

ALES & TALES

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE IN
STOURBRIDGE & HALESOWEN AND DUDLEY & SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE



Campaign
for
Real Ale

ISSUE 47
AUTUMN/WINTER 2023

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WELCOME BACK

Hello Readers! I have been Chair now for around 5 years, and the world has been through quite a lot in this time. I thought I would use this introduction to 'Ales and Tales' to draw a line under the 5 years but also to set my stall out for possible re-election at our branch AGM in October. Hopefully this issue should be out by then!

Active support for the branch is on the decline. We look at our branch membership statistics every month in terms of paying members but what we as a branch really need is active support. That means coming to branch meetings or socials and getting involved.

Dudley Winter Ales Festival is now safe for another year as another new Festival Organiser has agreed to step in, thank you Robin. However the pool of volunteers ready to take this event into the future does not appear to be there. I hope I am wrong.

Without active branch involvement, your CAMRA branch won't be able to provide the service you hopefully enjoy. That includes Ales and Tales; this issue may well be the last? Many people will bemoan the loss of their magazine or their beer festival but the truth is there often isn't the manpower or enthusiasm to run them.

In terms of wider membership, CAMRA seems to be losing members at both ends of the spectrum. We can't attract the enthusiastic, younger drinker of 'craft' beers, and we are putting off our traditional core membership base by trying to appeal to a modern audience. There are some active committee members of the branch, myself included, who have an equal preference for quality modern, craft, keg beer. Two new-ish venues to our branch, 'Hop Vault' in Stourbridge and 'Roberto's' in Halesowen are very different to the traditional pub and offer a wider offering to the discerning drinker. Both serve cask conditioned Real Ale in parallel to

modern beers served from across the world in the keg format, offering increased choice over a normal pub.

That said, we should not forget the pubs that offer a more limited range of beer, but still serve them very well indeed. It is often said that it's better to have 4 great beers than 10 which are well past their best. Indeed, pubs with one or two beers served consistently well can be very popular - Bathams is a great example of this.

I suspect that many of our members enjoy the same pint in the same pub and are reluctant to change either their choice of pint or pub. If you're a CAMRA member, ask yourself why you pay your subscription every year. Is it for the Wetherspoons vouchers, or to contribute to CAMRA centrally, or to take advantage of perks at beer festivals? CAMRA centrally benefits from membership subscriptions nationally, but many are often invisible to local branches. At this point it is worth a reminder that beers scored by all CAMRA members via whatpub.com or the GBG app are invaluable to branches. For those that do not attend our meetings, this is the one way you can firmly contribute to your favourite pub appearing in the *Good Beer Guide*.

Our active branch membership enjoys going to many different pubs, sampling a variety of different beers in many different venues. In the medium term I can see our core active branch membership further reducing, with little scope for attracting new members to the committee. We must therefore, in my view, concentrate on our core activities and decide on our priorities.

As an active local branch, our job is to maintain information on the pubs and breweries within our branch, which contributes towards national initiatives, for example, the Good Beer Guide and Whatpub.com, as well as running our own 'Pub of the Year' competition.



The recent events surrounding The Crooked House have increased everyone's awareness of pub closures. A key question though is whether the public are upset at the loss of a pub, or at the loss of an iconic building. Overall, I suspect it is the latter. Let's be honest, The Crooked House served the same pint of Banks's beer that can be found in many other Marstons pubs. Personally I have not been for many years. Setting aside the tactics of the new owners which I will not go into here, the public must also ask themselves if or when they supported this pub with their custom. It is good to see however that a large support group aimed at saving The Crooked House, has developed, separately to CAMRA.

We are quite lucky in our branch that we have very few pub closures for us to campaign on, but we must be careful that we don't just automatically campaign for pubs that our

members have no interest in. The role of the pub saver must fall largely to the customer, in terms of Use It or Lose It! Having said that, people can only spend their money once, and must choose where, if at all, to spend it. Popular pubs are the ones that are doing something right, leaving those that are not to fall by the wayside.

Circling back to the original topic for this piece, my focus with our dwindling resources will be on our branch continuing to support the quest to find the best pint of cask beer you will find within our branch, specifically supporting the *Campaign for Real Ale* in that respect, leaving the *campaign for pubs* to be won by the customer.

Tim Cadwell

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camra.org.uk/podcast

PUBS PINTS PEOPLE

THE CROOKED HOUSE

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF HISTORY?



None of us could have failed to have been moved by the sad, and somewhat quick, demise of Himley's famous wonky pub.

The Glynne Arms, as it was historically known, was a 260-year-old pub that had been sold to a private buyer in July 2023 for it to unexpectedly catch fire over the weekend of 5/6 August.

For many that saw the images on the Sunday and Monday, there was hope. After all, the exterior wall - whilst still heavily damaged-remained standing. So then to learn that by the Tuesday it had been demolished, was difficult for many of us to take in.

The impact of loss has been widespread. From local media, such as the Express & Star, ITV Central and BBC Midlands Today and featured across the nationals. We've even seen clips from as far as the United States. The Facebook group of "Save The Crooked House" has over 26,000 members.

At the time of writing, the matter is under investigation by Staffordshire Police and South Staffordshire Council (the West Midlands/Dudley borough border sits exceptionally close). We are all watching with close interest for potential outcomes.

Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA, plus the



wider community, clearly want answers and we hope that anything found to be illegal or nefarious is met with an appropriate action.

But, whatever the outcome, do we perhaps need to have an inward look and see what we are doing directly to support pubs? Many I spoke to were sad about the loss of The Crooked House, but in the same breath admit that they hadn't stepped in for some years.

Many pubs are having to close - not necessarily by choice - but by the wider costs, such as the recent impacts of inflation. In short: if a pub doesn't get the footfall, and therefore the sales, then it simply stops becoming a sustainable business.

Similar problems have occurred on the High Street. Shops - whether local or a national chain - go out of business when the public isn't buying. Going to a place and saying how sad is it that it is shutting - whilst at the same time buying everything at rock bottom price - is not what these businesses need. They need us to go in, purchase and do so regularly, not leaving it to the last minute.

Clearly there are some wider problems at hand too, and even profitable and well-maintained pubs have closed after purchasing and the like. CAMRA quoted, "That a third of [pub] closures and demolitions may be happening without



the required planning permission, denying the community the opportunity to save their local pub.

“This damaging practice must stop, and those found to have converted or demolished pubs against planning rules must be required to restore the original building brick by brick.

“If local authorities won’t provide adequate planning enforcement, then central government needs to step into make sure that unscrupulous developers know that they will face action if they do the same.”

Whatever any legal proceedings over The Crooked House takes place, it appears doubtful - although we remain hopeful - that the pub will be rebuilt with its original bricks.

Despite good intentions by some folk, attending the site to pay their respects by taking mementos, puts that rebuild in to doubt. Moreover, who is going to fund the rebuild without any firm guarantee that it will have regular footfall, as it did in its golden days?

