



# 10 great reasons to join CAMRA

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>1 CAMPAIGN</b><br>for great beer, cider and perry                 | <b>2 Become a BEER EXPERT</b>                            |
| <b>3 Enjoy CAMRA BEER FESTIVALS</b><br>in front of or behind the bar | <b>4 GET INVOLVED</b><br>and make new friends            |
| <b>5 Save YOUR LOCAL</b>   | <b>6 Find the BEST PUBS IN BRITAIN</b>                   |
| <b>7 Get great VALUE FOR MONEY</b>                                   | <b>8 DISCOVER</b><br>pub heritage and the great outdoors |
| <b>9 Enjoy great HEALTH BENEFITS</b><br>(really!)                    | <b>10 HAVE YOUR SAY</b>                                  |

## What's yours?

Discover your reason and join the campaign today:

[www.camra.org.uk/10reasons](http://www.camra.org.uk/10reasons)



# IRON BREW

MAGAZINE OF SCUNTHORPE & DISTRICT  
CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

FEBRUARY – APRIL 2025



Last Christmas ...

## IN THIS ISSUE ...

The Craft Beer Connoisseur: Independents' Day; What On Earth? No. 37:

Grodziskie; Branch Christmas Tour de Mexborough; Carlsberg Takes

Wrecking Ball to Cask Ale; Guinness Shortage

... and Much More!

## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

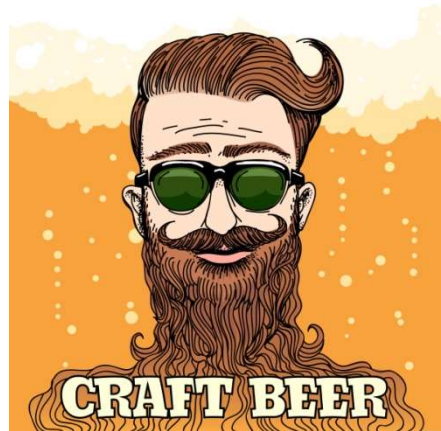


It's a new dawn, it's a new day etc etc. Yes, it's a brand new year and as ever we hope for better things for this year than last. We start off this column by being optimistic and hoping that the brewing and hospitality sector finally gets some much needed help from the Government so that it can thrive once more.

And as January recedes did you adopt Dry January and abstain from alcohol? Or did you go the other way and do Try January which encourages people to support their local pubs in an otherwise dreary month, or even Tryanuary, a campaign to support independent brewers and bottle shops? There's also a new initiative out there now called Damp January, where you voluntarily cut back on alcohol for the month.

Whichever option you went for, we hope it went well and that you'll support UK brewers and pubs throughout the rest of 2025. Cheers!

## CRAFT BEER CONNOISSEUR INDEPENDENTS' DAY



For a long time I thought it was just me and a few fellow craft beer enthusiasts who were concerned about whether the beers we drank actually came from a truly independent brewer. But no, it seems that this concern is shared by a wider demographic than I had imagined, with the acclaimed introduction of the Indie Beer Scheme by the Society of Independent Brewers and Associates (SIBA) and supported by other beer organisations such as CAMRA, the British Institute of Innkeepers (Bii) and the Independent family Brewers of Britain (IFBB).

The badge (shown, right), is open

to all breweries to use on pumpclips, labels or bottle caps provided they are genuinely independent from the control of larger corporations and account for no more than 1% of the British beer market (equivalent to around 220,000 barrels a year\*). Posters and window stickers can be used by pubs and taprooms that serve independent beers. SIBA also provide an Indie Beer Tracker on their website where consumers can check if the beer they're drinking comes from an independent brewer or not. The scheme is targeted at independent craft breweries, although not exclusively – independent family brewers are also covered under the scheme.

<https://www.indiebeer.uk>



The driver for the scheme appears to be the buying up of perceived craft breweries by the major international

brewers, blurring the lines between what is and isn't craft (although this was blurred in any case by craft beer not having a precise definition of its own). Research by SIBA showed that many drinkers were not aware that brewers like Beavertown and Camden, previously thought of as craft, were no longer independent, but were in fact owned by global brewers - Heineken and AB InBev respectively in this case.

I personally prefer to drink independent craft beers and generally shun those who've sold out to the big boys as Beavertown did. This is because I still feel that the "independent" tag is one of the most important criteria when judging a brewery as craft, alongside other considerations such as the beers, the brewery size and its ethos.

