

Opening Times



Huntingdonshire Branch of CAMRA
The Campaign for Real Ale

Issue 186
Spring 2026

Branch Pub of the Year



King of the Belgians, Hartford

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Hunts CAMRA Pub Awards

Branch Pub of the Year, Urban Pub of the Year, Cider Pub of the Year and Community Pub of the Year: King of the Belgians, Hartford



16th-century community pub with low oak beams, a copper-topped counter in the public

bar and a dining room with daily good-value food. Local charities are actively supported. There is a changing range of four real ales and local ciders. There are beer festivals in May and late August, quizzes, games nights, monthly Monday open mic nights and themed food nights.

The King of the Belgians will now go forward into the county round for Cambridgeshire Pub of the Year and Cambridgeshire Cider Pub of the Year.

Rural Pub of the Year, Local Ale Pub of the Year: Crystal Ship, Earith

The Papworth brewery tap, in the brewery's industrial unit. There is indoor and outdoor drinking, with up to 12 changing Papworth and guest ales, eight ciders, and a large gin selection. There is also a bottle shop with a range of Papworth beers and Cromwell ciders.



Mild/Dark Ale Pub of the Year: Falcon, Huntingdon



Steeped in local history, this 16th-century former coaching inn is said to be the site of Oliver Cromwell's

recruiting station and the gates from the market square were once the entrance to Huntingdon prison. An ever-changing selection of beers is served from up to 14 handpumps, including locally brewed Potbelly beers and many other beers from local and regional breweries.

Most Improved Pub of the Year: Elm, Abbots Ripton



The Grade II-listed building was built as an open hall in the late 15th century, to offer hospitality to drovers

bringing cattle down from Scotland. The operators of the Elm recently changed to the same team that run the Pheasant, Keyston with a refurbishment, a new menu, and an expanded range of cask ales.

Bottle Shop of the Year: Shumë, St Neots



A delicatessen off-licence in Church Walk, just off the Hight Street. Sells cheese, coffee and

gins as well as a wide range of British and continental bottled beers, many being bottled conditioned and local. Also available is a range of bottled-conditioned cider from Hogen's. There is an on-licence for drinking at the establishment.

Pub and Brewery News

Pub News

Black Bull, Godmanchester

The Black Bull is currently not serving food.

Chequers Inn, Eynesbury

Plans to convert the Chequers Inn into a three bedroom house have been approved by HDC. The pub has been closed and vacant since 2021.

Crown & Cushion, Great Gransden

The change of use planning application for the Crown & Cushion to a dwellinghouse has been refused by HDC. The pub owner had claimed that he had used the property as his primary residence for four years, but this was rejected by HDC.

Axe and Compass, Hemingford Abbots



We have received the following news from Emma and Stuart Tester. "We're Emma and Stuart

Tester, and for over 25 years, the Axe & Compass has been our home and passion. Running the pub alongside our full-time jobs and raising our three wonderful kids—Frankie, James, and Woody—has been a rewarding journey. However, we're facing a significant challenge with the pub's back roof. Despite spending £3,000 on repairs, the leaks persist, and now we've been told a section needs replacing, costing between £6,000 and £10,000. Unfortunately, Stonegate, the building's owner, will not fund this, and with rising bills, we simply don't have the funds for this essential work. To tackle this, we're taking on a challenge: cycling from Dieppe to Paris this July, covering around 120 miles! It's a huge test for us, especially since we're not natural athletes, but we're determined. Our 12-year-old son James and a couple of friends will join us on this journey. We'll be training hard over the next five months, starting with a 42-mile ride at the Cambridgeshire Classic on March 7th. If you can donate, we'd be

incredibly grateful. Every contribution helps us keep the Axe & Compass thriving for our community. Follow our journey on social media for updates, training progress, and maybe a few sore legs! Your support means the world to us. Thank you so much, Emma and Stuart"
gofund.me/03b4391fe

Three Horseshoes, Houghton



The Three Horseshoes has reopened under the tenancy of Mark who also runs the Three Jolly Butchers, Wyton. The Three Horseshoes is currently offering CAMRA members a 10% discount on all cask ales and real ciders.

Old Bridge, Huntingdon

Plans have been approved to convert existing office space and store rooms into four guest bedrooms at the Old Bridge.

