, but not in Edinburgh. We didn't want to put everyone through the additional transport.

In the last couple of years, I've worked on a lot of radio and TV comedy like *The Now Show*, *The News Quiz* and *Dead Ringers* on Radio 4, which is really fun. When you move into the world of writing for other people, especially topical shows, you've got about a day to write stuff as it's recorded the next day and goes out the day after that. Stand-up is so much fun but you only write for your own voice. Writing for different people makes you more efficient.

"Pubs are the office. You can map the cities you're working in by the pubs in it"

But if you're trying to get into stand-up comedy and you're allergic to the carpets of pubs, it's never gonna happen. Pubs are the office. You can map the cities you're working in by the pubs in it. They almost have to become your de facto living room, especially when you're running around trying to do as many gigs as possible.

You get to the pub, have a quick meal, sit in the corner working over your notes, rush upstairs, sit in the audience, watch the show, do your set and have a pint with the other comics before you have to catch the train. Then tomorrow you do it all over again. Comedy clubs will come and go, but pubs are forever.

CAMRA

WHAT'S BREWING

AUTUMN 2025

CAMPAIGNS, NEWS AND VIEWS

Closures to rise to one a day

● Tough times as pub closures expected to rise

THE beer and pub industry will face huge economic pressures over the next 12 months as closures are expected to rise to one a day, according the British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA).

The industry body, which represents more than 20,000 pubs, estimated 378 of them will close this year across England, Wales and Scotland, which would mean 5,600 direct job losses.

The BBPA claimed government can help by overhauling business rates for brewers and pubs, as they are one of the most highly taxed sectors.

The trade association said reducing the cumulative tax and regulatory burden would help more pubs stay open, leading to more investment and jobs while also protecting spaces that, for many, are the only places left to gather.

BBPA chief executive officer Emma McClarkin said: "Pubs are trading well but most of the money that goes into the till goes straight back out in bills and taxes. For many it's impossible to make a profit which all too often leads to pubs turning off the lights for the last time.

"When a pub closes it puts people out of a job, deprives communities of their heart and soul, and hurts the local economy."

The BBPA warned the rising pub closures will have a further impact on those in the supply chain, including farmers, brewers and other industries which form part of the under-pressure sector's wider ecosystem.

Campaign's fresh attack on handpump hijack

CAMRA has renewed calls for Carlsberg to stop selling imitation cask beer, one year on from its Fresh Ale launch. The Campaign has accused the global drinks producer of damaging the reputation of cask beer by hijacking traditional handpulls to sell its imitation Fresh Ale.

The Fresh Ale concept sees kegged beer served through handpulls masquerading as cask beer.

Recent reports claim Fresh Ale sales have been growing steadily. CAMRA does not see this will "reinvigorate the popularity of cask" but will instead mislead consumers and remove cask beer from bars.

CAMRA has complained to Trading Standards about the range, maintaining it qualifies as misleading dispense. The Campaign is calling on the government to step in and is urging Trading Standards departments across the UK to prevent pubgoers from being duped into buying Fresh Ale.

CAMRA chairman Ash Corbett-Collins said: "Enjoying a pint of cracking cask beer from your local pub is one of life's great pleasures. Our tradition of enjoying great cask beer is under threat from Carlsberg's plan to keep rolling out its Fresh Ale.

"Instead of being honest about the new kegged beers, Carlsberg is undermining centuries of British tradition and misleading punters into thinking they are ordering cask beer."

New direction for low-alcohol beers

● Push to raise alcohol-free drinks threshold

THE government's newly published NHS 10-year plan includes measures to address alcohol-related harm, focusing on health warnings on alcohol and a consultation on the definition of "alcohol-free".

It is also committing to nutrition labelling for alcoholic beverages.

Portman Group chief executive Matt Lambert said: "We do not believe there is a case for wider health warning labels which may be disproportionate when overall alcohol consumption is falling and the majority of people already drink within the chief medical officer's low-risk guidance.

"We welcome the chance to work with government to clear up consumer confusion around product descriptors, including raising the alcohol-free threshold in line with our international peers."

Alcohol-free beer is seeing record sales as it continues to rise in popularity, according to producer Lucky Saint.