Over time the UK craft beer scene has changed dramatically as existing companies attempt to get a share of the craft beer action by developing their own competing products or taking over the craft beer innovators. Allied to this are the barriers to market entry for craft beer largely set up by the bigger brewers through pub ownership or supply deals with pubcos, with just

13% of the UK beer market remaining for British-owned independent brewers to operate in. This restriction, together with rising raw material and energy costs, has seen many craft brewers struggle to sell enough beer to make ends meet. A knock-on effect of this has been the rise of craft brewery taprooms, where brewers can sell their own beers and guest beers at source. In a beer market where the majority of beer sales are accounted for by UK-brewed versions of international lager brands it's vitally important to get more people interested in independent craft beers so that they buy them in the pub, taproom or bottle shop. If we don't then the independent craft beer sector is likely to shrink even further. And some of the very best craft beers that we have reside in this sector – think Abbeydale, Cloudwater, Kernel, Northern Monk, Siren, and Thornbridge breweries to name but a few of the more well-known ones. I don't want a "one-size-fits all" approach to craft beer, where the same beers are distributed across the land and appear in almost every pub, in the way that Beavertown Neck Oil has become a national brand since its heavy promotion by

Heineken. There has to be a link to the original credentials of brewery size and locality for craft beer to be regarded as craft in my view, not brewed as an afterthought in a mega-brewery by a global brewer. I firmly believe independent beer gives you greater taste and more choice of styles and flavours than you ever get with global mass-produced beers, which is why I regularly champion independent craft beers in this column. The SIBA scheme has been broadly welcomed by the trade, but as Matt Curtis points out when writing about this topic in *What's Brewing*, it could be that the initiative is too little, too late for the independent beer market: "The time to do this was when it first started, not six years down the track when brands like Beavertown and Brixton have such a foothold and are firmly entrenched with drinkers," says one of his interviewees. "It feels like trying to put the genie back in the bottle." Hopefully this point of view will prove to be overly pessimistic and the scheme *will* raise people's awareness of independent beers and in doing so help them to make informed choices and find beers that they really like.



is also taken up by brewers and pubs alike to promote independent craft beers (*see picture above of poster displayed in Tap East, Stratford, London*), I for one will be definitely making use of it on my future beer travels.

#### **A BEERGEEK**

\* The Pub Curmudgeon

Ideas for this feature came from the following with thanks:

- Pub Curmudgeon's blog *State of Independence*.

<https://pubcurmudgeon.blogspot.com>

- Matt Curtis's feature, *Independence versus Authenticity*

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

#### **POSTSCRIPT**

As usual more on this topic can be had for the price of a pint in my local *The Hanging Bat*. That's me in the

corner, engaged in quiet contemplation enjoying that establishment's fine ales. So what's new on this side of the Saloon Bar? Well Big Sid has got a smile back on his face after winning the pub's pool flier last week. I didn't enter as I didn't wish to antagonise him further by winning it myself. Instead I joined the ladies in the afternoon arts and crafts session out of curiosity to see what they got up to, raising a few eyebrows in the process! I ended up making a rather ornate bookmark, which will come in handy when reading *War & Peace* or the next Richard Osman. And if you ever need a set of paper lace doilies in a hurry, then I'm your man! The pub has been quiet of late, but I'm not a fan of the Dry January initiative which is often cited as the reason for a lack of trade early in the New Year. This presumably came about as a way of detoxing after the Christmas excess (or as an insidious scheme to get people to stop drinking altogether). I prefer to drink sensibly and steadily throughout December and January (and every other month come to think of it), achieving the notable double success of enjoying myself and helping to keep the pubs open.

Someone has to step up, so it might as well be me!

Enjoy your beer. Until next time.

## BRANCH CHRISTMAS TOUR DE MEXBOROUGH

### In Search of Gorillas, Falcons and Old Mills

For this year's branch Christmas pub crawl we decided to eschew the oft-visited steamy hotspots of Sheffield, Leeds or York and instead head out to the less well known South Yorkshire jewel that was Mexborough. The main driver for this was a Meet-the-Brewer night at the Blue Bell in Scunthorpe held earlier in the year, when Gorilla Brewing Co. came to show off their wares. In conversation with the Gorilla Brewing representatives, they told us of the Gorilla Beer Hall, their brewery taproom in exotic Mexborough and to be honest we were intrigued. When we researched this on the interweb and found that another brewery taproom (Imperial Brewery) was located next door, then I have to tell you dear reader, we were smitten! And so it came to pass that on a crisp morning in early December six branch members, suitably attired in

garish Christmas clothing, gathered at Scunthorpe Railway Station (despite the morning's gloomy headlines of disruption on the rail network), for the short journey to Doncaster. Once there we had about a fifty minute wait for our connection to Mexborough, so eagerly entered the Draughtsman's Alehouse on Platform 3 to peruse the draught beers. I tried a pale ale from Abbeydale, before turning, perhaps unwisely given the early hour, to the 8% ABV Old Ale from the same brewery. Others opted for the dark festive offering from Turning Point Brewery.



Suitably refreshed we caught our connection for the brief journey to Mexborough and walked to our first port of call the Old Market Hall, a short distance away across the dual carriageway. This was a large Wetherspoon pub, previously a market hall as the name implied. The

building itself looked rather grandiose from the outside, but had a surprisingly mundane interior. This was our optional lunch stop, but we also enjoyed beers from Acorn and Wilde Child here.



