

Cask Calling



FREE

Issue 2 Autumn/Winter 2025



CUBLINGTON'S FIGHT SHOWS WHY YOUR PUB NEEDS PROTECTION NOW

Property speculators continue to target our branch pubs with predictable ruthlessness. Their playbook: buy what is claimed to be a struggling local for under £500k, secure planning permission, convert to housing — bingo! instant millions in profit.

The **Unicorn** in Cublington is the latest example of a how a community's determination to save their local has, for the time being, been thwarted. It also shows the urgent need for every pub to have Asset of Community Value protection before its locals realise it's too late

The residents of Cublington — a village of just 300 people — have raised nearly half a million pounds in pledges to buy back their 17th-century local, the **Unicorn**. According to the *Bucks Herald*, professional valuers assessed the property at £325,000 in its current condition for continued use as a pub. However, it is reported that the owners' asking price is significantly higher.

The newspaper quoted a Save the Unicorn spokesperson as saying, "The community group offered a 10% premium above the formal valuation — a fair and credible offer that recognises both local goodwill and business risk — but the vendor has declined to negotiate further unless the offer is within the original price band."

The campaign group is now exploring Community Right to Buy legislation and other legal avenues, with Aylesbury MP Laura Kyrke-Smith raising the issue in Parliament.

This standoff highlights the huge difference in market price between a freehold pub sold as a going concern and a pub that has potential for development into housing. If the local council allows change of use, the value of a typical country pub soars into the millions of pounds.

Continued on page 11

THE CHEQUERS INN

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Welcome to the second edition of *Cask Calling*

We had a great response to our first issue and hope this one will put us on track to follow in the esteemed footsteps of *Swan Supping*.

Our cover story is sadly a hardy perennial, illustrating why the playing field seems so unfairly stacked against communities wanting to preserve their locals. There's much misinformation about pub closures. We often see social media announcements that a pub has 'closed its doors forever' when management has called it a day or had its tenancy terminated. This is usually nonsense. It's currently illegal for a pub to be used as anything else until planning authorities give change of use permission. For more on that, read our feature article later in this issue.

By the time this magazine is published, the *Good Beer Guide 2026* will have been published. Congratulations to the 30 pubs across our area that appear in the guide. CAMRA members can now access *GBG* information on the new CAMRA website (if logged in).

Due to publication timescales, we'll need to start the 2027 guide selection process before year end. Beer scores, all entered by CAMRA members, are the basis for selection. We're grateful to the members who submit beer scores (easy to do on the website) but obviously the more we receive the better our information about local pubs.

With autumn drawing in, selecting the branch Pub of the Year will begin within a few months. This is also driven by the highest beer scores.

Speaking of pubs of the year, vice-chairman Elvis Evans and myself participated in judging our new East Central region's POTY competition in summer — quite a feat given that it sometimes feels an outing to Pluto would be closer than some pubs in our new region. We visited the **Mitre** in Buckingham (our County pub of the year), the **Towcester Mill Inn** (Northamptonshire), the **Sir William Peel** in Sandy (Bedfordshire) and

eventual winner the **Orange Tree** in Baldock (Hertfordshire). All are good pubs although the **Orange Tree** has unusual quirks (like booths with TVs in the garden and an odd windowless room) that may have given it the edge (as well as the six real ales).

This summer also saw the annual traditional Black Country trip, held on one of the longest days of the year, which organiser Dave Roe says is also the best day of the year.

The Great British Beer Festival (GBBF) was staged at the NEC (National Exhibition Centre), just outside Birmingham.

Turnout from our branch was lower than at Olympia, though our branch may be biased geographically towards a London venue.

I only attended the last day and even did a short stint on the Discovery bar. While it was a great day out, I noted that the lack of queues and abundance of seating might not have translated well financially. Maybe the T-shirt will become a collector's item?

We know that both the Great British Winter Beer Festival (GBWBF) and the GBBF won't return in 2026 and that CAMRA nationally is in a tight financial situation and needs to trim back activities, which will be painful.

Nevertheless, as the branch is run by volunteers (who also write the magazine for free) there's nothing much to trim at local level (apart from our waistlines!).

It was excellent to receive an email from a local member on the subject who ended by giving the local branch a thumb's-up, 'Cheers and keep the great branch going and promoting the great pubs of Bucks.' We'll drink to that.

MIKE CLARKE

Chiltern Brewery Celebrates 45 Years

Chiltern Brewery beers and their flagship brewery tap, the **King's Head** in Aylesbury have long been popular within our Branch, but for how long?

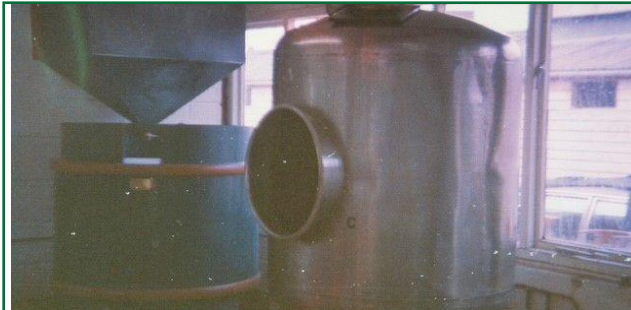
Well, September 1980 saw Richard Jenkinson brew his first Gyle of *Chiltern Ale*, now believed to be the longest continuously brewed beer in the county and the Chilterns.

Today we observers cannot know how important it was for Richard and Lesley, but can be grateful that the tradition has developed and grown through the generations.



1980. Mr Jenkinson welding the brewing platform, still in use today.

Richard had been a hobbyist home brewer whilst living in Weston Turville, before he and his wife bought the smallholding in Terrick.



1980. Just before the first brew — the grist case on the wall, the freshly painted mash tun beneath, and first copper.

His inspiration came in 1979 whilst drinking a pint of a **Ruddles Brewery** — then still independent — beer in Marylebone. Wondering whether a locally produced beer using UK malt and hops, with locally inspired names might be a business model.

There must have been something in the air that night, as Peter Austin, the doyen of the craft beer resurgence of the eighties had only set up **Ringwood Brewery** the year before.

Richard and Lesley discussed the idea, and jointly made plans to brew in their barns. Richard knew that moving from hobby home brewing to commercial brewing would require being licensed by Her Majesty's Customs & Excise (Inland Revenue and HM Customs & Excise were separate until HMRC formed in 2005), also, bespoke brewery kit was not as easily available as it is today, nor was training as a large-scale brewer available outside of the established brewers.

