

THE UK'S BEST SELLING
BEER AND PUB GUIDE



THE GOOD BEER GUIDE 2024

FOREWORD BY
BRUCE DICKINSON



Campaign
for
Real Ale

IRON BREW

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CHAIRMAN'S CHAT



A Happy New Year and welcome to this Spring edition of our branch magazine Iron Brew.

As the days lengthen, the sun hopefully makes an appearance and Dry January recedes into the

distance, our thoughts turn once again to visiting the pub. And despite many challenges over the

past few years, the British pub has proven to be remarkably resilient. But this cherished British institution

still needs your help to survive, so do visit your favourite pubs whenever you can in 2024 and help them to continue to provide the warm welcome they always have done.

We fully intend to visit as many pubs as we can during the year, both locally and further afield. Plans are in hand for some cracking days out, so if you'd like to join us, consult our Facebook and web pages for details and let the Chairman know of your interest. Cheers!



CRAFT BEER CONNOISSEUR CRAFT BEER CONNOISSEUR'S GUIDE TO LAGER



Lager is lager I hear you say. Why would I need a guide to it? Well in some respects you're right – that fizzy yellow liquid dispensed from keg fonts in virtually every British pub in the land just about fits the description of lager. And brand names like Carling, Fosters, Stella Artois, Carlsberg, Heineken, San Miguel, Coors and new kid on the block Madri, are all mass produced lagers. Despite some of them originating in other countries, they're all now brewed in the UK. However the lager style goes well beyond these leading brands and includes pilsners, bocks, dunkels, märzens and Oktoberfest beers. So what's the difference between lager and ale? Unlike ales, lagers are bottom-fermented beers in that the

yeast used gathers at the bottom of the fermentation tank; ales by contrast are top fermented beers. Yeasts used to brew lager also work best at lower temperatures than ale yeasts, typically 7 – 13 deg C (compared to 20 – 22 deg C for ales), where the lower temperature reduces the number of side reactions occurring, producing a cleaner, crisper beer.

Many lagers also benefit from longer aging times – the German verb *Lagern* means “to store” in English - and these beers can be aged for months at much lower cellar temperatures (0 - 4 deg C) than would be recommended for ales. Many UK-brewed cooking lagers don't benefit from this extended storage as mass production demands that they are made available for sale as quickly as possible, usually to the detriment of flavour and character.

Don't get me wrong – on the very few occasions I have tried lager (and this confession may risk being expelled from the craft beer community), I found Carling a pleasant, if unexciting, malty drink and Stella Artois, when drunk in Belgium, had a nice flavour reminiscent of green apples, but by

and large I prefer other beers.

However that might all be about to change as craft brewers embrace all styles of beers, including continental style lagers. So what are these different lager styles? Grab your pint of yellow fizz and your sharing bag of salt & vinegar crisps and let's have a detailed look at them:

Pilsners

Pilsners are the very essence of the lager style. Czech pilsners are golden and full-bodied, while German pilsners use delicate and spicy noble hops, producing a light colour with a cleaner taste. All pilsners are noted for their refreshing crispness, relatively low alcohol content and delicate bitterness.



Helles

Helles (or Hell, meaning "bright" or "pale") lagers are similar to pilsners, but with more emphasis on a soft, malt flavour. This southern German pale lager is golden with a mildly sweet, light hop profile, full-body,

and low bitterness and alcohol.

Amber Lager

Not all lagers are pale or golden, as we shall see. Among the most famous of the group of amber lagers is märzenbier (or March beer) which is well-known as an Oktoberfest beer. Such beers are simultaneously sweet and crisp, a characteristic of a specific blend of hops.

Vienna lagers are similar but use a lighter roasted malt than the Munich-derived märzens. Amber lagers tend to be slightly stronger, averaging around 5% ABV.

Bock

Bocks are German sipping beers with strong, malty, and warming characteristics. A number of sub-styles are included, such as light-coloured and creamy maibocks (or pale or helles bocks), dark and rich doppelbocks, and sweeter, almost chocolatey, dark and American bocks.