Moving on we walked through the High Street to the Falcon, with the promise of Old

Mill beers when we got there. Unfortunately our hopes were dashed on arriving at the bar – the Old Mill Bitter had been taken off (they couldn't sell enough of it apparently) and only the handpulled Tetley Bitter remained. Grumbling quietly under our breath we opted for the Tetley's in dimpled glassware, which wasn't bad to be fair, just nothing like we remembered it when Tetley actually had its own brewery. The pub itself was tidy and welcoming – just a pity there wasn't enough demand to keep two real ales in prime condition.

Leaving the Falcon we made our way back across the dual carriageway to the nearby Gorilla Beer Hall. This was located adjacent to the Sheffield & South Yorkshire Canal Navigation, prompting the Gorilla Brewing Co. to dub it the Meccie Riviera! No doubt the tables and bench seating set up outside the Hall would be very attractive on a hot summer's day, but less so in the middle of winter. As we approached the Hall entrance we were greeted by the very loud soundcheck from that evening's entertainment, but fortunately for our eardrums this didn't last long and we were able to settle down and try some Gorilla Brewing Co. beers. These included the pale Yeti, Bit'ter Meccie, Silverback Blonde, Stoutrageous and the strong Kong, all very tasty, in good condition and served on handpump. Quite a few in the group also tried the bottled Vanilla Gorilla chocolate porter. The Taproom was typical of those found at other craft breweries, comprising a large space with bench seating and tables scattered around, a bar at one end and in this case a stage at the other end for live music. A couple of things then happened which soured the hitherto positive mood a little. First the kitchen,

which we had been promised would be open on the day, didn't open (at least not while we were there). As a couple of the group had opted to eat at the Hall - they advertised some interesting gourmet burgers on their



website – this was particularly galling. To add insult to injury, we were told after about an hour that we would have to decamp to a small upstairs bar at another location in the building to allow that night's band to carry out a closed door soundcheck in the main room. This we did, only to find that there was no draught beer on the bar despite the presence of three or four handpumps – the barman from downstairs took our beer orders and brought them to the upstairs bar on a tray. Other people now started arriving as well, and the small bar became even more cramped. As we still had about an hour before the next venue, the Imperial Brewery

Tap, opened– we stuck it out, but it was far from ideal.

We then moved on to the nearby Imperial Brewery Tap, styled in a similar way to the Beer Hall complete with stage, but on a slightly smaller scale. We were the first people in and it looked as though we'd caught them unawares as the barman was attending to bar duties still dressed in his parka!



There was an interesting array of Imperial Brewery beers on handpump and most of us opted for their IPA or porter (or both). Whether the beers hadn't been pulled through enough or had been on too long we couldn't decide, but they definitely weren't at their best. A pity really as the Tap had the potential to be really good. Cutting our losses we headed back

to the station and the return to Doncaster. Given that we had the same fifty minute wait for our connection back to Scunthorpe, we decided to visit the nearby Leopard. This excellent pub had on a good range of real ales including Siren Lumina and a locally brewed porter. The hungrier members of the group were also able to abandon their enforced diet of crisps and enjoy some alternative sustenance in the form of sausage rolls and pork pies. Soon it was time to return home and reflect on the day. It had been enjoyable overall, with good company and (mostly) good beers. However for the 2025 Christmas Crawl we've decided we'll be heading back to Sheffield!

**MARK ELSOME**

## A CHRISTMAS WISH



## BRANCH CHRISTMAS PARTY Festive Celebration at the Malt Shovel

*'Twas the night before Christmas,  
with barely a sound, when to  
everyone's surprise, the branch  
chairman got in a round\**

The last branch event of 2024 was the annual Christmas party, held this year at the Malt Shovel in Scunthorpe. The Malt Shovel is one of our favourite pubs, but it was slightly disconcerting that two handpumps on the bar were not displaying any pumpclips, despite the pub being very busy at 5 pm when we arrived. Fortunately two new beers – Acorn Gold and Theakston Old Peculier - came on later to give the pub an (almost) full complement of draught beers which also included Peak Ales IPA and Brass Castle Bad Kitty.

Twelve local members and friends attended, although others dropped in during proceedings to swell the ranks. Once we'd all got a beer and the obligatory Christmas cards had been swapped, we got down to the serious business of the branch Christmas quiz. This had been set by last year's winners Gill and Debbie and comprised 20 general

knowledge questions and a “Secret Santa” picture quiz featuring 20 celebrities hidden by Santa hats and beards.

After much furrowing of brows the 3 Amigos team of Mark, Mike and Don got more right answers than anyone else and were rewarded with a pack of festive stouts.



After another beer or two we drew the Christmas raffle and with much oohing and aahing the winners were Keith and Lynne with a pack of bottled pale ales, Colin with a pack of bottled Christmas beers and Paul and Beverley who won a bottle of Fullers 2024 Vintage Ale. We then settled down to enjoy the pub’s beers and engage in conversation until it was time for the pub’s own quiz which some of the party took part in, having got match fit with our own version earlier. All too soon it was time to catch the

evening bus home. With thanks to all who came along on the night and for your good company and impressive display of Christmas jumpers and hats!

