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IRON BREW

MAGAZINE OF SCUNTHORPE & DISTRICT CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

NOVEMBER 2024 – JANUARY 2025



IN THIS ISSUE

Review of 4th St Peter's Beer Festival; Pub & Brewery News;

Craft Beer Connoisseur; Good Beer Guide 2025; New Homes for

GBBF and GBBF Winter

... and much more!

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT



The news that the Carlsberg Marston's Brewing Company (CMBC) is to close Bank's Brewery in Wolverhampton is devastating but predictable.

After presiding over the closure of Jennings, Ringwood and Wychwood in recent years, CMBC are putting jobs and the cask beers brewed at Banks's in jeopardy. This is more often than not the case when a global brewer buys a traditional British cask brewer, which shows that they have no regard whatsoever for cask beer and in an ideal world shouldn't be let anywhere near our remaining cask breweries.

The only chink of light in the gloom is that CMBC are apparently open to offers for purchase of the site for continued brewing operations. Let's hope that some enterprising brewer out there takes up their offer and continues to brew at this historic site.

It shows that cost pressures of high

beer tax, energy and raw materials can affect even global brewers. These pressures are even more extreme for independent brewers who have the added barrier of restricted access to market. If this "Government of Service" means to honour this laudable aim rather than pay lip service to it, then it should support the UK pub and brewing industries before more of them fall by the wayside.

CRAFT BEER CONNOISSEUR PART OF THE UNION



Despite the (probably necessary) gloomy backdrop to the Chairman's lead column about the Carlsberg Marston's Brewing Company's activities, there is an upside to something they did recently, albeit by default.

CMBC announced earlier in the year that they were to retire the historic Burton Union sets upon which

they'd built their brewing reputation (although this is now in tatters), particularly with regard to their flagship bitter Pedigree.

According to the venerable beer writer Roger Protz in his online column: "the Union method of fermentation was devised in the 19th century as a method of cleansing beer of yeast and it not only gave beer clarity and sparkle but an aroma famously known as "the Burton snatch" – a powerful waft of sulphur from the mineral-rich waters of the Trent Valley used in the brewing process".



Each Union cask holds about 150 gallons of beer and the term union came from the casks, trays and pipes used in the system being linked or "held in union".

CMBC decided the archaic system was not worth "the time, labour and trouble" to make it work. Salvation came in the form of Garrett Oliver, brewmaster at Brooklyn Brewery in

New York. CMBC distributes some of the Brooklyn beers worldwide and so a business connection was already in place.

Oliver acted as go-between in discussions with Thornbridge Brewery, who were interested in preserving this historic brewing apparatus and making it work for them.

With Oliver's influence in play, CMBC decided to donate a Union set to Thornbridge (probably to offset some of the umbrage that had come their way after their initial announcement to cease use of the Union sets) and even sent a team of brewers and coopers to Thornbridge to show them how to use and maintain the Unions.

Thornbridge wasted little time in getting to grips with their new toy and in May brewed a Union version of their flagship IPA Jaipur. The new version was softer, rounder and less bitter than the conventional brew. Not letting the dust gather, Thornbridge then brewed an English IPA on the Union called (unsurprisingly) Union IPA, which was 6% ABV in cask and 7% in bottle. It used Maris Otter pale, Munich and Crystal malts and was hopped with Goldings and Northdown. This was

thought to appeal particularly to those drinkers who missed White Shield, which was axed by Molson Coors in 2023.

Since then Thornbridge have collaborated with the Kernel Brewery of London (one of our leading craft breweries) to brew Burton Ale, a beer first brewed by Thornbridge in 2011, itself inspired by recipes from the early 20th century.

The 5.5% beer is described as malty, rich and dark with a balancing bitterness from Goldings hops.