Fortunately he was able to get help from a retired brewer keeping his hand in in his back garden, albeit

on museum-worthy kit. After some brew days with him Richard started to build his own brewery. Much of the equipment required



1980. The Fermenting Room (mid-late 1980). Of note is the Yorkshire Square-style fermenting vessel on the left, the yeast press beyond and the horizontal conditioning tanks along the right.

had to be sourced from dairy farms - a useful source for many start-up breweries following at that time - adapted for use, or fabricated from scratch if nothing suitable was available. Coming from a Sheffield steel family background, he was well equipped to make such items, two of which are still in use today; the grist case, which holds the malt after milling in the grist mill, and the stand supporting the mash tun.

Over time further innovations followed. The brewery was the first to set up a brewery shop in 1989, and to offer brewery tours. 2005, the brewery's 25th year, saw the opening of the new brewhouse and the opening of the brewery tap: the **King's Head** in Aylesbury.

In 2020, the brewery's fortieth year, they began the first phase of the brewery expansion, their largest project since the formation in in 1980. Then, in 2022 the brewery started brewing



From left to right: Thomas and Charlotte Jenkinson, Richard and Lesley Jenkinson, George Jenkinson

with malting barley grown in Buckinghamshire, which is grown

for them on the Waddesdon Estates. As far as they are aware,

Happy 45th Birthday Chiltern Brewery!

It has been my privilege to have been the CAMRA BLO (Brewery Liaison Officer) for *Chiltern Brewery* for some 18 years now having succeeded my late friend Dick Moore in the role. I did not need much encouragement as I had been a keen fan of their beers ever since we moved to Aylesbury from High Wycombe in 1983. *Or so I thought...*

...in chatting to George Jenkinson recently about the brewery's 45th anniversary I recalled that before we moved I used regularly to visit an off-licence called Wycombe Wines where one could take away beer drawn from a cask; this was somewhat of an innovation in those days. George advised that the fledgling brewery, founded by his parents Richard and Lesley, initially supplied Wycombe Wines in casks, then in polypins. It is almost certain therefore that actually I had begun to enjoy *Chiltern* beers before my move. Unfortunately in about 1983 they stopped supplying Wycombe Wines as there was no cooling in

the shop and the beer could not cope with the heat.

It was about that time that *Chiltern Brewery* opened their own off-licence, the **Frothy Firkin**, in Kingsbury Square, Aylesbury (later moving off sales to the brewery).

Now I can't pretend that that was the reason we moved to Aylesbury but I certainly followed my nose straight to the **Frothy Firkin** soon after arrival.

Once again beer could be taken away drawn straight from casks,

they are the only UK brewery brewing with regeneratively-grown local barley.

The forty-fifth anniversary year will be celebrated by brewing special beers from the brewery's archive, including *Ruby Anniversary Ale* and revisiting *Chiltern Ale*, bolstering it with more malt and hops, to be called *Original Gravity*.

Here's to another 45 years brewing in the Chilterns.

RED ACTEUR

but this time in cooler conditions, and not just *Chiltern* beers. Richard being the connoisseur he is introduced all sorts of delights to ale-starved Aylesbury.

I have to confess that the four-pint takeaway of *Owd Roger* I consumed one evening is still mentioned by certain people, but I blame Richard Jenkinson for that!

Happy Birthday *Chiltern Brewery* and many happy returns.

GILES DU BOULAY

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We are particularly pleased to have made exclusive arrangements to stock a large range from Brothers Wines Ltd, one of the top Wine Merchants in the UK and Whisk' Wine Guide 94. All Brothers Wines are chosen by Master of Wine, Christopher Topham, thus ensuring:

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Visiting the National Pub of the Year



CAMRA's 2025 National Pub of the Year (POTY), the **Bailey Head** in Oswestry

I've not managed to visit that many of CAMRA's National Pubs of the Year (POTY), although I did have a brief visit to a long-past winner, the **Old Spot** in Dursley, Gloucestershire, earlier this year. It's still a fantastic pub.

So, I was keen to take the opportunity to make a diversion on a journey south from Chester (many superb pubs but that's another story) to visit the current POTY, the **Bailey Head** in Oswestry, Shropshire. (For those who don't know, Oswestry is about 20 miles north-west of Shrewsbury and so close to Wales that apparently Welsh can be heard spoken in the town.)

It's run by Duncan Borrowman and his wife, Grace Goodlad, who took over the pub less than ten years ago and have transformed it into a national champion in that short time. Duncan is passionate about real ale and, as many CAMRA Discourse users will know, he is a frequent contributor

to the CAMRA online discussion site.

The pub sits in a pedestrianised square of the same name slightly outside Oswestry's town centre (a bit like Kingsbury in Aylesbury). It must be said that the pub looks unremarkable from the outside, where there are a few benches, albeit prettily bedecked with hanging baskets on the summer afternoon of my visit. (Be warned, early birds, the pub doesn't open until 3pm.)

Inside, the pub is welcoming, carpeted with a civilised arrangement of tables and chairs designed to encourage conversation. The main bar faces the entrance with rooms opening out to the left side and the rear of the bar. But there's no historic interior from the CAMRA inventory (although look more carefully and there are unique original artworks, including some from the influential beer blog *Pellicle*).

Clearly the beer is the main draw — and an extensive collection of real ciders. I had a conversation with Duncan about the pub over a half of the local **Stonehouse Brewery's Station Bitter**, which is a permanent fixture on the bar. He has a policy of promoting local small breweries and having a dark beer always on tap — **Burton Bridge's XL Mild** on my visit.



The impressive collection of handpumps in the Bailey Head

While the real ale handpumps face the pub's entrance, cider is dispensed from the other side of the bar. The pub always has five real ciders and a perry available. These should be compliant with CAMRA's definition of real cider. Duncan says he has so many visits from the CAMRA cider cognoscenti that he recognises them — even when they try to go undercover.

There's no food. Drinkers are welcome to bring food in from outside. But as well as the beer, the pub gives an impression of being an integral part of the local community. This spirit can only be fostered by licensees who work hard to create an inclusive and relaxing atmosphere.

Visiting the National Pub of the Year

Duncan hasn't always been a publican. He had an earlier career as a sound engineer, working with many famous names. He's also involved in local politics and is a local councillor on Shropshire Council. The experience of the **Bailey Head** winning National POTY has provided evidence for one of the projects he hopes the council will pursue in the future — improving Oswestry as a tourist destination by enhancing hotel accommodation and transport links to Oswestry's town centre.