**MARK ELSOME**

*\* with apologies to Clement Clarke Moore*



## WHAT ON EARTH? NO. 37: GRODZISKIE

I was intrigued to find this style of beer at a pub beer festival I attended a few months back and even I, with my vast knowledge of beer accumulated over a lifetime, didn’t know what it was. As a fan of smoked beers, it’s time to put the record straight and set out the facts about this mysterious beer. Grodziskie is a historical beer style from Poland made from oak-smoked wheat malt with a clear, light golden colour, high

carbonation, low alcohol content, low to moderate levels of hop bitterness, and a strong smoke flavour and aroma. The taste is light and crisp, with primary flavours coming from the smoked malt, the high mineral content of the water, and the strain of yeast used to ferment it. It was nicknamed "Polish Champagne" because of its high carbonation levels and valued as a high-quality beer for special occasions.

Grodziskie is brewed from wheat malt that has been dried by circulating oak smoke through the grains. The smokiness of the grain and the mineral profile of the water used to brew the beverage give the style its characteristic flavour.



Polish breweries historically used locally grown hops and one or two strains of brewer's yeast in its production.

The beer was originally produced by brewers in the town of Grodzisk Wielkopolski in the 14th or 15th century. Strict regulations regarding the quality of the beer were established by the local brewers' guild, and helped it develop a good reputation in the surrounding cities and neighbouring countries. At the peak of its fame, it was exported to 37 countries and was regarded as an exceptionally good beer. The brewing industry in the town flourished.

After the Second World War, beer production was nationalised, and the beer entered a period of decline under the Communist government of Poland. By 1993, the last brewery that was producing the style was shut down. After a period of years when the style was not available from any commercial brewers, several breweries began producing seasonal or year-round recreations of the historic style, spurred by interest in the style from the homebrewing community around the world.

Most beers that are made from wheat appear cloudy, because the final product contains suspended yeast and proteins from the wheat. During the production of Grodziskie, however, the beer is filtered before it is bottled, usually by adding isinglass. The filtration removes the suspended yeast and proteins, leaving a bright, clear beer. When poured into a glass, it produces a large, long-lasting, tight head with small bubbles. It was traditionally served in tall, conical glasses that were designed to show off the clear, golden colour, as well as allowing a wide, thick layer of foam to form when it was poured. Historically, Grodziskie was made with alcohol levels of around 3.1% ABV, but commercial versions were also made with alcohol levels ranging from 2.5% to 5% ABV. Information on Grodziskie was spread worldwide through the Polish Homebrewers Association and was picked up by American breweries in particular. Krebs Brewing Company of Oklahoma brewed a beer called Signature Gratzter using one of the original yeast strains used to ferment a Grodziskie. They were followed by Live Oak Brewing of Texas, who produced their own

Grodziskie in 2014. It remains a niche beer, one other brewers are drawn to, and a work in progress. The style is still brewed commercially today by Browar w Grodzisku in Poland, Brasserie du Haut- Buëch in France and a number of American microbrewers such as Fermentations Brewing in Massachusetts and Sketchbook Brewing Company in Illinois. And if you've made it this far, no doubt you'll want to know how you pronounce Grodziskie correctly (it's "grodz-is-key"). Now you can impress fellow beer geeks by not only knowing about the beer, but being able to pronounce its name! Na Zdrowie!\*

\* *Cheers or To Health in Polish*

#### A BEERGEEK

*This article was based with thanks on information obtained from the following sources:*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grodziskie>

<https://beerandbrewing.com/grodziskie>

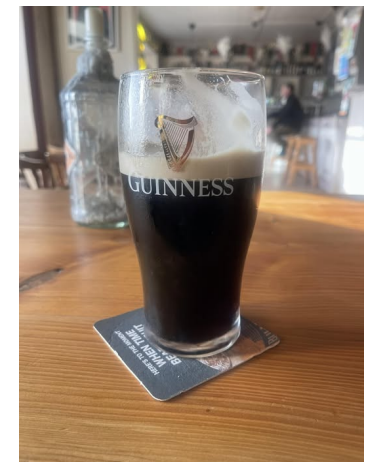


## GUINNESS SHORTAGE

### Supply Issues in Run-up to Christmas

Like me you were probably surprised to read that in the run-up to Christmas pubs in England were experiencing a shortage of Guinness due to exceptional customer demand. Surely Guinness is a big enough company to keep the black stuff running all year round? But no, there it was writ large – pubs normally getting through 20 kegs of Guinness a week found out they could only have two or three. This caused some pubs to ration the number of pints of Guinness customers could order – not ideal at this most festive time of the year! In the short term products like Brewdog's Black Heart and Anspach and Hobday London Black came into their own – the latter were subsequently forced to introduce a waiting list for their stout. CAMRA also released a list of 12 draught stouts that could be drunk as alternatives to Guinness. Here was a chance for publicans and drinkers to try something different and learn that there's a lot more to stout than Guinness. A nice idea, but in reality, although the 4.1% ABV

Guinness is arguably a fairly moderate example of the stout style, it is an iconic brand with its own pouring ritual. Sales have been further boosted by the inane Instagram drinking game of splitting the G, where you take a big enough initial gulp of your pint so that the level of the liquid bisects the G in the Guinness logo. This has introduced Guinness to a newer, younger audience who like to be seen drinking Guinness.



