

Winter 2025/2026

FREE

Pint Taken

Award Winning Worcestershire County CAMRA Magazine

In this issue

- Pub and Brewery News
- Local and National Awards
- A Malvern Trail
- Visits to Neighbouring Counties
- Meet the Brewer
- ...and lots more

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Editor's Introduction

I'm writing this amid all the usual fevered speculation that happens ahead of a budget where everyone has their own view on what will or won't be included. By the time this magazine is published it will have happened so you all know more than I currently do.

Hopefully, it will have included some measures to help our pubs and breweries, and also the hospitality industry as a whole because without them things do look bleak.

CAMRA isn't asking for handouts for pubs, instead we're looking for reductions in the overheads that they face on a day to day basis so they can at least keep their heads above water, ready to kick on once conditions are more favourable. The measures CAMRA would like to see are

- a reduction in VAT for food and drink in pubs
- Introduce a lower business rate for pubs
- rethink Employer NI contributions for pubs
- a drastic reduction of duty on draught beer to compete with supermarkets

I wonder how many of these were delivered?

If we needed any further evidence that pubs are an important part of communities the British Beer and Pubs Association has released a survey into how pubs help to combat loneliness, see page 14 for the results.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to provide feedback on our magazine and also those who have provided an article, such as the Bredon Beer Tour on page 26. If you have anything beer or pub related that you'd like to share please get in touch.

Finally, I hope you all have a very merry Christmas and can look forward to a happy New Year.

If you'd like to comment on anything within this magazine, or any other beer or CAMRA related issues, please get in touch

editor@pinttaken.org.uk Please include your name, even if you don't want it included as we can't publish anonymous comment.

Gez Quinn editor@pinttaken.org.uk

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The copy deadline for the Spring edition of *Pint Taken* is 26th January.

Cover photo: *The Hop Pole, Droitwich* by Andy Checketts Consultancy.

Pub and Brewery News

Pub News

For more details on pubs visit camra.org.uk/pubs

Fownd Brewery, of Kidderminster, opened their latest new bar, **Weavers of Bewdley**, on 14th November. Just around the corner from the top of the main street, past the church, it offers their own cask and craft ales, as well as some from other breweries. The picturesque Georgian town is already a popular destination for cask ale fans looking for interesting pubs offering quality beers to visit, and this is a welcome addition for visitors and pub tours.

In Stourport, the **Angel** offers a variety of beers including some very tasty ones from local BOA Brewery. The landlord is very keen on cask ales and keeps them in exceptional condition. The pub, by the side of the Severn, is found by walking past the canal locks and the imposing Tontine. It's well worth seeking out for the beers and wholesome tasty meals.

It was great to meet so many other CAMRA members at the most enjoyable Green Hop beer festival at the **Talbot** in Knightwick. There was an impressive array of 17 cask ales and three ciders available.

The **Millers Arms** in Pershore has reopened. It is a great community pub and highly recommended.

The superb **Bewdley Brewery Tap**, an entry in the *Good Beer Guide*, is now also open on Sundays to 6pm.

The **Bell** in Cropthorne has closed long term.

The **Eagle and Sun** at Hanbury Wharf has reopened after a major refurbishment which has seen the launch of a new menu alongside their carvery offering. The new licensees also run the Alma Tavern in Worcester.

The **Royal Oak** in Catshill has reopened, having been closed since the start of the year. After a major refurbishment, it is now a Christopher's Caribbean Carvery, serving Caribbean fusion food as well as traditional pub meals. Two cask ales are served.

The **Malvern Tavern** (formerly the Cross Keys) has now been opened on Belmont Road in Malvern by a father and son team who also own Link Wines.

The old Cross Keys closed and has reopened with a range of cask ales and keg beers, and will also be hosting the Friday Beer Co who will be brewing on site.

Brewery News

The big news from **Hop Shed Brewery** of Suckley is the redesign of all their pump clips and bottle labels along with a change to the bottle line up.



The new labels are stunning and include helpful information about the hops, especially important given the welcome increasing use of new British hop varieties. Also included is the hoppiness level, something I first noted in micro-breweries in the USA, which I found really helpful given the sometimes overwhelming choice.

The delicious Pale has gained a new name, Java





Pale, but the recipe has not changed and it still boasts a combination of three modern British hops. Leghorn blonde has been discontinued but Hoptical Illusion (my favourite) has proved so popular that it is now included in the core range. Bottled Redcap will be replaced by Buckeye Best Bitter, the chestnut best bitter which has been available on draught for a few years.

Finally, take advantage of the frequent food and drink evenings on Friday and Saturdays carrying on into December culminating in a New Eve's party.

Brew61 of Upton Warren near Bromsgrove were thrilled to hear that their Hop On, a hoppy IPA, has been awarded the Great Taste Award 2025.

Night Owl Brewery celebrated their 1st birthday at Crumpton Oaks near Malvern with their monthly Venison 'Beer, Burger & Band Day' featuring Flight pale ale, Forest bitter and the delicious Moonbather stout. The latter was booked for the Poole CAMRA beer festival so the word is getting out there.

The brewery's beers have also appeared locally at Weavers and The Brewers Arms in Malvern as well as the wonderful Three Kings at Hanley Castle. Once a local favourite cider venue it is seeing a welcome resurgence with a guest range of fresh ciders, much sought after by the local farmers and tourists given what this part of the country is famous for. Incidentally, venison is available in cuts direct from the brewery.

One of Worcestershire's best kept secrets, **Grinnbull Brewing** started brewing commercially in 2024 and is about as small as a nano brewery could be, currently producing 18 gallons per run. The family-run business is based on their farm in Ombersley where James' inspiration came as a child, watching grandad's home brew bubbling away. Now an adult and the head brewer, James went to Brewhouse and Kitchen in Bristol for a brewing experience day and then built a 30-litre home brew kit which grew over time to the setup he has today. The brewery's beers featured at CAMRA's successful Worcester Beer Festival in the summer and the Green Hop festival at Knightwick in October, as well as being regularly on sale at The Dragon and Oil Basin pubs in Worcester.

Brewery news is compiled by Neil Berry

To submit pub or brewery news go to pinttaken.org.uk/send-news



Regional CAMRA Awards

As reported in the autumn edition of *Pint Taken*, a number of pub and club awards have taken place celebrating venues that have gone the extra mile in serving their communities – and, of course, offering great beer from local brewers and cider from local producers. Several West Central CAMRA regional winners have also been recognised nationally, which is an amazing achievement.