Most are at least 6% ABV but can reach 10%. Eisbock is another variant and is the strongest and most flavourful, with an average of 9 to 13 % ABV due to freeze-distillation.

Dunkel

Dunkel is German for "dark" and it's a classic pub beer from Bavaria, specifically the Munich area. It's made with dark roasted malts giving a red-tinted colour from amber to mahogany. The flavours include nuts, bread, coffee, and chocolate marked with the characteristic lager crispness and a delicate hoppiness. The alcohol content and bitterness is relatively low.

Schwarzbier

Another dark German lager, Schwarzbier originates from the eastern state of Thuringia. This rarer style is characteristically dark chestnut to ruby-black in colour with a complex taste featuring roasted malt and bitter chocolate and liquorice. It has a dry, smooth finish, low alcohol content, and mild bitterness.

Czech lagers are a diverse group encompassing a range of styles such as the pale *světlé* (a pilsner), the amber *polotmavé*, the dark *tmavé*, and the black *černé*. The alcohol content ranges from 3 to 9 % ABV. Lagers are also young beers. Hops were introduced to brewed alcoholic beverages in 1000 AD and primarily

produced ales. Lagers were discovered by accident in the 1500s when it was found that storing brews made with cold-resistant yeast for a month produced a crisper beer. Even in a historical lager-brewing region like Bavaria, the famous hoppy German pilsners are a 19th-century discovery. The other famous Czech and German lagers are not much older than that. Although the popularity of lager in the UK really took hold in the 1970s, lager was first brewed in Britain (in Edinburgh) in 1835. From the 1860s onwards lager (usually märzen), was sold in a handful of outlets and maintained a toehold in the UK through two world wars and an economic depression to eventually become the best selling beer in Britain.

As with all things craft, brewers latched onto the style when the new wave of craft beers became popular and authentic continental lagers are now seen in most craft brewers' ranges. Lost and Grounded in Bristol produce some renowned lagers such as Keller Pils (4.8% ABV), Helles (4.4%) and Running with Sceptres (5.2%), the latter a new craft invention – an India Pale Lager (IPL), which is strongly hopped.



Camden Town Brewery in London has even gone so far as advertising their Hells lager on prime time TV. I myself have been to the Pillars Craft Lager Brewery in Walthamstow when visiting family and have enjoyed their hop forward lagers such as Pillars Hop Lager (4.5%) and Helles Lager (4.8%), the latter a traditional Munich lager with new world hops.



And of course the Freedom Brewery in deepest Staffordshire has been brewing British lagers for almost 25 years. Their range includes Freedom Lager (4.0%), Helles Organic Lager

(4.8%) and Pilsner Lager (4.4%). With many craft breweries having at least one regular lager in their armoury, plus the wide availability of authentic continental lagers such as Budweiser Budvar (the Czech beer *not* the bland, fermented rice water produced in the States) and Pilsner Urquell (now owned by Asahi but still brewed in Plzen in the Czech Republic), there's never been a better time to try a craft lager or two. I have, on the odd occasion and enjoyed the experience. More on this topic can be obtained for the price of a pint in my local *The Hanging Bat*. That's me in the corner engaged in quiet contemplation, often studying that day's newspaper crossword. Unless I'm on the oche for a game of arrows, behind the eight ball for a game of winner-stays-on pool, having a hand of dominoes or a game of cribbage with the locals (who are very competitive, especially Big Sid) or belting out *I Will Survive* on the karaoke machine (at least I think there's a karaoke machine?). There's nothing like keeping busy! It's a miracle I have time to make pronouncements on beer or drink any of the stuff. Happy drinking until next time.

A BEERGEEK

Based with thanks on the following:
<https://www.thespruceeats.com/definition-of-lager>
<https://www.beeradocate.com/articles/7144/britains-first-lager/>

A TALE OF TWO CRAWLS

BRANCH CHRISTMAS PUB CRAWLS

The ASLEF union train drivers' dispute (*still ongoing*) put the kibosh on our original date to organise a Christmas pub crawl of selected Kelham Island pubs in Sheffield. As a result we decided to go on this crawl a day early, but to compensate those members and friend who couldn't change the date, a second pub crawl of Hull pubs was hastily arranged for the next day. So, two pub crawls (almost) for the price of one! For our *Greatest Hits* tour of Kelham Island pubs we were joined by members of Grimsby & N E Lincs CAMRA and we met up at the Station Tap on Sheffield Station for a couple of swift halves.