The supply issue was predicted to continue throughout the festive season, but expected to return to normal in January when Guinness should again be flowing smoothly through England's pubs. Remember though that other nitro stouts are available!

**MARK ELSOME**

## CARLSBERG TAKE WRECKING BALL TO CASK ALE

### Nine Cask Brands to be Axed

You may remember way back in December that Carlsberg caused a collective sharp intake of breath in the drinks industry (and some genuine anger among certain commentators), when it announced that nine cask brands from its portfolio were to be axed. This follows on from its recent intent to close the Banks's Brewery in Wolverhampton and you would be right to wonder if it had any interest in British cask ale whatsoever. The brands to be axed were as follows:

Banks's Mild and Sunbeam, Eagle IPA and Bombardier, Marston's Old Empire and 61 Deep, Jennings Cumberland Ale and Ringwood Boondoggle and Old Thumper.

While some of these beers were not beloved of connoisseurs, some such as Banks's Mild and Ringwood Old Thumper did have an important association with a region or a reputation as an iconic beer. And as the worldwide fascination with IPA's continues unabated, you would have thought that Carlsberg would want

to nurture its Old Empire IPA, a modern-day recreation of the IPA's originally sent out to colonial India. But no – they've just thrown it on the scrapheap of unwanted cask beer along with the others. Carlsberg's reasoning behind the axing of these beers is that there is falling demand for cask beer, but that depends on who you ask. Timothy Taylor, Theakston, Thornbridge and St Austell among others, all report that cask beer is recovering well from Covid and is prospering. Of course a little promotion of these brands by Carlsberg themselves wouldn't have gone amiss.



Carlsberg, exhibiting their considerable brass neck, stated that they were still committed to cask

ale. If that's the case, then they have a funny way of showing it! CAMRA condemned the axing of these brands, citing the huge loss in consumer choice that would ensue. Beer writers Roger Protz and Pete Brown went further by stating that Carlsberg were intent on wrecking Britain's brewing heritage. Not everyone agreed though. Boak & Bailey declared they were in camp "Who cares?", arguing the beers on the list weren't especially interesting or distinctive. And the Pub Curmudgeon thought that Carlsberg had inherited a sprawling portfolio of often overlapping brands, so some degree of rationalisation was inevitable. But as Pete Brown argues in his blog, the importance of the announcement is what it says about the market for cask ale and the attitudes of those who supply it. So, Carlsberg-Marston's ploughs on with its wrecking ball approach to British cask ale. Who knows what will be left by the time they're finished? Maybe just a few bland, national lager brands? Or was that the plan all along?

**MARK ELSOME**

*Compiled with quotes from the following websites:*

<https://protzonbeer.co.uk>  
<https://petebrown.net>  
<https://camra.org.uk>  
<https://boakandbailey.com>  
<https://thepubcurmudgeon.blogspot.com>



## SIX LOCAL PUBS JOIN GBG 10-YEAR CLUB

### Ten consecutive Years in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide

Six of our local pubs have attained the not inconsiderable feat of appearing in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide (GBG) for ten consecutive years up to 2025.

The roll call of honour is as follows:

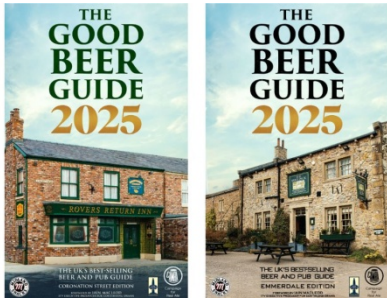
**Blue Bell, Scunthorpe**

**The Ferry Boat Inn, Burton-upon-Stather**

**The Malt Shovel, Ashby, Scunthorpe**  
**Pooley's, Messingham**

## Royal Oak, Snitterby Yarborough Hunt, Brigg

Well done to all six pubs and their commitment to quality real ales. We hope this will continue for years to come, particularly in the case of the Malt Shovel and the Yarborough Hunt, both of which have had recent changes of ownership.



We also hope that Pooley's will be able to reopen again in 2025 after being closed for most of last year as a result of the licensee's unfortunate ill-health issues.

The White Swan in Barton and the Haven Inn at Barrow Haven are not far behind and should join the 10-year club if they make it into the 2026 Guide.