This is a great example of craft brewers collaborating for the greater good, a process almost unheard of in the world of global brewing. Unfortunately I have yet to sample these Union beers myself as they have been restricted to a handful of

pubs or beer festivals or as the bottle-conditioned version in the Thornbridge Beer Club's monthly offerings. Hopefully before too long they will have a wider distribution and I look forward to trying them. Good to see that CMBC's ill-advised decision to retire their Union sets has had a happy ending.

CMBC continue to attract bad news with their decisions however, seemingly taking the crown once held unopposed for so long by world champions Brewdog.

Until next time, enjoy your beer! *With thanks to the following for information on which this feature was based:*

<https://protzonbeer.co.uk/>
<https://www.facebook.com/thornbridgebrewery>

POSTSCRIPT

More information on this topic can, as usual, be found for the price of a pint in my local *The Hanging Bat* where I reside most lunchtimes. That's me in the corner in quiet contemplation enjoying this establishment's fine ales.

I'm back on the pub games rota again after a self-imposed break to recharge my batteries. I even beat Big Sid at pool the other night and

he didn't take losing very well. I've been avoiding him ever since in case he buttonholes me and gives me a piece of his mind – not a good idea as he didn't have that much to give away in the first place! (*Ha-ha! Only joking Sid if you should read this*). My luck was also in for the weekly meat raffle when I won first prize – a large tray containing several huge red slabs of meat and a number of unidentified frying objects. I got meat sweats just looking at it – it was enough to turn one vegetarian. Pass the falafel burgers please!

A BEERGEEK

REVIEW OF 4TH ST PETER'S BEER FESTIVAL

How Did It Go?

The last cask has been sealed up and the remaining cider boxes disposed of and the 4th St Peter's Beer Festival is over for another year. So how did it go this time around?

Well, it has to be said that it was a tremendous success again this year, with record numbers through the door (over 800 people in total) and more beer, cider and wine drunk than at previous festivals.

The festival was helped by the sunny weather over the weekend and in

the afternoon and early evening on Friday and Saturday there seemed to be just as many people drinking outside in the marquee and church grounds as there were inside the church.

The beer and cider selection found favour with most of those attending and by around 830 pm on Saturday evening there was very little left. The first beers to sell out were Thornbridge Green Mountain and Blue Monkey Infinity Plus 1.



The demand for cider this year was phenomenal and required a mercy dash on Saturday morning by one of the organising committee to Message In A Bottle in Cleethorpes to restock the ciders. Five more bag-in-box ciders were added to the stillage early on in proceedings, but even these had gone by early evening.

The change to measured quantities of wine was also popular and we got

through a large number of bottles during the three days of the festival. At the busiest times queues did develop at the bar, but the volunteer bar staff did their best to serve people as quickly as they could and customers in the queue were patient while waiting their turn, so in the end we got through it without too many problems.



We deliberately pushed the bar further forward this year to give the bar staff a bit more room to work in, rather than getting in each other's way when serving and this worked out well.

The well-stocked tombola proved popular and there were only a handful of prizes left at the end.

The festival food and the evening barbecue also did good business, helped by the clear signage on how to obtain food tokens and where to access food.

Monies raised from the festival will go towards upkeep of the church and to support the work done by the church in the local community. So that's it for another year. Many thanks to all those who came along to this 4th festival. We hope you enjoyed yourselves and all being well we'll be back next September in this ornate venue for the 5th St Peter's Beer Festival. Scunthorpe & District CAMRA should also be on hand again to support the event on the beer and cider side of things. Cheers!

MARK ELSOME

PUB & BREWERY NEWS

Britain's oldest brewery **Shepherd Neame** of Faversham in Kent, recently announced a shift in focus away from cask beer and onto kegged products. Chief Executive Jonathan Neame cited "a shift in flavour-profile" for their decision to focus on kegged beer. CAMRA Campaigns and Communications Director Nick Boley commented:

"This news is indicative of the struggle that many brewers face in staying afloat while keeping true to their flagship products" and called on the Chancellor to cut duty specifically on beer and cider served in pubs to promote pubgoing and the tradition of enjoying fresh cask beer in your local pub. Shepherd Neame said later that they were "completely committed" to brewing cask beer.