As many who've investigated visiting the **Bailey Head** will have discovered, the town's railway connection was axed in Dr Beeching's slash and burn. The *Stonehouse Brewery* ale refers to a



The impressive Pontcysyllte Aqueduct

heritage steam railway that's been restored in its place. A railway station is only a few miles away in Gobowen but requires a bus or taxi ride and hotel chains have chosen to locate out of town on the A5 bypass.

Duncan told me there are 22 other pubs in Oswestry so anyone visiting the **Bailey Head** and staying overnight won't go thirsty. For those interested in industrial

heritage, Thomas Telford's spectacular Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, on the Llangollen Canal, is only a few miles away. With the **Bailey Head** such a worthy winner of National POTY, it may well triumph again in future years. Let's raise a glass to those tourism plans now Oswestry is firmly on the cask ale map.

MIKE CLARKE

Cask Calling

is distributed free of charge to pubs in the branch area.

Estimated Readership 6000.

Email: editor@avw.camra.org.uk

Designed & Produced on behalf of
CAMRA by: Paper Red Media

Website: www.paperredmedia.weebly.com

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Printed By:

Printed by Zenith Media, Unit 9-13, Pontyfelin Industrial Estate, New Inn, Pontypool, NP4 0DQ

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The Demise of Brewers?

Many of us are familiar with DEATH, his horse Binky, and with the Death of Rats. Dead Brewers however is not something as familiar as elephants riding on the back of a turtle. There are Dead Brewers and they have a Society! Cut me own throat if I'd lie to you, but it's true, I've seen the pump clips and I've drunk the beers.

Enough. If there are any readers unaware of Terry Pratchett, local libraries should have copies of his books — inexplicably often filed under science fiction and fantasy.

The *Dead Brewers Society* has a significant presence in our area. But I find that I really know very little about them, other than the beers appearing in many of our local pubs and indeed, often appear at the *XT* tap.



All have their own pump clips, clearly indicating they are *Dead Brewers Society*, and the beer being recreated from breweries that have ceased to exist, from takeovers, closures ... the many reasons for loss of a brewery.

Which is not really a lot at all, mostly surmise and third-hand comment. So in this modern, switched on, connected world concrete information should be easy to find: a Google search is called for. This, however, is almost a blind alley — links to other CAMRA magazines, pub websites, which are predominantly Oak Taverns outlets, to Untappd, American breweries, even to Brewers, the paint company! So much for modern tech.

One does see an occasional *Dead Brewers* newsletter, and personally I always try to secure one when I see them. These cite the forthcoming beers, useful when one knows where to find them (Oak Taverns outlets, and the *XT Brewery* tap) and is a hook for future sampling.



Perhaps there are advantages to being a 'ticker' — I could not tell you which of these beers I've tried nor even when. I just know I've enjoyed trying them, and probably scored some, if not all, on CAMRA's WhatPub/NBSS. Yes, I know I could check.

Reading through that newsletter I found a name I'd seen before: Alastair Wallace. This occasioned another, more fruitful, Google search: a link to a pre-covid article in another branch's magazine (West Dorset's *Giant's Dingle*, now *Giant's Pint!*) by Alastair W. Wallace, curator of the Dead Brewers' Society [sic], entitled 'The Dead Brewers' Society of GB & Ireland', subtitled 'Who we are and what we do — an introduction'.

This was gold dust to me, it gives their origin, as a group of retired brewing professionals, their *raison d'être*, and some of their criteria are explained. For example, brewers choosing to access their database should be restricting themselves to breweries that were within a 30 miles of them.

The Demise of Brewers?



Conversations I've had with Oak Taverns licensees, and *XT* give hope of further information here: a suggestion from Peter at the **Cross Keys** suggested that Oak might produce an article for us, and similarly, Michael at *XT* suggested that Nick Zivkovic, the brewer, could also be tempted to contribute for us. Oak Taverns, through the good offices of Simon Collinson were forthcoming, and gave us a very thorough and in-depth explanation of their involvement and commitment.

OAK TAVERNS AND THE DEAD BREWERS SOCIETY

From SIMON COLLINSON of **Oak Taverns**

The *Dead Brewers Society* is a collection of retired brewers and historians that have saved brewing notes from closed breweries over the years. Our main contact is Alastair Wallace. Nick is the brewer who introduced me to Alastair five or six years ago. Nick brewed beer for us at *Bicester Brewery* and *Barnet Brewery* among other places. *XT* brews it, with Nick in support and Alastair providing the recipe.

Oak Taverns has brought all this together under the direction of Emma Stevenson, our Marketing Director, who has designed the pump clips (all with a nod to the original where we have information), as well as writing and designing the *Dead Brewers* papers. We have done two of them and a tent card for the table.

The process is, Alastair and I choose the beers for the next 12 months, we would like old forgotten local brewers but, in this beer rich area, a lot of them are still going, or at least the brands are. So, we have come up with other tenuous links to our area or brands that mean something to us. This year's selection includes a *Dutton's Brewery* beer from Blackburn, which is where our father and founder started his career in the licensed trade. The others this year are all award winners. In the past we have also made a number of *Halls* beers and beers from the less-known *Wallingford Brewery*.

Then Emma and her team, along with Alastair, designs the pump clips and POS. We then put a brew plan together with *XT* and Nick. The brews often use unusual hops or malt that are not normally used in modern brewing.


We sell somewhere in the region of three quarters of the beer brewed by *XT*, the rest is then sold to *XT*'s other free trade customers. The only thing we insist on is having the beers first in our pubs!

It has been a popular programme and gives a new dimension to cask beer focusing on local heritage rather than the next new hop from New Zealand! We have resurrected around 18 dead brews including a Christmas one.


RICHARD PALMER

Did you know?

An analysis of 34 scientific studies
found that moderate drinkers lived
longer than other groups



Source: Castellanovo, S. et al. "Alcohol dosing and total mortality in men and women" (2006)



Home Brewing

An Introduction

You fancy a pint but all the pubs near you have closed down? What to do? Well, don't just go to the supermarket but maybe make your own just as people used to do in years gone by. Is it easy? — it certainly can be. Is it time-consuming? — well, yes, it can be that as well. But only when you get to the more advanced processes. Let's start very gently.

At its most basic all you need to make beer is a bucket (25 litres covers most situations), a beer kit and some ordinary white sugar. You will find extra equipment very useful but it is not necessary. Do be aware that the more expensive the beer kit, the more malt extract it will contain and the nicer the flavour will be.