Horseshoe, Offord Darcy

Work has finally commenced at the Horseshoe to repair the damage caused by the kitchen fire and it is hoped the pub will reopen shortly.

Golden Knight, Sapley



The Golden Knight reopened on 30th Jan after a refurbishment. The new tenant is Jez Davies who previously

ran the Black Bull in Godmanchester. There are currently no plans to serve cask beer.

Barn, St Ives

The Barn has closed after only being open a short time and its future is uncertain.

Pub and Brewery News

Broadway Cellars, St Ives

The Broadway Cellars is now serving keg beer.

Royal Oak, St Ives

The Royal Oak has reduced its opening days to Thursday-Sunday.

Taproom, St Ives

The Taproom usually has a keg beer from IVO brewery available.

Tellers Table, St Ives

The former Di Rita's is set to open as the Tellers Table and will be the second venture in St Ives for Stephen James Inns, who opened the Broadway Cellars at the end of last year

White Hart, St Ives

The White Hart is currently closed

Maddison's, St Neots



A new bar has opened in St Neots in what was the Corner House. Maddison's is a Well's pub advertising as a sports bar

White Hart, Warboys

The White Hart is currently closed

Brewery News

IVO, St Ives

Charlie & Jason have now started brewing at the new site and are holding an open weekend at the farm where they look forward to showing you around the new site and big shiny brewery. Doors open at 5pm - 9pm on Friday 27th March and 12pm - 9pm on Saturday 28th March. There is plenty of inside space and children and dogs are welcome. In order to make sure there is enough beer they are asking everyone to buy a ticket in advance. This is purely to give a better indication of numbers and your £5 ticket price includes a £1 (refundable) deposit on a limited-edition reusable cup and your first pint. You do not need to buy tickets for anyone not drinking beer. They hope to

have at least eight cask and four keg beers on tap with some guests from other local brewers. Food, wine, soft drinks and non-alcoholic beer will also be available. You can get your tickets and more info [HERE](#).

Papworth, Earith

Koura, their wheat beer recently won the Silver award in the Speciality, Differently Produced beer category at CAMRA's Winter Beer of Britain competition.

Papworth Printworks, Papworth

Frank, former co-owner of W heatsheaf is now working hard to get this community owned brewery up and brewing.

Rocket Ales, Great Staughton

Rocket Ales is currently for sale.

W heatsheaf, Huntingdon

The W heatsheaf Brewery has unfortunately closed.



The screenshot shows the CAMRA.org.uk website with several call-to-action elements:

- A green circle with the text "Search for a pub or social club" pointing to a search bar on the website.
- A green circle with the text "Scroll down to suggest an edit" pointing to a "Help keep our information accurate!" section.
- A green circle with the text "Help update our pub data" pointing to a "Support an edit" button.

The website header includes "Help power CAMRA.org.uk" and the CAMRA logo is visible at the bottom left.

Ted Bruning - Obituary



Ted Bruning, who has died aged 68, was a writer and journalist who played a pivotal role in turning

What's Brewing into an influential newspaper and a major source of information for CAMRA members.

Ted was born in Wolverhampton. He studied at University College London and also went on a journalism course to learn the skills of the profession. He joined the *Workshop Guardian* as a reporter and then moved to the *Morning Advertiser*. The MA at the time was a daily printed newspaper that reported on pubs, beers and breweries. The paper was founded in 1794 by the Society of Licensed Victuallers as a voice for publicans. In the 19th century it could boast that one of its contributors was Charles Dickens and Ted was moving in illustrious circles. He rose through the ranks at the MA to become news editor and built what journalists call a strong contacts book – a list of useful people to speak to on a regular basis about events in the pub trade and brewing industry.

As a founding member of the British Guild of Beer Writers in the late 1980s, Ted also developed a bond with fellow journalists writing about beer and pubs.