The **Pelican** in Gloucester (pictured left) joined three other finalists in the National Pub of the Year competition: the **Volunteer Arms**, Musselburgh; the **Tamworth Tap**, Tamworth; and the **Blackfriars Tavern**, Great Yarmouth.

The **Carpenters Arms** near Stroud (pictured right) reached the last four in the National Cider Pub of the Year competition, alongside **That Beer Place**, Chester; the **Bull and Dragon**, Meeth in Devon; and the eventual winner, the **Blackfriars Tavern**, Great Yarmouth. The regional award was presented by Regional Cider Coordinator Andrea Bennett, who said:

“Since opening just before lockdown, Sammy has worked tirelessly to make a success of this 600-year-old pub that she saved from the hands of developers. Real cider has been in decline for many years, and it is terrific to see so many different choices available at The Carpenters Arms – all locally produced in Gloucestershire.”



The **Hartpury Heritage Trust** in Gloucestershire has won CAMRA's Pomona Award for playing a vital role in preserving the UK's perry heritage. Named after the Roman goddess of apples, the Pomona Award recognises people and groups who have made an outstanding contribution to the promotion of real



cider or perry – a key campaigning aim for CAMRA. Since 2006, the trust has planted and maintained the Hartpury Orchard Centre, home to the National Collection of Perry Pears and a collection of Gloucestershire apples, plums, and cherries. It now boasts more than 100 varieties of perry pear trees across 30 acres of orchards and wetlands.

“It was a total surprise and great honour to hear that Hartpury

Orchard Centre had been chosen by CAMRA to receive the Pomona Award this year,” said the trust’s Jim Chapman. He added: “I have always felt a close affinity for perry since I enjoyed my first glass in the 1960s, so I was delighted when I was asked to take over the National Collection at Malvern. Then, having inherited land in Hartpury, I established a second national collection – now grown to over 100 varieties – and the purpose-built Orchard Centre. Today, the centre is cared for by the village charity, Hartpury Heritage Trust.”

Jim is a well-known face at the Malvern Autumn Show, where rare perry pears are displayed each year.

Finally, the West Central CAMRA Regional Club of the Year, **Cheltenham Motor Club** (pictured opposite receiving their award) will go forward to the next round of the National Club of the Year competition, the results were due to be announced on 26th November at the Club Mirror Awards in Leicester.

Brett Laniosh, West Central CAMRA Regional Director



Worcestershire Pub of the Year

Worcestershire County CAMRA Pub of the Year 2025 has been awarded to **Fleece Inn**, Bretforton and was presented by Lloyd Evans, Chair of Shakespeare CAMRA.

The Fleece is a pub steeped in history, originally built in the early 15th century by a farmer named Byrd, the pub remained in the ownership of the same family until 1977. The last of the descendants was Miss Lola Taplin who bequeathed the pub to the National Trust when she died in 1977.

It remains largely unchanged, although it now serves delicious pub food and most famously pays homage to the locally grown vegetable Asparagus during May and June. This renowned National Trust village pub has also been identified by CAMRA as being one of Britain’s best Real Heritage



pubs whilst boasting roaring open fires in the winter months, apple orchards and garden to sit in and enjoy the atmosphere in the summer and a friendly welcome all year round.

Since 2009 It has won the Shakespeare CAMRA

Worcestershire area branch pub of the year on no less than nine occasions and has also received a long service certificate in recognition of Nigel’s twenty years stewardship of the Fleece.

The success of this pub has been built on continuous hard work, dedication, and attention to detail which all then go together in making the Fleece such a splendid community and regional asset. Bretforton is incredibly lucky indeed to have such a quality venue in the middle of the village, and our congratulations go to Nigel and his team for achieving such a tremendous and deserved accolade.

Lloyd Evans



Licensee Nigel Smith (left) receiving the award from Lloyd

Pub of the Season

Pub of the Season Summer

After a busy summer, members of Redditch & Bromsgrove CAMRA finally got together at the Hop Pole Inn in Bromsgrove to present Ian, Mandy and the team with the branch's Summer Pub of the Season Award!



A regular entry in the CAMRA *Good Beer Guide*, the Hop Pole serves an exclusive house beer named Hop Till You Drop, a pale ale brewed locally by Woodcote Brewing Co alongside three other real ales.

The pub is most famous for its live music and hosts an excellent line-up of bands every month. This summer, the pub commemorated forty years of Live Aid with its very own music festival to raise funds for The Basement Project - a local charity which provides a food bank and support for young people who are homeless or are facing homelessness. And for that added sense of community atmosphere, the pub are also proud sponsors of Bromsgrove Sporting Ladies FC.

Congratulations to both staff and supporters of the Hop Pole on winning this award, and long may their good work continue.

Pub of the Season Autumn

Redditch and Bromsgrove CAMRA have awarded their Autumn 2025 Pub of the Season to the Holly Bush, Belbroughton.

The roadside pub, located off the A491 between Hagley and the M5 junction, was purchased in 2025 by Daren and Jamie MacDonald, who have completely refurbished the building, including a full renovation of the cellar. The outside area has been extended, providing a pleasant space to enjoy a drink.

The award recognises the effort the brothers have made to maintain the essence of a true community pub, with hot

food and filled cobs always available, while still offering a welcoming place to simply enjoy a drink.

Since reopening, the regular cask ales have typically included Hobsons Town Crier, Enville Ale and Ginger, Three Tuns XXX, and Wye Valley Butty Bach. Daren and Jamie have also listened to their customers' recommendations, and as a result, the beer range has expanded to feature guest ales from Church End, Fixed Wheel, Holdens, and Castle Rock.



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10 Years in the Good Beer Guide

Two pubs in the Wyre Forest CAMRA branch area have achieved ten continuous years in the *Good Beer Guide*. Serving consistently superb cask beers requires knowledge, skill and dedication. The two pubs were presented with Special Awards in October to recognise their achievements by Wyre Forest CAMRA branch Chair, Rob Budworth.

In Stourport, the **Black Star** offers beers from Wye Valley and many other, mainly local, breweries and it's famed for its home-cooked meals, parties and live music. The pub is popular with locals and visitors to the town seeking out its excellent cask ales. Receiving the award and pictured right was Maria Gooding who, with husband Andy, have built a renowned reputation as a destination pub. Maria was excited to receive recognition for their hard work since they took over the pub eleven years ago.