Please use your local pub. It is there for a moment of relaxation, social interaction and - of course - drinking some great beers. Across both the regions (Stourbridge & Halesowen and Dudley & South Staffordshire) we have some great pubs and, of course, some great breweries – we’ve got some of the highest concentration of breweries compared to other regions.

Hopefully you’ve picked up this magazine at one of our local pubs? If so, take some time to have a good look around. Take in the heritage, the teamwork, the visitors and what’s on offer. Is this something that you think your community would cope just fine with, without it being there? Probably not.

So let’s please do our bit. Be regular patrons, tangibly demonstrating that the pub is the lifeblood of the local community. Don’t leave it too late.

Still, on a final, positive note, we won’t be forgetting the pub and in support of its memory

and heritage, The Crooked House will be our theme for this years Dudley Winter Ales Fayre in November (which you can read about within this edition).

What’s that you say? You’re off to the bar? Well, mine’s a pint and - whilst you’re there - I’ll have a ham cob too.
Happy drinking.

Matthew Sparks

Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA

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WMCA & CAMRA LAUNCH A PUB PROTECTION SCHEME

Following the loss of The Crooked House, the West Midlands Combined Authority and CAMRA are collectively lending their support to save “heritage” pubs in the region.

As part of their “List Your Local” campaign, residents and pub goers are encouraged to submit details of those which are believed to be of historical significance to the region, via the website of <https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-our-pubs/>.

Both groups have begun on building a ‘target list’ of suitable heritage pubs which, alongside the public’s recommendations, will be examined on a case-by-case basis to see if and how they can be protected.

This may include becoming a “heritage listing” or “asset of community value listing”, as just two examples.

Within the West Midlands Combined Authority region there are 1,200 pubs and yet only 133 are listed within Historic England.

CAMRA identified that, from April 2021 to September 2023, 81 pubs had closed. In the first six months of 2023 they also noted that 21 pubs in England were demolished without planning permission.

CELEBRATIONS OF BLACK COUNTRY DAY

Several breweries in and around the Dudley borough supported Black Country Day with special events and beers.

Black Country Day fell on Friday, July 14 this year and breweries were invited by the Campaign for Real Ale to put on tours, open days or other activities over the weekend.

Black Country Ales undertook tours of the brewery at the back of The Old Bull's Head in Redhall Road, Lower Gornal, which also included a sample of three core beers, accompanied by a home made cob.

Beacon Hotel in Bilston Street, Sedgley had food and tours of the Sarah Hughes brewery as did Ma Pardoes – The Old Swan in Halesowen Road, Netherton.

Green Duck Brewery, Gainsborough Trading Estate, Rufford Road, Stourbridge showcased a range of Black Country-themed ales.

Kinver Brewery in nearby South Staffordshire also undertook plans to brew a special Black Country-themed beer for the weekend.

THE PIE FACTORY



Congratulations to Tipton's Pie Factory for its centenary celebration. The pub, known also as Mad O'Rourke's Pie Factory, had its 100-year celebration on 30 September.

A public voted pie was baked specially for the event, with "The He Con Ate Pie", featuring chicken, beef, gammon, lamb, onions, mushrooms and sage & onion stuffing, plus homemade gravy.

Live bands also played with many dressing up in clothing dating back to the 1920s.

A pub has stood at the Sedgley Road West and Hurst Lane junction since the 1860s, with The Five Ways Inn being the previous resident until 1923. Then, it became The Doughty Arms - named after a councillor of Tipton Council (as it was then). The pub was renamed - to its present name – in 1987.

Lump Hammer Gold, Sledge Hammer IPA and Bitter are some of their stalwart beers.

With thanks to Mad O'Rourke for the images.



ENVILLE BREWERY



HISTORY

Enville Brewery was founded in 1993 by Will Constatine-Cort.

The brewery was then in a unit somewhere in the Stourbridge/Amblecote area but quite quickly a new brewing premises was required and the current brewing site in Enville was acquired to continue production. The site was a disused courtyard and stables, and these had to be renovated prior to being used to brew ale.

This year, 2023, is the 30th anniversary of the brewery being founded. It's sad that Will Constatine-Cort won't be here to witness this as he died on 16th January 2023, but the brewery is very keen his memory is part of the Enville Brewery story.

CURRENT

The current team pictured of Helen (Brewery Manager), Becky (Sales), Martin (Head Brewer), Paul (Drayman) and Jim (Brewery Operative) along with others, a total of 11 and not forgetting Treacle the dog, keeping the organisation and sales running smoothly.



Enville Ale was the first ale brewed by Will and it's still their best seller today, now available in cans and bottles as well as cask.

Over the years Enville has expanded their range of ales into their current range of quality brews: Enville Ale, Enville Ginger, Enville Gothic, Enville Gothic Ginger, Enville American Pale Ale, Enville Blizzard, Enville White, Enville Old Porter and SimpKiss bitter an old Black Country favourite.

Enville also have Enville Spiced Rum and Gin, with the trademark honey involved. Helen told me a lot of sampling went on during Covid to make sure

the products were absolutely perfect. I'm sure we all commend the team's hard work in quality control!

The current brewery is a 10-barrel brewery with a yield of 36 to 37 Nines and hasn't changed from the outset in 1993. A half brew creates a yield of between 16 and 20 Nines and helps to keep Enville brewery flexible in the brews it produces reacting to customers and market requests.



FUTURE

Enville want to expand their bottles and canned ales with new brews. They have been proactively tasting and testing new beers. They wish to bring in new and exciting ales into their range.

They did some testing at The Golden Cross, Wetherspoons in Bromsgrove, and the new brews, including a milk stout, were really well received by the customers. They are currently looking at other strong summer beers going forward and will be testing these and having launch parties when they're ready. They can then release the names of the new brews.

Enville Brewery are happy to come to pubs and clubs to be more visible and to showcase their ales to the customers.

Customers can order online or can make a pilgrimage to the brewery and buy directly from Helen and Becky in the office. It's a beautiful brewery in the heart of the countryside. What's not to like!

Andrew Cartwright

With thanks to Helen Briggs for permission to use the pictures off the website.

BREWERY NEWS

STOURBRIDGE & HALESOWEN

CRADDOCKS

**Duke William 25 Coventry St,
Stourbridge DY8 1EP**

The contract for brewing Craddocks beers has now moved from Fixed Wheel Brewery to the Birmingham Brewing Company in Stirchley. Dave Craddock hopes to return to brewing small batch monthly specials at the Duke William in future.

ANGEL ALES

Furlong Lane Cradley Halesowen B63 2TA



Having not seen any beers from Angel Ales for six years it is with great pleasure that we can confirm that they have started brewing again. Two brews were produced recently for the Black Country Brewery Open Day, namely Angel Ale and Zanzibar, a new Pale Ale. At present these are available in bottle from Brewmonkey in

Cradley Heath, by appointment with the brewery plus direct ordering from their website when it is up and running. Negotiations are underway with several free houses and small pub chains to stock some cask ale shortly.