When he left the MA, he came to work for CAMRA in the 1990s at its office in St Albans where he worked for 13 years as assistant editor and then editor of What's Brewing. He was the model of a good reporter in the age of printed newspapers. He had impeccable Pitman shorthand and an easy and warm telephone manner that extracted information from often reluctant and even hostile brewers. What's Brewing since its inception in the 1970s had been a 16-page monthly paper. But thanks to a major increase in advertising revenue in the 1990s it was possible for a team of just three – Ted,

production editor Kim Adams and this writer – to produce 28, 32 and even 36-page papers. Kim and Ted had also worked together at the MA and had a strong working relationship. Kim says Ted was a gifted writer who always supplied his copy to deadline. Ted enlivened the small What's Brewing office with his infectious laugh and great sense of humour.

When I stood down as editor, Ted took over and continued in the role for eight years. He broadened the scope and appeal of What's Brewing by adding regular coverage of cider. After his long stint at What's Brewing, Ted threw himself into book writing on a variety of issues. His main work was the *Microbrewers Handbook*, a best-seller that ran over several editions. It was a mine of information for people thinking of building small breweries and guided them through the legal and health and safety aspects, as well as how to buy kit and raw ingredients.

He went on to write books on homebrewing, cider and whisky. He produced a number of books on the history of pubs in both London and the wider country. They included books on historic inns and coaching houses. His *Historic Inns of England* won him a silver tankard award from the British Guild of Beer Writers in 2000.

He met Liz, who became his wife, when they were both students at UCL. They settled in Gamlingay, Bedfordshire and raised twins Robert and Isobel. When they divorced but remained on good terms, Ted moved to St Neots where he continued his busy writing activity. During this period, Ted became an active member of the Huntingdonshire CAMRA branch, attending socials and working at the St Neots Beer & Cider Festival.

Ted had been ill for some time. He had two heart attacks and had been in hospital since December.

He will be mourned by his close friends and colleagues at What's Brewing, the wider CAMRA community and all those who respect professional writing and journalism of the highest order.

Roger Protz

Glasgow by Train

Searching on the CAMRA website showed that the availability of cask beer in Glasgow is not as good as in the capital. There are some good pubs in the city centre including a number owned by Wetherspoons, but outside of the centre, cask beer is difficult to find. I only had a limited time to visit the pubs so only a couple are reported on. As there are no direct trains I travelled with LNER to Edinburgh for an onward connection.

My first visit was to The Raven on Renfield Street in the city centre.



Two cask beers were on sale, alongside many craft beers. The Scottish cask beers were Stewart Jack Back pale ale and Cromarty Whiteout IPA which were both very drinkable. The craft beers included several from Cold Town brewery of Edinburgh, plus some from over the border. I hadn't previously heard of Weekend Project brewery from Cheshire so their Arctic Fox milk stout was tried.

The large pub has several separate areas and many television screens showing live sport. There is live music several times a week when the pub is really busy. Food is mainly burgers and pizzas.

The next visit was to the Pot Still on Hope Street. This small traditional pub has won many awards for both its cask beer and also its impressive whisky selection. The cask beers from Scottish breweries are dispensed from traditional tall fountains. On my visit the three available were Black Isle Yellowhammer, Five Kingdoms McGregor's mild and Spey Valley Spey Stout. Several craft beers were also on tap. There are also bottles of



Thistly Cross cider. It gets busy here at all times of day.

Slightly out of the town centre is the Bon Accord, a Glasgow landmark which has won numerous CAMRA awards and has been Pub of the Year many times. Unfortunately, its lease was up for renewal and the owners had taken the



decision not to renew it and, instead, move to a new site on Hope Street in the city centre. I took the opportunity to visit the Bon

Accord with a friend for a final time. There are eight hand pumps but they were obviously running down as there were only four cask beers on sale. The only local beer was Two Towns Down Juicy, from Paisley. The other three were from Adnams, Timothy Taylor and Wye Valley. There is an impressive collection of whisky, and good-value food is available all day.

I called in at several Wetherspoon outlets, all of which had at least one Scottish beer on sale. The Hengler's Circus near my hotel in the Charing Cross area of the city centre, which had the largest selection of cask beers, including ones from Skye and Mor breweries. Alcohol only appears to be sold after 11am, unlike at Wetherspoons pubs in the England.

Ian Baptist

East Coast Rail Journeys - Canterbury

I recently enjoyed a short stay in Canterbury after, probably, my most easterly rail journey. This delightful Kent town has many historic pubs with many cask beers available. The CAMRA website contains information on all the pubs in the town, and is regularly updated by the local branch, and is probably the best guide to where to visit.