After catching the Supertram to Shalesmoor, we walked the short distance to the Fat Cat (Grimsby members initially had a detour to the University Arms). The pub was very busy but we eventually secured a table in the bar and enjoyed two or three halves of their excellent beers and some lunch. Next stop on the agenda was the Kelham Island Tavern around the corner, which was thankfully quieter with a good range of real ales plus an 8% craft keg stout from Almasty. Grimsby members also caught up with us here.



Our next port of call was Shakespeare's, which had another good range of beers including a couple of tasty dark beers from Red Willow Brewery. They were also having an imperial stout day which included the delicious Caribbean Chocolate Cake (10% ABV) from Siren Craft, dispensed by gravity

from a bar-mounted pin. Tearing ourselves reluctantly away from the great beers in Shakespeare's, we ventured across the road to Lost in West Bar, formerly Barstewards, but now an outlet for local brewery Lost Industry. I tried their Irish Stout which was dry, akin to Guinness, but with more flavour. By now time was getting on and we decided to make our way back to the station.



We made it to the station on time only to find our return train had been delayed. Only one thing for it – another half in the Station Tap! An enjoyable day all round. With thanks to Grimsby & N E Lincs members for their company.

Branch Secretary Keith Dixon now provides a summary of the second branch pub crawl to Hull ...

Unfortunately, due to rail strikes in December, the Scunthorpe CAMRA 2023 Christmas pub crawl became a two day event with a trip to Sheffield on Thursday 8 and then the

following day a visit to Hull was undertaken. No one managed both days, but each was enjoyed by the hardy few who ventured out. With buses currently more reliable than trains, the 1045 Fast Cat left Scunthorpe on time, arriving in Hull a couple of minutes early.

First visit of the day was to the Wetherspoon Admiral of the Humber, where, after some debate, lunch was also ordered. Several Christmas ales were available including Batemans Rosey Nosey and Black Sheep Blitzen.

Leaving the city centre the hike down to the Victoria Pier area to the Minerva was well worth it as it lived up to its usual high standards, also being very busy! Victoria Plum Porter continued the Christmas theme and with Timothy Taylor's Landlord Dark also available it had to be sampled!



As the afternoon wore on a quick visit to Furley & Co and then The Mission, where we found Old Mill

ales from Snaith being served through their hand pumps. Very nice!

Next to be visited, for our first time, was the George Hotel in the Land of Green Ginger. Definitely a drinking man's pub! Quite busy for a mid-Friday afternoon but a range of fairly standard real ales meant our visit wasn't a long one. Another Timothy Taylor's beer, their dark mild, was sampled.

From the George we made our way through Queens Gardens to find the Hop and Vine. A very small basement pub serving excellent local real ales from Great Newsome, Vocation and Brew York.

By now it was early evening and the bus back to Scunthorpe beckoned. The usual problem was discussed, whether to get off the bus at the White Swan in Barton for a comfort break and of course a quick half, or continue home. Due to traffic another 350 bus to Scunthorpe arrived in Barton and the drivers consulted before saying one bus would go direct to Scunthorpe whilst the second one would go round by Winteringham and Winterton. We opted for the direct bus, finishing the day off with a visit to the Blue Bell before heading home.

Some excellent beers were sampled and a couple of new pubs (for our group) were visited.

The weather was a bit damp at times but it didn't stop us having an enjoyable day. Let's hope for a better turn out and a single day out for all in 2024!

MARK ELSOME/KEITH DIXON

GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL CANCELLED FOR 2024

Flagship Event Takes a Year Off

Rather like Glastonbury, CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival is taking a year off. But unlike Glastonbury, they aren't letting the grass grow under their feet and it will be back in 2025 – Ed.

