

# Beer at Heart



Magazine of the Heart of Staffordshire branch of CAMRA

Incorporating Uttoxeter & District sub-branch and covering Stafford  
• Stone • Eccleshall • Penkridge • Gnosall • and surrounding areas

## We've Been Slayed! *George & the Dragon is our Pub of the Year*



Photo: Phil Vickers

**FULL DETAILS OF ALL THE WINNERS ON PAGES 10 AND 11**

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**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

# The Moat House

**Located in the heart of the Staffordshire village of Acton Trussell, the Moat House shines in all its historic glory**

It was the first property owned and developed by the Lewis family and is the first of five developments that created the Lewis Partnership that we see today. Originally a 15th Century Manor House it was refurbished but kept its rustic oak-beamed charm and opened as a bar and restaurant in June 1988.

Over the years, The Moat House has been redeveloped and extended; it now boasts 41 bedrooms, 8 conference rooms, wedding facilities and the award-winning Orangery restaurant. With so many rooms to choose from The Moat House can accommodate occasions of all sizes: Weddings, Birthdays, Anniversaries, Charity Events, Balls, Proms, Fashion Shows, business meetings...the list is endless.

Despite the refurbishments, you can still admire the historic beams and beautiful charms of the old manor house in the Lounge Bar. There is a good mix of seating including traditional high tables with stools, sofas and easy, comfortable chairs. It has a stunning fireplace with an open fire and is the perfect place to sit back and enjoy a pint of real ale.

The Moat House, like many of the Lewis Partnership properties, is proud to be Cask Marqued and has three real ales available on the main bar. Cask ales are so popular here there is an additional pump being added later this month.

*Wainwright* is the most popular bitter, followed closely by *Lancaster Bomber*; these are two of the beers you might find in the Lounge bar. Marstons

beers are often available to sample including Wychwood, Ringwood and Thwaites. *Blonde Star* from Sillhill Brewery has been popular with the locals and with the addition of another hand pull we are looking forward to offering more guest ales.

If you enjoy sampling real ales you can enjoy our real ale platter served as part of our Gentlemen's Afternoon Tea. These can be booked online or by telephone and enjoyed in our Orangery Restaurant.

The Lounge Bar is a hidden gem in Acton Trussell and is open for breakfast and offers its own menu including English Breakfasts, Bacon Sandwiches and Pastries. Sandwiches and snacks are served all day and the full menu, including classic favourites such as Fish & Chips and Steak and Ale Pie is available 12-2pm and 5.30-9.30pm (12-4pm 5.30-9pm Sunday). In the summer months, you can enjoy eating and drinking al fresco, overlooking the lake and the church—it really is the most idyllic setting.

The award-winning two AA rosettes Orangery Restaurant is open every day and offers the very best of fine dining. The restaurant is open for lunch and evening meals, serving Afternoon Tea in between. The Orangery is a beautiful dining room and has a panoramic view of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal alongside the beautifully maintained grounds of the Moat House itself.

# Spring 2017

# Beer at Heart

Winner of West Midlands CAMRA Branch Magazine Best Newcomer Award

## From the Editor

Our branch stalwart Mike Harker took a nasty fall recently. The good news is that Mike is recuperating well but he will be out of action for a while. We are missing him and probably only now realise how much he did for the branch: his roles include Branch Contact, Membership Secretary, Social Secretary, Cider Officer and Slater's Brewery Liaison Officer, as well as dealing with the advertising and distribution of this magazine...but that doesn't really even begin to cover it!

Mike's absence has pointed out the problems of very few people having to take on an awful lot. Our annual beer festival is also the hard work of a small group and so far we haven't had as many people as usual joining the organising committee or signing up to volunteer. We all seem to be leading increasing busy lives but many hands make light work.

So, as this will be our milestone 10th festival please consider helping out - that could be as simple as a single afternoon or evening behind the bar or ticket desk. It's also good craic! See pages 13, 16 and 17 for how to get involved.

It's just left for me to say, get well soon Mike!

**Andy Murray**

editor@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk

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# Chair's Chat

**Welcome to Beer at Heart 28**, it doesn't seem long since I was writing the similar article for issue no. 27, but the festive season is behind us now and hopefully the worst of the winter weather.

Things in the branch remain busy with the Good Beer Guide 2018 selection process. It is a timely reminder to keep submitting your beer scores via [whatpub.com](http://whatpub.com), whether you are reading this in your local, another pub or club in our branch area, or if you are visiting from another part of the country. These scores are a continuing quality control process throughout the year, as the selection and branch officials can't be in every pub and club all the time (not that we wouldn't like to!!).

We've held our first planning meetings for the 2017 Beer and Cider Festival, our 10th. (It's a long time ago since those first two sweaty, busy festivals at the Gatehouse Theatre!) There are lots of things to be done, ordered, and organised before the end of July, so any help would be gratefully received. Positions are still available during the festival and help is always required with set up, take down, so if you would like to volunteer for a few hours, days or a week, details are available on the branch and Beer Festival websites. Various social media platforms are also being set up.

We've just awarded the Pub of the Year to George & the Dragon in Gnosall. At the presentation I remarked on the fantastic atmosphere the pub generates, while landlord George paid tribute to their customers, saying they are what makes the place special. More on page 10.

I would like to extend a big thank you to all who have helped the branch during a difficult winter. This is a timely reminder that the Branch AGM is in May and there will be positions to be filled.