Founder Luke Boase said: "As more people consciously choose to drink less alcohol, alcohol-free drinks are playing a major role in positively impacting the health of our nation."

Campaign backs Women in Beer awards

CAMRA is backing the Women in Beer group by supporting its awards.

With only 23 per cent of management roles in craft beer being females, representation for the many women who work in the beer industry is essential.

The mission for Women in Beer in organising these awards is creating role models and showing young women a career in beer can be something for them too.

Sponsoring the Women in Beer 2025 – Industry Icon awards, CAMRA vice chair Gillian Hough said: "Celebrating and congratulating those nominated for the Women in Beer Awards is something really special and close to my heart.

"From managers, directors, consultants, owners, writers, teachers, journalists, judges and campaigners, women are no longer 'just' a part of the industry – they are swaying opinion and driving trends as industry influencers.

"At CAMRA, we are proud to support and champion what the Women in Beer Awards stand for and welcome greater diversity across the beer and pub industry. To every nominee and winner, thank you for inspiring the next generation."

With 10 categories, the awards are open to anyone who identifies as a woman and includes those working professionally, independently, or as a volunteer. Taking place in London on 28 October, the awards aim to become an annual highlight for the industry and welcomes everyone connected to beer, whatever their gender.

Brewer's Budget plea to chancellor

GREENE King has unveiled policy proposals on business rates that could unlock millions of pounds to drive growth through investment in the UK.

In a new report, the pubco and brewer lays bare the growing financial challenges facing pubs – from escalating National Insurance contributions to unsustainable business rates – which are limiting the sector's ability to invest in communities.

Five months before the chancellor delivers her Budget, Greene King is calling for an overhaul of business rates as a priority, to create a fairer system.

With a business rates bill of almost £60m across its close to 1,500 managed pubs in England, Greene King is asking the chancellor to introduce a specific, lower business rates multiplier for all pubs at the Autumn Budget, giving them a 20p discount on their current rate. This change would deliver immediate relief for the whole sector in England in the next financial year.

For Greene King, it could realise £13.7m in immediate annual savings. Across its managed pub estate, this equates to £10,000 per pub.

Nationally, the 39,989 pubs in England and Wales account for just 0.4 per cent of business turnover but pay 2.1 per cent of the national business rates bill.

Musical twist to tasting notes

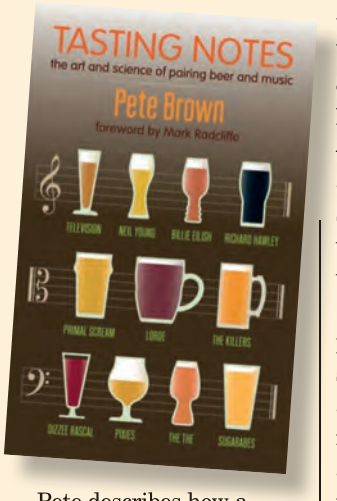
● Latest CAMRA book pairs beer and music

SCIENTISTS understand less about how we hear music than they do about the birth of the universe, but a new book by beer writer Pete Brown is set to accelerate that understanding, simply by going to the pub.

Tasting Notes: The art and science of pairing beer and music, published by CAMRA, stems from a fun event above a pub that turned out to be an accidental cornerstone of one of the latest areas of neuroscientific research.

Pete combines popular science with a music fan's perspective to explain how our senses work, we appreciate flavour, music, and the world around us. He shows our senses interact in ways we don't even realise and proves how you can alter the way your beer tastes by changing the music around you.

Across 45 beer-and-song pairings, Pete's experimental journey continues with genres covering rock, grime, jazz, alt pop, country, folk rock, electronic and progressive trance, with songs from Primal Scream, Joy Division and more matched with an eclectic list of beers.



Pete describes how a professor of neuroscience approached him after one of his beer-and-music events and explained that the talk covered similar ground to experiments already underway at Oxford University. The experiments were exploring how senses affect each other – how colour or shape affects our perception of sweetness, or much of what we hear is influenced by what we can see.

Pete said: "To be fair, pairing music and beer sounds like a bit of a joke and it started off as one. But realising I'd stumbled across something serious, I read academic papers and started to learn about retro-nasal olfaction and cross-modal correspondences.