After a change of trains at London Bridge I arrived at Canterbury West station. It is a bit of a walk into the city centre but there is also a regular bus service.

One of the nearest pubs to the station is the West Gate Inn operated by Wetherspoons.



Dating back to the 17th century, it is Grade-II listed, although many of the original features have been lost over the years. It definitely doesn't look like a typical Wetherspoons pub, with many separate drinking areas. The choice of two beers from Wantsum Brewery, Uprising Red Ale and Fortitude plus a beer from Hadrian, in addition to their regular beers, was probably the best that I seen in their pubs in East Kent. The Uprising was especially good.

I then headed along St Peter Street to the Black Griffin, a former Ridgens brewery pub. This company eventually became part of the Fremains part of the Whitbread company, which finally left the brewing to concentrate on running hotels and coffee shops. Today, it this pub survives as part of the Stonegate pub company's portfolio. There has been a pub on the site since the 1600's but the current building dates from the early 1800's.



There are two separate rooms. One regular and three changing cask beers from the pubco's beer list are served. The pub is well known locally for

its live music nights.

Continuing along St Peters Street the next pub is the Cricketers.



This traditional pub's history doesn't go back as long as others in Canterbury. Today it is operated by Shepherd Neame brewery and sells three of their cask beers including Spitfire and Master Brew.

Another detour brings you to the Foundry Brewpub the home of Canterbury Brewers. In contrast to Canterbury's traditional pubs this is in a former industrial premises. The brewery can be viewed from windows in the bar area. Tours of the brewery can be booked on their website. Normally up to three of their cask beers are on

East Coast Rail Journeys - Canterbury



sale, with further craft-keg beers and ciders. Canterbury also operates as a distiller, producing whisky, gin, rum and vodka, which have won many awards. The beers and spirits are also available to take away.

I headed back across St Peters Street and onto Best Lane where the Thomas Becket can be



found. This is another former Ridgens brewery pub. It dates back to 1775, when it was named the Bricklayers Arms. It was renamed in 1970 on the 800th anniversary of

Archbishop Thomas Becket's murder. This pub is described in the *Good Beer Guide* as 'a gem of a pub a stone's throw from the Cathedral'. It normally serves four changing beers from Kent breweries. The pub is extremely dog friendly, even having a special menu for man's best friends.

Around the corner on Orange Street is the Seven Stars, another historic pub whose history dates



back to the 1660s. Later in its history it was also under Fremplins ownership. The Dover-Kent archives contain many references to the pub and its history over the years. Unfortunately, cask beer is no longer available here.

My final visit in the city centre was to the Sun Hotel.



The bar is probably only open to residents and has no cask beer, but the photograph shows what is probably the most interesting architecture of the pubs I visited.

East Coast Rail Journeys - Canterbury

I visited the New Inn on Havelock Street, outside the centre of Canterbury.



A *Good Beer Guide* regular, this back street local is a short walk from the cathedral. There is a main bar and a conservatory at the rear. Up to seven cask beers are on sale and two beer festivals are held annually. The New Inn has been the local CAMRA branch pub of the year on several occasions. The beers available on my visit were Tonbridge Brewery Traditional, Surrey Hills Ranmore, Arbor Shangri-la and Oakham Citra. I also had a Dubai Stout but neglected to make a note of which brewery it was from, I blame this for chatting too much with the locals (but it was probably that I was feeling a bit under the weather following the extreme cold spell the previous week).

Many other pubs in Canterbury are worth a visit including the Thomas Tallis Alehouse on Northgate.



This 15th-century half-timbered building was converted to a pub in 2016. Today, it is, justifiably, featured in the *Good Beer Guide*. Local cask beers and traditional ciders are featured, together with a large range of craft beers. Also

recommended is Stonegate's Unicorn on St Dunstan's Street close to Canterbury West Station. This pub recognised by CAMRA as an Outstanding Pub Conversion and is Grade II listed. Three changing cask beers and one traditional cider are served.