In Bewdley, on the Wribenhall side of the Severn next to the railway viaduct, is the **Great Western**. The pub is popular with locals as a place to chat, meet with friends, enjoy filled cobs, tasty pies and rolls, and by visitors to the town and the nearby Severn Valley Railway. Often, station staff can be found enjoying a pint after a hard day's volunteering on the railway.

Amongst the cask ales are two well-kept beers from Bewdley Brewery – Worcestershire Way and 2857, known in the pub as 'numbers'. The beer is named after a Great Western locomotive resident on the railway, although it's currently having its ten-year overhaul. Jennie and Gary Mills were delighted to receive their award and a round of applause from their regulars and the gathered throng.

Ever seen a
Ginger Panther?
No, but we've
tried one...

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CAMRA

A Visit to the Railway Inn, Ripple

This wonderful, homely pub toward the south of the county should be on everyone's list to visit. My wife and I had the pleasure of lunch there on a Wednesday in October, where later we had the pleasure of a chat with Jon Lewis, who has been in charge of the pub for the past ten years. It's a free house, so the first attraction for us is the beer choice. Jon likes the four cask beers he has on the bar to come from breweries no more than 30 miles away. Having said that, there are occasions when he can't resist, and a beer or two might turn up from Wales.

The Inn has a great community feel about it. The lunchtime we were there was packed with people from Ripple and the surrounding villages enjoying the very reasonably priced menu. On a blackboard was chalked a pie night, quiz night in aid of Upton on Severn Community Care and a conker contest, all that month. And there is a skittles alley (pictured) which Jon told us is in use almost every day.



During Covid, Jon and his colleagues organised delivery of fish and chips at weekends for homes in a four-mile radius, as well as collection from the forecourt. Other delights such as pies and curries, were made available during the week. This is a pub with a superb community spirit.

The original Railway Inn was tiny and, being circa 200 years old predates the railway that ran through Ripple and Tewkesbury from Malvern to Ashchurch that opened in 1864. It's likely, therefore, that if the building was a pub from its early days, it would have had a different name to now. The line closed to passengers in 1961. The station is a beautifully restored home and the Railway Inn is thriving - the only thing missing these days are the trains. The Inn was extended to the front and rear over the years.

The Inn now has an entry in the prestigious CAMRA *Good Beer Guide*, emphasising that it's well worth a visit for a beer, but stop for a bite to eat as well.

Neil Berry

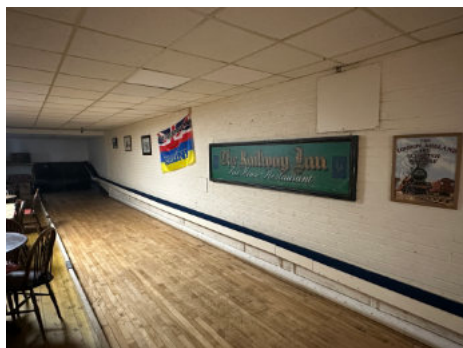


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Meet The Brewer - Hop Shed

Redditch & Bromsgrove CAMRA members were in for a treat at their October branch social as they received a visit from the Hop Shed brewery in Suckley. Founding brewer Sarah Saleh met the branch at the **Old Cock** in Droitwich and generously provided samples of the beers that were brewed and introduced the branch to the brewery's new branding. She also had an interesting tale to tell about founding the brewery.

Hop Shed brewery was set up nine years ago when Sarah and her husband decided to move out of London after some successful home brewing in their garage which gave them the motivation to brew commercially. Their initial brews raised concerns from landlords over a high ABV content as the brewers were used to brewing for a commuting clientele in London, so the recipes for their casks were scaled down accordingly. They then needed somewhere to brew.

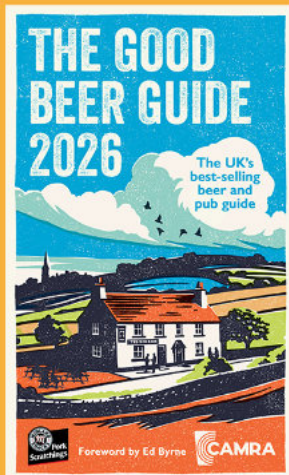
While touring Worcestershire for supplies (the brewery is committed to sourcing as many local ingredients as they can), they came across Ali Capper's hop farm in Suckley. Ali was immediately keen to have a local brewery on the hop farm's doorstep and offered Sarah the use of an old chicken shed. A renovation project then began and a custom-built 10 barrel brewkit was commissioned. Many of the core beers such as



Frizzle (pale), Phoenix (porter) and Buckeye (best bitter) are named after breeds of chicken.

After nine years of brewing and some surprising TV appearances, the brewery is still going strong and it is getting close to capacity. Hop Shed beers can be found at many good pubs throughout Worcestershire and Herefordshire, and the brewery also hosts an on-site tap room on Fridays and Saturdays alongside a shop (thehopshed.co.uk). Our heartfelt thanks must go to Sarah for an enjoyable and entertaining evening.

Are you missing out on CAMRA events? You may need to enable email communications on the CAMRA website to receive news from your local CAMRA branch.



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Pubs Against Loneliness

With worries about loneliness on a par with peak pandemic levels, new polling by the British Beer and Pubs Association (BBPA) shows two out of three see pubs as vital in the fight against isolation.

However, two in five say they have seen pubs close in their area, prompting calls for urgent support for the “cherished institution” in the next Budget.

With pubs struggling under a heavy tax and regulatory burden, more than 2,000 have closed since 2020, and one is predicted to close every day in 2025.

The same poll found that, nationally, six in 10 are concerned about pub closures in their area, and seven out of 10 consider the pub important or very important for their area’s social life.

The BBPA’s Long Live the Local campaign said this underlined the urgent need for the government to use the Budget to deliver fairer taxes and action on rising costs to save these beloved institutions.

The survey shows a regional picture of where people view pubs as a solution to isolation and closely reflects where closures have hit hardest. In the North of England, 71 per cent of people agree pubs are vital in tackling loneliness and isolation, underlining the role pubs play as informal support networks and community hubs. In Wales, 64 per cent feel the same, while in Scotland, 63 per cent back the idea that pubs are part of the solution to the UK’s loneliness crisis.

Since 2021, the BBPA has recorded a net closure of 291 pubs across the North West, North East and Yorkshire and the Humber, Wales has seen the net closure of 132 pubs and Scotland 206.

According to Office of National Statistics figures from October 2025, 26 per cent of Britons report feeling lonely at least some of the time, a figure that has remained consistently high since records began in 2020, during the Covid pandemic.