The book is £16.99 from shop1.camra.org.uk

Drinkers get Indie Beer message

DO you know where your beer is brewed? New research shows almost a third (31 per cent) of young beer drinkers surveyed now recognise the Indie Beer campaign, which aims to promote beer from independent brewers.

The YouGov research of more than 2,000 consumers, commissioned by the Society of Independent Brewers and Associates (SIBA), found 18-24 year olds were much more likely (31 per cent) to be aware of the campaign compared to just over one in 10 of beer drinkers nationally.

Indie Beer campaign organiser Neil Walker said: "What this research clearly shows is that the Indie Beer campaign is resonating with younger consumers, many of whom are drinking less but better – choosing quality beers from local, independent breweries."

A key part of the Indie Beer campaign has been to use social media and pub point of sale to promote a brewery checker tool which allows people to quickly check any brewery to find out if it is genuinely independent or owned by a global beer company.

All under-threat locals need help not just heritage pubs

THE Campaign has welcomed the new UK government heritage revival scheme.

CAMRA's Pub Heritage Group chair Paul Ainsworth said: "CAMRA warmly welcomes this new fund which will help communities bid for money to breathe new life into closed, derelict or at-risk heritage pubs. We believe that pubs in nationally important buildings, or with historic interiors, need to be protected both as buildings, but also as thriving pubs acting as the beating heart of communities today.

"The government also needs to provide funding to save under-threat locals that aren't classed as heritage pubs. There are more than 200 community-owned pubs in the country, where previously struggling pubs have been taken over and run for the people, by the people.

"Since the community ownership fund closed last year, no such support has been available."

FEATURE

Makeover marvels revealed

● Initiative transforms three independent pubs

AIRBNB has revealed the major renovations to rooms above three independent, rural pubs secured in a new initiative with CAMRA.

Almost a quarter of Airbnb customers want to explore more of the UK and new guest rooms will allow these pubs to now welcome staycationers, diversifying income streams as well as boosting the local economy.

With a 6.7 per cent increase in pub closures, particularly in the South West and East Midlands where 37 shut last year, the partnership between Airbnb and CAMRA to refurbish and list rooms in these pubs is timely. The three pubs now join the more than 350 British pubs already listed on Airbnb that are helping towns and businesses benefit from more overnight guests.

Airbnb UK's Luke Impett said: "Pubs are the beating heart of any community and play a vital role in sustaining local economies. We're proud to support the industry by breathing new life into these three unique, independent pubs that are so loved by their communities, helping them to welcome more guests and ultimately put more cash behind the bar. We know travellers want to explore more of the UK's rural gems and unique stays like these on Airbnb provide the perfect base."

CAMRA pub and club campaigns director Gary Timmins said: "We are delighted to see the results of this partnership with Airbnb that has put independent pubs and the value they bring their local community into the spotlight. The addition of such striking guest rooms not only helps through investment into preserving the use of these important community landmarks as working pubs but also enriches the UK's hospitality landscape by offering locals and visitors alike distinctive and immersive experiences."

The pubs were selected by judges including chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Dame Caroline Dinenage and chair of the Hospitality and Tourism All Party Parliamentary Group Chris Webb MP.

Dame Caroline said: "The Airbnb and CAMRA initiative will help holidaymakers discover a new way to explore British towns that they may not have previously considered. Pubs are at the heart of communities across the UK and this initiative is an example of how we can think differently about their dynamic role in supporting local economies and driving sustainable tourism."

Swan Inn, Milton, Derbyshire

SINCE taking the reins in 2021, White Swan landlord Olly Way has transformed the traditional village pub into a welcoming haven for visitors. The newly renovated guest room is richly adorned with traditional Balmoral tartan and a striking green colour-washed ceiling.

Olly's vision is that these rooms will help him open the doors to the Swan even wider, inviting guests from around the globe to experience the charm of Derbyshire. Located near the Anchor Caves and Foremark Reservoir, the Swan is perfectly placed for guests to explore the natural beauty of the countryside.

This welcoming inn not only stands as a testament to Derbyshire's tradition and beauty but also fosters a sense of discovery and connection among visitors from all walks of life.