GREEN DUCK

**Gainsborough Trading Estate, Rufford Rd,
Stourbridge DY9 7ND**

Green Duck will be celebrating their 10th Birthday this year with a number of events and brewery collaboration throughout the remainder of the year. Keep an eye on social media for more information on this, plus special events such as Christmas parties, regular beer festivals, and constant new beer releases. Don't forget to get yourself down to the Tap Room on Fridays and Saturdays (check opening times) to enjoy a quality pint of beer within yards of where it is brewed.

Is your local pub
under threat?

CAMRA has the tools
to help you save it



camra.org.uk/saveyourlocal



BRANCH DIARIES

STOURBRIDGE & HALESOWEN

NOVEMBER 2023

Wednesday 8th 7.30pm

Branch Meeting

Waggon & Horses, Halesowen

Thursday 23rd 7.30pm

Marking Social

Stourbridge (P&H, W&H, Royal Exchange, Queens Head)

DECEMBER 2023

Wednesday 6th 7.30pm

Branch Meeting

Robin Hood Amblecote

Thursday 14th 7.30pm

Marking Social

Wollaston (Foresters, Plough, Unicorn and Kingsbridge)

DUDLEY & SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

NOVEMBER 2023

Thursday 23rd – Saturday 25th

Dudley Winter Ales Fayre

Dudley Town Hall

For further details on these and future events, head over to dudley.camra.org.uk



www.camra.org.uk/saveourpubs

The Dodo

Save your local pub from extinction

#saveourpubs

CAMRA CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE



Why our yeast needs to be locked up

You might well wonder why we lock away our yeast. Until you learn how important it is to the flavour of our beer. We use our own unique strain called, appropriately, *Taylor's Taste*. The properties of this particular yeast are vital to giving Landlord its deep and complex yet crisp and clean flavour. It's so valuable to us that every year two samples of Taylor's Taste are carefully transported to separate secret locations and stored securely under lock and key, just in case the precious yeast here at the brewery is ever compromised or damaged. It might seem over cautious, but it's *all for that taste of Taylor's*.

All for that taste of Taylor's



ONLY 24 HOURS IN TAMWORTH

We stayed at the Premier Inn just south of where the rivers Tame and Anker meet. The same river Tame that in the 1950s, we used to dare each other to jump across in my hometown of Wednesbury. It was known then as the Black Brook because of the industrial waste it carried.

It was a ten-minute walk along a pedestrianised road and bridge to Tamworth Castle and grounds and a further two minutes to the Market place. We had a look around and came across the Tamworth Hub, a small shop selling Tamworth related memorabilia. It also had historical information and we learned about three of the towns benefactors Robert Peel, Thomas Guy and William MacGregor. The two ladies working there were very helpful and supplied us with a map to help us explore.

The real purpose of our visit was to go to the Tamworth Tap because we couldn't believe it had pipped our local, the Bird in Hand, Wordsley, in CAMRA's Pub Of The Year competition for the Midland Region. When people ask us which is your perfect pub, we used to say we haven't found it yet. Well, we have now, The Tamworth Brewing Company Tap.



The ground floor is open plan with a central bar, but the layout has different areas. On the left is a Belgian Bar, serving Belgian beers and craft keg

on tap with plenty more choices in the fridge. The walls are adorned with Belgian adverts just like you get over there. There is a large table in the window and a smaller corner table for a couple, where we sat after we explored. To the right was the main bar with a mixture of table and booth type seating. On the bar there was a choice of eight taps, seven on, on our visit which included one of their own a 5% IPA Her Maj, which was in top condition and in spite of the choice I enjoyed it so much I had another. There was also a choice of twenty ciders.



Continuing past the bar was CAMRA corner with seating for two. There were awards and CAMRA related material on the walls, a complete set of Good Beer Guides from 1974 and numerous branch magazines.



Upstairs leads to another large seating area, a small snug and the toilets. The urinals were made from Carling kegs which explained what the gaffer thought of that particular British keg lager! There is another storey with a large room across the whole building which was used for holding events occasionally. Lots of beer related memorabilia throughout the pub made it cozy and interesting.



We went outside to check out the garden, and met the owner, George Greenaway. We got chatting and were later joined by George's wife Louise. They told us it was a Brewhouse circa 1741. Prior to them acquiring the site it was a tourist information office on one side and the other was a school uniform shop. They started selling their own beer upon opening in 2017. They opened initially for just one day a week which extended to every weekend until they were open for regular hours. The building is essentially Tudor with a Georgian facade. The garden was fantastic with four different areas, two of which backed on to Tamworth Castle walls where regular musical events are held.

Another section had covered booths. Access to the garden was via the alleyway dividing the brewery from the pub. There was a hatch server to the bar and on busy periods another small bar behind the brewery is open and there were more toilets. Again, lots of artefacts and memorabilia throughout the garden, no wonder it won the best beer garden at the Great British Pub Awards. The locals made us very welcome and told us the pub organised many events for them such as cookery demonstrations, flower arranging and getting an artist in to give painting lessons.

Oh by the way we did come home again.

NOTE: SINCE WRITING THIS ARTICLE THE TAMWORTH TAP HAS WON THE CAMRA NATIONAL PUB OF THE YEAR AWARD. CONGRATULATIONS!

Tony & Bridget Skirving



MEET THE BREWER: BLACK COUNTRY ALES



Name, Age and Occupation

Matthew Pearson, 30, Head Brewer for Black Country Ales

What is the history of the brewery and pub company?

Black Country Ales was established through a genuine love of real ales and traditional houses. We understand that pubs are a part of our country's heritage, and a vital centre for our communities. Our goal is to uphold the values of the traditional real ale pub.

When we bought The Old Bull's Head pub in 1999 it came with a boarded up brick building at the rear that was referred to by the estate agents as "a two storey outhouse". Imagine our amazement after the purchase when we finally entered the building to find three magnificent wooden fermenting vessels and other brewing equipment going back years. Whilst most of our brewing kit is brand new, to give us the quality required in modern times, the building still retains a very special heritage, and it is the driving spirit behind our brewery.

What was your first alcoholic drink?

My first alcoholic drink was Batham's best bitter at the Bull and Bladder on the Delph, many years ago with my father.

What are your favourite beers - your own and someone else's?

My favourite beers would be Hop Bomb and Mud City Stout by Sadler's brewery which unfortunately is no longer in production.

My go to pint would always be BFG but I do enjoy the odd strong Belgian beer.

What is your favourite drink that's not beer?

Red wine, it never lasts long in my house!

Do you have a favourite pub (not one of your own)?

The Mount Pleasant in Sedgley known locally as 'The Stump'. It's an old-fashioned pub with a great selection of beer. Unfortunately I don't get to visit as much as I would like too.