Similarly, 30 per cent of people surveyed for the BBPA’s Long Live the Local campaign say they or someone they know has felt isolated and lonely due to the loss of their local pub.



BBPA chief executive Emma McClarkin said: “This polling confirms that for many, the local pub is a lifeline, not a luxury, and the loss of a pub can have a real and devastating impact.

“It’s made all the more concerning given our prediction that one pub will close every day this year, with heavy tax and regulatory costs often at the heart of why they’ve been forced to shut.

“The government must use this once-in-a-generation Budget to reset and reform the unfair tax burden and costs, which would help pubs keep their doors open and continue to fend off loneliness, which is affecting so many.”

Professor of Historical and Cultural Geography at the University of Cambridge and author of the book *Pub*, Philip Howell, said: “When pubs are ripped out of communities and neighbourhoods, the damage to social cohesion is incalculable.

“With rapidly rising levels of loneliness, we need pubs more than ever. As the survey suggests, the cost of standing by and watching pubs close will be measured in even greater isolation and the fracturing of our communities.”

The BBPA is urging supporters to join Long Live the Local and email their MP before the Budget, calling for an overhaul of business rates, a duty cut in line with European averages and action on spiralling regulatory costs.

Timothy Hempson

Three Cheers for Community Pubs

CAMRA has released the first episode of its new three-part community pubs documentary series, celebrating people who have banded together to save their locals.

The series highlights the challenges and complexities faced by the campaigning groups, shedding a light on the process of buying and running a community pub.

The opening episode stars Tottenham's longest-established working pub, the Antwerp Arms. Facing demolition in 2013, the community and CAMRA campaigners saved it to become North London's first community-owned pub in 2015.

Episodes two and three will feature the Traveller's Rest in Skeeby, North Yorkshire and then the Yr Heliwr in Nefyn, Wales.

Partnering with Plunkett UK, the films feature on CAMRA's Learn and Discover education platform. The first episode is available to watch on Learn and Discover at learn.camra.org.uk/courses/the-antwerp-arms

The films are being published as the government is introducing laws to give communities in England a legal right to buy community assets including their pub.

CAMRA Pub and Club Campaigns director Gary Timmins said: "Whether it's a busy high street or a small village, when a pub closes, the community loses its beating heart. Campaigners who fight to save their locals deserve recognition. Our three-part film series is a great way to share these stories and celebrate volunteers across the UK. We want this documentary to encourage people to see community ownership as an option for saving their own local.

"Released as parliament is debating new laws giving people a new right to buy community assets including pubs, these heartfelt films are a timely reminder that government needs to step up and give funding to community groups looking to take on ownership of their local pub when it is under threat of closure or conversion."


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A Malvern Trail

Great Malvern is a delightful place to visit with regular trains from Worcester and beyond. This trail starts at the railway station and begins with a rather steep climb to the first venue, but once that is over, the walk is level or downhill. The order of pubs in this trail allows for the later opening of some of them. So for example, a midday start on a Wednesday is possible. Checking current opening times is advised; more information from camra.org.uk/pubs

From the railway station, join Avenue Road and turn left and follow the path uphill. At the junction of Church Street, turn left and continue to ascend. You'll be passing Weavers, but the crossroads just before is a good place to cross onto the other side of the road. There is a very steep but thankfully short section as Church Street meets the main A449 Worcester Road, where you turn right. A short distance from here is our first stop.

1) Foley Arms

This large pub offers amazing views to the east. Owned by JD Wetherspoon, it opens at 7 am so it is a good place to begin the day with breakfast. Seven cask ales are served.

Turn right out of the Foley Arms and follow Worcester Road. Take the first right into Bank Street. Cross Zetland Road and go down the short hill until you meet the next stop at the bottom of Bank Street.

2) Nags' Head

This atmospheric and charming free house opens at 11 am (noon on Sunday) and serves 11 cask beers from interesting, independent breweries as well as two real ciders. Food is available.

Retrace your steps back up Bank Street until you meet Zetland Road. At the junction, turn left and immediately right into Back Lane. This is an unpaved road built in the Victorian era to provide rear access to the houses on either side. It is a lovely place to stroll. You'll pass a spring providing water from the hills and eventually come out behind the Waitrose supermarket. Cross the road at Edith Walk and you will be at the rear of our next stop. There is a rear entrance, or you can turn onto Graham Road for the main entrance.



3) Great Malvern Hotel

This comfortable and welcoming bar serves food along with five changing guest beers, usually from local breweries.

Turn right out of the hotel onto Graham Road and carefully cross Church Street where you were earlier. Just up the hill on the left is our next stop.

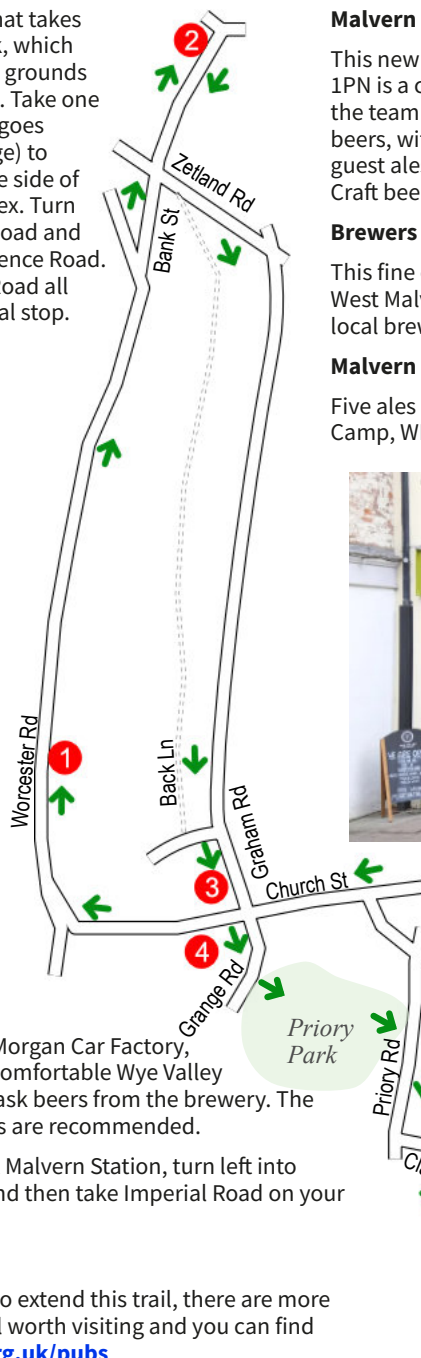


4) Weavers of Malvern

This modern, award-winning bar is located in a former shop and has a variety of seating on the ground and upper floor. Owned by Fownd Brewery, you'll find their beers on sale. Seven cask ales are served in total as well as a number of craft keg beers. Customers can bring in their own food.