**Neil Butler**  
**Chair, Heart of Staffordshire CAMRA**



## Branch Diary

NB dates and venues are subject to change, so before making a special journey please check the diary on our website, which is bang up-to-date

### MARCH 2017

THURSDAY 16th MARCH: LYMESTONE  
20:20 TRIP - CAMRA members' launch night  
- from 7pm at the brewery (see page 9)

THURSDAY 23rd MARCH: URBAN PUB OF  
THE YEAR PRESENTATION - Floodgate,  
Stafford - 9pm (see pages 10/11)

THURSDAY 30th MARCH: BEER FESTIVAL  
PLANNING MEETING - Constitutional Club,  
Stafford - 8pm (see page 13)

### APRIL 2017

THURSDAY 27th APRIL: BEER FESTIVAL  
PLANNING MEETING - venue TBA (see  
page 13)

FRIDAY 28th APRIL: STAFFORD HOCKEY  
CLUB BEER FESTIVAL TRIP - from 7pm at  
the Clubhouse on Riverway

### MAY 2017

TUESDAY 9th MAY: BRANCH ANNUAL  
GENERAL MEETING - County Staff Club,  
Eastgate Street, Stafford - 8pm. All CAMRA  
members welcome (see pages 16/17)

### JULY 2017

27th - 29th JULY: 10th ANNUAL STAFFORD  
BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL - Blessed William  
Howard School, Stafford. BE THERE!

# Pub and Club news

## STAFFORD

The **Shrewsbury Arms** opened as planned on 8th December and has had a successful first three months—they're adding three extra lines to offer more ciders. The Shrew will hold its first beer festival between 25th-28th May, with a Black Country theme.

The **Kings Arms** on Peel Terrace is hosting a fest 7th-14th April featuring 11 ales and 8 ciders. Their new beer club launches on 10th April with a beer tasting and food matching event. Booking essential!

The **Knot and Plough** had the distinction of being the 20,000th pub visited by the Black Country Ale Tairsters [*sic*]. The group began their quest in 1984, touring 300 inns on a Banks's brewery map. They completed that in just a year but decided to carry on going. They've raised £20,000 for charity over the years by asking each pub visited for a £1 donation. The group's co-founder Pete Hill toasted the milestone with a pint of Marston's *61 Deep*.

**Stafford Hockey Club's** annual beer, hockey and music festival is happening between 27th-29th April. We're going there as a branch social on the Friday evening (28th) from about 7pm. Please come and join us!

## STONE

**Joules Brewery** and Stone Revellers have approached Stone Town Council with proposals for a new development including a pub and a theatre at Crown Wharf. The town council have offered their support in principle for the scheme, which they say is dependent on a bid to

the Canal and River Trust which owns the land. Watch this space!

## GNOSALL

The **Horns** re-opened on 24th February after a thorough refurbishment (*below*). New managers Neil and Michelle aim to offer good home-cooked, locally-sourced food (served Weds-Sun), warm, friendly service, zero tolerance to drugs or ASB, and support for local charities and sports teams. And a great pint of beer from their three handpulls of course! First impressions for this correspondent were very good indeed.



## SALT

The **Holly Bush** has been named travel guidebook company Les Routiers' 'Inn of the Year 2017'. The pub has long had an enviable reputation for its food.

# Pub and Club news ctd...

## BASWICH/WEEPING CROSS

Titanic Brewery has been granted a premises licence for 57-59 Bodmin Avenue.

## BURSTON

The **Greyhound Inn** has arranged for a well-known local brewer to supply an “in house” ale. So far the names of the beer and the brewer are closely guarded secrets!

## BRADLEY

The **Red Lion** has been awarded Cask Marque status.

## HILDERSTONE

The **Roebuck** has been closed and boarded up since December; it is up for sale by Admiral Taverns and the parish council are encouraging villagers to form a group to save it.

## CHURCH EATON

The **Royal Oak** is owned by locals. The bar is now managed by Caitlin while a new landlord is sought and she has found a chef, so food is served Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, 5-9pm. The volunteers have re-opened the fireplace which was bricked up in 2004 with a faulty chimney; they mustered the wherewithal to buy a double-sided log burner, and created a large straight through open fireplace linking the two rooms, to great effect.

## ANYTOWN

### Anypub

Landlords—your pub news could have been here. Drop me a line with short snippets about your upcoming events, real ale promotions, beer festivals etc. [editor@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk](mailto:editor@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk)

**BLACK COUNTRY ALES**

**The Shrewsbury Arms**  
Eastgate Street  
Stafford  
ST16 2NG

10 hand pulls  
Fresh cobs always available

**A Beer Festival every day!**

**Great beer, brewed in the Black Country.**

The advertisement features a blue and white color scheme. At the top right is the 'BLACK COUNTRY ALES' logo with a windmill icon. Below it, the name of the pub 'The Shrewsbury Arms' is written in a bold, serif font, followed by its address. Further down, it lists '10 hand pulls' and 'Fresh cobs always available'. A large banner reads 'A Beer Festival every day!'. At the bottom, there are four beer cans: 'BLACK COUNTRY ALES', 'BFG', 'PIG WALL', and 'PILSENER'. To the right of the cans, the text 'Great beer, brewed in the Black Country.' is displayed in a white serif font against a blue background.

# YE OLDE ROSE & CROWN

\* 10 Market Street (Next door to The Gatehouse Theatre), Stafford, ST16 2JZ \*

\* Call 01785 251343 \*

\* Winners of CAMRA's Urban Pub of The Year 2014 \*

A traditional pub, serving  
fine, local ales and lager  
from Joule's.  
By *Joule's* It's good!

Opening times:

Monday 12-11

Tuesday 12-11

Wednesday 12-11

Thursday 12-11

Friday 12-12

Saturday 12-12

Sunday 12-10.30

Food Available:

Mon-Sat 12-2.30

Fri & Sat 5-7.30

Bar Snacks

All day

Every day

YE OLDE ROSE & CROWN • JOULE'S ALES •

10 Market St

ENTRANCE



Like us on Facebook for up-to-date events, offers and specials!