We need these pubs to continue to fly the flag for real ale as our area is often thought of as a beer desert compared to other parts of the country.

We fervently hope that other pubs will feature and promote real ale in

this new year – if the pubs reaching 10 consecutive years in the Good Beer Guide can do it, surely others can too?

**MARK ELSOME**

## CHRISTMAS 2024 FESTIVE BOTTLED BEERS HUNT

### One Man's Quest for Christmas Beers

As the Christmas season fast approached in early December, apart from the annual CAMRA Christmas pub crawl and party night, the search for festive beers also began in earnest.

Some of the usual favourites were easily found; Bradfield Farmers Belgian Blue, a 4.9% ABV Christmas berry ale is also found in draught form during the festive season. As the name implies, it has a blueish colour to savour.

Saltaire, White Christmas at 4.8% is another regular Christmas bottle whose description of a Citrus and spicy ale never disappoints.

More standard Christmas ales, also found in draught form in some pubs, are the Rosey Nosey Christmas ruby ale from Batemans at 4.7% and another ruby ale, Blitzen a 4% offering from Black Sheep Brewery.

A Marks and Spencer's regular Christmas bottle, brewed by Adnams at the Southwold Brewery, is a 4.2% fruity bitter simply called Christmas Ale.

In my opinion, two less exciting Christmas offerings, are Rocking Rudolph, a 4.2% Christmas bitter from Greene King and another Christmas bitter under the name of Santas Reinbeer (4.3%) from Robinsons brewery.

Sainsbury's, whilst creating several seasonal ales, have none listed as Christmas beers. Two regular winter ales from Hall and Woodhouse are both 5% and worth trying though. The Winter Warmer and Winter Porter are good seasonal ales. A new beer for the season is brewed in France by La Goudale and is a 7.9% Celebration Ale described as being citrus and spicy. It is served in an unusual 750ml bottle.



A selection of seasonal beers, mostly found on sale in Garden Centres, are produced by the Staffordshire

Brewery from Leek and are sold under the Cottage Delights label. Their strongest beer at 4.7%, described as a golden ale is named Grumpy Santa; their second, a nice 4.2% hoppy ale known as Snow Balls, is followed by their North Pole ruby ale at 4.5%.

Another beer named Christmas Ale, produced by the Castle Eden brewery, is a 3.8% chestnut ale. Definitely aimed at the Christmas present market as it is a small 330 ml bottle, sold in a tube!

The only beer in my Christmas 2024 collection to appear in a 440ml can is from the Love Lane Brewery in Liverpool. It is just known as a Christmas Pudding and Custard Stout at a moderate 4.5% strength. To round off my selection of Christmas Ales I have seven bottles from four fairly local breweries. The low strength 3.4% Merry Imp from Ferry Ales Brewery at Fiskerton is described as a pale ale with Christmas spices. An interesting 5.5% chocolate stout ( my highlight!) from Welbeck Abbey Brewery near Worksop is named Cocoa Noel. Pheasantry Brewery, close to Newark, produce a selection of Christmas beers to meet most tastes, a 3.8% bitter style beer called

Best Christmas being their weakest. Beer Humbug at 4.2% is a dark Christmas ale having a nice selection of Christmas flavours and perhaps a strength you would think was higher. Completing the Pheasantry selection was a tasty 5% IPA simply called Merry Christmas.



Just up the A1 from Newark is Cromwell, home of the Milestone brewery who always produce a selection of Christmas ales named after Santa's reindeers! Donner and Blitzed was sampled this year, a 5.4% mahogany ale and to round off my Christmas selection was Santa's Porter, as the name suggests, a 4.9% smooth rich Porter. I managed to collect a few more bottles than in previous years. Whether this indicates the Christmas Ale market is expanding, or whether I was just lucky to find a few more for this year's selection, I'm sure. I hope you have enjoyed reading about my Christmas beers collection;

I will certainly enjoy further research in sampling them. Happy New Year and keep enjoying whichever ales you go for!

**KEITH DIXON**

*The local supermarket selection of Christmas ales, with the notable exception of Morrisons, was again very poor this year I thought. Did they know it was Christmas? – Ed.*

## PUB & BREWERY NEWS

Huddersfield craft brewing company **Magic Rock** were due to call in administrators in January. A 'notice of intent' to appoint administrators was filed by legal firm Fladgate on behalf of In Good Company, owners of Magic Rock Brewing Co. It was reported that Magic Rock was seeking a solution to financial issues, although the extent of the problems were not known.

Magic Rock Brewing Co. was founded by Huddersfield businessman Richard Burhouse in 2012 and was sold in 2022 to the current owner, In Good Company, by **Lion**, one of Australia's biggest



food and drink firms, itself a subsidiary of Japanese global brewer **Kirin**.