What is your favourite food?

Spanish Tapas and an avid cheese lover!

Do you have music on during the working day? If so, what sort?

I listen to all kinds of music but just lately I have a lot of soul playing Sam Cooke, Otis Redding etc.

What are your hobbies and interests?

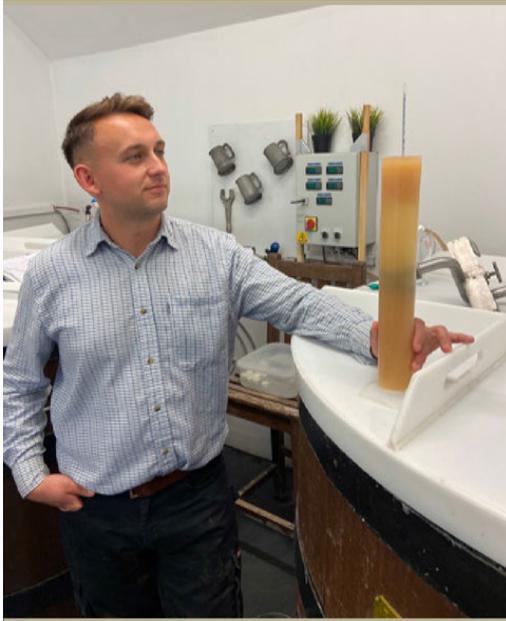
When my time is not being taken by my two young children, I am a keen fisherman and when I am not on the river I quite like to go shooting. Very much a countryman!

How did you get into brewing?

I qualified in engineering but decided that job wasn't for me and wanted to try something completely new. In 2017 I applied for a Trainee position at Sadler's Brewery and have never looked back.

What aspirations do you have for the brewery?

Double brewing in our brewery was more of a Christmas requirement but with the number of pubs being acquired by Black Country Ales and a well-established customer base, double brewing is now the norm! Perhaps in time, it would be great to see an expansion of the brewery and more fermenters added for us to brew into, leaving us more time to produce new brands.



How much freedom do you have to brew new beers?

With the thirsty Black Country folk this doesn't leave us with any free time or space in the fermenters to produce new beers but who knows what the future may hold.

What makes a brewer happy?

There is a no better feeling than receiving cracking feedback from our new and regular customers and hearing the words 'this is the best beer I've ever had'. Knowing that our pubs are thriving from the beer that I produce leaves me with a great sense of pride.

How can CAMRA help you in your business?

Keep doing what you are doing! Keep supporting great British breweries and traditional pubs like ours.



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DUDLEY WINTER ALES FAYRE 2023

DUDLEY WINTER ALES FAYRE

DWAF 2023

COMMEMORATING THE CROOKED HOUSE

23rd
24th
25th
NOV



Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA will once again be running the famous Dudley Winter Ales Fayre for 2023.

The popular event at Dudley Town Hall is running Thursday 23 to Saturday 25 November. This year's theme is a celebration and reflection of The Crooked House, which we lost in summer 2023.

Managed by volunteers, the festival will have a localised focus this year, with the majority of over 50 selected beers from the West Midlands.

There's also a wide selection of ciders and soft drinks.

In a slight change to previous events - and to save on wastage - they're recycling glasses from previous events.

But there is also going to a limited selection of commemorative glasses which can be pre-

purchased from the main website (dudley.camra.org.uk).

Expect entertainment on the Friday and Saturday and selection of food from the caterers. Saturday is also a "family day" so adults can bring their under-18s.

Keep an eye on the website for details on the event.

Information correct at the time of publication.



DUDLEY & SOUTH STAFFS

SWAN INN

A Grade II listed pub in Sedgley which shut in February is set to reopen in time for Christmas. The Swan Inn in Gospel End Street – opposite All Saints Parish Church – is to become part of the Red Pub Company chain.

The pub, which dates from the early 19th Century, was sold for £250,000 in July by Stonegate Pub Company and has been let to the Tipton-based pub company.

Director Paul Jones said work would start in the next few weeks on a refurbishment of the ground floor which will see it refocused as a real ale pub with six hand-pulls and more craft beers. The nine rooms upstairs will be used for a separate Airbnb business. Structural repairs to the roof are to be carried out first.

Paul said the pub would open before that started operation. "The aim is to open before Christmas. There is a lot of work to be done," he added.

He stressed that the plan was to make the Swan a community asset. The beer garden would also be improved and he was exploring putting electric vehicle charging points in the car park.

It will be Red Pub Company's 18th pub and tenth real ale specialist premises. It reopened the Glasscutters Arms in Wordsley on August 11. The other real ale pubs are The Bird in Hand, Wordsley; The Bartons Arms, Aston; The Beacon Way, Bloxwich; The Jolly Crispin, Upper Gornal; The Malt Shovel, Dudley; Red House Boutique, Stourbridge; The Tame Bridge, Tipton and The Plough, Oswestry.

Paul said that the Glasscutters had had a successful opening and more improvements were planned. "We are over the moon with how the pub has been received. It has already got a great community spirit," he added.

The Glasscutters Arms in wasbought in July and a mini refurbishment has been carried out since then.

The pub is now open seven days a week.

FIVE WAYS

GORNAL WOOD

The Five Ways in Gornal Wood, which was threatened with conversion to apartments, has been given a reprieve.

This pub, also known locally as The Widowers, is at the Five Ways on Himley Road.

It reopened on August 18.

Previous owners Ian and Wendy Harris had decided to sell and go down the redevelopment route and planning permission had been approved.

Mike Westwood, the owner of the JinJa Beer Company in Tipton and a regular at the pub for the past 20 years, stepped in.

Feedback from locals was that they did not want to lose it as a pub and Mike had discussions with Ian and Wendy and they agreed he could take it over.

Mike has taken on the pub as leaseholder, with his colleague Callum Nicholls running it as manager. He said: "It would have been galling to see it close and I'm going to do as much as I can to keep it open for a long time.

"What made it special in the past was the community side as everyone knew each other, so that's what I want to bring back, with Sky Sports and TNT Sports on the TV and a new loyalty card scheme, which means that for every pound you spend, you get 10p back on the card. "It means, for example, a £4 pint will get you back 40p on the loyalty card, so it means people can save and spend as they wish, so things like that will help it to become a community hub people can come to.

"We are working on renovating the pub right now and plan to reopen fully at the start of September, so exciting times ahead."



BROOK INN

WOODSETTON

The Dudley and South Staffordshire branch is to lodge an objection to the Brook Inn in Bourne Street, Woodsetton, being converted to flats.

Licensee Fiona Tennant was astonished to find out that a planning application has been submitted for the Brook which she has run since December.

Five flats have been proposed on the site of the pub which dates back to 1835 and was run by the Tully family for nearly 100 years.

Under the application, three one-bed, a two-bed and a three-bed homes are proposed, with a two-storey rear extension replacing the existing extension also included in the plans submitted to Dudley Council on August 2.