[www.facebook.com/yourac.stafford](http://www.facebook.com/yourac.stafford)

# Brewery news

## LYMESTONE of Stone

[www.lymestonebrewery.co.uk](http://www.lymestonebrewery.co.uk)

The refurbishment of the **Borehole** was successfully completed in a week at the beginning of January. Work included renewal of the bar counter and fittings, together with a new floor and covering in this area, plus redecoration and refurbishment of the kitchen. Everything is now back to normal.

Monthly beers for the early part of 2017 are:

February: *Heart of Stone*, 4.4%, orange/red coloured bitter for Valentine's Day.

March: *Pounamu*, 4.2%, a straw coloured bitter, an annual favourite at this time of year.

April: *Flagstone*, 4.2%, golden bitter, again an annual favourite.

May: *Son of Stoneman* (NEW), around 4.0%, a baby version of Abdominal Stoneman.

June: *Standing Stone*, 4.9%.

After the success of *Stone Cold* with the Wetherspoon chain at the end of 2016, Lymestone has secured another supply contract for 3 months (April, May, June) for *Standing Stone*.



The early year 20/20 beer festival will again be during March. The evening of Thursday 16th March will be an exclusive CAMRA members preview, between 19.00 and 22.00, with free entry and a drink. 17th and 18th (Friday evening and Saturday from lunchtime onwards), will be open to the public by ticket, with visits to the brewing area, entertainment and large screen rugby action on Saturday.

Reapers, the historic vehicle and motorcycle meetings, recommence at the brewery on 19th March, whilst the first brewery tour of the year is on Friday 10th March (all dates and booking details via the brewery).

Finally, the Borehole won an award for the Best Dog Friendly Business in Staffordshire for 2016. It now goes forward to the national finals in April 2017.

**Neil Butler**

## SLATERS of Stafford

[www.slatersales.co.uk](http://www.slatersales.co.uk)

**BREWERY TOURS**—held on the first Friday of every month. £15 gets you entry, food and as much beer as you can drink. Contact the brewery to book on 01785 257976.

**MONTHLY BREWS**—April's guest beer is *Pale Ale*, 3.8% ABV with American & New Zealand hops.



May is *Refresher*, 4% ABV - Goldings & Saaz hops and coriander and orange peel. Pop into the brewery shop on St. Albans Road to buy some beers and ask for a taste.

# Pubs of the Year 2016

## Rural Pub of the Year 2016 and overall winner George and the Dragon, Gnosall

**This cracking little pub** first opened its doors in July 2015 and from day one has been a success, winning our Heart of Staffordshire branch Cider POTY for 2015 and is now our Rural POTY 2016.

The pub sits on the high street in Gnosall and is accessible by public transport from the no. 5 Telford – Stafford bus. The building dates back to 1763 when it was originally two buildings, then at some point later was knocked into one. It has been used as a shop, in recent years an off-licence and now a micro-pub.

The pub consists of two rooms served from one bar. The interior is a bit steam-punk with some of the furniture and fittings made from old industrial and farming implements. It has no TV, music or bandits which creates a good old-fashioned atmosphere.

There are five beers on tap: Holden's *Golden Glow* is permanent, Joules *Slumbering Monk* and Wood's *Shropshire Lad* alternate and the other three hand pumps are ever-changing with mostly local beers and there is always at least one dark ale available. They also have five ciders; like the guest ales they are always changing and they are all kept in tip-top condition by landlord George.

Pies, sausage rolls and baps on sale at the bar have all been homemade by



### Presentation of the Pub of the Year award (trophy to follow!) on 9th March

George's wife Lyn. Be warned, they sell out fast and come highly recommended by the locals.

On Sundays they run a pie club taking it in turns to make a large pie which is eaten and judged by the locals. We asked what the pies were like...“the chips are always good” was the resounding response.

### Paul & Norma Haycock

Address: George & the Dragon, 46 High Street, Gnosall ST20 0EK

Opening times: Monday to Friday 16:00-22:30, Saturday & Sunday 12:00-22:30

### Pub of the Year runners-up

Silver medals this year go to:

**URBAN: Swan, Stone**

**RURAL: Swan, Whiston**

### Cider Pub of the Year

The winner was being chosen just after we went to press. An announcement will be made on Facebook and in the monthly branch email.

# Urban Pub of the Year 2016 Floodgate, Stafford



The Floodgate is another micropub and relative newcomer. It made an immediate impact, winning our Rising Star award soon after opening. Its one room can hold 45 people, and often does on a Friday or Saturday night or at one of their excellent folkie Tiny Pub Concerts.

Five beers are available at all times, in a variety of styles, usually from smaller breweries so you're almost guaranteed to find something new and interesting. The growing collection of pump clips on the wall is a testament to the incredible number and variety the Floodgate has offered us lucky ale fans. It is also great for real cider drinkers, with up to five available.

Clever use of space means there are plenty of seats and it is a good talking pub (no recorded music, TV etc.).

The pub's name originates from the

council's insistence that flood defences be installed. The owners' quirky humour is evident on the markings on the front barrier: "Save the dog", "Imminent welly overflow" etc., and the kayak perched above drinkers' heads at the bar. Andy and Esther are keen to encourage local artistic and cultural endeavours, and the Floodgate and its sister pub and gin bar **No.7 Market Square** were venues for Stafford's Pocket Film Festival in March.

Address: The Floodgate, 147 Newport Road, Stafford ST16 2EZ

Opening times: Closed most Mondays; Tuesday - Thursday 17:00-22:00; Friday & Saturday 13:00-23:00; Sunday 13:00-22:00.

NB don't be deterred by the boarded-up window, the pub is very much open!