Little Big Dog of Barrow had a "cask-atrophe" recently when a cask of **Smoke On The Porter**, a 5.4% ABV smoked porter destined for the 4th St Peter's Beer Festival, blew out its keystone and emptied most of the contents onto the brewery floor! Owner Geoff McCaughtrie was able to rescue some of the remaining beer and can it later for customers to enjoy at home.

The Lincoln Imp on Gloucester Avenue in Scunthorpe has lost its long fight to resist a change of use application to demolish the property and build houses on the site. The property developer company Shape Land & Property took their application to the National Planning

Committee on appeal after twice being rejected by North Lincolnshire Council.

The appeal was then granted and Scunthorpe will now lose this community hub and venue for live music.

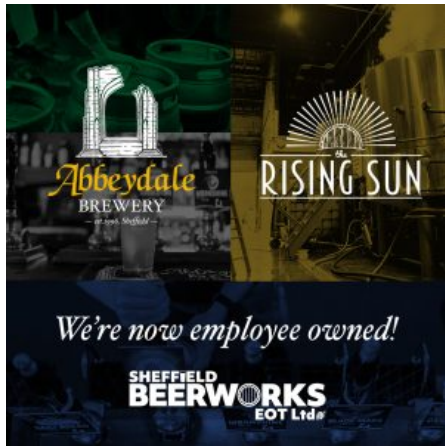


Due praise should go to the **Save the Lincoln Imp** campaign group led by former licensee Lorraine Briggs and local councillor Tony Gosling who fought long and hard to try and save the pub.

Shadow Bridge Brewery are planning to swap their current premises in Barton this autumn for an ex-office space on the Normanby Industrial Estate in Scunthorpe, which will give them extra room to house the brewery and an indoor taproom.

They have also brewed a new beer recently – **Olympus Mons**, a 4.1% golden ale named after a volcano on Mars.

Abbeydale Brewery of Sheffield has changed hands, but fortunately this is not a takeover by yet another disinterested global brewer. As founders Pat and Sue Morton (they of the Dr Morton range of seasonal beers), wind down towards retirement, the brewery ownership will pass to the Abbeydale employees under an Employee Ownership Trust. The new company Trust will be known as **Sheffield Beerworks EOT Ltd.**



Abbeydale is one of the branch's favourite breweries and it's good to see it remains in safe hands.

Thornbridge Brewery are to open a new pub in Farringdon, London called the **Wild Swan**, named after one of their first beers. The pub will be at 99 Fettes Lane

and will feature a range of cask and keg beers and an extensive wine list, as well as offering food throughout the day.



The pub is scheduled to open at Easter 2025. Great news if you happen to be in that part of London, but their other pubs, the **Bankers Cat** in Leeds and the **Market Cat** in York are nearer to hand.

London craft brewer **Fourpure** of Bermondsey has entered voluntary administration just a short time after relocation of its operation to Huddersfield, West Yorkshire.



Once a proud participant in the Bermondsey Beer Mile, Fourpure has been the subject of a number of takeovers and is now a wholly owned subsidiary of In Good

Company (IGC), who also own Magic Rock Brewery, but are unaffected by this administration. All Fourpure brewing operations in London will now close.

Administrators are now focused on finding potential buyers for Fourpure's remaining assets. Fourpure beers will continue to exist, but will be brewed, canned and produced at Magic Rock Brewing.

GOOD BEER GUIDE 2025 IS PUBLISHED CAMRA'S FLAGSHIP PUBLICATION NOW AVAILABLE

The 2025 edition of the CAMRA Good Beer Guide has just been published. The Guide features details of more than 900 pubs in this edition, all collated by thousands of CAMRA volunteers up and down the country.