There are two ways to our final pub, but thankfully, both are downhill. You can retrace your steps to the station down Church Street, Avenue Road, turning into Imperial Road and then left into Clarence Road. Alternatively, a more interesting and slightly more direct route is to turn into Grange Road and cross into

the access road that takes you to Priory Park, which was originally the grounds of Priory Mansion. Take one of the paths (one goes across a footbridge) to Priory Road by the side of the leisure complex. Turn right into Priory Road and then left into Clarence Road. Follow Clarence Road all the way to our final stop.



Malvern Tavern

This new brew pub located on Belmont Rd, WR14 1PN is a collaboration between Friday Brewery and the team at Link Wines. The brew pub brews Friday beers, with two of their own on cask and up to seven guest ales, 30 keg taps with a mix of Friday beers Craft beers, German and Belgian beers.

Brewers Arms

This fine community owned pub is in Lower Dingle, West Malvern WR14 4BQ. Up to six cask ales from local breweries.

Malvern Hills Hotel

Five ales are served in this hotel located at British Camp, WR13 6DW



5) Morgan

Named after the Morgan Car Factory, this homely and comfortable Wye Valley pub serves four cask beers from the brewery. The popular filled rolls are recommended.

To return to Great Malvern Station, turn left into Clarence Street and then take Imperial Road on your right.

More Malvern...

If you would like to extend this trail, there are more pubs that are well worth visiting and you can find them at camra.org.uk/pubs

Trip to Warwickshire

Redditch and Bromsgrove CAMRA visit Warwickshire

Much closer to home than our last couple of trips as we visited our neighbouring county of Warwickshire. Our first stop was to the **Black Horse**, Moreton Morrell (pictured), a longstanding village pub which reopened in February 2023 after closure for nearly three years. Generous opening hours allowed us to start early to find the pub nearly full, perhaps the showing of the second test of the British Lions tour to Australia helped to pull in the village residents and other visitors. A good range of Ales; Hop Back Summer Lightness, Abbeydale Moonshine and Downton Quadhop were helping to keep spirits raised as the Lions looked to be struggling. We had to leave before the end of the match in which the Lions eventually prevailed, so I am sure that spirits would have been even higher. There was a great community feel to the pub, with local plants for sale at the front and board advertising the mid-week arrival of a fish and chip van.



Our next stop was to the picturesque village of Harbury and the **Crown Inn**, (pictured), a very nice-looking grade two listed building constructed from the local limestone. The pub had recently undergone a change of management, in charge now were a young couple with Jo leading the bar and front-of-house and partner Dom the chef. A blend of national and regional ales was available; Purity Gold, Adnams Ghost Ship and Harvey's Sussex Best. If the freshly cooked scotch egg available from the bar snack menu is anything to go by, the food should also be a great success.



Our tour continued to Long Itchington and the **Harvester**, a white-fronted pub near the village

pond, on the corner of the square and a free house usually supporting smaller breweries. The Harvester was runner-up in the Heart of Warwickshire 2025 Country Pub of the Year, with Enjoy The Silence from Twisted Barrel, Elgood's

Blackberry Porter and Church End Brewery Goats Milk all available. They were also running an interesting competition called "Ducks, Pints and Good Times!" to select images for next year's calendar.

Our next stop was the **Malt Shovel**, Bubbenhall, a Grade II listed 17th Century free house and local branch Pub of the Year 2022. A large L-shaped lounge bar at the front set up mainly for dining and a small public bar to the rear, we also made use of their large walled garden to the rear to sample our choice of Greene King Abbot, St Austell Tribute, Sharp's Doom Bar or Church End Brewery's Fallen Angel, Bronze winner Champion Beer of Britain in 2019 and much more recently in 2025!

Next up was the **Cape of Good Hope** (pictured opposite), on the outskirts of Warwick, an Historic alehouse on the Grand Union Canal, dating from 1798, and

welcoming canal users, locals and minibus visitors alike. There is much canal memorabilia featured in the pub and also outside seating by the canal, next to a busy double lock. An amazing six cask ales were on offer including Slaughterhouse Warlock EL Dorado (a hazy pale ale), a session IPA from Church Farm Brewery and What The Fox's Hat from Church End.

Our penultimate stop was to the **New Inn**, Norton Lindsey. Warwickshire's first community-owned

pub opened in 2017 and has been local CAMRA Pub of the Year from 2021 to 2023 and Country Pub of the Year, 2024 and 2025. Very good for circular walks that start and end at the pub. If you've been walking or just sitting you will have plenty of choice from typically up to six cask ales. Those available included Summer Solstice and Shagweaver both from North Cotswold Brewery, Our House, an Extra Pale Ale, from Castle Rock and BG Sips from Blue Monkey, if you're eating then all food is locally sourced.

Our final stop was to the grandly named **Fleur de Lys**, Lowsonford. A rambling country pub in a grade II listed building dating to the 17th century but more recently famed for their pie-based meals, the pub is where Fleur de Lys pies originated. Sampling their pies will have to be another time but we did sample an ale from their range of national ales; Timothy Taylor Landlord, St Austell Tribute, Greene King Abbot or Fleur De Lys which is their name for Greene King Yardbird.

Tim Craig, Redditch & Bromsgrove CAMRA Social Secretary, social@rb.camra.org.uk



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Lunchtime Socials

2026 will be a New Year in the Redditch and Bromsgrove CAMRA Calendar, as it will be in most households reading this magazine! We've chosen this opportunity to launch 'lunchtime socials'. Our branch already holds regular monthly evening meetings but some members may find these events difficult to attend, perhaps for many reasons, lack of public transport could be one of them.

Our lunchtime socials will be another opportunity to meet other CAMRA members, but in the daytime; noon to 2pm, whether you want to have a lunch, just a drink, a mid-morning coffee or just a quick 'look-in' whilst taking a break from some retail therapy, please come along to say hello, lookout for our new banner, that's where we will be.

Not a CAMRA member? No worries, just come along anyway, meet a few more people.

We have three main towns in our branch area, and the intention will be to cover these equally with a

meet-up each month in one of the pubs connected with either Bromsgrove, Redditch or Droitwich. Make use of our daytime public transport links and come to each event wherever you are based?