# THE GREYHOUND

CAMRA branch Pub of the Season  
Winter 2015/16



In the CAMRA Good Beer Guide every year since 2005  
8 Real Ales available



Quiz nights Tuesday and Sunday  
(entry just £1 per team)  
Meet the brewer nights  
Sky & BT Sports

Opening times:  
4pm – 11:30pm Mon-Thu  
4pm – 12midnight Fri  
12noon – 12midnight Sat  
12noon – 11pm Sun



*The Greyhound*

*County Road, Stafford ST16 2PU Tel: 01785 222432*

*Steve and Bonita look forward to your visit*

# Beer Festival news

**Thursday 27th – Saturday 29th July 2017**  
***The festival needs YOU!***

Wow, is it February already! [Actually, it's at least March now Paul – Ed.] We are less than six months away from our 10th Beer and Cider Festival and planning has already started to make it the best ever. Don't forget this is our tenth iteration of the Festival and we are looking for ideas on how we can make the three days really special.

Dates for the festival are 27th - 29th of July 2017 (Thursday, Friday, Saturday).

The first Festival meeting has taken place and the team are already beavering away behind the scenes to make sure we have everything ready. It's not too late to help in terms of filling some of the key roles, we still have a number vacant and any help would be welcome.

Please contact me at paul.hewitt100@hotmail.co.uk if you would like to get involved; unfortunately the Festival doesn't happen without a lot of "blood, sweat and tears" but I promise you we're a really friendly bunch and there's a good atmosphere.

We also need volunteers to help make our tenth festival a big occasion. If you have any ideas about marking our tin/aluminium anniversary please send them in!

We especially need helpers for setup and takedown but every little helps, even a few hours on one day. Details of how to volunteer are on the right. Hope to see you there!

**Paul Hewitt, Festival Organiser**  
**Stafford Beer and Cider Festival 2017**



**Some of the volunteers at our Bob the Builder-themed festival a few years ago**

## **BE A VOLUNTEER!**

GO TO [www.staffordbeerfestival.co.uk](http://www.staffordbeerfestival.co.uk)

HELP REQUIRED WITH: BAR WORK,  
TICKET DESK, RECRUITMENT, SET  
UP AND TAKE DOWN

## **BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL 2017** **3rd PLANNING MEETING**

THURSDAY 30th MARCH 8.00pm

CONSTITUTIONAL CLUB  
LLOYD STREET, STAFFORD

**ALL WELCOME—BRING IDEAS!**

## **BEER FESTIVAL SPONSORSHIP**

\*SPONSOR A BARREL END FOR £20

\*ADVERTISE IN THE PROGRAMME

\*SPONSOR ONE OF THE BARS

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opportunities available - contact  
[editor@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk](mailto:editor@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk)

# Holly Bush Inn

Stafford's Oldest Licensed Inn

tel. 01889 508234



*AA Recommended, AA Pick of the Pubs, The Good Pub Guide's Staffordshire Dining Pub of the Year. As recommended in: Les Routiers in Britain; Which? Guide. FREEHOUSE*

Just four miles from Stafford but in the heart of the country. Visit us and enjoy the finest cooking, cask ales and good old fashioned hospitality.

Open Monday to Sunday 12noon - 11pm

Food served all day from 12noon to 9.30pm (9pm Sundays)

Salt, Nr Stafford ST18 0BX

Web: [hollybushinn.co.uk](http://hollybushinn.co.uk) Email: [geoff@hollybushinn.co.uk](mailto:geoff@hollybushinn.co.uk)

# Save my Pub! ACVs to the rescue?

In the last issue of Beer at Heart we reported how locals in Weston were applying to Stafford Borough Council to register the Woolpack as an Asset of Community Value (ACV for short). Here, Phil Vickers explains what a ACV is, how to apply for one, their benefits and their limitations.

More and more pubs are being closed. Sometimes because there are too few pub goers and sometimes when developers see a pub as building land from which they can make great profits. Sometimes a pub changes use, e.g. to a Tesco-op micro-store or curry house.

## My pub's not in danger!

Do not be lulled if your pub is busy, serving the community and profitable. There are too many cases of greedy pub owners ousting successful licensee(s), closing, demolishing and building houses/flats. Those big car parks can mean big bucks and the developers don't care about your community.

## What is an ACV?

It is a law to put the brake on developers destroying such assets to make a quick buck and to allow a local community the chance to buy it for themselves. If your community has an asset, such as a pub, you don't want to lose then an ACV can be taken out on it.

Once an ACV is in place then any intended change of use or intended sale of the asset has to be notified to the ACV holder. An ACV lasts for five years, unless and until an intended change of use is notified. If a change of use is notified then the holder(s) of the ACV have six months to bid to buy the asset. Note that this is a right to bid, NOT a right to buy.

If the community fails to bid or is outbid after six months then the ACV lapses and the proposed changes, subject to planning law, are allowed.

## How do I take out an ACV?

The law intends a local community to act together to try and save their asset. CAMRA itself can take out ACVs as we are considered to be a community group. But the best way is to get 21 signatures from locals on an application form and then approach the application through your Parish Council. CAMRA has a lot of experience in taking out ACVs, has an online process to guide you through the application and experts that can be consulted.

It is not necessary to consult the licensee in order to take out an ACV. However; I would regard it as only good manners! Especially if the licensee also happens to own the property. How would you like it if someone imposed a legal restriction on your home without your knowledge or consent!

## An ACV protects my pub then?

Not completely, though it's better than nothing. Bizarrely, the law does not cover certain changes of use for pubs. While your local village hall, if protected by an ACV, cannot be arbitrarily turned into a hairdressers or curry house the same does not apply to pubs. So, a large supermarket can come along, ignore your ACV and turn your pub into a convenience store. CAMRA is fighting to get these change-of-use aspects of pubs law changed into something saner. Why not join CAMRA and help the battle along – it may be too late when the company owning your one-and-only local decides to turn it into flats.

# Get involved in CAMRA

CAMRA membership now stands at a whopping 185,000, the highest ever. Locally, around 700 are members of our Heart of Staffordshire branch. But how many of us are active members?