I can recommend the Premier Inn as a good place to base yourself in Canterbury. There is also what appeared to be a good Travelodge just around the corner. As well as its many excellent pubs the city is also well positioned for visiting other parts of Kent. If like me you have a bus pass there are good services around the area. An advert that I noticed on one pub was for the Thanet Loop Ale Trail. This uses the Stagecoach 'Loop' service that operates frequently between Margate/Ramsgate/Broadstairs and intermediate villages. Something to try in the summer months.

Ian Baptist

NB: I have mentioned the Dover-Kent Archive against two of the pubs. Their website Dover-Kent.com contains much historic information about these pubs. If anyone is interested in the histories of these and other Kent pubs then it makes for an interesting read.

Ever seen a Ginger Panther?

No, but we've tried one!

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FIND OUT MORE



Pub Companies

Pub Companies - The Pubs Code

In the last article, we examined how pub companies make money from their tenanted/leased pubs, notably through operation of the tie, which requires tenants both to pay rent and to buy, at inflated prices, most products from the company. This arrangement has been a source of tension ever since the tied house system was introduced in the late 18th century but those tensions were exacerbated by the 1989 Beer Orders and the consequent rise of the pub companies.

Various attempts at self-regulated controls were tried but the imbalance of power persisted. By 2013, the Business Secretary, Vince Cable, had concluded that statutory regulation was necessary. The result was the Pubs Code Regulations 2016, or Pubs Code for short. Sadly, it was decided that the Code would only apply to companies owning more than 500 tenanted/leased pubs.

The Code, which applies only in England and Wales, is based on two principles:

- fair and lawful dealing by pub-owning businesses in their dealings with their tied tenants;
- tied tenants should be no worse off than if they were free of tie.

In pursuit of the second principle, the Code introduced the option for tied tenants to request a Market Rent Only (MRO) option. This provides for tenants to break free from the tie on beer and other products and simply pay a 'market rent' for the property. The Code specifies the rent assessment process to be followed.

A Pubs Code Adjudicator (PCA) was appointed to issue advice and guidance about the Code, arbitrate individual disputes and carry out regulatory functions, including a power to investigate suspected breaches of the Code. The current PCA is Fiona Dickie.

The PCA office has mostly concentrated on the first two sets of responsibilities. However, in 2019

it launched an investigation into Star Pubs & Bars. The allegation was that the company was obliging tenants negotiating MRO to carry on stocking some of their products. The PCA found that Star had frustrated the principles of the Code and fined them £2m (an appeal is working its way through the courts).

In its first five years, the PCA received 536 arbitration referrals; of these, 272 related to Stonegate or its predecessor Ei, 116 to Star and just one to Admiral Taverns.

A Government review of the Code kicked off in 2019. The main points in CAMRA's submission to the review were that:

- the Code was not working as intended;
- pub companies were 'gaming' the Code, exploiting gaps in the regulations and failing to discharge their MRO duties;
- surveys of tenants revealed high levels of concern around the ineffectiveness of the
- Code and exploitative behaviour by companies;
- the PCA was under-resourced and lacked teeth;
- the playing field was unequal, with companies enjoying access to a much higher level of legal resource;
- changes were urgently needed to allow tenants to make a decent living and prevent them walking away from the trade.

The Government published its response to the consultation in November 2020. Although it accepted that the Code was not working as well as it should, it restricted its proposals for action to further consultations on a range of relatively minor matters where it felt there was room for improvement. Those consultations did not start until July 2021 so any resultant changes are some way off yet and may not amount to a great deal.

Interviewed that month, Fiona Dickie, the PCA, claimed to have done a lot both to improve the

Pub Companies

processes she had inherited and to encourage tenants to find out more about their rights. 'The MRO process is better' she said 'but it's not good enough and there's more to do'.

In August 2021, two academics, Dr Jed Meers and Dr Liz Hind, published a detailed study on 'The Pubs Code, Statutory arbitration and the tied lease'. They concluded that 'there are a series of limitations with both the function of the Pubs Code Regulations and the "code adjudicator" model itself.

In particular, our findings demonstrate the use of delaying tactics, the interaction of code adjudication with the parties' existing contractual relationships, and issues with the application of arbitration "burden of proof" standards to the exercise of duties under the statutory code'. They note that the Scottish Parliament had recently agreed a similar system for Scotland but which

seeks to "avoid problems experienced in implementing (the Code) in England and Wales".