The cover features one of two iconic TV pubs – the Woolpack and the Rovers Return – and you can choose which you prefer when you purchase a Guide. The foreword is written by Iain Macleod, ITV's executive producer for continuing drama. New CAMRA chairman Ash Corbett-

Collins said: "CAMRA's mission is to ensure support from the government as well as tangible legislation to protect pubs across each nation of the UK.

"By next year's edition of the guide, we want to be talking about the beer and pub trade growing with the support of communities and parliament alike."



Of course Scunthorpe & District CAMRA members played their full part in carrying out pub surveys for the Guide earlier in the year. Now the Guide is published we can reveal our choices, which were as follows:

- Berkeley, Scunthorpe
- Blue Bell, Scunthorpe
- Crown Inn, Glentham
- Dog & Gun, East Butterwick
- Ferry House Inn, Burton-upon-Stather
- Haven Inn, Barrow Haven
- Honest Lawyer, Scunthorpe
- Malt Shovel, Scunthorpe

- Pooley's, Messingham*
- Red Lion, Redbourne
- River Don, Eastoft
- Royal Oak, Snitterby
- Sloop Inn, Barton-upon-Humber
- White Horse, Brigg
- White Swan, Barton-upon-Humber
- Yarborough Hunt, Brigg

* subject to premises reopening

You may not agree with all of our choices (if not, why not join CAMRA and help us to select and survey our branch area pubs for the 2026 Guide?), but these are the pubs that the branch committee thought were the best in our area at the time. With thanks to all the CAMRA volunteers who gave up their time to survey pubs for the Guide. The Guide is available online from CAMRA Books priced at £16.99 and in all good bookshops.

<https://camra.org.uk/>

GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVALS

NEW HOMES FOR BOTH OF CAMRA'S FLAGSHIP EVENTS IN 2025

Both of CAMRA's flagship events – the Great British Beer Festival

(GBBF) and the Great British Beer Festival Winter (GBBF Winter), have found new homes for 2025. GBBF Winter will relocate to the Magna Science Adventure Centre in Rotherham from 12 – 15 February after two years at Burton Town Hall in Burton-on-Trent. This looks like too good an opportunity to miss, but I'm unlikely to be taking our narrowboat up Rotherham High Street this time around! It will have to be the train for me on this occasion.



This former steelworks provides a perfect backdrop for a huge selection of cask ales, craft beers and traditional ciders and perries. Tickets are available from CAMRA online at: <https://winter.gbbf.org.uk/> GBBF, the summer counterpoint to GBBF Winter, is also on the move to

the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) in Birmingham from 5 – 9 August, after several years at Olympia in London.



Again expect a massive selection of cask ales, craft beers, featured breweries and traditional ciders and perries, plus an extensive range of food vendors and live entertainment on the main stage.

Always worth attending and now that it's located nearer to our home base I'll be considering a visit a bit closer to the time.

Online tickets are available from CAMRA at:

<https://greatbritishbeerfestival.co.uk/>



SAM SMITH'S ESTATE TO GET NEW MANAGEMENT LONG STANDING CHAIRMAN HUMPHREY SMITH TO RETIRE

It had been widely rumoured, but it has now been officially confirmed that Humphrey Smith, long-standing Chairman of Samuel Smith's Brewery, is to stand down in December of this year when he reaches the age of 80. He will be succeeded by his 36-year-old son Samuel, who has already been running the company's London estate.

It must be said that this news will not provoke many tears, as Humphrey has been, to say the least, a controversial character, and some of his actions have seemed downright perverse. He has imposed

draconian and offputting house rules in his pubs, he has gained a reputation for treating his staff in an arbitrary and high-handed manner, and he has kept many properties, both licensed and unlicensed, closed for many years, sometimes stretching into decades, partly due to the difficulties he has experienced in recruiting suitable managers for his pubs.