We will usually meet on the first Monday of each month, unless bank holidays get in the way, when we will slip to the day after. Our meeting dates will be published in the events section in each edition of *Pint Taken* and in the regular monthly email bulletins.

Be sure to put the following dates in your new 2026 calendar:

- **January 5th** - Bromsgrove, Golden Cross Hotel
- **February 2nd** - Redditch, Royal Enfield
- **March 2nd** - Droitwich, Freemasons Arms (this will be a special weekday lunchtime opening)

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible.

Tim Craig

Social Secretary, Redditch & Bromsgrove CAMRA



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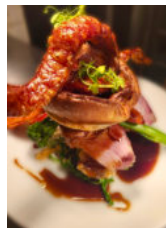
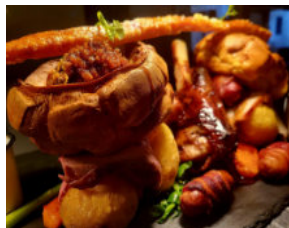
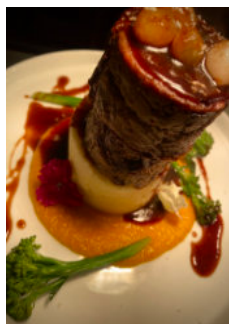
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New Hops for Homebrewers

Homebrewers have their chance to help shape the future of a new hop variety by registering for this year's Society of Independent Brewers and Associates (SIBA) awards.

SIBA has partnered with hop merchants Charles Faram to give homebrewers access to the latest experimental British hop called CF243.

Early feedback shows it offers orange peel, spearmint and intense honey flavours. Entrants will have the chance to brew a single-mash and single-hop (SMaSH) beer with the new variety and provide valuable feedback on how they perform.

Charles Faram MD Paul Corbett said: "We have a pioneering hop development programme which breeds new unique varieties to find the next generation of hops.

"We're looking forward to placing some of these in the hands of homebrewers to see what they can do with them. Their feedback will be vital in determining the future of this new variety."

The SIBA National Homebrew Beer Awards 2026 will give the winner the opportunity to scale up their recipe on Copper Beech Brewing Company's 1,400-litre brew kit, with the beer being made available in its taproom.

"At Copper Beech we pride ourselves on using locally sourced ingredients and we're really looking forward to trying out the latest cutting-edge British hops and seeing what our innovative homebrewers can make with them," said director Dan Lawson.

The competition is free for SIBA homebrewer members and is now in its fourth year. It gives amateurs the chance to have their beers judged by the UK's best professional brewers, sommeliers and experts at BeerX in Liverpool – the UK's



biggest beer and brewing trade event in March 2026.

By entering the awards all entrants automatically become a SIBA homebrewer member.

Homebrewers who have registered for the competition will be able to get hold of the experimental hops via the Malt Miller, which also has a wide range of ingredients.

More information can be found here: siba.co.uk/2025/10/22/siba-homebrew-beer-awards-2026 or use the QRCode below.



A Vast Expanse of Darkness

No, not a quote from Professor Brian Cox about the universe. There are fifty shades of grey, according to the title of the book (technically incorrect, and who wants to read a book about a section of the Dulux colour chart anyway!). There are infinitely more varieties of dark beer, however, but one has a vast share of the market, the ubiquitous Guinness Irish Stout. Walk into many pubs and it will be the only dark beer offering. However, there is a whole universe of other options for the dark beer drinker.

It was slightly depressing to witness at a recent beer festival, where there were well over fifty beers available, a guy with a tray of four pints of Guinness. Drinking a Guinness and thinking “This is what a stout is” is like standing on a pebbly beach and thinking “This is what the entire UK coastline is like.”, whereas actually you are just seeing one tiny part. There are a huge variety of other types, from high cliffs to sandy beaches to marshlands.

Now I should say firstly, I don’t dislike Guinness. It has a pleasant slightly dry and malty flavour and as a dark beer drinker I’d prefer a pint of it over a double dry hopped IPA any day. Personally, I think Guinness is a bit like a Rich Tea biscuit. There is nothing wrong with a Rich Tea biscuit, it’s mass produced and readily available most of the time, you know exactly what you are getting and it’s pleasant, but not very exciting. Especially compared with say, a luxury chocolate brownie made by an artisan bakery which is what a pint of cask stout that’s on really good form is like; it’s rarer to find, it’s a real treat and is a lot more exciting with a far greater depth of flavour.

Why do I think this? Cask beer is served at a higher temperature than Guinness, which means more flavour is released from the beer. Also, Guinness is mass produced and mass marketed for broad appeal, so the flavour profile is designed to be inoffensive. Real ale stouts and many craft keg stouts are braver with their flavours. Finally, I think a well-brewed and well-kept real ale stout or

porter has a body and mouthfeel second to none. That said, one of the ways Guinness markets itself is consistency, from the brew to the dispense. It’s perfectly possible for a pint of Guinness to be better than a poorly brewed or poorly kept pint of real ale. In a slightly bizarre twist you’ll find that your Rich Tea biscuit (Guinness) is more expensive than the artisan-baked chocolate brownie (cask stout).

What Guinness has been very clever at doing is creating brand awareness. From cinematic adverts, sponsorship of the Six Nations Rugby Tournament and the Book of Records to promotions centred around St. Patrick’s day, it’s a brand that most people have heard of, and it is served in most pubs. A conversation I had with a lad in his early twenties recently illustrates why this is important. I know he drinks Guinness and asked him if he had tried any real ale. “No” came the reply and when I asked, “Why not?” he replied, “I haven’t heard of any of the names, so they can’t be any good.” I was left wondering if the spirit of adventure is truly dead.

There is also the social media trend of “Splitting the G” where someone tries to take a gulp of a freshly poured pint of Guinness to try and get the level of the liquid left in the glass to the midpoint of the G on the glass. I have to confess it is not something I understand the appeal of, but it has helped increase sales massively, especially amongst young people, to the point it has created shortages of Guinness at times. I have heard stories from publicans of young people buying a round of pints, attempting to split the G and then leaving the rest of the pint. What a waste! If I was drinking a good pint of cask stout, I wouldn’t be leaving any!