Activism in CAMRA can take many forms—it is not just about joining a committee or attending meetings. It could involve writing to your MP to lobby for a cut in beer tax, helping to keep your local pub going or persuading sceptical friends to give real ale a try.

But we're asking if you can give a little bit more of your precious time, knowledge and enthusiasm to CAMRA this year: to volunteer for our 10th annual beer festival, or to consider filling a role on the branch committee. Neither need be arduous - in fact both have very enjoyable social angles - and always include a pint or two!

## WRITE FOR US!

I love words but hate writing, so I'm much happier editing other people's efforts.

**Beer at Heart** comes out four times a year and I am always a bit short of content by deadline day, so if you fancy penning an article I'd be delighted to hear from you. Some ideas:

- \* news about your local pubs
- \* your 'Desert Island Pub'
- \* your three favourite beers or ciders
- \* a write-up of a trip somewhere that involved visiting a few pubs (photos add plenty of interest)
- \* an opinion piece on e.g. 'craft beer', CAMRA's revitalisation project
- \* something satirical or a cartoon

I'd also welcome an assistant to help with headline writing, captions, advertisers etc.

**Andy Murray**



## BRANCH COMMITTEE

[Kelly (above), our Pubs Officer was going to write this but she's broken her toe!]

The committee deals with the day-to-day running of the Heart of Staffordshire CAMRA branch. Some people hold officer positions (e.g. Chair, Secretary, Treasurer) and some people are general committee members. We hold branch meetings roughly five times a year, always in a pub or club serving real ale. We try to vary the location to cover all parts of the Heart of Staffs area, which takes us to some fantastic pubs.

As mentioned in my editorial Mike Harker isn't well at the moment so there are some vacancies on the committee. These include Social Secretary, Cider Officer and Membership Secretary. We have struggled a bit in his absence! There are a couple of long-standing vacancies too - Clubs and Young Members (i.e. under 30) Officer. Job descriptions are available. Ideally, we need a different person for each role, so no-one is over-stretched.

*continued right...*

## BEER FESTIVAL VOLUNTEER

My involvement with CAMRA began by volunteering to work behind a bar on the Saturday afternoon in 2015. Having attended pretty much every festival as a punter I felt it was time to give something back. I was given a health and safety briefing, a t-shirt and set to work. And the next few hours flew by most enjoyably.

You don't need to have done bar work before (I hadn't) - the beers are 'on gravity' so it's a simple case of turning a tap on and off. There's no cash handling to worry about either, just a bit of counting in 10s!

There are other jobs to be done, and not just during the festival but in the few days before and the day after too (mainly lifting and shifting).

You'll be well looked after - some food is provided for volunteer staff, and beer tokens. You get to keep the t-shirt too. But the best thing about it is the feeling that you've been involved in one of the best events in Stafford's social calendar. **AM**

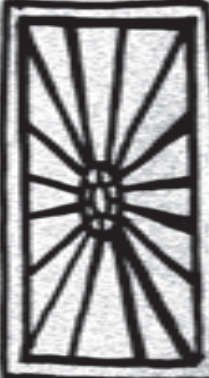
## BRANCH COMMITTEE ctd...

Even if a role is currently filled, you are welcome to put your name forward for those positions, which come up for re-election at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Tuesday 9th May, from 8pm at the County Staff Club on Eastgate Street (next to the British Legion).

If you are keen to get involved but not sure about the responsibility, most roles can be 'job shared', or you could start by becoming a general committee member. Support is on hand from other committee members too, so please join in! **AM**

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Image credit: West Wolf

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# Budget Day Blues

## Price of pints to rise as beer tax rises

Drinkers have been let down by the Chancellor's decision to increase beer and cider duty in the Budget. The announced two penny a pint increase in beer duty is the first rise in five years. It marks a U-turn by the Chancellor as he risks returning to the days of the much-hated Beer Duty Escalator which contributed to 75,000 job losses, 3,700 pub closures and a 24% fall in beer sales in pubs.

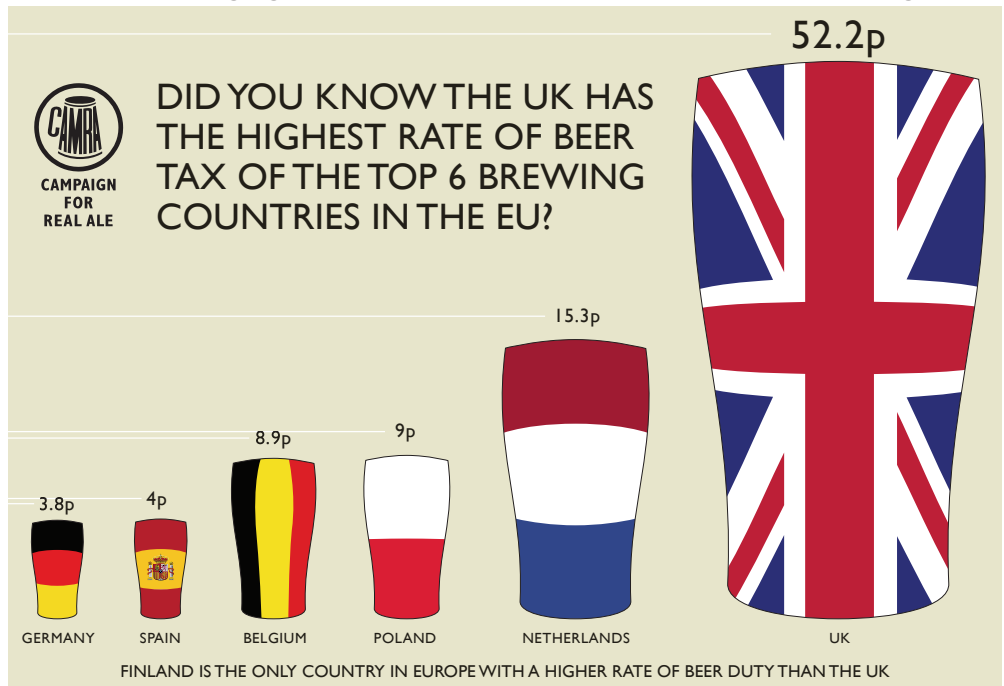
Colin Valentine, CAMRA's National Chairman says: "The UK still pays one of the highest rates of duty across Europe, only consuming around 12% of the beer yet paying nearly 40% of all beer duty in the EU. Further increases will lead to unsustainable price increases in pubs. The decision completely ignores the pressures faced by brewers and pubs."