The applicant says: "The proposed conversion of the public house to residential apartments is due to the lack of demand for its current use."

The Brook is owned by Richmond Hill Brewery. Customers want to see the pub kept open.

The branch will also be exploring whether the 188-year-old Brook can be registered as an asset of community value in a bid to prevent it being lost as a pub.

CHAPEL HOUSE

LOWER GORNAL

A Lower Gornal pub is to be given a full refurbishment. The Chapel House in Ruiton Street is part of Holden's Brewery's Woodsetton Pub Company estate.

Holden's says that that refurbishment work is to starting from the beginning of October.

The brewery will be putting its 5.6 per cent Dragon's Blood golden amber ale in its pubs in October and for November and December will once again have its 4.2 per cent Noddy Holden's – named in honour of Slade's Noddy Holder on sale.

Holden's has also launched two new bottled 4.1 per cent ciders. Berries and Gold are on sale in all of the Woodsetton-based company's pubs in the Black Country, Staffordshire and Shropshire.

They are also available at the brewery shop off Sedgley Road.

WHITE SWAN

OLDBURY

The White Swan opened on 8 September following a £230,000 refurbishment. There's been work on a brand-new bar, flooring and furniture.

Adam Riese, who has worked in the pub for three years will be managing it.

STOURBRIDGE & HALESOWEN

WAGGON & HORSES

21 STOURBRIDGE RD, HALESOWEN B63 3TU

The new licensees Emma and Drew will have been at the pub a few weeks by the time this edition is released. They are very active on Facebook with events such as a Chippy Supper & Games night on alternate Tuesdays.

THE QUEENS HEAD

111 ENVILLE ST, STOURBRIDGE DY8 3TQ

Anthony & Victoria are very busy at the pub! 1st Tuesday of every month from 1pm folk music afternoon. 1st and 3rd Sunday live music from 6pm. Hot pork available Friday Saturday and Sunday. Roast beef boxes which include roast potatoes and parsnips, pot of gravy, and sauce of choice. Coming in the winter hot stews and chilli! The Skittle alley is still available to hire for functions and gatherings, as well as happy hour too 12pm - 7pm. Beers include Carling £3.95, BFG £3.40, Pig On The Wall £3.30 They will be holding craft events for Christmas see our beer board to see what and when! The darts teams are looking for new players so why not pop along for a game.

THE OLD WHARF

78-80 HIGH ST, AMBLECOTE,
STOURBRIDGE DY8 4LY

Are now proudly displaying their blue Cask Marque plaque. We have personally visited and enjoyed a fantastic pint, so if you are looking for somewhere to try The Old Wharf is definitely worth a visit.

THE BEER BANK

186-188 HIGH ST, QUARRY BANK,
BRIERLEY HILL DY5 2AB

Another to add to the list -We have a new micro pub opened in our area! Please show your support and make a visit.



A promotional poster for the Kidderminster Beer and Cider Festival. The poster features a large circular logo with an eagle and the text 'Kidderminster Beer and Cider Festival'. To the right, it lists '42 Beers', '15+ Ciders', 'Local Wines', and 'Craft Gin Bar'. The festival dates are 'Thursday 2 - 10', 'Friday 12 - 11', and 'Saturday 12 - 9*'. It includes a 'CAMRA Members Preview 12 noon' and 'Live Music Friday Evening'. A 'FREE re-entry Hot Food' offer is also mentioned. The bottom of the poster is a dark blue banner with the text '9 - 11 November 2023 Kidderminster Harriers Social & Supporters Club'. Logos for CAMRA and Wyre Forest CAMRA are also present.

HALIFAX UPDATE

I read Tony Skirving's article about drinking in Halifax (*Ales and Tails Summer/Autumn 22*) with interest and am pleased that someone else agrees with me that Halifax is a good destination for a short beer break.

I would like to add a couple of pubs that Tony didn't have the opportunity to mention in his article. The first is my personal favourite and the first pub I ever visited in Halifax. It is also the closest to the railway station (walk to the main road from the station entrance, turn left and it's about a three-minute walk on the same side of the road. The pub is the Ossett Brewery owned Three Pigeons; the pub itself is an architectural gem, an Art Deco pub built in 1932 which consists of five separate drinking areas radiating out from an octagonal drinking lobby. The pub also contains what looks like original signage. The only thing that doesn't remind you

of the 30s is the prices! Warning! it only opens at 3pm Monday to Friday.

The other pub is possibly one that was closed when Tony was there and also with unconventional opening hours. This pub is situated next to the Town Hall and is rumoured to be the smallest pub in Britain to hold live entertainment. The bar only seats 18 and has a covered terrace at the rear and some outside seating in the Town Hall square in the summer. I hope I have made Halifax sound even more appealing that Tony did. I also agree that La Luna is a good restaurant too!

Clive Walder

SAVE OUR INN SIGNS

Founded in 1990, the Inn Sign Society raises awareness of the nation's pub signs and compiles a record for the benefit of future generations. Many pub names have links with events from the past or personalities of national and local importance, and the Society provides a forum for members to research the history of inns and pub names.

It has an active website and a quarterly full-colour journal to which members are encouraged to submit articles, pictures of pub signs and news from their areas.

As inns and pubs close at an alarming rate, much local heritage is in danger of being lost forever. Pubs are not just a place to enjoy a drink, they are often at the heart of the community and can reflect its history.

Many members take a general interest in all signs, with some specialising in particular breweries, counties, aircraft or railways, to name but a few.

The local Midlands Group meets three or four times a year at the **Mare & Colt**, near Kidderminster, to enjoy a lunch followed by a slideshow of pub signs.

The Inn Sign Society is seeking to recruit more members and bring in new blood to help

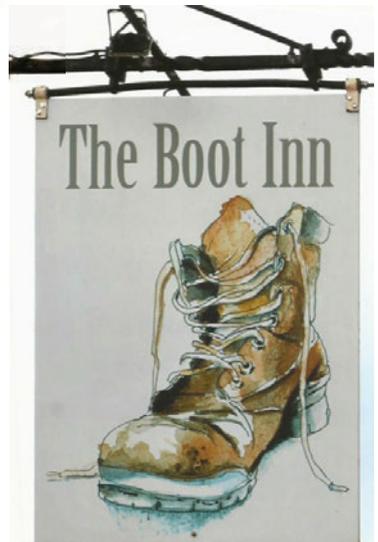
continue the good work done over the last 32 years.

If the Inn Sign Society doesn't research, capture and save our pub sign heritage, perhaps no-one else will.

For more information, including on how to join, see the website at innsignsociety.com

Iain Perks

Membership Secretary Inn Sign Society



*Left: Farriers Arms Worcester
Above: Boot Inn, Flyford Flavell*

WIGAN AND PRESTON TIME TO HEAD NORTH

Time to recommend a couple of pub crawls 'Up North', Wigan and Preston. Straightforward rail journeys from Birmingham & Wolverhampton. Only about 15 minutes apart by train (but separate days out).