I feel that there is an awful lot of nonsense talked about Guinness. I recently read an article by a professional journalist that started “I don’t like stout, but I do like a Guinness”. Talk about advertising your ignorance! There is a guy who styles himself on social media as “The Guinness



Guru” who goes around rating pints of Guinness in pubs. Now I may have missed something here but serving a decent pint of Guinness shouldn’t be difficult. It is mass produced and isn’t a live product, unlike real ale, and Guinness doesn’t go off anywhere near as quickly. It should be a simple case of connecting your keg and pouring it. Having done a few shifts behind a bar I know it’s not even difficult to pour, certainly compared to a lively cask beer. I think as long as the glass is clean and not too warm and the lines get cleaned regularly, then Guinness should be good. I would say it takes infinitely more experience and skill to serve a good pint of real ale. For

instance, the cellar keeper has to make sure the cask is tapped and vented at the right time. The beer needs time to settle before being served. Knocking a cask on the rack will result in the served pint being cloudy. Plus, cask beer has a short shelf life and will

start having off tastes if left on too long. As I have already said, one of the ways Guinness markets itself is consistency, so it baffles me slightly how you can rate pints of it, surely it’s all very similar? To go back to the biscuit analogy, if you rate Rich Tea biscuits from the same manufacturer then surely you’re really just rating the plate they are served on as they are going to be more or less the same. The Guinness Guru says stouts are all about presentation, but I disagree; I would say it’s all about taste, mouthfeel and body. He’s not a fan of other stouts and says things like “There is nothing as creamy as Guinness.” I do wonder if he’s heard of this stuff called... cream?

So, I challenge all you Guinness drinkers out there to step out of your comfort zone and try some different stouts, expand your dark horizons. There are so many different flavours to experience, from dry Irish Stouts to sweet creamy milk stouts, delicious dark roasted porters, fruit, chocolate,

honeycomb. The list is practically endless. You may not like every single one you try – I don’t, and everyone’s tastes are different, but try and you might find something truly magnificent. Most good real ale pubs will allow you a taste before you buy a pint and as I have already mentioned, cask beer is usually cheaper than Guinness. Also, because of the cooling required by Guinness, cask beer is a lot more environmentally friendly.

Forget “splitting the G”! I think if you have a drink of a good, well-kept cask stout your first thought will be “Wow, that tastes amazing” rather than

“Have I drunk enough of this to get the level to a certain point on the glass?”

Cask stout is becoming more readily available than it was ten years ago when I was first getting involved in CAMRA. Then there were only a small number of pubs serving dark cask beers on a



regular basis. There are a lot more now who have a dark beer on permanently. This is being reflected in brewing as well. It’s good to see tropes such as “Dark beers don’t sell.” and “Stout is only for winter.” being proved wrong. I hope it’s a trend that continues, although Guinness continues to have a huge stranglehold on the market. I’m doing my best with this piece, but I think that cask breweries and pubs need to come up with some clever ways to help promote cask stouts and get people trying them. If there are any budding social media influencers reading this then maybe you could give it a go?

So, in conclusion it’s not just Guinness, there is a vast expanse of darkness out there. These dark beers come in many different forms and to misquote Professor Brian Cox “Many of them are beautiful.”

Rob Carter

Bredon Beer Tour

The following article was submitted by one of our readers, Adrian Dufton who says "... essentially it's a group of guys who all live in Wyre Piddle that decided to organise a mini bus and tour the pubs around Bredon Hill to sample the ales".

So, it's the final Lions test vs Australia in Sydney.

First stop, therefore for the gang of 10 is **Claude Choules** in Pershore to watch the rugby on the big screen whilst nourishing ourselves with a full English. The dilemma is what drink accompanies the breakfast given there's a day of visiting eight pubs around Bredon Hill? For some it was coffee, for others it was straight on to the Guinness - there is no ale in Claude Choules. The closest offering is a Timothy Taylors brew called Hopical Storm.

The rugby is delayed for bad weather so the minibus leaves later than planned, heading for our second stop (first of the planned Bredon tour) the **Swan** at Birlingham. Lovely pub, sunny garden but only one beer, Purity Mad Goose at 4.2%. It's a decent pint, clear as a bell and holds its head all the way down the glass.

It's a pint per pub. We're off to our next destination within 20 minutes, the **Anchor** in Eckington, but it's closed! Fortunately the **Bell** is just over the road. As a big Timmy Taylors Landlord fan I know that this beer can vary from pub to pub, it didn't disappoint in The Bell - it was as good as it is in Yorkshire pubs where it is brewed. Also, the Wye Valley HPA, preferred by many on the trip, was excellent. Full marks to the Bell.

Next was the short trip to **The Fox & Hounds** in Bredon. All beers were Donningtons: Cotswold SBA, BB Traditional and Cotswold Gold. The latter was the favourite amongst the group. Very distinctive taste, toffee like. Not a bad pint but all agreed not a beer for a session.

Our next stop arguably provided the best choice of the day with four ales. The **Crown** at Kemerton also has a great outside space and the most amazing range of sports memorabilia (in the Gents loo). We quenched our thirst here on Wye Valley Butty Bach and HPA, St Austell Proper Job and Otter Bitter. Thumbs up for every brew.

We're at least four pints in now, the sun is beating down & the scenery is stunning as the minibus weaves its way to the **Yew Tree** at Conderton. Only a single ale here and a new one on me - Pyoneer, it's a Wye Valley amber ale at 3.8% and very drinkable but not the pick of the day. Lovely garden though.

Our sixth Bredon pub is the **Gardeners Arms** at Alderton which also meant food time. The burgers can be highly recommended. The ale was Camden Town Pale Ale or Hawkstone Session at 4%. The Jeremy Clarkson brew was the favourite, though it didn't come close to the Landlord in the Bell. They also had 'Today's Real Ale', highlighted which was Hill Climb by Prescott (no-one tried this).

Pub number seven, was the **Star** at Ashton. The star beer here was a 4.7% White Knight from Goffs brewery. Butcombe Original and Butty Bach were also available. All good ales, a pub who keep their beer in good nick I would say.

Approaching 6.45pm we landed at our final destination, the **Queen Elizabeth** at Elmley Castle, where we broke our one pint per pub rule and had two. The majority went for Bewdley Brewery Sunshine Bitter. Wye Valley HPA was also available as were Butcombe Original and Rare Breed and their non-alcoholic Goram IPA Zero.

We were back in Wyre Piddle by 8pm. What a fantastic day. Thanks to Dean the mini bus driver, Steve Charlton who organised the day and doubled up as a Bredon Hill tour guide. And all the other guys for their brilliant company and drinking stamina.



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Trip to Much Wenlock and Ironbridge

Redditch and Bromsgrove CAMRA visit Shropshire

We were blessed with sunshine for our previous trip, this time we had our more usual helping of rain, but it was heard many time throughout the day “what else would you want to be doing on a rainy day”. So here we are making our way to Much Wenlock and our first stop, the **George and Dragon Inn**.