## On the plus side...

The Government has recognised the unique role that pubs play in our communities in England by introducing a new temporary £1,000 discount on business rates bills for all pubs with a rateable value of less than £100,000. CAMRA has warmly welcomed this relief and has called for it to be made permanent and increased further in future Budgets.

While this discount will provide welcome relief for the majority of pubs, not all will benefit as the relief does not apply to the largest pubs so a minority are still faced with very large business rate increases. CAMRA is calling on local councils to use the new discretionary fund available to support those pubs that will still be hit by massive business rate increases over the coming years.

## CAMRA campaign graphic from before the Chancellor's recent Budget



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Visit [camra.org.uk/ciderpubs](http://camra.org.uk/ciderpubs) to find real cider and perry pubs

The advertisement features a central image of two glasses filled with golden cider and perry, with a branch of green leaves and fruit (an apple and pears) hanging over them. The text is arranged in a structured layout with brown and red background boxes for emphasis.

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# Uttoxeter & District News

**Tom Abbott** reports from our blossoming sub-branch

## Staffordshire's Newest Brewery

Staffordshire's latest brewery **The Uttoxeter Brewing Company** made its debut last November at the Uttoxeter Beer Festival, putting forward four different beers for sampling the first time.



All of the brewery's beers are named to reflect important aspect of the town and history of Uttoxeter.

**Bunting's Blonde** (ABV 3.7%), named after the historic 19<sup>th</sup> century local brewery. *An outstanding Blonde - low alcohol. Lemon-grapefruit, citrusy flavor.*

**Earthmover Gold** (ABV 4.7%) named with a nod to a famous local excavator company. *A bright, light coloured English style golden ale, (IPA), hoppy, yet fruity style beer*

To reflect the importance of the local racecourse there were two other beers:

**Final Furlong** (ABV 4.5%) *Best Bitter (British style, Bass) nutty, smooth spicy and floral with caramel flavour.*

**Paddock Porter** (ABV 4.8) *chocolaty; dominated by a distinctive dark roasted grain flavour and with a slight sweetness.* It is well hopped, with a lighter body and malt character.

Tom and Andy, the brewers, were delighted at the very positive response and feedback from CAMRA members to the four different ales. *Earthmover Gold* was voted favorite beer at the festival—a real fillip for the two new brewers.

Based on the high quality of the beer at the festival Paul Needham, the landlord

of the highly regarded local pub and restaurant, the **Dog & Partridge, Marchington** asked the two lads to provide five different beers for a 'special event': a Uttoxeter Brewing Company beer night.



This was well received by local drinkers and CAMRA members, a highly successful event with all of the Uttoxeter Brewery's beers selling out.

On March 3rd -5th the 9th Marchington Melee beer festival takes place, providing locals with 30 different real ales. It will feature a new ale specially brewed by the Uttoxeter Brewing Company for the Melee.



## continued from previous page

At the beginning of February Tom and Andy were asked by BBC Radio Derby to appear on the Sally Pepper show to tell the story of the development of their new local brewery, where they stressed the importance they placed on providing local beers for the people of Uttoxeter and the surrounding villages.



**Facebook:** Uttoxeter Brewing Company

**Tel:** Tom or Andy on 07734 392321 or 07789 476 871

**Email:** [contact@uttoxeterbrewingcompany.com](mailto:contact@uttoxeterbrewingcompany.com)

## Uttoxeter loses one pub and finds another

### Christmas Fire at the Robin Hood, Bramshall

Uttoxeter branch members were particularly shocked at the loss of one of their favorite pubs, the **Robin Hood**, Bramshall. A sequence of fires over Christmas Eve and Christmas day ended in the complete destruction of a very famous and well-loved local pub. A good pub with lots of character serving a good range of local ales, it will be sorely missed.



Scene of devastation at the Robin Hood

### New Micropub for Uttoxeter, the Horse and Dove



By the time this edition of Beer at Heart is published Uttoxeter will have its first micropub: the **Horse & Dove**, located in the market square opposite Dr. Johnson's memorial. The owners Paul and Yogi told branch members they hoped to be open by the end of February and wanted to focus on selling top quality real ales produced from across the North Midlands, Staffordshire, South Derbyshire and South Nottinghamshire.

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# To Be or Knot to Be...



No doubt you have seen the branch logo on the front cover of this magazine whereby we have combined the CAMRA mug with the Stafford Knot. The knot is widely used as a symbol, by both our local brewers (Lymestone and Slaters), Staffordshire County Council, Port Vale FC, Staffordshire Police and many more. But what exactly is it? And what does it represent (if anything)?

First and foremost; it is **not** The *Staffordshire* Knot, it is The Stafford Knot. Though, as I say, widely used throughout Staffordshire. The Stafford Knot (TSK) should undoubtedly be used in its standard form (top right); one of the most dubious uses I've seen was in the name of a former Stafford pub where TSK was turned through 90 degrees and used to represent the letter 'd', something like this:



Many people think TSK is “inappropriate” as they have bought into the tale that it was invented by a hangman in medieval times who had only one rope but three miscreants who needed to be hanged.