A canned kit can be bought for as little as £8 to £12. It will be drinkable but it will not be marvellous. The one-tin kits tend to have 1.5 to 1.7kg of the goopy liquid. This means that you need a fair bit of sugar to get 23 litres (40 pints) of a reasonable strength beer, which makes the beer taste thin.

Remember to brew at about 18°C and store the finished beer at about 12°C. Another tip that goes for all beers using malt extract, whether kit or not, is that extract usually works better with darker brews.

By the time you're paying £25 to £34 for your kit it will normally be in two tins and will have much more malt extract. This means that less sugar is required and the beer will (should) taste much nicer.

Some people stop at this point but not you. You are brave and you are going to make the next step onward and upward. You are going to try malt extract recipes but from a book.

Now the process of brewing beer hasn't changed much really in the last 600 years, so any age of brewing book will work. Even that one that they can't sell cheaply at the charity shop. If it is old you will have to convert from those antiquated Imperial measures to modern metric equivalents but you've probably got a pocket calculator or an app. That does mean you will probably end up with a recipe calling for 102g of hops for instance and hops are usually sold in 100g packets. Don't let that bother you. Small changes in the recipe will make no difference to the end result.

Having said that you can use any old brewing book for this stage some are best avoided, for example,

the one by C.J.J. Berry, because the recipes are not brilliant and it is not written in an entertaining way. Books by Ken Shales also have dubious recipes, but the books are written in such a fun way that they are a good read anyway.

Then we come to the David Line books which is really where the path to success begins. His books contain recipes for extract beers and for full-mash beers; for now, we're only interested in the extract recipes.

One problem with older books is that many ingredients are no longer available: Muntons DMS and Superflavex malt extracts are no longer made, but many modern equivalents can be used instead. I love the story from David Line about testing a batch of lager.

Then there are the many books written by Graham Wheeler and published by CAMRA. I have the first, and felt it was 'nearly good'. I told him this and later books are much improved.

Having reached this far the next step is to make your own beer recipes using malt extract. These will usually be based on somebody else's recipe but with a lower or higher hop bite because that's what you personally prefer. Or maybe make the recipe a bit lighter or darker in colour because of your personal preference.

One thing I have noticed about recipes in brewing books is that the writers fall into one of two camps. They will either advise a fairly large proportion of sugar or will insist that no cane sugar should go into beer at all. I was told by the head brewer at *Brakspear* in Henley (remember them?) that he was happy to use up to 10% of sugar in his brews as it didn't really affect the flavour. By which he meant that for every kilo of crushed pale malt he was happy to use anything up to 100g of cane sugar (but no more). If it was good enough for *Brakspear* then it's good enough for me.

I will end this part here before delving into the greater complication of full-mash brewing, the strange brews of Clive la Pensée and the lofty heights of the Durden Park/Harrison book.

Actually those last two may be beyond me really.

ELVIS EVANS

CUBLINGTON'S FIGHT SHOWS WHY YOUR PUB NEEDS PROTECTION NOW

If surveyors value a pub based on the amount of revenue income it generates as a business, then it is much lower. An asking price that is higher risks the campaigners' capital due to borrowing costs on the higher price. This is particularly important for a community ownership bid (as opposed to some cases when a single or small number of benefactors might buy a freehold to protect a pub).

Other examples of pubs in the same position, however, indicate this could be a stand-off that lasts years — one that is often ended by Buckinghamshire or South Oxfordshire councils unfathomably making decisions that appear to reward the interests of the asset strippers against the community needs of those who pay their Council Tax and vote for councillors who are seemingly toothless in representing the communities that vote for them.

Even in cases where councils refuse speculators' applications to close pubs, they have a poor record of enforcing their decisions. Even when a building is illegally demolished, like the notorious **Crooked House**, councils have the power to demand it be rebuilt brick-by-brick.

CAMRA's local branches have documented systematic dismantling of Buckinghamshire's pub estate. Five years ago, the county maintained well over 100 pubs on its Asset of Community Value register. Today, most have disappeared, often without communities being notified.

Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe CAMRA branch repeatedly fights planning applications they often discover by chance. Unlike many councils, Buckinghamshire does not notify CAMRA of pub planning applications despite the organization's recognized consumer status.

The **Rose and Thistle** in Haddenham currently lies empty and is an example of the council planning committee's astonishing decision to leave Haddenham, a large and rapidly expanding village, with only two remaining pubs. Still, they do better than nearby Stone, where Buckinghamshire Council was happy to give the nod to closing the only pub in their sizeable village.

Their decision on the **Rose and Thistle** appeared to be influenced by a viability report that the council commissioned itself from, believe it or not, an estate agent. When the local branch referred this report

to CAMRA's national planning lead he believed it misleadingly focused on one mode of ownership and failed to consider the economics of successful community ownership models within miles: Oakley's Parish Council owns the **Chandos Arms**; Dinton residents run the **Seven Stars**; and local people in Ashendon have purchased the **Ash Tree**.

Despite being granted planning permission for conversion to housing, local campaigners continue fighting to save this pub.

CAMRA argues that Buckinghamshire's own planning guidelines state that decisions should be taken with long-term perspective and not influenced by short-term factors. Just because one management fails to make a pub viable, it does not mean others, with more entrepreneurial spirit cannot. More importantly, CAMRA contends there is no justification under the council's own planning policies to allow community assets like pubs to be lost — regardless of ACV status.

Even thriving pubs can face sudden closure. The pub trade is notoriously volatile — last year's CAMRA Pub of the Year can become next year's housing development. ACV applications cannot be made retrospectively. The example of the **Crooked House** fire and demolition is one nobody wants repeated in their locality.

CAMRA can help with ACV applications — see https://camra.org.uk/campaign_resources/saving-your-local-pub/.

Applications need either parish council support or 21 local signatures.

Communities across England are successfully buying their locals. From 56 community-owned pubs in 2017 to nearly 200 today, this model works. But it requires proper ACV protection and councils willing to support communities over speculators.

Check your local's ACV status now. If it's not protected, apply immediately. Don't assume your pub is safe — assume it's vulnerable until proven otherwise. The **Unicorn** campaign proves communities will raise the market rate to invest in their social infrastructure — if the system lets them. Protect your pub before the property speculators come calling.

RED ACTEUR

Caskiteers

Part 16

Pre-opening time Jacob and Harry sit in the diminishing autumnal light in the bar at Shackney microbrewery, *Eaten Trifles*.