Oliver said: "I got the keys to the Swan Inn at 12pm on Friday the 13th and opened for business at 4pm the same day – from the outset, it has been full steam ahead! Unfortunately, like many others, our pub has faced challenges in the current economic climate. Despite our passion for welcoming everyone to this little slice of countryside heaven, we had to make the tough decision to close the pub one day a week to manage costs. With Airbnb's incredible renovation, we hope that we'll be able to scrap this and welcome guests from far and wide, no matter the day."

Townhouse, Lymington, Hampshire

SINCE taking over the Townhouse more than two years ago, owner Dave King has ensured the suntrap courtyard and live music events are at the centre of Lymington's hospitality scene. Faced with a slightly run-down space upstairs, Dave saw the potential of this makeover to help him channel his experience in hospitality into providing a perfect experience for overnight guests.

The two upstairs rooms have been transformed into contemporary guest suites, mirroring the pub's exposed brickwork and bright airy tones. Whether guests want to bike and sail or take scenic walks among the roaming horses scattered across the New Forest, the rooms at the Townhouse are the perfect retreat from the lively activities in this stunning harbour town.

Dave said: "I've worked in the hospitality industry for more than two decades and economically speaking, this January has been the toughest I've faced. Pubs need help, we need people to choose local and independent, so as a result of Airbnb's generous investment and expert mentoring, we really hope that people will do just that at the Townhouse. My son is only eight, but he wants nothing more than to manage a pub when he's older and I can't wait to show him the ropes as we enter what is set to be a busy spring thanks to this incredible renovation."

Thomas Tripp, Christchurch, Dorset

THE storied Thomas Tripp is a pub renowned for its local legacy, which friends and co-owners Dave Burns and Jason Giddings love to lean into – even featuring portraits of regulars dressed as seafaring smugglers around the bar. The pair put an added emphasis on community action, working with local charities and community projects including the Dorset Children's Foundation. Thinking about what's next for the pub, they saw the opportunity to turn their empty kitchen unit upstairs into a new offering for overnight guests, encouraging more travellers to explore local attractions such as Southbourne Beach.

The loft has now been transformed into a moody yet refined private space with a cosy cove for guests in the heart of Christchurch. This getaway lets guests dive into the South Coast's sea heritage, perfect for relaxing after paddleboarding on the River Stour or taking a ferry to Mudeford beach.

Dave and Jason said: "Like many pubs across the country, the Tripp is a pillar of the local community and has been for generations. While the entire industry is feeling the pinch, independents like ourselves have been particularly vulnerable, so Airbnb's investment is truly life changing. Not only do we hope to keep this a place that is special to locals, but now we want to help more tourists discover the gem that is Christchurch."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Solar-powered tills at pubco

● YOUNG'S has reported strong trading momentum in the first quarter of its financial year, driven by the warm weather in the last few months.

In a trading update prior to its AGM for the 14 weeks to 8 July 2025, the London and the South-East pubco said revenue was up 6.6 per cent and 7 per cent on last year.

"This performance has benefitted from long periods of warm and sunny weather during spring and early summer, supporting growth particularly in our beautiful gardens and riverside pubs," the company said.

Pubs rewarded at Plunkett awards

● THREE community pubs were among nine winners at Plunkett's 2025 Rural Community Business Awards.

A community which raised more than £350,000 to buy and reopen the Rising Sun, in Woodcroft in the Forest of Dean won Plunkett's Connecting the Community Award.

The Going Green Award went to the Locks Inn, Geldeston on the Norfolk/Suffolk border. The 16th-century, Grade II-listed George Community Pub, Wickham Market, Suffolk won the One to Watch award.

Ape hangs on after pub refurbishment

● AS one of the UK's few female master brewers, Jane Kershaw has achieved plenty in her career, but one of her proudest achievements dates back to when she was just 10 years old — designing the sign for Manchester's Ape and Apple pub (*right*).

Now, following a £400,000 refurbishment, that childhood artwork still hangs above the Holt's pub door as a quirky nod to the past amid the new marble-topped bars and a full top-to-bottom revamp.

"With the refurbishment complete, it's ready for a new chapter — whether you're here for the comedy, the cask ales, or just a great night out in the city," said Kershaw.