The Great British Beer Festival is taking a year off in 2024 but will return in 2025 with a bang! Work is now underway by organisers and volunteers to explore a variety of options for the future – and the festival will return better than ever before.

CAMRA's Events Director Catherine Tonry commented: "While we are understandably extremely disappointed CAMRA's flagship event will not take place next year,

we are now looking at a range of options for its triumphant return in 2025.

“It has been a difficult decision to make as it is the highlight of our calendar. Unfortunately, our current venue could not offer us the dates we needed. It is essential the Great British Beer Festival is the absolute best it can be for our valued volunteers, wider membership and customers.”



Ongoing building works could also affect CAMRA being able to host its flagship festival to the high standards customers and members have come to expect.

Catherine added: “While other venues have been explored, due to timescales, costs and our requirements we have not been able to secure a suitable venue. While

this was not a decision taken lightly, we will now look forward to the future and continue with plans for 2025, looking at a variety of options and venues.”

Catherine also thanked everyone who attend or volunteers at CAMRA’s Great British Beer Festival and looks forward to seeing everyone in 2025.

CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

BRANCH CHRISTMAS PARTY

Festive Celebration at the Yarborough Hunt

Our branch Christmas party took place this year at the Yarborough Hunt in Brigg once again, who allowed us to book their back room for this annual celebration.

We managed to avoid “Mad Friday”, although the pub was still fairly busy all evening. As usual those attending generously provided food items for a tasty DIY Christmas buffet including homemade bread and sausage rolls, pork pie, cheese and crackers, pickles and mince pies.

Paul & Beverley put together this year’s festive quiz which was won by Gill and Debbie who received a pack of Christmas beers for their efforts.



We followed this with a Christmas raffle with prizes of packs of dark beers and IPAs, a Budweiser Budvar gift set of bottle and branded glass and a bottle of Fuller’s 8.5% ABV Vintage Ale for 2023 (the latter won by yours truly).



And of course we enjoyed the selection of draught beers available at the Yarborough bar which included Black Sheep Blitzen, Lincolnshire Craft Christmas Cheers and Wilde Child Thunderstruck. An enjoyable evening ensued and a great start to the festive season! With thanks to Paul & Beverley for the quiz, to all those who came along and for the provision of buffet food items.

MARK ELSOME

PUB & BREWERY NEWS

Warwickshire-based brewery **Purity Brewing Co** was acquired by investment firm The Breal Group just before Christmas for an undisclosed sum. Brewer of popular beers such as **Mad Goose** and **Ubu**, the deal for Purity aims to further strengthen Breal’s growing investment portfolio which also includes **Black Sheep Brewery, Brick** and **Brew By Numbers**.

Purity Managing Director John Hunt said: “We all know the brewing industry has had a turbulent time of late and like many others the business has felt the pressure of rising costs.

“We’re incredibly pleased Breal

recognises the uniqueness of our offering and had the vision to invest in the future of the brewery.

“We’re very much looking forward to continuing to brew our much-loved, award winning beers and delighting drinkers in the Midlands, London and beyond.”

Wetherspoon boss **Tim Martin** received a knighthood in the New Year’s honours list.



Congratulations to him. The award was for hospitality and culture in building up a nationwide chain of affordable pubs and he rightly deserves kudos for that notable achievement (*although not for his unwarranted [in my opinion] use of the Wetherspoon house magazine to shower us with his political views! – Ed*).

Micropub pioneer **Martyn Hillier** has also been awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours List. Martyn developed the micropub concept

when he launched The Butcher’s Arms in Herne, Kent, in a former butcher’s shop in 2005. Micropubs have since popped up all over the country.

Operators across the wine sector have branded the concept of selling pints of wine in the on-trade a “peculiar distraction” from more pressing issues (such as the largest duty increase in half a century) and an attempt by the Government to scrape some benefit from Brexit. The plans were unveiled by the Department for Business and Trade in December, which said the optional reform (to sell still and sparkling wine in a new 568 ml (pint) bottle), was made possible thanks to “new freedoms” from leaving the European Union under the Retained EU Law Act 2023.