WIGAN

So Wigan first. Leaving Wigan Central and Swan & Railway, two crackers, until later, we set off through the centre. It's all very walkable, and all but one below features in the 2023 Good Beer Guide.

First stop **The Anvil**, a traditional pub with the first evidence of the town's pride in the famous rugby league team and Wigan Athletic FC. Wisely the pubs back both sports. Here opposite walls reflect photographs of great players and triumphant times. Our first try of Wily Fox beers, a local brewery, and the Karma Citra was excellent.

A short walk to the **Tap 'n' Barrel**, the first micropub. A narrow modern building in an alley by the bus station, with guitars and vinyl records on the wall in the glass-roofed annex. Quirky and comfortable, with three guest cask ales, three craft beers, and cider boxes. I was happy with my Elland South Sea Pale. You soon discover that nearly every pub in Wigan offers 'award-winning' pork pies (likely from the same supplier). Next visit was a large modern bar in an older attractive building, the **Real Crafty**, Wigan's Pub of the Year in 2021, and it was easy to see why from the beer menu. 5 cask ales, 4 ciders, and a very broad range (27) of keg craft beers. Belgian, wheat beer, lager, Guinness, Austrian shandy, Cloudwater, Tiny Rebel, Wilde Childe, Siren Craft - something for everyone, I had the Ossett White Rat and Squawk's Pavo. A fine beer palace, but another micro a hundred yards away was calling. **Doc's Alehouse** had a choice of five cask ales, I tried a different Wily Fox this time. A friendly bar again, though quiet when we went in.





Then a walk back into the town centre, we didn't have time to visit **Sherrington's** this time but will take a taxi there in future, to the **Raven**, a fine example of a retro conversion of a century old hotel with some attractive features, tiling and panels. Several beers to choose from but I was getting a taste for Wily Fox beers so tried another, Nelson Pale. Finally, two great but contrasting pubs by the train station. The **Swan and Railway** is a triumph of conservation, another hotel with an impressive bar full of features, tiling and local imagery, with seven handpulls, Wigan Brewhouse Old Boston Plum Porter for me. Go there first and you may not get any further. Then under the railway bridge and left to the railway arches that are now home to **Wigan Central**, an award-winning regular Wigan Pub of the Year winner, modernised bar with table service for beer and snacks (note the table signalling arrangement in this railway themed pub). Seven handpulls and a range of craft beers available - Distant Hills Escapade Stout for me).

Very impressed with the range of pubs in Wigan, and two further observations - we voted Wigan the best town for consistently good music in every pub, but second to every town for the quality of WiFi in the town. (Not great, just saying).

PRESTON

A week later we were waving to Wigan as we stayed on to Preston. Just the eight Good Beer Guide pubs to visit that day, and we missed a few others, notably the **Vinyl Tap**. I recommend you download the excellent **Preston Real Ale Trail guide** from **Central Lancs CAMRA** website. Most of the pubs are close together in the town centre but we chose to take a couple of taxis, first to the renowned **Moorbrook** and then to the **Continental** for lunch. The Moorbrook is a proper traditional pub with a good range of handpulls and some interesting features and shapes. Thirsty from the journey I

drank Blackjack's Dark British Stout and Shiny's Afterglow. Taxi transfer then to the Continental, a large pub beside the River Ribble, regular local Pub of the Year winner, with eight handpulls and a decent food menu. My beers were Vocation's Life and Death and Pictish Alchemists Ale.



Then we had a pleasant 15-minute walk back through a park into the town centre and 'micropub land'. Firstly, the **Winckley Street Ale House**, a single room bar, for a Cloudwater It's A Mild. Then the **Guild Ale House** for Rat's Reservoir Rats. Seven handpulls plus a range of other beers on two levels, with a fine atmosphere. Next micropub, coming thick and fast, was the **Orchard**, a sister pub to the Guild Ale House and an interesting new wooden framework and decor in the Grade II listed covered market. Quite the contrast - Beartown's Kodiak for me.



After three micros the **Black Horse** offers a great contrast. A fine Victorian listed pub featured in the National Inventory for its historic interior - tiles, mosaic floors, mirrors, real fires. A pleasure to spend time in. It's a Robinsons pub with 6 guest ales - *Saltaire's Mayflower* was excellent.

station where I drank Track's Sonoma. By the way, don't miss the **Preston Martyrs memorial sculpture** outside, commemorating the 1842 shooting of four people during the cotton worker's strike.



Just time for two more micros before the train home. Firstly, the **Plau**, a carefully restored three story pub in a building dating back to the 1700s. Good atmosphere, Mallinson's Mosaic beer. Then finally the **Plug & Taps**, a friendly and busy micro near the

So, two excellent and varied pub crawls that you may not have tried before. Not too far away.

Cheers

Geoff Mills



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HITCHMOUGH'S LOST PUBS

Here is a photograph of another mystery pub. Can you identify it?



The solution to last issue's lost pub is the Pack Horse Inn, on the corner of Hill Street and Hampton Street, Netherton.

This pub was originally a beerhouse and the first licensee we have found is Daniel Hampton. In 1863 a 17 year old miner stole a pigeon from his stable, and at Worcestershire Assizes was sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labour. Daniel Hampton seems to have run the business well and in 1868 he was granted a victualler's license, allowing him to sell spirits. Following his death in 1871 his widow continued to live at the pub with their nephew, Richard Rollinson, who became the licensee, aged 26. Richard Rollinson built the Netherton Hill New Brewery adjacent to the pub, taking a mortgage from his aunt for £2,000. In April 1876, when the brewery was described as recently completed, at considerable cost, with internal fittings of superior character, and with the most modern appliances, a fire broke out. Being situated at high ground, and with strong winds, the flames were fanned, and in a short time the brewery was a roofless ruin with nothing left but the walls. The fire brigade arrived from Dudley and managed to prevent the spread of the fire to

other buildings. Whilst attention was diverted to the fire, thieves stole money, spirits and furniture from the Pack Horse Inn. The brewery had been insured two days previous to the fire for £4,500 and the damage done was estimated at £2,500. The brewery was rebuilt and in the 1881 census Richard Rollinson was described as brewer and licensed victualler.

Brewers had to keep a record in their brewing book of date and time of brewings together with the ingredients used, and excise officers had to oversee certain processes. For transgressions of the brewing regulations, treated as intent to defraud the revenue, Rollinson had been fined several times, the penalties amounting in all to £250.

Richard Rollinson filed for bankruptcy in 1885. At the official examination into his affairs he was subjected to a lot of questioning about going to races and betting. It transpired that he took money out of the business for this, and had continued to do so since he first realised he was in financial difficulties, thus using money which should have been available for distribution to his creditors.

Rollinson admitted having regularly borrowed money from relatives, but claimed to have paid it back. He had kept no financial books.