How much of a change the new regime will bring remains to be seen, but surely there must be some relaxation in the house rules?, in particular allowing the use of mobile phones and other devices. It would not be unreasonable to expect them to be kept on silent and for any animated conversations to be taken outside, but it is ludicrous to prevent a customer even checking the times of their trains home. Apparently in

London this rule is largely ignored, and maybe Sam will extend this approach to the rest of the estate. The most important issue, though, must be sorting out the recruitment of managers, which is the key bottleneck that is keeping so many of their pubs closed.

(Think Open Hearth and Sherpa in Scunthorpe – Ed)



Despite all these problems, it has to be said that Sam's pubs, when they are open, have a very distinctive appeal that is not matched by any of their competitors. They offer comfortable seating, traditional décor with plenty of dark wood, an absence of TV sport and piped music, and only admit children if dining, making their wet-led pubs adults-only. They are oases of calm. They may not offer the widest choice of beer, or the absolute best beer, but in many locations they are the most congenial pubs around. Hopefully Humphrey's successor will

recognise this uniqueness and proceed cautiously in making any changes.

THE PUB CURMUDGEON

Excerpt from longer article at:

<https://pubcurmudgeon.blogspot.com/>

BRANCH DIARY

Here are some Scunthorpe & District CAMRA events coming up over the next month or two for your diary:

Thursday 21 November

Branch AGM

Malt Shovel, Scunthorpe

230 pm start

All local CAMRA members welcome

Friday 6 December

Christmas pub crawl of Mexborough visiting the Gorilla Brewery Beer Hall and Imperial Brewery Taproom



Meet at Scunthorpe Railway Station for the 1008 train to Doncaster.

Thursday 19 December

Branch Christmas Party

From 5 pm. Venue TBC

All CAMRA members and friends welcome on socials.

CHAMPION BOTTLED BEER OF BRITAIN COMPETITION

SCOTLAND'S FIVE KINGDOMS TAKES WINNERS GONG

Five Kingdoms' Dark Storm stout

(6.9% ABV) has been named

Champion Bottled Beer of Britain by CAMRA.

The winner was announced in October at an event at The Bohemia, in North Finchley, London.

Five Kingdoms, a small brewing team based out of the Isle of Whithorn, Scotland, started in 2015 as a hobby and passion project between Alastair Scoular, owner of the local pub and restaurant The Steam Packet Inn, and head chef Brendon Dennett.

"The brewery team were thrilled to have won this award for the whole of the UK," said Alastair. "We are a tiny brewery from a remote corner of Scotland, so to win an award at this level is incredible, great recognition for years of hard work.

"It is also fantastic publicity for our local CAMRA branch, who have been

incredibly supportive since we started brewing.”



Judge Alex Lines said: “Judges commented on the enticing chocolate aroma, the notes of coffee, liquorice, and chocolate on the palate and dry finish. The panel was also impressed by its drinkability, despite its strength.” Lacons’ Audit, an 8% ABV barley wine, scooped the silver award, while bronze went to Milk Stout by the Incredible Brewing Co.

BEER TODAY

<https://beertoday.co.uk/>



BEER WRITER ADAM WELLS WINS 2024 POMONA AWARD

AWARD

CAMRA’S PREMIER CIDER AWARD

Adam Wells has been named as the winner of CAMRA’s Pomona Award this year, for his commitment to cider and perry.



He was given the award in October, at the end of a presentation he was giving at the Applefest Perry Day at The Courtyard Theatre, in Hereford. Named after the goddess of fruit trees, gardens, and orchards, the Pomona Award is presented by CAMRA to a person, group, organisation, idea, or concept that has made an outstanding achievement, commitment, or contribution to the promotion of real cider or perry.

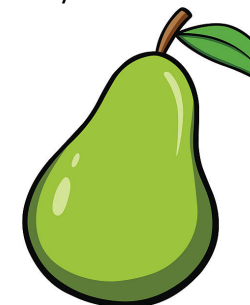
Adam (pictured) is an award-winning drinks writer and one of the UK’s leading voices on cider and perry. As the founder-editor and primary contributor on Cider Review, the nation’s leading source of long-form articles on cider and perry, author of *Perry A Drinker’s Guide* (CAMRA Books, £17.99) and co-host of the Cider Voice podcast, Adam has been at the forefront of championing producers and growers, becoming an advocate for the cider- and perry-making industry.