Another variant is that one of the villains invented the knot to aid the executioner and was spared his life as a consequence. I doubt that if someone was trying to kill me that I would willingly help them along! However; there are recognisable Stafford Knots on an Anglo-Saxon cross in a Stoke churchyard and also on several seventh century pieces from the famous Staffordshire hoard. Thus we can date TSK back to pre-Norman times and safely discount the executioner's tale as a myth.

Another version has it that Ethelfleda, daughter of Alfred the Great, was called upon to defend Stafford from marauding hordes (probably from Walsall) in 913 AD. She took off her girdle and told the main three local lords “with this girdle, I bind us as one.” And thus was Staffordshire created. I confess I'm a bit flummoxed as to how a girdle came to be represented as a three-looped knot or how she managed to stretch it around three blokes! Seems like another myth to me.

Yet another theory is that TSK is the letter S, stylised and duplicated to represent Staffordshire. Why two S's mean Staffordshire I don't know. And why don't we know the person who invented it? I suspect another urban myth.

It is also said that TSK resembles the ancient 'pretzel' symbol, which some sources say represents two arms crossed in Christian prayer.

For sure; there is a strong resemblance isn't there?



We must also note that TSK is part of the coat of arms of Lord Stafford. Does he own TSK, as many believe? Or is it so ancient (at least 1200 years) that it is in the public domain? I think I won't comment on that!

Well; I asked the question: what is TSK? The answer is “I don't know”, because it's so ancient and tied into so many mythological or semi-mythological tales. We can safely discount the hangman triple-topping theory and I think, most likely, it originates from early Christianity and is derived from the pretzel or bretzel symbology. But who knows? If you know, or think you do, why not drop a line to the editor?

**Phil Vickers**

# Pottering around the Potteries

## POTTERING AROUND TITANIC BREWERY

1912 may not have been the best of years for the ship that was named **Titanic**, but, despite only being a couple of months old, 2017 is shaping up to be a very good year for the Burslem-based brewery that purloined its name. The Queen saw fit to award an MBE in her New Year's Honour List to our very own Keith Bott [pictured below], co-owner (with his brother Dave) of the aforementioned brewery.



Titanic Brewery was set up in Middleport in 1985, just down the road from Burslem, by the then landlord of The Traveller's Rest pub; however, three years later, the Botts bought the brewery and transferred it up to The Mother Town. Since then, Titanic Brewery has gone from strength to strength, the ales that the brothers produce having won many local, regional and national awards. In September 2007, a new phase of the history of Titanic began, when the Botts took on the lease of the **Greyhound**, at the top of George Street, on the Hartshill/Newcastle border; the first of a few Project William pubs run on behalf of Everards, the deal proved to be a lucrative one, with the Titanic fleet now numbering 8, including (of course) the **Royal Exchange** in Stone and the **Sun** in Stafford.

Not content with merely running an award-winning brewery, Keith has also been an influential figure in the UK industry as a whole. He has served as both Chair and President of the brewing industry body SIBA, during a period where the number of British brewers has grown from 300 in 2002 to around 1,700 today thanks to the introduction of Small Brewers Relief which he was instrumental in securing. Keith also advised the Parliamentary Beer Group and helped to lead a successful campaign to scrap the beer tax escalator in 2013, a move which helped to revive the British brewing industry. All this led to the honorary award from The Queen at the beginning of the New Year.

The missing piece of the Titanic jigsaw is, of course, the opening in 1992 of the **Bull's Head** on St. John's Square in Burslem as the



brewery tap; an immediate award winner in itself, the pub unfortunately found itself grounded on the rocks a few years later, when Keith was obliged to take on the

## Pottering around the Potteries *continued...*

running of the vessel himself. Then, in August 2004, the tiller was passed to one Mr. Bob Crumpton, and the pub has since gone on to win at least one award from the Potteries Branch every year after that, the pinnacle of which was when it acquired the Regional Cider Pub of the Year title in 2012, at that point the highest award that had ever been bestowed on one of the branch's pubs. The latest in the long line of Bull's Head Awards was when the branch presented Bob with a certificate for the pub gaining a place in The Good Beer Guide for 16 consecutive years.

Congratulations go out to Bob and the rest of the crew at the Bull's Head; and, of course, to Mr. Keith Bott, without whom none of this would have been possible.

**Martin Perry**

**Editor, Potters Bar** (with a bit of help from The Official Titanic Press Release)



**Jim and Bob in the Bull's Head**

Visit **CAMRA Potteries'** website and read their excellent magazine **Potters Bar**:  
[www.camrapotteries.co.uk](http://www.camrapotteries.co.uk)

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# CAMRA Members' Weekend

## Why I'm looking forward to Bournemouth 2017

by National Chairman Colin Valentine



This April, I will be joining CAMRA members from across the UK in the seaside resort of Bournemouth for CAMRA's Members' Weekend, which includes our National AGM and Conference.

The Members' Weekend is a fantastic opportunity for any member across the organisation – whether you have just joined, been a member for 20+ years, active or inactive – to shape the future direction and purpose of CAMRA.

As Chairman, I now have the great responsibility of making sure that the AGM and Conference part of the Members' Weekend is run successfully and open to every single one of our 185,000 members. This year, that responsibility is even greater than ever before.

Following 50 consultation meetings across the UK and three national surveys, we have now seen the proposals that were put forward by the Revitalisation Project Steering Committee on CAMRA's future. Whether you agree or disagree with the proposals, took part in the consultation events or stayed at home, the Members' Weekend will be the opportunity to discuss them inside and out ahead of a decision next year.

Over the weekend, members will be able to consider the Revitalisation Project and

proposals on the future of CAMRA in a series of discussion groups. It will be your chance to have a say on the Revitalisation Project's findings and represent your views in the debate. A final decision on the proposals will then be taken at the Members' Weekend in 2018.

I am proud to chair an organisation that is a true democracy – where every member has the opportunity to feed into our policies, direction and future. I never forget that without our huge membership base and dedicated volunteers; there simply would not be a CAMRA.