To sum up, the Code clearly isn't working as intended. Consultation on improvements is underway but the scope is limited and the radical changes needed are not on the horizon. Nonetheless, CAMRA will continue to fight for proper reform of the Code and the rights of tied tenants across the UK.



Is your local pub under threat?

CAMRA has the tools to help you save it

camra.org.uk/saveyourlocal



Photo credit: Stop Press Media / Alamy Stock Photo

CAMRA Members' Weekend

CAMRA Members' Weekend 2026: St Albans is ready to welcome you!



All members are warmly invited to join us in St Albans for CAMRA's Members' Weekend, 17–19 April – with plenty happening either side for those who want to make a longer trip of it.

CAMRA
MEMBERS' WEEKEND
ST ALBANS 2026

Our team in CAMRA South Herts Branch has been working hard to create a weekend that's not just a great CAMRA gathering, but a true celebration of beer, cider, pubs and clubs across a whole city.

For this weekend we're creating something special called the St Albans City of Ale – a programme of events taking place right across the city in pubs, clubs and venues.

Rather than concentrating everything in the conference venue, we're taking the festival out into the places where great beer is poured every day.

Our pubs (including many of our *Good Beer Guide* pubs) will be part of our City of Ale event, laying on special beers and ciders, running mini beer festivals, tastings, meet-the-brewer sessions, guided pub walks, live music and much more, giving you plenty of reasons to explore. Full details are here stalbanscityofale.org.uk.

The new website brings all of this together in one place. You'll find:

- **Confirmed events** — from tastings and tap takeovers to live music and special presentations.
- **Pub trails** — great routes for sampling the city's best real ales, ciders and perries while taking in historic sights.
- **Travel and accommodation info** — handy advice on getting here and where to stay.

Already featured are lively festivals, tastings and entertainment across a range of great venues — and more events are being added all the time.

There's something for everyone, whether you're a passionate cask ale fan, a modern craft beer enthusiast, a cider devotee or just looking forward to a fun spring weekend in a beautiful, historic city.

And what a city it is to explore! St Albans is compact, friendly and packed with history, from the Roman remains of Verulamium to the magnificent cathedral. It also boasts an exceptionally dense cluster of quality pubs within easy walking distance of each other, the Alban Arena where our conference will be held, and the train station.

Whether you're coming for the beer, the pubs, the people or a bit of all three, you'll find a warm welcome waiting.

More details on registration, travel and accommodation can be found at: camra.org.uk/members-weekend.

We can't wait to raise a glass with you in St Albans in April. Cheers!

Emily Ryans

*Chair of the Local Organising Committee,
Members' Weekend 2026*

Upcoming beer festivals and events (more details on the branch website or social media)
Hunts Branch events and other CAMRA events in bold

March

Wed 4 - Sun 15 - Wetherspoon Spring Ale Festival - Sandford House, Swan & Angel and Weeping Ash

Sat 14 - **Walking social in Cambridge**

Fri 27 - Sat 28 – IVO Brewery Welcome To The Farm

Tue 31 - **Open Branch Meeting** - Three Horseshoes, Graveley

April

Wed 1- **Rural beer scoring trip (TBC)**

Wed 1 - Mon 6 - Old Riverport Beer & Cider Festival, 1-6 April at the Crystal Ship, Earith, 3-4 April at St Ives Corn Exchange

May

Fri 1 - Sat 2 – 1st St Neots Scouts Beer at the Hut

Thu 7 - Sat 9 - **Biggleswade Beer & Cider Festival**

Thu 7 - Mon 11 - **Isle of Man trip**

Sat 16 - Wicken Beer Festival

Mon 18 - Sat 23 - **Cambridge Beer Festival**

Tue 26 - **Open Branch Meeting** - TBC

June

Thu 4 - 6 Sat - Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival

Sat 6 – **Hunts Branch AGM followed by walking social in Huntingdon / Godmanchester**

An up-to-date listing of pub & local beer & cider festivals can be found at:

hunts.camra.org.uk/pubbeerfest.

An up-to-date listing of Hunts CAMRA events can be found at: hunts.camra.org.uk/diary, or contact the social secretary, on socials@hunts.camra.org.uk.



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