‘Storm cones hoisted,’ Jacob said, reading a letter that had been delivered that morning personally by a brutish-looking man. ‘Seems Uncle Quentin’s had some financial hiccups, and his payments haven’t been made into our bank account for six months.’

‘Surely our *Jellyfish and Bladderwrack IPA* at fifteen pounds a third will have kept the balance healthy?’ Harry protested, grooming his beard.

‘Afraid not, old bean,’ Jacob said, folding the letter into a paper plane and launching it across the empty bar. ‘The bailiffs will be here in a fortnight if this place isn’t turned around.’

‘Sleeves rolled up,’ Harry said. ‘What do we need to do?’

‘We do exactly what we normally do when we make a total Horlicks of something,’ Jacob said. ‘Run away as fast as we can and find a complete sucker to take the blame. And I know exactly the right mug — I mean — gallant, upcoming entrepreneur.’

Piers Charmer was a new brewer on the Shackney High Street scene. Unusually, he’d worked his way through various of the microbrewers on the basis of his brewing skills rather than the usual route

of most of the bar proprietors, which was being a conduit for a rich relative’s tax losses.

He’d gained a reputation, which was unusual in the area, of making beers that were occasionally

free of adjuncts like ugly fruit and toothpaste and that could, on rare occasions, be clear enough to view the light from a mobile phone torch on the other side of the glass.

Jacob had sold Piers the prospect of an ‘indefinite Tap Takeover’ and Piers was about to open a new era in *Eaten Trifles* history, having ordered a sign for a super new name,

Pints of Plenty. For the time being it was stored behind a fermenting vessel as he hadn’t quite made up his mind about the name change.

At midday, Piers’ first customers approached the bar.

‘Good day. And what type of craft beer experience would you good people be interested in?’ Piers mumbled in his nasal twang.

‘I’d like a *Dry Hopped Sour IPA*,’ a young woman with a nose piercing asked.

‘That sounds so cool o’clock,’ her companion, a man with a tattoo of a self-driving taxi agreed.

‘Oh, excellent. Now, would you like that with Mohawk or Tetracycline hops?’ Piers asked.

‘Er, Mohawk, obviously,’ the man intoned seriously.



Caskiteers - Part 16

'And the water it's brewed with.' Piers adjusted his spectacles seriously. 'Filtered organic Shackney rainwater collected in our butt or desalinated water from the Thames?'

'Organic every time,' enthused the woman.

'And what would you like the brewer's name to be? You can have me, Piers, or my partner Pamela or Dave, who comes in on a Wednesday.'

'I don't actually care. I'd just like a pint of *Dry Hopped Sour IPA*,' the young man said, growing more frustrated.

'Ah well, we may have a problem there. We make our beer to order. We believe in listening to people and delivering what they want,' Piers said.

'I'd like a pint of beer now and so would Jocasta here.'

'Er, I do have a fallback stock of *Blandweiser*?' Piers pointed to a single tap on the bar with its corporate logo.

'Humph. Two of those then I suppose.'

'But, Hugo, I really loved the idea of a beer brewed by a Dave,' Jocasta said, imploringly as she grimaced at the taste of her *Blandweiser*.

'Well, I carefully noted your preferences,' Piers said. 'Come back here in a fortnight and you shall have your *Dry Hopped Sour IPA brewed by Dave*.'

Two weeks later, Hugo and Jocasta burst through the doors of what still had the *Eaten Trifles* name on its sign.

'Greetings, customers!' Piers said in recognition. 'Are you ready for an amazing craft beer experience?'

'Ooh yes, I've been counting down the days until I can have my *Dry Hopped Sour IPA brewed by a real Dave*.'

'Ah, yes, about that,' Piers declared.

'Two pints please,' Hugo held out his smartphone in payment.

'I had a change of mind and I decided that *Stout with Squid Ink* instead, which isn't Dave's area of expertise, so we had Luigi brew it instead.'

'What!' Jocasta protested. 'I've waited two weeks for my perfect pint of craft ale and you've changed your mind what you've brewed for us.'

'Well, it's very nice. I think,' Piers said defensively. 'I thought you'd like it better.'

At that point a tall woman dressed in overalls and an Oasis beanie hat strode to the counter from inside the brewery.

'Has he been changing his mind again?' she asked the customers in a strong northern accent.

Jocasta nodded. 'Does this happen often?' she asked.

'Too right. He's done more U turns than there's U bends in Shackney. I'm Pamela and I wear the trousers in here. We've got so many barely fermented brews in there that we could start our own low alcohol beer business, except they'd taste awful.'

'Sounds like they'd do well in Shackney,' Hugo said. 'We like health-conscious beer — and to have our tastebuds challenged.'

'Now there's an idea,' Pamela mused. 'But today we've got two good northern choices which is plenty enough for anyone — *Bitter* and *Mild*.'

'Ooh, how bougie,' Jocasta said. 'That's really innovative. Let me tell my Instagram followers right now.'

CHARLIE MACKLE

Getting Real in Belfast

As well as a shared rugby union team, there's something else that Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have in common: the scarcity of real ale. Pubs in both are dominated by *Guinness*. Besides the ubiquitous black stuff, you'll find its associated brands like *Hophouse 13*, *Smithwicks* and *Harp*.

Nevertheless, if you look hard enough you can find real ale and brewpubs in the North, as I found on a recent visit to Belfast and counties Antrim and Down.



Crown Liquor Saloon, Belfast, May 2025

The **Crown Liquor Saloon** on Great Victoria Street had a notorious location in the Troubles — opposite Europe's most bombed hotel — the Europa. Fortunately its spectacularly ornate Victorian interior — complete with wooden booths around the perimeter of the drinking area — can be appreciated nowadays without fear of explosions. A Nicholson's pub, it has a good selection of cask ales, mostly imported from Mainland UK but on my visit I found *Belfast Ale* from the local *Whitewater Brewery*.

In a part of the north-west of the city centre undergoing regeneration stands the **Sunflower**. It retains a security cage on its door, a relic from the Troubles. This allowed bar staff to vet entrances and exits.



The security gate at the Sunflower

The somewhat forbidding-looking bars on the Falls and Shankill roads seem to be a real ale desert).

Boundary Brewery in East Belfast is gaining an excellent reputation for its beers, some of which are cask ale. Beers from its range can be found in the **John Hewitt** in the Cathedral Quarter. It's a characterful bar that features traditional music and is owned by the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre. It funds their work but is operated by **Boundary**. I had the curiously named *Horror to the Core of Your Being* (a wheat beer) and *You Never Should* (a New England IPA).

