

Mild & Bitter

Keeping Derby CAMRA drinkers informed since 1975

Brunswick Triumphs on Awards' Evening

Upwards of 50 attended the awards' evening on 26th February at the Flowerpot, whose staff laid on a lovely spread. Attendees included Derby North MP Catherine Atkinson, Derby South MP Baggy Shanker, and most of the finalists were represented.

16 judges including members from neighbouring Branches participated in judging and here are the results in full:

City winner: The Brunswick Inn; runners up: Flowerpot and Smithfield. **Suburban winner:** Falstaff; runners up: Creaky Floorboard and Hoppy Place. **Country winner:** Bank of Beers, Melbourne; runners up: Spirit Vaults, Melbourne and Spread Eagle, Etwall. **Club of the Year winner:** Liberal Club, Spondon; runners up: Jubilee Club, Chaddesden and Victory Club, Allenton. **Cider Pub of the Year winner:** Brunswick; runners up: Smithfield, Victoria. John and Emma won a special award for reviving the **Victoria Inn**, Midland Place. **Overall Branch Pub of the Year:** Brunswick Inn.



Alan Pickersgill (right) at the awards' presentation
Fancy Redesigning M&B?

We're looking to give M&B a modern, new look and we're appealing for those with graphic design skills to help us. In particular, we need a new masthead incorporating the text "M&B April 2026 newsletter for Derby, Ashbourne and Amber Valley CAMRA members". Also, the text font generally needs changing. So, if you can oblige please send your design to mildbitter@derby.camra.org.uk

Sharp Shock for Cornish Brewery

Derby based Gillian Hough, CAMRA's national Vice-Chair appeared on GB News on 26th February revealing the bad news that Sharp's of Rock, Cornwall is to close. The brewery has a capacity of 200,000 barrels a year and is best known for Doom Bar, although Sea Fury won a CAMRA award not long ago. At the time of going to press, isn't clear whether brewing will be transferred to the Midlands (Burton on Trent).

Dead Poets top again in Amber Valley POTY

The **Dead Poets Inn**, Holbrook, won this coveted award for the third-year running, so congratulations to the licensees. **The Steampacket**, Swanwick, was runner up with former winner, the **White Hart**, Bargate, third. **Cider Pub of the Year:** 1st - Dead Poets Inn; 2nd - Groovers Arms, Peashill, Ripley.

CAMRA Meetings

Derby: Thursday, 5th March, Peacock, Nottingham Road, Derby – 8.00pm.

Amber Valley: Thursday, 26th March **Annual General Meeting** at the Old Oak, Horsley Woodhouse – 8.00pm.

Ashbourne: Tuesday, 31st March at the House of Beer, Ashbourne - 8.00pm.

Brewery Historian Publishes Book on "Big Six"

John Arguile has published "The Big Six" which recounts the formation, growth and demise of Britain's six largest breweries between 1955 and 2025. It looks at the key players involved and the most notable beers are recounted by employees. Priced at £9.90, you can obtain a copy from the Alexandra, Siddals Road, Derby and Poynton's in the Derbion shopping centre stock it too. Alternatively, please send a cheque for £13.35 (including postage and packing) made payable to Mr J Arguile to 71 Elms Avenue, Littleover, Derby DE23 6FB. It's a highly attractive and incredibly well researched book.

Derbyshire County CAMRA Meeting

This will take place on **Saturday 14th March at the Red Lion in Matlock**. We have the room from 12.30pm so we'll aim to start the meeting at 1pm. Thanks to Matlock & Dales Branch for organising it. Matlock has good transport links with an hourly train service from Derby or regular buses 6.1 & Transpeak from Derby or the X17 from Chesterfield & Sheffield with the stop almost outside the pub.

Gareth Stead, Derbyshire County CAMRA Coordinator

Going for a Burton?

Don't forget it's the Burton CAMRA Beer Festival at the Town Hall between the 19th and 21st March.

AGM can be Experienced on-line

If you can't attend the AGM in person, then you can go to the CAMRA website to register for the event which is between 17th to 19th April in St Albans. This will enable participation.

Red Lion Roars in Pub of the Year Competition

Members of Uttoxeter CAMRA assessed the **Ashbourne** pubs thus lessening the potential for personal bias and these were the results: **Town POTY** - Smith's Tavern. **Rural POTY** - Red Lion, Kniveton. **Cider POTY** - Red Lion, Kniveton. **Club of the Year** – Royal British Legion, Parwich. **Overall Branch POTY** - Red Lion, Kniveton. Therefore, we congratulate the licensees of all of the above premises especially Kevin Woolley and Hannah Barton at the Red Lion for their endeavours which have been duly recognised.