In the middle of his bankruptcy proceedings there was another prosecution by the revenue, for making a false entry in his brewing book. He was fined £50 but because of his bankruptcy he had no access to funds and, in default of the fine, was sent to prison for two months.

In 1886 the outcome of the bankruptcy was that creditors received 1s 2d in the £.

Richard Rollinson did not receive his discharge as a bankrupt until 1898. In that hearing it was stated that he had been striving to retrieve his position in Australia, now having returned to this country. However, it would appear that he had not achieved this; his relatives paid a sum of £100 to supplement the payment to creditors and get him discharged. The reasons given for requiring this conditional, rather than

absolute, discharge were omitting to keep accounts; trading after knowing himself to be insolvent; contracting debts without reasonable expectation of being able to pay them; and having given undue preference to creditors. What subsequently came of Richard Rollinson has not come to light. The pub, however, continued in business until around 2000 and it was eventually converted into housing.

Hitchmough's Black Country Pubs
Longpull.co.uk

This article was provided by Tony earlier this year. Sadly, after some health problems, Tony passed away in September. He was 73.

His knowledge and contribution to the history of breweries and pubs in the area has been nothing short of magnificent. We thought it was fitting to publish this article as a memory to his work.

We know he'll be sadly missed by many, and our thoughts sit with those close to him.

Tony, enjoy those pubs in the next life.

FRED MASON OBITUARY

It is with the deepest regret that we must inform you of Fred Mason's passing on 26 June, after a stroke in 2018. Fred was the former branch chairman and supporter of the Stourbridge Beer Festival.



Here is Fred presenting one of our Pub of the Year awards to the late Leanne McKinney at the Royal Exchange in Enville Street.

Fred became an active member of CAMRA in the late 1970s mainly with Dudley Branch as Treasurer for the Dudley Beer Festival in the days when it was held in Horsley Gardens.

Fred became active with the Stourbridge branch in the 1980s when we still controlled the Wyre Forest area wandering over to Tenbury Wells from Kidderminster. We did have a Kidderminster Beer Festival on the Seven Valley Railway Station before the Stourbridge version started and Fred played an important roll in the organisation. One of his fondest memories of this time was when he met Ian Botham who was taking his family for lunch on the railway.

When we did start a Stourbridge Beer Festival Fred yet again played an important in the organisation which continued until the end of our Festival years.

He had many positions on the Committee, including Treasurer, Social Events Organiser and of course as Chairman for a few years.

His funeral took place on Tuesday 18th July with a Wake following at the Hare & Hounds, Wollescote, which incidentally was always a venue used by the Committee during the 1980's.

John Midwood

2023 REAL ALE & PUB CENSUS

Members from Stourbridge & Halesowen Branch carried out their annual census of beers and pubs over a 24-hour period on 21/22 July. This was the 5th census that we have attempted since 2017.

The aims are firstly to capture information about the range of real ales that our pubs are serving; secondly, to check that the opening times and other information for each pub on CAMRA's *WhatPub* website are accurate; and thirdly well it's a pretty good excuse to have a day out visiting pubs, including some that we do not get around to frequent too often! We also took a photo of each pub for our records.

We started at 5pm on the Friday evening with members visiting pubs in their local neighbourhood. Saturday was a more social affair with groups coming together to join five different ale trails of our more popular pubs, before meeting up as usual at the Red House Boutique in Stourbridge to compare notes and enjoy a beer together.



The 2023 results were largely as expected. We visited 82 pubs altogether, including two new ones that had opened in the year, these are the Old Liberal in Quarry Bank and Roberto's Bar opposite the church in Halesowen. In addition, one existing bar has recently started serving cask – Lounge 101 in Kent Road, Halesowen is a now welcome addition to the local real ale scene!

Sadly, two pubs have permanently closed since the last census: the Greyhound in Norton and the Beat Brewery Taphouse in Lye. We also found that five pubs had no cask on sale on

the day, though some of these were due to temporary problems of hot weather or cellar issues. In total, 75 pubs were serving cask this year, compared to the 79 in 2022.

The range of beers was very similar to last year with 136 different cask ales on sale in our Branch area, one less than 2022. Wye Valley HPA was the most popular beer we came across. It was being served in 24 of the pubs we visited, closely followed by their 4.5% Butty Bach which was in 13. As in each previous census, Holden's Golden Glow and Enville Ale were the other beers we saw most often. We also recorded 34 different real ciders and 25 "craft keg" beers being served, so the overall range of beers and ciders is impressive.

As expected, the price of a pint has increased again as both breweries and pub owners struggle with their overhead costs. The median price is now £3.90, up from £3.65 in 2022 and £3.20 pre-Covid. The cheapest pint was Ruddles Best at £1.71 being served at both Wetherspoons pubs in the Branch. The most expensive was the £5.00 being charged in one of our Stourbridge pubs. There was a time when you used to be visiting London to pay that much. And to think that the first pint I bought cost me 14p!

It's hard to measure but the other takeaway from the weekend is that all the pubs seemed a little busier than last year. Let's hope that the difficulties that the licenced trade has had to endure since 2020 are starting to ease and that we will start to see a brighter future.

My thanks to all the volunteers who made the census another success. A special mention for Tony Morgan who spent his Saturday visiting the six pubs that no one else had picked. Using public transport, he travelled from his home in Kinver to Camp Hill in Stourbridge, back to the town centre, on to Wollescote, Halesowen and Colley Gate before heading back to Stourbridge and Kinver. Well done, Tony!

Andy Koszary



Summary of 2023 Results

	2023	2022	2019	2018	2017
Pubs visited	81	84	91	64	76
Volunteers	16	16	22	10	21
Pubs serving real ale	75	79	83	62	74
Breweries	84	85	84	69	83
Cider Producers	16	12	9	11	17
Cask Beers available	136	137	150	129	150
Ciders available	34	28	22	19	31
Craft Keg beers available	25	33		18	
Least expensive pint of cask ale	£1.71	£1.49	£1.79	£1.89	£1.99
Most expensive pint of cask ale	£5.00	£4.80	£3.95	£4.00	£4.20
Average price of Cask ale	£3.78	£3.56	£3.08	£3.11	£3.08
Median price of Cask ale	£3.90	£3.65	£3.20	£3.15	£3.10
Average ABV of Cask ale	4.31%	4.30%	4.30%	4.37%	4.33%
Average price of Cider	£4.34	£4.19	£3.60	£3.57	£3.33
Average ABV of Cider	5.19%	5.32%	5.29%	5.24%	5.50%
Average price of Craft Keg	£6.33	£5.31		£4.47	£4.50
Average ABV of Craft Keg	5.92%	4.97%		5.80%	5.90%

Most popular Cask Ales (Pubs serving)

		2022	2019	2018	2017
Wye Valley - HPA	24	19	13	14	11
Wye Valley - Butty Bach	13	15	10	12	9
Holdens - Golden Glow	9	9	16	11	15
Enville - Ale	8	8	14	17	17
Sharp's - Doom Bar	7	8	7	6	9
Banks's -Amber	6	6	8	4	10
Black Country Ales - BFG	6	6	4	4	4
Banks's - Sunbeam	5	6	5	3	4
Batham's - Best Bitter	5	4	4	4	4
Black Country Ales - Citra Sublime	5	3	0	0	0
Three Tuns - XXX	5	2	1	0	0
Timothy Taylor - Landlord	5	11	3	1	1

Pubs serving Real Ale

As at previous Census

79
2

90
4

93
2

New pubs

OLD ENOUGH TO BREW, TOO YOUNG TO DRINK

For those of us who watch the media outlets you will no doubt have seen the coverage given to Jacob Murphy, the young apprentice brewer at the Fixed Wheel Brewery - 'Old enough to brew, too young to drink'. He was featured on the BBC Midlands Today programme, and following that local papers and national papers picked up the story, it became a nationwide and even a cross continent story followed in Belgium.