A moment of panic as we saw a sign overhead saying “The George Shut”, but this turned out to be a local term for an alley running down the side of the pub! The local, and somewhat damp, Town Crier was in full voice on our arrival but we were soon seeking shelter and selecting an ale from the George’s extensive range; Kirkstall Brewery Three Swords, Timothy Taylor Landlord, Wye Valley HPA, Butty Bach and Salopian Shropshire Gold. This is an historic pub in a beautiful small market town, close to the Guildhall and Wenlock Priory with some lovely rooms and interesting artwork, definitely worth another visit on a hopefully drier day.

Our next stop was to the **Mill**, another historic pub in Leighton, a small village about four miles west of Ironbridge. A community run pub recently refurbished but retaining impressive wooden cog and gearing (pictured) from the original mill that was powered by water running off the Wrekin and into the nearby River Severn. The waterway has long since dried up, but the Mill nonetheless is an excellent watering hole of the ale kind with a number of ales available; Hop Union Maiden Voyage, Envile Brewery Old Porter, Three Tuns XXX and Timothy Taylor Boltmaker being new beers to us on our trip.

The rain continued but luckily there was no risk of flooding as we approached Ironbridge, though the village has suffered from flooding historically, we had no need of that one-person, rounded boat



traditionally used for fishing and often seen in this area in bygone days, but in recognition we spent some time at the **Coracle** micropub (pictured). Opened in 2018 by two beer enthusiasts Emma and Michael who wanted to create “the type of pub that we would like to drink in”. I don’t think anyone in our group disagreed. Formerly a printers, jewellers and a butcher’s premises it makes a good micropub, nice and cosy and an excellent view down the Severn valley from a rear window. Around five cask ales were available including Kelham Island’s Easy Rider, Fixed Wheel’s Chain Reaction and Little Critter’s Vanilla Chinchilla, also around 10 keg offerings, quite a range. We didn’t see either Emma or Michael today as they were spending more time at their latest venture, The Wellington, Telford.



Our next stop was at the **Dog & Davenport Arms**, Worfield, known locally as The Dog, this 19th century village inn was formerly called the Greyhound Inn. First licensed in 1800, the property of the Earl of Dartmouth, a principal landowner of this area. Bridgnorth Pub of the Season for Autumn 2022. Classic village pub with a lounge that allowed some of us to catch up on the Women’s Rugby World Cup as England played out a tough contest with France. Hobson’s Town Crier, Wye Valley HPA and Three Tuns XXX were available.



The **Three Horseshoes**, Alveley, is a village-centre free house known locally as "The Shoes", Grade II listed and claims to be the oldest licensed premises in Shropshire, the signage outside indicated 1406. More recently a Telford & East Shropshire CAMRA Pub of the Year 2024 and Rural Pub of the Year 2025, what's more Bathams Mild and Bitter were available to remind us of our proximity to the Black Country, supported by Ludlow Blonde and Wye Valley HPA.



At the Cat Inn

Onwards to the **Cat Inn**, just outside Stourbridge and tap house for Enville Brewery, we just about glimpsed the brewery although it is set back from the road. South Staffordshire Pub of the Year 2020 and very much enjoyed by our group. The interior has multiple rooms, enough to almost lose your group though we found each other for a group photo (pictured). A good range of Enville ales were on offer.

We broke our journey back at the **Chester Tavern**, on the edge of Kidderminster. Not often visited as it is on the outskirts of the town it was established in 1855. The pub had been closed and was feared to have been lost to residential development but reopened after a few years in August 2022. We were more than happy to support their offering of Goff's White Knight, Brothers of Ale's (BOA) Centival, Bewdley's Worcestershire Way and Wye Valley HPA. Ales from BOA Stourport are very rarely found.



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CAMRA Events and Contacts

Events below are open to all CAMRA members, and non-members are welcome to join us.

December

Tue 2nd Members' meeting (WF) - Lock Inn, Wolverley, DY10 3RN

Thu 4th Evening Social, Dark Beers Festival (WF) - King & Castle, Kidderminster, DY10 1QX

Tue 9th Christmas Social (RB) - Festive tour of Bromsgrove starting at The Little Ale House in Worcester Road at 7.30pm.

Wed 10th Members Meeting (WO) at TBA

January

Mon 5th Lunchtime Social (RB) - 12pm to 2pm, Golden Cross Hotel, Bromsgrove B61 8HH

Tue 6th New Year Social (WF) - Hollybush, Stourport, DY13 9AA

Wed 14th Members Meeting (WO) at TBA

Tue 20th Members' Meeting (RB) - Holly Bush, Stourbridge Rd, Belbroughton DY9 9UG

February

Mon 2nd Lunchtime Social (RB) - 12pm to 2pm, Royal Enfield, Redditch B97 4QR

Tue 3rd AGM and social (WF) - King & Castle, Kidderminster, DY10 1QX

Tue 24th Members' Meeting (RB) - Nevill Arms, Astwood Bank B96 6NB

Wed 11th Members' Meeting (WO) - at TBA

March

Mon 2nd Lunchtime Social (RB) - 12pm to 2pm, Freemasons Arms, Droitwich WR9 8LR

Tue 3rd Members' Meeting (WF) - King's Arms, Areley Kings, DY13 0NN



Branch Contacts

Redditch & Bromsgrove Branch (RB)

Email paul@rb.camra.org.uk or call Paul Richards 07974 889553 Website rb.camra.org.uk Facebook facebook.com/groups/rbcmra Meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month and start at 7.30pm unless otherwise stated.

Worcester Branch (WO)

Email contact@worcestercamra.org.uk or call Mark Griffiths 07968 337487 Website worcester.camra.org.uk Members' meetings are on the second Wednesday of every month 6.45 for 7pm to 9pm.

Wyre Forest Branch (WF)

Email contact@wyreforest.camra.org.uk or call Rob Budworth 07845 901706 Website wyreforest.camra.org.uk See Facebook facebook.com/wyreforestcamra for latest details of social events. Members' meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month, start at 7.45pm.

Shakespeare Branch

Email contact@shakespeare.camra.org.uk or visit shakespeare.camra.org.uk Covering Evesham area.

Worcestershire Tasting Panel

CAMRA members wishing to join the panel and breweries with info on new beers are very welcome to make contact. Panel Chair Nick Yarwood worcstastings@wyreforest.camra.org.uk

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