Boundary Brewery itself was slightly too far out of the centre for my visit. There's a brewpub however, the **Deer's Head** just outside the Cathedral Quarter. It's a busy pub with a long wooden bar and the brewkit on display through a glass wall. I had a pint of **Bell's Brewery** *Monkey*



Vessels on display at the Deer's Head

Getting Real in Belfast

Shaving the Goat. Are these weird names down to the Irish sense of humour?



The artwork decorating walls outside the *Sunflower*

While nothing out of the ordinary for the British visitor, the city's cask ale availability is added to by Wetherspoons. The **Bridge House**, towards the south of the city centre, was both huge and chaotically busy on a Sunday evening.

The local ale was “coming soon” so I enjoyed the ever-reliable *Thornbridge Jaipur* in the sunny yard at the back, which was mostly populated by an exuberant cohort of Belfast youth.

How is real ale availability outside the city? Before my exploration of Belfast, I visited a few of the fairly sparse *Good Beer Guide* recommended pubs in the east of the province. The **Dirty Duck Alehouse** by the coast in Hollywood, north-east of Belfast, is famous for being local golfer Rory McIlroy's local. It's also famous for serving cask ale. I had a swift half of *Marble Brewery's Brick by Brick*.

Daft Eddy's bar in Killinchy enjoys a spectacular location across a causeway on an island in Strangford Lough with its extensive gardens overlooking a ruined castle. It gets busy. I was given a plastic glass to take outside with my half of *Marado Red Ale*. This was from local cask brewery, *Whitewater*, which is now the largest brewery in Northern Ireland.



Sainfield's *White Horse*, still an outlet for *Whitewater* beers

I found two more *Whitewater* beers in the **White Horse** in Saintfield, a village around ten miles from Belfast. The pub used to be owned by the brewery but still remains a reliable outlet for their beers. Although the pub is predominantly food focused it has a lively bar area. *Maggie's Leap* and *Nutty Krust* (brewed specially for the pub) were most enjoyable on my visit, proving that finding good real ale in Northern Ireland isn't just down to the luck of the Irish.

MIKE CLARKE

Did you know?

Research commissioned by CAMRA found that people who have a 'local' are happier and have higher levels of life satisfaction than those who don't.



Source: Dunbar, R., "Friends on Tap" (2016)



Pub and Brewery News

Aylesbury

The **Old Millwrights Arms** reopened mid July, after a deep clean, as a family-run, community pub managed by Pam and Alan with five well-kept real ales.



Five active handpumps at the *Old Millwrights Arms*, all with the exception of *GK IPA* enjoyed by our reporter

A recent selection was: *Tring Side Pocket for a Toad*, *Chiltern Beechwood Bitter*, *Greene King IPA*, *Greene King Radical Hoptimist* and *Oakham Dragon Cask-Aged IPA*. There are also eight keg beers on tap so there's something for everyone. The pub is open every day from noon till late with pizzas being the main food available daily with roasts on Sundays. Landlady Pam says 'Oktoberfest!!' Throughout October **OMA** will have a small selection of *Oktoberfest* Ales available, some on tap some straight from the cask. We are celebrating in style — *Lederhosen* secured! Also come celebrate the cask and keep it alive with us while we honour our ales through cask ale week.

The **Harrow** reopened at the start of May. Sadly, there is no real ale.

The **Honey Bee** in Fairford Leys reopened in April following a refurbishment. It now features a sports bar and separate lounge bar.

The **Rockwood** has had an application to extend the area covered by its licence to include an outhouse approved by Buckinghamshire Council.

Beaconsfield

The JD Wetherspoon due to open in Beaconsfield New Town will be known as the *Chiltern*. The

opening date is shown as December 2nd on the company's website.

The **Beech House**, affected by Oakman Inns entering administration in July, has, along with 13 other Oakman Inns, been taken over by Upham Inns. Trading out of Havant, Oakman Inns appear as a separate brand within Upham Inns.

Chinnor

Congratulations to Craig and Jodie who recently celebrated four years at the helm at **The Crown** on the August Bank Holiday weekend. The single handpump here continues with *Timothy Taylor Landlord* which is more often than not, in excellent condition.

Congratulations too to Chinnor's wine bar **Grapes & Flavours** which recently celebrated its one-year anniversary. Two *Boobytrap* beers can be found on draft here — *Luigi* and *Tip of the Iceberg*. The **Wheatshaf** continues with a single real ale - *Greene King IPA*.

Chinnor Community Pavilion still has a couple of *Rebellion* beers on keg dispense.

The **Red Lion** keeps its four-ale line-up, with *XT 3* as session ale, bolstered by three rotating ales from local breweries and some further afield. *ABInBev's Bass* has been spotted on several occasions.

Emmington

Having closed on Friday 28 March due to rising costs, a buyer has been found for the **Inn at Emmington**, who wants to reinstate David Maisey to run it, which he has eagerly accepted.

Hitting the ground running, it appears Dave has already planned for forthcoming events, including, an 'Inn Fest' on 6 September, heralding the pub's reopening. We look forward to another reopening of a local public house and wish them every success.



Downley

The lease of **Le De Spencers Arms** is up for sale. *The Bucks Free Press* reports, quoting Fleurets' (the property specialists handling the sale) Divisional Director Elysia Wilson-Gunn: "It has been a successfully trading business for the past 14 years and has come to market as a retirement sale".

The current tenants commented on Facebook 'Contrary to the ... published ... website [article] we are very much still here doing what we do best and the pub has NOT been sold. The lease for the pub is however up for sale but we will be carrying on as usual until it is sold. ... Mark and Sarah'.

Great Hampden

The **Hampden Arms** have lodged a planning application with Buckinghamshire Council to fell a number of trees which they claim pose a safety risk and have a potential to cause damage to the property.

Hazlemere

The **Crown** have submitted a planning application to Buckinghamshire Council for improvements to the patio area at the front of the pub and the beer garden at the rear.

High Wycombe

The **Beech Tree** in Terriers closed on 4 May after having been reopened for just under two years under the current management. The pub reopened in the middle of July with new tenants. There was no real ale when our reporter visited, The **Belle Vue** has undergone an external redecoration connected to a long-term lease being signed.