While the Government argued that some 900 vineyards across Britain would benefit from the decision, Stosie Madi, chef and owner of the Parkers Arms in Lancashire said: “What a pointless thing; all bottling plants are set for 70 cl etc. At what enormous cost will it be to reset the bottling machines at this challenging time.”

MORNING ADVERTISER

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

The Vault in Brigg, a conversion of the old Midland Bank premises into a cocktail bar, has **Salt Jute Session IPA** (4.2% ABV) on craft keg, plus 330



ml cans of other Salt beers such as **Huckaback NEIPA** and **Loom Pale Ale** for sale, as well as an

extensive range of cocktails. See their website for further details and opening hours:

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

The Berkeley in Scunthorpe, a CAMRA heritage pub, is open again after a long period of closure enforced by the owners **Sam Smiths**. They do offer the brewery’s single real ale, **Old Brewery Bitter**, but currently are open for drinks only.



They also have a wide range of Sam Smith’s keg and bottled beers.

LOCAL GROUP FORMED TO SAVE THE LINCOLN IMP

Action to Make the Imp a Community Pub

A local action group called **Save the Lincoln Imp** has been formed in an attempt to prevent the pub from demolition and to retain it as a Community Pub.



Headed by former Imp licensee Lorraine Briggs and with support from local Labour Councillor Tony Gosling, the group has 90 members and has had meetings and discussions with the Plunket Foundation on how to mount a community bid for the pub. Unfortunately the owners **Admiral Taverns**, have exchanged contracts with a 3rd party (a property development company), despite planning permission for change of use being rejected twice by North Lincolnshire Council. If the developer goes to appeal, this will be considered by the Planning Inspectorate, who will judge the

appeal on planning grounds alone and has the power to overturn any local planning decisions already made.

Despite this, the fight to save the Lincoln Imp goes on. We wish them the best of luck and we await the outcome with interest.

MARK ELSOME

DILUTING THE BEER!

Duty Changes Usher in Weaker Beers

Last year, following the Government reform of UK alcohol duties, the threshold for a reduced rate of duty was raised from 2.8% to 3.4% ABV. Considerable savings in paid duty then became possible for beers of 3.4% strength and with the industry struggling to cope with increases in energy and raw material costs, it seemed likely that brewers would reduce the strength of some beers. Sure enough this is exactly what has happened. Greene King for example has reduced the strength of its best-selling IPA from 3.6% to 3.4%, but fortunately most of the top ten best-selling UK cask beers are 4% or above (*see table*), so are unlikely to change.

Others have made wholesale



changes to their beers. Marble have reduced the strength of their flagship Pint (now known as Metric!) from 3.9% to 3.4% and Carlsberg Danish Pilsner has gone from 3.8%

to 3.4%. Elsewhere the changes have been more modest; draught beers like Hook Norton Hooky Bitter, Ilkley Mary Jane and Hawkshead Windermere Pale have been reduced in strength from 3.5%, and the canned beers Tetley's and Boddingtons are both now sold at 3.4% ABV. Sam Smiths took the opportunity to go the other way and raised the strength of their keg light and dark milds and their Alpine lager from 2.8% to 3.4%. For now, Timothy Taylor's Dark Mild and Golden Best remain at their normal strength of 3.5%.

The saving in duty from brewing beers of 3.4% is very significant, so

expect to see the UK's hard-pressed brewers pushing 3.4% strength beers onto the market.

While it's perfectly possible to brew palatable and appealing beers of 3.4% strength, will drinkers actually want to buy them? As NW blogger Curmudgeon points out, "... few if any will be improved by having their strength reduced to that level, and many of the beers of that strength tend to be somewhat thin and lacklustre. It would be a depressing prospect if that was to become the norm of British beer drinking."