“I’m absolutely astonished to have the honour and privilege of receiving CAMRA’s Pomona Award, joining a roster of former recipients who have been such a source of personal inspiration,” he said.

“Being a part of that broad international group has been one of the greatest pleasures of my career. The cider community, at its best, is the most welcoming, positive and enthusiastic in all of drinks, and it is with that enthusiasm and positivity that the global cider revolution will continue to blossom and grow. I hope I’ll continue to play a role within it for a long time to come.”

Andrea Briers, who oversees CAMRA’s Pomona Award,

said: “Adam Wells has shown outstanding commitment to cider and perry, sharing his vast knowledge and keen enthusiasm about the drinks, the producers, and the industry to varied audiences.



“I would like to congratulate Adam on his Pomona Award win, and I look forward to witnessing his continued success and further impact upon the cider and perry scene. There is no doubt that he has inspired others to learn more about these wonderful, historic drinks, and his dedication to the industry is something to be celebrated.”

BEER TODAY

SIBA LAUNCHES SCHEME TO IDENTIFY INDEPENDENT BEERS

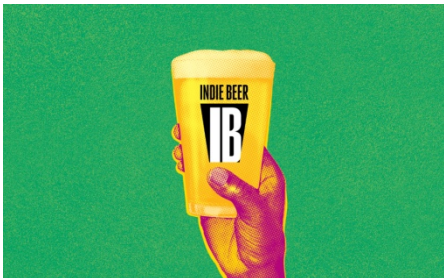
CONSUMERS WILL BE ABLE TO CHOOSE INDEPENDENT BREWERY BEERS

The Society for Independent

Brewers (SIBA) launched a campaign in late October to make it easier for drinkers to identify beer from independent breweries in pubs, bars and shops as demand for local beer rises across the UK.

New YouGov data found that 75% of people surveyed believed consumers were being misled when purchasing beer from once independent craft breweries such as Beavertown (Heineken), Camden (Budweiser), Fullers (Asahi), Brixton (Heineken) and Sharp's (Molson Coors).

Andy Slee, SIBA Chief Executive said: "People want to support smaller independent businesses, but when buying beers from companies such as these, they're actually spending their money with Global beer giants."



SIBA have now launched their "Indie Beer" mark, which will be used on beer pumpclips, cans and bottle labels to identify beers as being produced by a genuine UK independent brewery. The campaign

also includes a new "beer checker" tool via indiebeer.uk which allows people to check who owns the brewery they're drinking from (*this is such a simple and useful idea I'm surprised no-one has thought of it before –Ed*).

The campaign is supported by CAMRA and independent breweries such as Cloudwater, Thornbridge, Attic, Windsor & Eton, Elusive Brewing, Ossett, Roosters and Titanic among others.

SIBA

www.siba.co.uk

CHAMPION BEER OF BRITAIN 2024

CROUCH VALE BREWERY WINS TITLE

Amarillo (5% ABV) by Crouch Vale Brewery was named the overall winner of CAMRA's prestigious Champion Beer of Britain (CBOB) award.

The winner was exclusively revealed at Kelham Hall Beer and Cider Festival trade session in October in Newark, following a rigorous and hard-fought final round of judging. The long-standing CAMRA award is one of the most coveted and well-respected cask beer competitions in

the world, putting the winner firmly in both the national and international spotlight.

Festival goers could enjoy sampling this year's newly crowned champion, along with the well-deserved silver and bronze winners' beer at the Kelham Hall Beer and Cider Festival. CBOB judging panel organiser Christine Cryne described the beer as having "a tangy aroma with a faint note of biscuit. The flavour is full of tropical and citrus notes on a sweet biscuit base with a dry sweetish bitter finish. A full flavoured beer."