Red Lion, Kniveton

Champion Winter Beers of Britain

Judges at the Liverpool Beer Festival declared the following results:

Gold: London Brewing, Beer Street, a rye bitter, 4% abv.

Silver: Cairngorm, Black Gold, 4.4% abv.

Bronze: Green Jack, Baltic Trader Export Stout, 10.5% abv.

Beer Festivals

26th to 28th February: Bradford, Saltaire.

26th to 28th February: Chappel Winter Beer Festival, East Anglian Railway Museum, Wakes Colne, Colchester, Essex.

26th to 3rd March: Charity Real Ale and World Beer Festival, Castle Social, Norwich.

5th to 7th March: Loughborough, Polish Club.

19th to 21st March: Burton on Trent CAMRA Beer Festival at the Town Hall.

26th to 29th March: Murkfest at the Smithfield Ale House, Meadow Road, Derby. A dozen of the murkiest, haziest, unfiltered beers around.

27th and 28th March: Coventry CAMRA 40th Festival at the rugby football ground.

15th to 18th April: Railway Terrace joint enterprise at the Brunswick Inn and Victoria Inn, Midland Place. Collaboration to present 60 real ales between the pubs.

24th and 25th April: Nottingham Castle Beer Festival.

14th to 17th May: Rail Ale, Barrow Hill Beer Festival.

21st to 23rd May: Lincoln Beer Festival. Direct trains from Derby to Lincoln.

12th September: Derby Pride, Markeaton Park.

Don't forget, as a member you have free admission to all CAMRA Beer Festivals.

New Zealand Arms Really ups its Game

When Derby Drinker editor, Gareth Stead, delivered the magazine to the pub on the corner of Langley Street and Peel Street, he had a pleasant surprise as it now serves three real ales including Dancing Duck Dark Drake, brewed a few hundred metres away. Also, there's a food menu from 4.00pm and Sunday lunches are served between noon and 6.00pm, thus it's definitely worth checking out.

Ambergate Pub Sets a Re-opening Date

The Hurt Arms in a prominent position on the A6 and across the road from Ambergate railway station, is set to reopen after a lengthy closure caused by flooding. New flood defences are in-situ and the interior has been expensively remodelled with a view to reopening on Friday 15th May. Breakfast, lunch and dinner will be served and we look forward to seeing its real ale offering.

Brunswick to Host Award Winning Theatre

In March, the Brunswick Inn will host Lamb's Trans, a play written by East Midlands' playwrights, John Booker and Tabby Lamb, on behalf of award-winning theatre company Fifth Word. Meanwhile, the **Bell Hotel**, Sadler Gate, has A Night at the Musicals on Friday 20th March.

Ashbourne Festival is in the Offing

Subject to approval, Ashbourne and District CAMRA Branch is planning a Beer Festival in the Town Hall over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

Branch Account: Report Period January 2026

Opening cash in bank £15,049.22

Income £588.00. Good Beer Guide 2026 £588.00.

Expenses £4,507.11. M&B £67.49 inc VAT. DD £48.64 inc VAT - advertising cards. Bank charges £0.80. VAT £4,390.18 including festival. Closing cash in bank £11,130.11.

Andrew Norman, Treasurer

Name Change for Melbourne Pub

From the 11th March, Harpurs, Melbourne, will be renamed The Boot at Melbourne as Bespoke Inns look to capitalise on their culinary reputation.

Local Journalist Relaunches Beer Blog

Colston Crawford was the author of the Derby Telegraph's Beer Hunter column and he's altered his on-line blog to: <https://www.colstoncrawford.com>

Derby Drinker is Runner-up

Derby Drinker has been praised for its varied content and been ranked by CAMRA as runner up in a group of eight newsletters.

Inn Brief

The **Victoria and Albert Vaults**, Watson Street/Mackworth Road has opened serving a trio of changing real ales. Nearby, the **Jonty Farmer**, Kedleston Road, built by Banks (Wolverhampton) brewery in 1987, should have reopened now as a "sports bar" after a £334,000 refurb with large screens showing sports events. Although not to my personal taste, it isn't difficult to understand why pubs should want to focus on these broadcasts given that football is often shown seven days a week. The **Smithfield** closed briefly at the end of January following a medical emergency which prompted Westminster Building Company who own the pub, and a GoFundMe appeal, to raise funds for two defibrillators, one attached to the pub, and the other in Ockbrook. At the beginning of February, the **King's Head**, Duffield was closed for refurbishment. If strong stouts are to your liking, then you might want to make a dash for the **Spirit Vaults**, Melbourne, where a collaborative brew with Bang the Elephant brewery sees a 9.0% abv Imperial Stout available once a month throughout the year. The **Silver Ghost**, Alvaston and the **Thorn Tree**, Jackson Road, Matlock are run by the same management team. Julian Tubbs informs M&B that the **Melbourne Inn** (ex-Lamb), Melbourne, will be opening the lounge as Jo Jo's a Country and Western themed bar with open mic nights once a week (Thursdays) and current acts and tribute bands will appear occasionally. The bar itself will continue to be open during normal hours. The lease on the **Horse and Groom**, Elm Street, expires in March. On the 2nd February, the **Nag's Head**, Mickleover had Caledonian Deuchars, Abbot and Greene King IPA on handpulls. Across the road, the **Vine** had Abbot and Draught Bass available.