Founder Frank's special brew

● DORSET-BASED independent family brewer Hall and Woodhouse marked its Founder's Day on 8 June with a new limited-edition beer, Frank's Integrity.

The 7 per cent ABV refined and warming, bottle-conditioned chestnut ale is a tribute to former chairman Frank Woodhouse and is the third in a series of five Founder's Day beers which are being released annually in the countdown to the brewery's 250th anniversary in 2027.

Frank's Integrity, like other Founder's Day beers, will be available in 500ml bottles from Hall and Woodhouse pubs, the brewery shop and the Badger online store badgerbeers.com. It has an RRP of £4 per bottle.

Tributes paid to barley pioneer

● TRIBUTES have been paid following the death of barley pioneer and Scotland's first black professor Sir Geoff Palmer, at the age of 85.

Sir Geoff, a chancellor and professor emeritus at Heriot-Watt University, moved to the UK from Jamaica as a teenager and became a professor in 1989. Sir Geoff undertook world-leading research into barley malt and invented the industrial process of barley abrasion and pioneered the scanning electron microscope to study cereal grains.

Principal and vice-chancellor of Heriot-Watt University Professor Richard Williams said: "His infectious enthusiasm and passion for education was impossible to ignore and this university was all the richer for having such a strong association with him over the years."

Sir Geoff retired in 2005 but was made chancellor of Heriot-Watt in 2021. He was knighted in the 2014 New Year's Honours and in July 2024, he was recognised for his contribution to Scotland and installed in the Order of the Thistle.

He was a passionate advocate for the rights of black communities, Sir Geoff's legacy saw him invited by Edinburgh City Council to chair a review group looking at its colonial heritage.

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OPINION

Cider is not the villain...

IT'S a drink of craft, culture… and quiet revolution.

Recent coverage in the *Guardian* has rightly raised concerns about ultra-cheap, industrial cider.

However, it has overlooked something more important: an extraordinary cider renaissance that is quietly unfolding across the UK and beyond.

In our bottle shop and bar at That Beer Place in Chester, CAMRA's Cider and Perry Pub of the Year 2024, we see it every day. Cider made from nothing but apples, often rare, heritage varieties pressed and fermented with care and crafted with techniques that many winemakers would be proud of. The ciders we champion have more in common with natural wine than with the mass-produced drinks that cause so much public concern.

And therein lies the real story: cider is a drink of place, culture, biodiversity, and flavour. It deserves to be seen, tasted and celebrated as such.

Much of the industrial cider on our supermarket shelves contains as little as 35 per cent apple juice, often from concentrate, with the remainder made up of water, sugars, and flavourings. That's why it can be sold cheaper than pure apple juice.

In contrast, the small producers we work with craft their ciders from 100 per cent freshly pressed apples, no artificial sweeteners, no concentrates, no shortcuts. The price difference simply reflects the difference in quality and authenticity. Across the UK, a wave of talented cider makers is redefining what this drink can be. Using wild fermentation, heritage apples, and techniques like pét-nat, barrel-ageing and fractional blending, they are creating ciders of remarkable complexity and beauty.

Dale Lord (*pictured on left with wife Lisa*) is the co-owner of That Beer Place, CAMRA Cider and Perry Pub of the Year 2024. This article was originally written in response to a story in the *Guardian*

Makers like Ross-on-Wye, Little Pomona, Oliver's, Find and Foster, Wilding Cider, and many others are leading this quiet revolution. They are not the problem. They are the future.

Cider also has a vital role to play in our food culture and landscape. Many of these producers are helping to restore and protect ancient orchards, preserve biodiversity, and champion local food systems. Every bottle of real cider supports a living ecosystem and a community of skilled artisans.

Of course, there is a need to tackle harmful drinking and reform tax policies that allow large corporations to exploit loopholes. But let's not throw out the orchard with the apples. Good cider is a drink of heritage, community and joy.

So next time you raise a glass, seek out cider made with care. Visit your local pub or bottle shop that supports small producers. Look for names like Ross-on-Wye, Little Pomona, Oliver's, and many more. You'll not only be drinking something delicious, you'll be also helping to keep alive a tradition as old as Britain itself.

It's time we told a fuller story about cider, one that goes beyond problems and celebrates possibility.

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