The Belle Vue following redecoration

The **High Wycombe Social Club** closed in January so the upstairs can be converted to house the Chair Museum. Refurbishments will also be done to the ground floor before the club reopens. The **Phoenix** closed at the end of May at the end of the current lease. Negotiations on a new lease failed to reach any agreement.

Ibstone

The **Fox at Ibstone** reopened in April under new management having undergone refurbishment.



Fox at Ibstone showing the patio and play area

Marlow

The **Chequers** has had listed building consent approved for a major internal renovation approved by Buckinghamshire Council.

Following an extensive refurbishment both internally and externally the **Two Brewers** pub in St. Peter Street, Marlow reopened on Thursday 7 August. Now part of The Morgan Pub Collective new managers are James Duncan and Lilli who also manage 'sister' pub **The Argyll** in Henley.

The Pub Group now runs over two dozen pubs as seen at www.morganpubco.co.uk

On the handpumps regular beers are **Rebellion IPA** and/or **Smuggler** plus up to three others which on a recent visit were **Harvey's Best** and **Oakham Citra** — the latter having just replaced **Vocation Brewery's Heart & Soul**.

The **George and Dragon**, on The Causeway reopened on July 15th. All very smart, all very large inside and out, copious staff handing out copious canapes, totally revamped side and rear section complete with a shower for canine visitors in the yard. Half of Marlow seemed to have turned out to be greeted by George in armour with friendly

dragon hand in hand with Brasserie Blanc/Heartwood Inns' Raymond Blanc no less.

The pub, branded as a Heartwood Inn, had been closed for refurbishment since its purchase from Whitbread last year. Cask-conditioned ales available on opening where *Fullers London Pride*, *Loddon Citra Quad*, *Rebellion IPA* and *Timothy Taylor Landlord*. The manager, Ben Donald took some copies of the first issue of *Cask Calling*. Heartwood Inns are 100% cashless and that does not mean all drinks and food is gratis.

The Royal British Legion have rebranded their bar as the **General**, but recent social media posts suggest it might have to close as a result of competition from Wetherspoons. It has been reported that this was confirmed at an EGM.

Medmenham

The **Dog and Badger** which has been closed since March 2024 was advertised for sale through Christie & Co in January.

Oakley

In June Brett Sewell became the new tenant at the community-owned **Chandos Arms**.



The Chandos's welcoming bar

Locally-born Brett has a long history in Hospitality, having started work in his teens as a potman at the **Spread Eagle** in Thame, progressing to the kitchen there before moving on as an accomplished chef. His career has taken him over much of the country, most recently Devon

and even, some fifteen or so years ago, to Thame again as landlord of the **Swan Hotel**.

Brett will continue to have ales from local breweries — *Rebellion*, *Chiltern* and *Vale* predominantly, normally with two or three available from firkins rather than pins.

Live music currently features on a Sunday, though Saturday is being considered. Theme nights once a month also feature, with details regularly updated on their Facebook page.

Radnage

Having only reopened in August last year; the **Crown** closed again just before Christmas reporting issues with the electricity supply. We have been told that the leaseholder has not been seen since and has allegedly left behind a number of debts.

Thame

After almost 20 years. *Hook Norton Brewery's* long established tenants, Paula Dimmock and Chrissy Harris will be leaving the **Falcon** in October for a more relaxing future. Despite rumour and customer concerns the tenancy will pass to Sarah Payne and her husband Steve. As a local Thame girl, Sarah has worked with many Thame pubs, including many that are no longer operating, but is currently at the **Nag's Head**, while husband Steve works for a well-known F1 company. No doubt there will be some lively F1 discussions between fans, peppered by insider knowledge.

It is understood that after Paula and Chrissy leave the pub will be closed for a few weeks whilst *Hook Norton Brewery* undertake some very necessary internal work.

With the current cask-conditioned offering of *Hooky Bitter* and *Hooky Mild* as popular regular beers and a seasonal on the third pump, all are looking forward to its continuance under the new tenants.

FRESH ALE'

Help CAMRA's Investigation

CAMRA's bid to educate and protect beer lovers from *Carlsberg's* 'imitation' cask beer continues, and CAMRA needs your help to investigate how 'Fresh Ale' is being presented at the bar.

'Fresh Ale' was launched by *Carlsberg* in March 2024, serving kegged versions of *Wainwright Amber*, *Wainwright Gold* and *Hobgoblin IPA* through the traditional cask handpull.

'Fresh Ale' has been promoted as a cask product with an extended shelf life of 14 days. *Carlsberg* claims that 'Fresh Ale' is "preserving the beloved handpull ritual" but it is taking up space for genuine cask beer on bars and misleading pubgoers into believing they are drinking a cask product when they are not.

CAMRA's Handpump Hijack campaign quickly followed with the intent of protecting consumers who are being misled by 'Fresh Ale' on the bar.

CAMRA is clear that only cask beers, and their real cider equivalents, should be served through handpulls at the bar — and that *Carlsberg* should stop pubs serving their kegged 'Fresh Ale' products from traditional handpulls that are intrinsically linked with cask.

Carlsberg claims it has taken steps to ensure pubgoers understand 'Fresh Ale' isn't a cask product by using the term 'Brewery Conditioned Ale' on each pump clip, along with a QR code explainer of the term, and instruction guides for publicans serving 'Fresh ale.'

But it is not always clear whether you are ordering a genuine cask version of these beers — or if you are getting the kegged 'Fresh Ale' version.

Now CAMRA is asking drinkers to help build up a body of evidence about 'Fresh Ale' that we can use to challenge Trading Standards departments and the Government about the misleading practice of serving kegged beers through cask handpulls at the bar.

CAMRA members are asked to fill out the quick sighting form along with an image of the pump clip whenever 'Fresh Ale' is spotted in pubs.