MARK ELSOME

With thanks to:

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

2023 rank	Brand	Volume (hl)	Value (£m)	2022 rank	Up or down
1	Sharp's Doom Bar	144,133	91.8	1	Level
2	Timothy Taylor's Landlord	110,204	82.6	2	Level
3	Greene King IPA	84,703	57.3	3	Level
4	Fuller's London Pride	71,985	56.1	4	Level
5	Wainwright	47,635	30.9	7	Up 2
6	Greene King Abbot Ale	46,152	29.8	5	Down 1
7	St Austell Tribute Ale	36,845	26.9	6	Down 1
8	Marstons Pedigree	33,417	21.3	8	Level
9	Butcombe Original	26,826	17.3	9	Level
10	Harveys Sussex Best Bitter	23,982	19.4	N/A	New Entry

GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL WINTER

Winter Ales Festival Again at Burton-on-Trent in February

While the main CAMRA national beer festival, the Great British Beer Festival, has been cancelled for 2024, their seasonal counterpoint, the Great British Beer Festival (GBBF) Winter will still go ahead from 15 – 17 February (Thursday – Saturday).

Once again the festival will be staged at Burton Town Hall in Burton-on-

Trent, which is handily placed for the railway station and speaking personally, a short two hour cruise from the marina mooring of our narrowboat *Sheila May*. So we'll be wrapping up warm, setting the tiller in the direction of Burton-on-Trent and heading to the Town Hall at a sedate 4 mph to partake of a collection of winter ales that's second to none!



We've been assured that the long queues that gathered at the start of the first day last year have been addressed and there should be no repeat of having to stand outside in the freezing cold for 40 minutes waiting to get in.

There will be hundreds of not only dark and winter brews, but also a great selection of light and hoppy ales too plus a number of brewery bars to serve their own beers direct.

As well as the huge range of drinks on offer, you can enjoy a selection of food and snacks. Entertainment is also included as part of the ticket price with live music in the afternoons and evenings. On the first day, when we're scheduled to attend, there's also the theatrics of announcing from the stage the winners of the Champion Winter Beer of Britain Competition, decided by blind tasting sessions before the event (and sometimes during!) and a chance afterwards to sample the beers in contention.



Although not as big as the summer event in London, GBBF Winter is well worth attending. Day (£15) or Evening (£10 or £13) presale tickets are available for each day and the price includes entry, programme, souvenir glass and £5 worth of beer tokens (£8 worth to CAMRA members showing a valid

membership card). There will also be a small number of walk-in tickets to be purchased on the door.

By the time you read this, GBBF Winter will probably be only be a couple of weeks away, so if you're interested in attending and you haven't got your tickets yet, it would be a good idea to purchase them without delay! Check availability at CAMRA online:

<https://winter.gbbf.org.uk/tickets>

MARK ELSOME
/CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

CHRISTMAS BEERS

Seasonal Quest for Christmas Themed Bottled Beers

Branch Secretary Keith Dixon writes about his collection of Christmas beers this year. He certainly did better than my feeble effort – I only managed one bottle of Bateman's Rosey Nosey and one Ilkley Mary Christmas - Ed.

December once again saw the annual hunt for the selection of Christmas Ales.

A reasonable collection was obtained from various outlets, the bargain of the season being the Black Sheep Blitzen and Saltaire White Christmas both at the time on

offer in Morrisons at £1 a bottle! Needless to say, more than one was bought!

Going through the photos below, left to right the selection was:

Glenn Cannock Brewery Christmas Spiced Red Ale, in a can, 4.5% ABV with hints of orange and cinnamon. One of my favourites (nothing to do with the price) was the Saltaire White Christmas at 4.8%, well-hopped and infused with orange and coriander seeds. Next was a regular Christmas beer from Marks and Spencer, their Christmas Ale, brewed by the Southwold Brewery with a modest strength of 4.2% and a mention of Christmas cake in their description.