First Belper 250 Beer Launched

This year Belper celebrates the 250th anniversary of Jedediah Strutt's first cotton spinning mill in the town, and 300 years since Jedediah's birth.

To mark these momentous events **Crich Brewery** (now based in Belper) are brewing four seasonal ales, the first of which, **Pull Your Socks Up Porter**, was launched on 13th February. Using nine malts and traditional English hops brewer Lloyd Stringer has produced a smooth, full bodied 4.4% brew with subtle chocolate, coffee and roast flavours. We'll publish details of more celebratory brews in due course.

It Isn't Just the Green Man That's Doing Well

Last month we reported that the Green Man, Willington, had a cracking year of trading in 2025. Well, now Pete and Tracey Marshall who run the Railway, a Lincoln Green house in Belper, echo that sentiment, reflecting on a successful 2025.

Annual General Meeting Summary

28 members were present in the rear room of the Victoria Inn, Midland Place on 4th February where John and Emma had very kindly laid on a tasty buffet. Chair, Mark Fletcher, reflected on a turbulent year at regional and national level which saw the national beer festival in Birmingham make a significant loss. Locally, however, things had gone well with the Heritage Beer Festival in profit and Derby had led the way in the Handpump Hijack campaign thanks mainly to Alan Pickersgill, Kat Higgins, Gillian Hough and Derby South MP Baggy Shanker. In spring, the campaign will be presented to parliament. Russell spoke of the probability of a third Heritage Beer Festival possibly at the end of September/early October. Treasurer, Andrew Norman, said it had been a good year at all levels, furnishing us with the financial figures, and thanked Julian Tubbs for help with auditing. Gillian had sat at many Beer Festival membership desks, near and far, and spoke of the pleasure of recruitment. James Williams said he'd organised 34 socials in the past year and we'd had a quarter of a million views on facebook. Pubs' Officer, Kat, is busy collating beer scores for the 2027 Good Beer Guide nominations' meeting and Pub of the Year judges' scores.

Ian Forman, who served the Branch brilliantly as Branch Secretary for thirty years will be presented with a tankard, a most deserved reward for such sterling service. Ian also undertook physically demanding work before and after the City Charter Beer Festivals. The committee was re-elected unchanged as follows: **Chair**-Mark Fletcher; **Secretary**-Nic Scott; **Treasurer**-Andrew Norman; **Membership**-Gillian Hough; **Pubs Officer**-Kat Higgins; **Social Secretary**-James Williams; **Campaigns' Co-ordinator**-Alan Pickersgill; **Beer Festival**-Russell Gilbert; **Derby Drinker**-Gareth Stead; **Advisory**-Kevin Hepworth.

Photograph Appeal

We've had a request for a photograph of the (Black) Panther pub now known as the Oaklands, on Oaklands Avenue. If you can oblige, please contact M&B.

Minutes of the Ashbourne & District CAMRA Sub-Branch Meeting at the Queen's Vaults, Ashbourne, on 27th January 2026

Welcome

Attendance: Graham Burke (Chair), Mark Grist, Colin Terry, Kevin Woolley, David O'Dell, Jon Chamberlin, Stephen Asbury, Bob.

Apologies:

Diane Grist, Alison Terry, Hannah Barton, Rob & Mandy Hodson-Walker.

Declaration of Interest:

Mark Grist – Smith's Tavern, Kevin Woolley – Red Lion, Kniveton & Kniveton Cider.

Minutes of previous meeting including accuracy/action minutes

Taken as read.

Pub of the Year

8 pubs have been identified, split into town and country groups. **Town:** House of Beer, Smith's Tavern, Green Man, Queen's Vaults. **Country:** Shoulder of Mutton, Old Dog, Watts Russell Arms, Red Lion at Kniveton. Each group will produce a winner, after which a final overall winner will be selected from the two. All judging being carried out by Uttoxeter Branch, result to be forwarded asap. Some of our members will be reciprocating the judging process for their shortlisted pubs as well.

Club of the Year

3 candidates – Parwich RBL, Compton Club, The Brass Button.