For *Carlsberg's* 'Fresh Ale' versions of *Wainwright Gold*, *Wainwright Amber* and *Hobgoblin IPA*, you can use this sighting form: smartsurvey.co.uk/s/8MH341



Report a 'Fresh Ale' sighting

Report a 'Fresh Ale' sighting

Please submit a new form for each pub or club where you've seen 'Fresh Ale'

Let the CAMRA Campaigns and Communications Team know when you spot 'Fresh Ale' on sale, and how it's been presented at the bar. For more about the Handpump Hijack campaign, go here: www.camra.org.uk/take-action/handpump-hijack

Start now

There's also a form for sightings of *Otter Brewery's* 'Fresh Ale': smartsurvey.co.uk/s/XLQ6G6



Report an Otter 'Fresh Ale' sighting

Report an Otter 'Fresh Ale' sighting

Please submit a new form for each pub or club where you've seen Otter's 'Fresh Ale'

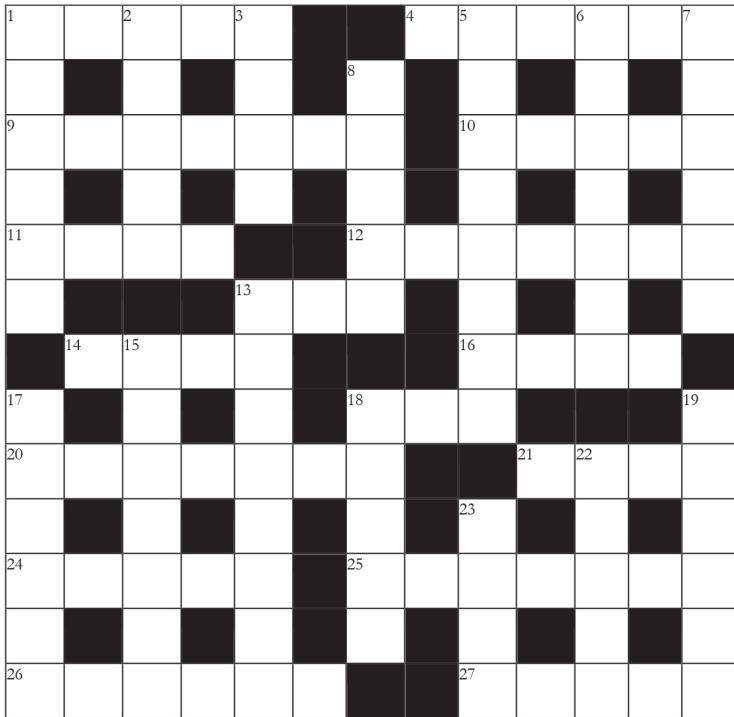
Let the CAMRA Campaigns and Communications Team know when you spot Otter's 'Fresh Ale' on sale, and how it's been presented at the bar. For more about the Handpump Hijack campaign, go here: www.camra.org.uk/take-action/handpump-hijack
To report a Carlsberg Marston's 'Fresh Ale' sighting, please use the form [here](#) instead.

Start now

It is important that pubs serving 'Fresh Ale' are identified and not considered for inclusion in the *Good Beer Guide* while continuing to serve 'imitation' cask beer. Members can contact campaigns@camra.org.uk with questions on *Carlsberg's* 'Fresh Ale' and CAMRA's Handpump Hijack campaign.

RED ACTEUR

Calling's Crossword No. 2



ACROSS

1. The code that solves murder in Oxford(5)
4. The United Nations can or they cannot (6)
9. Hesitate after the crests of the hill —he's just looking (7)
10. You might find a bird on a golf course (5)
11. Ill-fitting with nothing inside – you won't win (4)
12. Joining metal with me inside is a fighting man (7)
13. Fasten clothing with speed (3)
14. Vital for all alcoholic drinks bar one – it might go in your eye (4)
16. Put the crack fighters on heat for a decorative band (4)
18. Talk a lot with helium (3)
20. Theoretically where you find this crossword (2,5)
21. American fighter likes to play with his ball (4)
24. A weight of lightweight metal sounds musical (5)
25. Russian abandons South and becomes a Spaniard (7)
26. Ship's crewman enters his NBSS score (6)

27. Magistrate concerning the first woman (5)

DOWN

1. A phone that's in Alabama (6)
2. Trios turn into forceful protests (5)
3. Brain-boxes will find this too (4)
5. Don't require more – it's unnecessary (8)
6. Important people with lots of fake hair (7)
7. Former dare to become an old room (6)
8. Hold it right in the aperture (5)
13. Led to the balloon (8)
15. Hair style is the best fastening (7)
17. He used to carry the beer along the platform (6)
18. Trendy rag starts the production of beer (5)
19. Old Ben becomes a Nordic stereotype (6)
22. The best is short writing between the Englishmen (5)
23. Carry the Ursidae creature (4)

(For Answers see issue 3)

Branch Events

OCTOBER

Saturday 18th

Marlow Saturday Social, 12pm, itinerary tbc (to include George and Dragon, SL7 2AA and Two Brewers SL7 1NQ)

Thursday 23rd

Piddington and West Wycombe Social, start 7pm, Dashwood Arms Roadhouse, HP14 3BH then Plough, HP14 3AG and Swan, HP14 3AE

NOVEMBER

Saturday 22nd

Driving/Pub surveying social, daytime (tbc)

Saturday 29th

Banbury train trip

DECEMBER

Wednesday 3rd

Christmas dinner, venue tba

MARCH 2026

Wednesday 4th

Branch AGM (tbc)

All social events are published and updated on <https://avw.camra.org.uk/diary>. Please check for last minute changes before attending.

Answers to Calling's Crossword No. 1

ACROSS

1. Frank
4. Chased
9. Lantern
10. Icing
11. Ouse
12. Bowlers
13. Bus
14. Late
16. Oast
18. Sid
20. Leveret
21. Male
23. Banjo
24. Anymore
25. Steins
26. Event

DOWN

1. Fallow
2. Aunts
3. Keen
5. Hailwood
6. Smilers
7. Digest
8. Snobs
13. Beartown
15. Advance
17. Globes
18. Strat
19. Decent
- . Adore
22. Gyle

Observant readers will have seen that, in the grid, next to 21 across the down column was unnumbered. A woops, *mea culpa* moment for the editorial team that missed the literal.

It should, of course, have been numbered as 22 down, with the following clues and squares advancing appropriately.

The clue to not 22 down was: When is a jar not a jar? Love it! (5)

Winter Pub of the Year 2025

As the nights draw in and the temperature falls, our thoughts turn to the pub with a roaring fire, a cosy nook and a fine array of well-kept cask ales.

In other words, your favourite pub to visit in the winter months.

The CAMRA Branch would like to recognise the Branch pub that typifies the ideal winter drinking

experience, so let us know your favourite winter pub by emailing branch.contact@avw.-camra.org.uk. We will then hold an online poll to find out the Branch's Winter Pub of the Year.

The deadline for nominations is 1st December 2025.

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Tap Yard Opening Hours
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 Fri & Sat: 11.30-10 / Sun: Closed

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Beers are best shared with others. So, treat someone you like to a CAMRA gift membership and bring them along to the pubs and festivals that matter.

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