Jacob is now a fully qualified brewer and now 18 so he can legally purchase alcohol to drink.



He is the youngest qualified brewer in the UK, and possibly, the youngest in Europe.

To celebrate his attainment of becoming a qualified brewer, he produced his very first beer that he developed/designed and brewed by

himself. It was called 'Neo Pro', a New England IPA and it has sold very well, with great reviews. Jacob is now thinking and planning his next brew, which is sure to be a success.

With such an accolade of being the youngest brewer, he agreed to a 'Question and Answer' session.

What made you decide to embark on a career in the brewing industry?

Jacob. At the age of 9/10 I visited the Guinness Museum at St. James' Gate, and all the smells and facts just raised a curiosity in me, so my family started to take me to visit some more breweries and I developed a real interest in the brewing industry.

When you started your apprenticeship, did you realise how complex the work and science that goes into making beer?

Jacob. I knew there was a lot of things I would have to learn, but I was definitely surprised about how complex and intricate it can be.

Now that you can legally purchase beer, which ones do you like?

Jacob. Obviously, I am a big fan of a lot of the FW beers, I put a lot of time into helping brew them and as well as tasting great there's real satisfaction behind it. I am also a fan of Wye Valleys Butty Bach and Tiger Lager, which I find very enjoyable, they go down really well.

What do your friends think about you working in a brewery, do they think you have obtained the dream job?

Jacob. Not quite, a lot of my friends had no idea of how much hard work is involved to produce good quality beer.



What do you most enjoy about your job?

Jacob. It's a real challenge and very satisfying coming up with new ideas, and then trying to work out how to achieve them, whether it's a new recipe or a way to improve the process.

Do you have any hobbies?

Jacob. Aside from brewing and creating recipes, I am a fan of Star Wars, the Lord of the Rings and DnD, in fact anything science fiction and fantasy.

What are the challenges you have faced in your development as a brewer?

Jacob. Well, when I started, I wasn't physically able to lift casks and the malt bags, so it took a few weeks to get used to that and it save me the expense of gym fees. As I stated earlier, understand the complex changes that water, barley and yeast undergo to present the beer that is presented to the customer.

Would you recommend this trade to anyone?

Jacob. Always it's such a great way to meet great people and there's real comradery between brewers, that feels very unique, and of course the more brewers and breweries that are available the more beer there is to drink for everyone.

What are your future plans, where do you envisage you will be in 10 years' time?

Jacob. I have not really looked in to my 10 year plan. I don't want to set myself any goals yet. I am still young and have a lot of time to think and plan about my future direction in life.

Phil Zjalic

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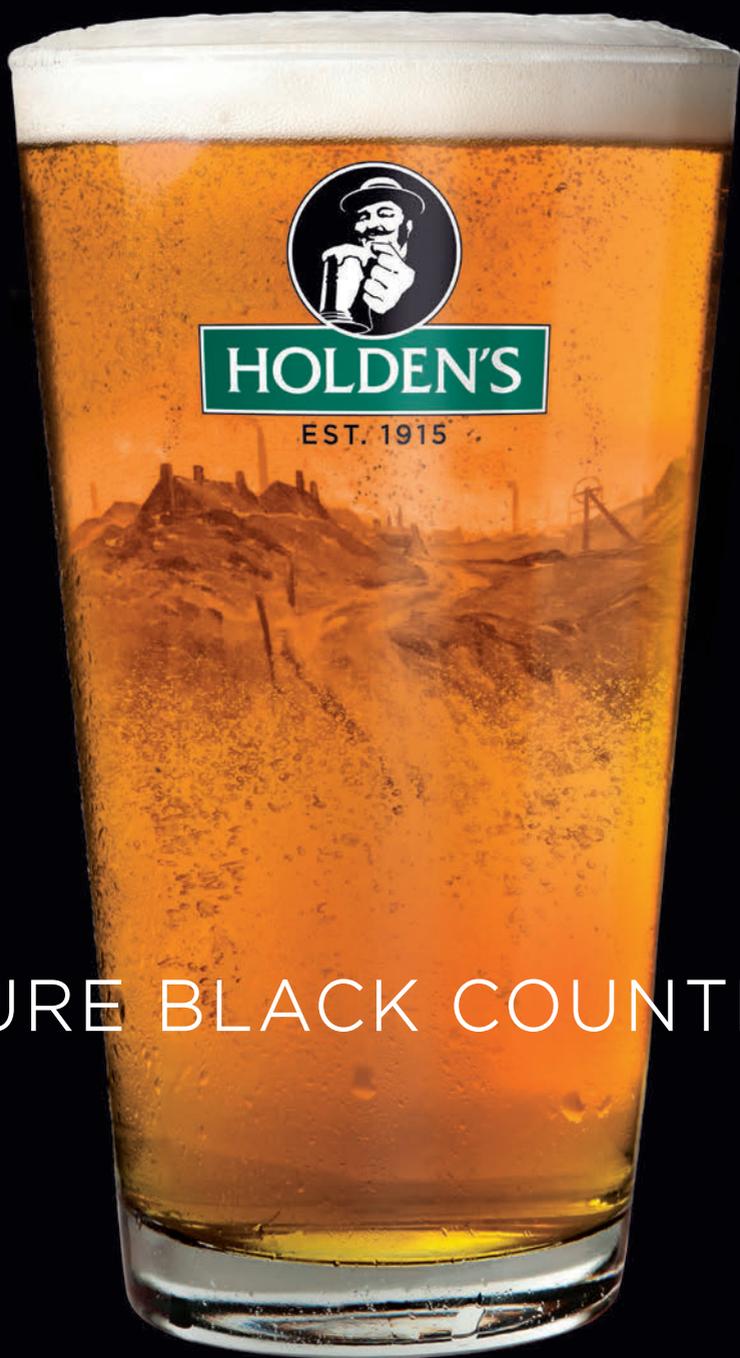
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