## YORKSHIRE LIVE

<https://www.examinerlive.co.uk>

*The sale to Lion in 2019 was the point at which the Magic Rock star started to lose its lustre and they've now become just another mid-table player in the craft beer sector rather than one of its leading lights - Ed.*

**Bristol Beer Factory** (one of our favourite independent craft brewers), has invested £2 m into a new site just 1km from its current brewery in South Bristol.

The new site will be eco-friendly and provide extra brewing capacity and further job opportunities within the local community.

## MORNING ADVERTISER

<https://www.morningadvertiser.co.uk/>

Independent drinks wholesaler LWC has teamed up with **Tiny Rebel** brewery to create and distribute **Coal Drop**, a new stout, exclusively to the on-trade in 30-litre kegs. It's described as "an easy-drinking, smooth and creamy stout, at an accessible price point". It comes in at 4.1% ABV.

The name pays homage to the rich



mining history in and around Newport and the surrounding South Wales valleys, and the rich earthy colour of stout.

## BEER TODAY

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

*The fact that Coal Drop is the identical strength to Guinness and was released at the same time as there was a nationwide shortage of Guinness is, of course, entirely coincidental! - Ed*

Local micro **Little Big Dog** of Barrow released a brand new beer just before Christmas called **Motueka**. This is an Indian Pale Lager (IPL), a hybrid beer having the crispness of a lager allied to the hoppiness of an IPA. It's brewed with the New Zealand hop Motueka (*pr. Mo-two-e-ka*) to a strength of 4.7% ABV.

**Thornbridge Brewery** are gearing up to celebrate their 20th anniversary with a comprehensive set of events

and launches throughout 2025. They began in a small stonemason's workshop at Thornbridge Hall, and have grown into the state-of-the-art Riverside Brewery in Bakewell. Today, the company produces 9 million pints of beer a year, and annually welcomes more than 100,000 visitors to the Taproom.



To commemorate 20 years, Thornbridge have created a special logo that will be found on glassware, t-shirts, beer mats, and seasonal beers throughout 2025. As part of the 20th anniversary celebrations, they will be reviving several well-loved classics. These will be available through Thornbridge Beer Club or as part of their Year of Beer programme for pubs and bars.

#### BEER TODAY

**ShadowBridge Brewery** has completed the move from its

original premises at the Old Tile Works in Barton to its new home on the Normanby Business Park in Scunthorpe. Their new address is The Business Centre, 15 – 19 Normanby Road.

They planned to restart their popular Food Truck evenings at the end of January.

**Acorn Brewery** of Barnsley has returned to the original ownership of Dave and Christy Hughes a year after it was sold to Sonas, a business development company. This should make their future a little more secure. Their beers, including the superb Gorlovka strong stout, are often featured in our local pubs.

**Marble Brewery** of Manchester has bucked the current trend for weakening beers by returning their flagship bitter Pint back to its



original strength of 3.9% ABV in response to customer

demand, having reduced it to 3.4%. Good to see this small reversal in the race to brew weaker beers.

Finally some better news from **Carlsberg Marstons Brewing Company (CMBC)** (*it's been a long time coming! – Ed*), with the release of Hobgoblin Session IPA in cask. Jo Marshall, director of marketing for ales and craft at CMBC said: "Hobgoblin Session IPA is a fantastic beer. At 3.4% ABV, it's refreshing and sippable, but with an intense and hoppy flavour, while delivering a fresh and zesty aroma." (*It will need to display all of those characteristics to register with drinkers when pitched at such a low ABV – Ed*).



Sales of Hobgoblin cask volumes are said to be up 76% year on year in the on-trade, compared to a cask category that is down 6.7%.

#### BEER TODAY



## THE BEST PUB IN EVERY ENGLISH COUNTY

**According to the Daily Telegraph** The *Daily Telegraph*, taking a day off from writing about wine, recently compiled a list of the best pub in every English county. This was also picked up by Time Out. No details of how they decided on their choices – did they send a hack to check out every pub? – but you can read the list at the link below.



A few select snippets from the list of the best pubs (in their opinion) within striking distance of our neck of the woods are as follows:  
 North Yorkshire: The Blue Bell, York  
 West Yorkshire: The Corn Dolly, Bradford  
 East Yorkshire: W M Hawkes, Hull  
 South Yorkshire: Kelham Island Tavern, Sheffield  
 Greater Manchester: The Briton's Protection  
 Nottinghamshire: Vat & Fiddle, Nottingham  
 Lincolnshire: The Strugglers, Lincoln

You may recognise some of these pubs in the list, but not others. A welcome fillip for the licensees of these pubs, but other good pubs not considered must be thinking what else they could do?

Have a look at the full list and maybe make a pledge to visit them all?

[The Telegraph Has Crowned the Best Pub in Every English County](#)

### IMPERIAL STOUT FESTIVAL AT DONCASTER BREWERY & TAP First Branch Day Out in 2025

Our first planned day out in 2025 was a visit to the Imperial Stout Festival held throughout January at Doncaster Brewery & Tap.