Cider POTY

1 nomination received – Red Lion at Kniveton.

Membership – as of 06/01 – 73 (-2)

Cider Red Lion Kniveton Cider & Perry Festival provisionally confirmed for first weekend in July.

Pub News

The **Yew Tree**, Ednaston is being offered as a going concern on a 5-year lease, despite fears it may be sold off for housing development. No solid new on any bids as yet. **Roston Inn** (The Shant) has re-opened and its future is much more hopeful, although not definitive as yet. Confirmation that **The Machine Inn** is now owned by Berkeley Inns. **The George** at Alstonefield remains open and trading, although again the long-term future is not yet confirmed.

Beer Festival

Early plans remain in place to run again this August, although the securing of the venue remains to be made, as no confirmation yet from the Town Council on the Town Hall being available. Should this happen, a first planning meeting will be called for late February/early March.

Branch dates

Tuesday 24th February – branch meeting – Hug & Heave, Ashbourne.

Tuesday 31st March – branch meeting – House of Beer.

Tuesday 28th April – branch meeting – Old Dog, Thorpe near Ashbourne.

Tuesday 26th May – branch AGM – Smith's Tavern.

Meetings start at 8.00pm.

Derby Branch Diary

MARCH

Mon 2nd – Committee meeting at the Malt Shovel, The Wharf, Shardlow – 8.00pm.

Tues 3rd – Standing Order beer festival preview from 6.00pm. CAMRA members provided with free food.

Thu 5th – BRANCH MEETING at the Peacock, 87 Nottingham Road, Derby -8.00pm.

Sat 14th – Derbyshire County CAMRA meeting at the Red Lion, Matlock Green, see page 1.

Mon 16th - Derby Beer Girls are meeting at the Silk Mill, Full Street, Derby from 7.30pm. All women welcome.

Wed 18th – Ilkeston Flyer at 7.00pm from Derby bus station, visiting the award-winning Burnt Pig, 53 Market Street, near bus stop, and a couple of other hostelrys.

Fri 27 – Fabulous Falstaff lazy afternoon from 2.00pm to 4.30pm. Join us at the classic Victorian corner pub, 74 Silver Hill Road, Normanton.

JUNE

Mon 15th – Beer Day Britain to be arranged.

Amber Valley Diary

MARCH

Thu 26th - AGM at The Old Oak, Horsley Woodhouse – 8.00pm.

MAY

Tue 26th – BRANCH MEETING at the Groovers, Peasehill, Ripley – 8.00pm.

JUNE

Fri 5th - Sun 7th Belper Goes Green, Branch is running the real ale and cider marquee.

JULY

Thu 2nd - Sun 5th - The Eyes Have It Music festival, Duffield, Branch is running the real ale & cider marquee.

Amber Valley Contact

Chairman: Chris Rogers 01332 880041

Ashbourne Diary

MARCH

Tues 31st – BRANCH MEETING at the House of Beer, Ashbourne town centre - 8.00pm.

APRIL

Tues 28th – BRANCH MEETING at the Old Dog, Thorpe – 8.00pm.

MAY

Tues 26th – Branch AGM at the Smith’s Tavern – 8.00pm.

Ashbourne Contact

info@ashbourne.camra.org.uk

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DERBY CONTACTS

COMMITTEE

Chair: Mark Fletcher *chair@derby.camra.org.uk*

Secretary: Nic Scott *secretary@derby.camra.org.uk*

Treasurer: Andrew Norman *treasurer@derby.camra.org.uk*

Membership: Gillian Hough *membership@derby.camra.org.uk*

Pubs Officer: Kat Higgins *pubsofficer@derby.camra.org.uk*

Ashbourne Chairman: Graham Burke *info@ashbourne.camra.org.uk*

Campaigns’ Coordinator: Alan Pickersgill *campaigns@derby.camra.org.uk*

Cider and Perry Officer: Post vacant.

Socials: James Williams *socials@derby.camra.org.uk*

Press and publicity: Alan Pickersgill *publicity@derby.camra.org.uk*

Derby Drinker: *derbydrinker@derby.camra.org.uk*

Beer Festival: Russell Gilbert *BeerFest@derby.camra.org.uk*

NON – COMMITTEE

Derby Drinker Distribution: Kevin Hepworth *derbydrinkerdist@hotmail.com*

Derby Drinker advertising manager: Vacant *ads@derby.camra.org.uk*

Derby CAMRA Tasting Panel Chair: Les Williams *lescamra39@yahoo.co.uk*

M&B Copy Deadline

Copy to *mildbitter@derby.camra.org.uk* by **Friday 20th March**

Derby Drinker Deadline

5th March

derbydrinker@derby.camra.org.uk
Advertising:
ads@derby.camra.org.uk