Crouch Vale directors Colin and Fiona Bocking said: "We are delighted. We have been doing this

for half of our lives. We won in 2005, and we won in 2006, and there has been a 19-year hiatus. Hopefully, this will demonstrate to people that we are still around, and we are still making great beer. This is a beer that has been brewed for 30 years, at the time, when a lot of these very exciting American hops were coming on the market, we decided to use Amarillo hops from Washington State in the USA, and we are still using them today."

Silver prize winner was The IPA (6% ABV) from Anspach & Hobday, which judges described as "A wonderful fruity new world IPA. Aromas of citrus and tropical that are also on the palette where the developing bitterness is perfectly balanced by the bitterness leading to a dry, spicy finish. Moreish for a six per cent beer."

Bronze winner Trawlerboys Best Bitter (4.6% ABV) from Green Jack Brewery, was described by judges as being an "Attractive orangey brown beer with a honey biscuit nose plus sweet orange marmalade with nutty notes and slight hint of chocolate. The finish is fruity and sweet, becoming bitter and dry. Complex and very drinkable."

CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

BUDGET 2024

MIXED RESPONSE FROM INDUSTRY AND CAMPAIGN GROUPS

CAMRA broadly welcomed the new Labour Government's first budget as it applied to the beer, brewing and hospitality sectors.

On the cut in duty for draught beer and cider sold in pubs and clubs CAMRA Chairman Ash Corbett-Collins said: "Despite general rises in alcohol duty next year, CAMRA is pleased to see the Chancellor's decision to cut the rate of tax specifically on beer and cider served in pubs, clubs and taprooms. This will help pub goers as well as independent breweries and cider producers who sell more of their products into pubs, and recognises the principle that drinking in the community setting of the local pub is far preferable to the likes of cheap supermarket alcohol."

Turning to business rates for pubs in England he said: "Today's announcement of a new, lower rate of Business Rates for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses could be a gamechanger for pubs in England. If this is done right and we get a fairer rates regime which ends the system where our pubs are

penalised with unfair bills, this would help save community locals up and down the country. "Until a new, fairer system is in force in 2026/27, we are pleased to see that discounts on business rates bills for pubs will be extended into the next financial year, albeit a lower 40%. However, the Treasury should monitor the impact that this reduction in support is having on struggling community pubs to make sure more businesses aren't forced to close their doors for good."

On the Government review of access to market for independent brewers he stated that: "Consumers are looking forward to hearing more about the previously announced policy on helping independent breweries get better access to the pub market. If done right, that should mean a better choice of locally-brewed beers at the bar in pubs up and down the country." However many pub operators have responded to the Budget with disappointment.

Young's CEO Simon Dodds welcomed the cut to draught duty, describing it as a small step towards reducing the huge tax burden faced by the industry. He added: "Unfortunately, given the other

measures announced, there are many more snakes than ladders for the hospitality industry – a vital industry for the communities we serve and the country's economy as a whole.

"The Chancellor has said she wants to stimulate growth, so do we. We are pleased the Government has listened and committed to support hospitality through reviewing business rates but this needed urgent reform, especially when costs are increasing next year."

**CAMPAIGN FOR REAL
ALE/MORNING ADVERTISER**
www.morningadvertiser.co.uk

Well that's about it for this issue. No jokes this time as the Craft Beer Connoisseur's fund of craft beer rib ticklers appears to have dried up (*and* he seems to be keeping a low profile to avoid Big Sid)! I didn't even see him in the *Hanging Bat* to buy him a Christmas pint – an opportunity he very rarely misses! All that remains is to say that it's been an absolute pleasure editing Iron Brew this past 12 months to bring you up-to-date local and national beer news and I'm sure there'll be more of the same in 2025. Thanks for reading - Ed.

With best wishes to you and yours for the festive season – see you again in the New Year!



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