I hope you will consider joining us in Bournemouth this year. The closing date for online registration was 17th March but [you can still register at the venue on 7th - 9th April](#). For more information simply visit [camraagm.org.uk](http://camraagm.org.uk)



# Contact Us

## Heart of Staffordshire branch

Branch officers as of 1st March 2017:

Branch contact (temporary):

**Neil Butler**

contact@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk

Address: 21 St. Lukes Close, Norton Bridge, Stone, Staffs ST15 0PD. Tel: 07810 142664

Chair: **Neil Butler**

chair@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk

Secretary: **Phil Vickers**

secretary@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk

Treasurer: **Dave Tomkinson**

treasurer@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk

Membership Secretary: **vacant**

Social Secretary: **vacant**

Pubs Officer: **Kelly Porter**

pubsofficer@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk

Social Media: **Kelly Porter**

socialmedia@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk

Cider Officer: **vacant**

Publicity Officer: **Paul Hewitt**

publicity@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk

Beer at Heart Editor: **Andrew Murray**

editor@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk

Webmaster: **Martin White**

webmaster@heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk

Clubs Officer: **vacant**

Young Members Officer: **vacant**

If you're interested in taking on any of the vacant roles, or joining the committee in a general capacity, please contact the Secretary or come to our AGM on 9th May (details on page 5).

## Uttoxeter & District sub-branch

Branch contact & Chair: **Simon Ardron**

Email: CamraSocial@ardron.co.uk

Website: [www.uttoxetercamra.org](http://www.uttoxetercamra.org)

# Contacting You

We endeavour to contact our members each month via email with details of socials, meetings, beer festivals and news items.

**Beer at Heart** should be readily available from your local real ale pub and will be published in PDF on the branch website but if you would like to be posted a copy of Beer at Heart four times a year for £4 (to cover costs) please contact the Editor.

## Thank You:

Tom Abbott, Neil Butler, Paul Dykta, Norma Haycock, Paul Haycock, Paul Hewitt, Martin Perry, Kelly Porter, Dave Tomkinson, Phil Vickers and Luke at Warwick Printing.

Articles, letters and suggestions for the next issue gratefully received by the Editor. The next issue of **Beer at Heart** will appear in June 2017.

## Consumer information

If you have any complaints over short measures etc. and have no satisfaction from the pub in question please contact Staffordshire Trading Standards:

Tel: 0300 111 8045

E: [businessadvice@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:businessadvice@staffordshire.gov.uk)

Post: Staffordshire County Council,  
2 Staffordshire Place, Stafford ST16 2DH



Search for **Heart of Staffordshire CAMRA** or **Uttoxeter & District CAMRA**

# Pubs on the 101

## Paul Dykta's public transport odyssey continues

The 101, on its way into Stafford, stops in front of the **Waggon & Horses** (right), a good place to start a north end pub crawl. 'The Waggon' has a superbly decorated interior and it offers pool, darts and a large function room. The beers on tap were: Hardy & Hansons *Rocking Rudolph* alongside Greene King *Abbot Ale*, both in very good condition. On the main road, this pub is worth a visit (superb takeaways near too).



On to Sandon Road and the **Princess Royal** – originally Dawsons Brewery, now Banks's. On offer were Banks's *Amber* & Marston's *61 Deep*, a new one to me; now I'm on halves.



A short walk up Fancy Walk brings you to the **Joiner's Arms**. An end-of-terrace pub where you have the choice of small or large rooms to sup in, at this time only Wells *Bombardier* was available, but nice.

Turning right on exit and right on to Peel Terrace will bring you to the **King's Arms** (our Autumn Pub of the Season) with five ales on offer. We tried Bass *Premium* – a regular – and Camerons *Rough Ride* followed by Wickwar *Bob*, all superbly kept. Cider drinkers are also well catered for.

Carry on down to the **Tap & Spile** (right), under new management. Three ales were on tap: Salopian *Shropshire Gold* (sampled), plus *Hobgoblin Gold* and *Doom Bar*; worth the stop.

Now towards town, past the chip shop if you can, to the **Hop Pole** (left) to sample a very nice Theakston's *Best Bitter*, supported by Theakston's *Lightfoot*.

Onward south is the Four Crosses which is devoid of cask so over the mini roundabout towards the gaol, turn right at the gates, please! to the **Greyhound** on County Road. A log fire with a *Farmer's Blonde* will warm you up; *Bombardier* is another regular, with six changing ales to pick from, quite often from Yorkshire for some reason.

Left out of the pub will put back on track for the town centre, right will take you to the A34 and the 101 to Stoke or Stone.



## Travel information

Journey planner including buses and trains: [www.travelinmidlands.co.uk](http://www.travelinmidlands.co.uk)

# Real Ale...

...tastes  
better with  
friends...

...tastes  
better  
together.

## And that's the truth of it

So why not show your friends how much you care and invite them to join CAMRA today? As you already know there are a whole host of benefits to being a member of CAMRA, from discounts in thousands of pubs across the UK to having the chance to connect with over 180,000 like-minded members.

CAMRA membership boasts so many benefits it's far too long to list here but why not refer them today and as a reward for them joining we will give you both a 5% discount in the CAMRA shop and each month we will choose 2 lucky winners at random to give away a case of free beer! It could be both you and one of your friends.

Visit [camra.org.uk/mgm](http://camra.org.uk/mgm)  
to refer a friend today

Chance to  
**WIN** a case  
of beer!

5%  
discount  
in the  
CAMRA shop





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- \* Biannual Beer & Cider Festival \*



## The Royal Exchange

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T: 01785 812685

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- \* Great local feel \*



## Titanic Brewery

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T: 01782 823447

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[WWW.TITANICBREWERY.CO.UK](http://WWW.TITANICBREWERY.CO.UK)