Although our visit to this event last year was very popular and well supported, disappointingly the reverse was true this time around and only four hardy souls from the branch made the trip. Still no time to waste and we eagerly

got on with enjoying the beers on offer in the upstairs Dystopia Bar. These included a couple of IPAs from Burning Sky and Italian brewery Brewfist, a Wild (sour) beer and a Festbier among the five Imperial Stouts. The latter came from the likes of Sureshot, Newbarns, Basqueland and Brewfist themselves and were all delicious and extremely strong at 10 – 11% ABV, making third of a pint measures the order of the day. A couple were barrel-aged after maturing in rum and grappa barrels respectively and all, apart from the Newbarns beer which was a dry stout, were on the sweet side.



We steadily worked our way through the list before heading downstairs to partake of the beers on the lower bar. These included Dreaming of Doncaster, a collaborative 5% ABV brown ale brewed with Dreaming Creek Brewery of Kentucky and Amity Nonsense, an 8.4% ABV

marshmallow stout, thought by some to be the beer of the day.



All too soon it was time to return to the station for our return train, pausing only at the Draughtsman's Alehouse for a couple of swift halves of Thornbridge's Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough Lucaria porter and a gingerbread pale of theirs called Mind the Fox.

We boarded our train on time but were held up for over an hour at the Keadby Canal Bridge which was stuck in the open position. Network Rail, who were fixing the problem, seemed to be incommunicado, so there was a lot of hanging around not knowing what was happening. Finally we got underway and arrived home about two hours later than planned.

Reflecting on the day it had been very enjoyable and drinking thirds allowed us to stay on the right side of sobriety.

At a time of year when many pubs struggle with Dry January and

reduced footfall, having an Imperial Stout Festival is unique and a great idea. Judging by the number of people attending when we were there it's been very successful and is well worth a visit. Thanks to those who came along to the Imperial Stout Festival and for their good company and to Ian, Alison and Robin Blaylock of Doncaster Brewery & Tap for another great event. We hope to be back (with a few more people this time), for the Easter Beer Festival.

MARK ELSOME

### CAMRA UNVEILS NEW LOGO

#### Is It Distinctive Enough?

In January CAMRA unveiled its new logo and in a statement said: "CAMRA has now launched its new branding to encourage more people to get involved and join us." Whether a new logo will be enough to achieve this remains to be seen, but one good thing to come out of this is a branch-specific version of the CAMRA logo, as can be seen on the front page of this issue. This new logo is also shown below. Some people have said the pint glass representation in the logo is not

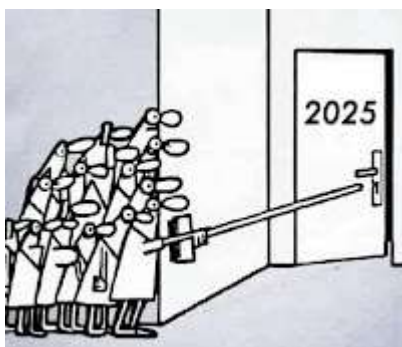
distinctive enough. I myself have some sympathy with that view and didn't think much of the logo at first, but after a few days I grew to like it.



This replaces the old "tankard" logo, used for many years. Anyway there it is – you can now make up your own mind!

**MARK ELSOME**

Well, that's about it for this issue. Now that the confusion about which day it is during Betwixtmas is over and the anxiety of When is Bins? has receded, we can (hopefully) look forward to some more enjoyable beer events in 2025.



We in Scunthorpe & District CAMRA will be organising some local and

not-so-local beer-related activities during the year which we hope you will find of interest, so do look out for these on the branch Facebook and web pages.

It just remains for me to wish one and all a Happy New Year! See you next time - Ed.

Did you know?

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



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



## ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

**BRANCH CHAIRMAN (P/T) & IRON BREW EDITOR**

**Mark Elsome**

**Tel: 01724 331056**

**e: [chairman@scunthorpe.camra.org.uk](mailto:chairman@scunthorpe.camra.org.uk)**

**29 The Dales, Bottesford, Scunthorpe DN17 2QF**

**BRANCH TREASURER**

**Neil Patchett**

**Tel: 01724 647755**

**BRANCH SECRETARY**

**Keith Dixon**

**Tel: 01724 346023**

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

**Paul Williams**

**Tel: 01673 818109**

**SOCIAL SECRETARY:**

**Mark Elsome**

**[www.scunthorpe.camra.org.uk](http://www.scunthorpe.camra.org.uk)**

**f/scunnycamra**

**CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE (CAMRA)**

**230 Hatfield Rd, St Albans, Herts**

**AL1 4LW**

**Tel: 01727 867 201**

**e: [camra@camra.org.uk](mailto:camra@camra.org.uk)**

**[www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk)**

**DISCLAIMER – views expressed in this publication are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the editor, branch committee or CAMRA nationally. The Editor reserves the right to amend or shorten articles for publication. All editorial copyright Scunthorpe & District CAMRA**