A local offering from the Lincolnshire Brewery was Christmas Cheers, a festive bitter with a strength of 4.8%. Two beers from the Stafford Brewery, both with great Christmas names were the 4.8% strong ruby

ale called Totally Sleighed and a premium golden beer at 5% under the name of Grumpy Santa. Another fairly local and widely available through handpumps in local real ale pubs was the Bradfield Farmers Belgium Blue, filled with Christmas berries! A third Christmas beer from the Staffordshire Brewery was their Christmas Ale, another hoppy, ruby ale at 4.6%. Sainsbury provide a couple of seasonal ales for Christmas, both from the Hall and Woodhouse Dorset Brewery. The Winter Porter at 5% is full bodied with fruits and winter spices. Their Winter Warmer Ale also at 5% is malty with figs added. A fairly standard beer from



Robinsons Brewery at 4.3% went under the name of Santa's ReinBeer. The second offering from Marks and Spencer, Winter Spiced Porter brewed by the Meantime Brewery, was the strongest this year at 5.5%. Rich and dark, packed with

cinnamon, fruit and spices - it certainly is. My second bargain, Black Sheep's Blitzen, another regular Christmas favourite has a taste that is perhaps better than its 4% identity.

The final one of this year's selection, another can from the Glen Cannich Brewery with a 4.5% strength is a well named Christmas Pud and Custard Stout. It certainly was a tasty stout.



Well that's my Christmas 2023 collection. I suppose round the country the selection on offer would be big enough to keep you going for the full year, but many people do not like a good spicy stout whilst having a summer barbecue! Enjoy whatever your preference is and let's hope for another good selection to sample next Christmas.

KEITH DIXON



DYSTOPIA IMPERIAL STOUT FESTIVAL AT DONCASTER BREWERY & TAP

First Branch Day Out in 2024

On a chilly day in January, a group of ten Scunthorpe & District CAMRA members and friends boarded a train to Doncaster to partake of the Dystopia Imperial Stout Festival being held at Doncaster Brewery & Tap.

This unusual pub beer festival was the brainchild of owners Ian & Alison Blaylock and their son Robin and featured ten imperial keg stouts ranging from 8.5 to 15.7% ABV. At such high strengths it necessitated us sipping them slowly in thirds (in fact the stouts were only sold in halves and thirds), which helped us to savour them properly and retain a measure of sobriety.



Torrside Brewery and a 15.7% dessert stout from Hoppin' Frog

The stouts on offer included Black Albert from Belgium, an unusual white stout from

from the USA. The latter was a whopping £8 for a third, so we had a kitty for it and shared the third measure out among the group using shot glasses!



All were delicious and our group managed to sample all ten stouts between us. The Tap also offered tasty pork pies and crisps to help soak up the alcohol.

Because the stout festival runs throughout January, there was not the usual rush of people to the event that you would normally get with a

weekend beer festival, so it was very relaxed throughout and we had the upstairs Dystopia room almost to ourselves.



By late afternoon it was time to rouse ourselves and head back to the railway station. We had time to call at the Little Plough, a very traditional pub which had Acorn Barnsley Bitter among its draught offerings as well as a guitar and fiddle duo playing some modern folk songs in one room.



Our final port of call was the Draughtsman's Alehouse on Doncaster Station, which, as always, had a good range of beers on offer, including Thornbridge's Swedish-influenced Christmas dark mild Knack and a tasty IPA brewed in a collaboration between Vocation and Siren Breweries.

It was also quite nice to have all the trains running on time and with no cancellations or delays!

With thanks to all those who came along on the day out and to Ian, Alison and Robin at the Tap for organising this great little festival. Rumour has it that they'll be having a barley wine festival at the Tap in November and if it comes to fruition we'll certainly try and get over to Doncaster for it. May the stout be with you!

MARK ELSOME

BATEMANS CELEBRATE 150TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2024

Company Spans Five Generations of the Batemans' Brewing Family

Batemans is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year, showcasing the work of five generations of the Wainfleet, Lincolnshire-based brewing family.

It all began with George Bateman in 1874. Stuart and Jaclyn Bateman are the present guardians of the Batemans brewing legacy, with Stuart and wife Rachael's children, Harri and Ed (*pictured*), preparing to carry on the family tradition.

The company brews 10,000 hectolitres of beer each year, owns 52 community pubs, and has a flourishing free-trade network, operating across Lincolnshire, the East Midlands, and Norfolk.



It has not only survived COVID, two world wars, and the keg beer revolution, but also a family dispute and hostile approaches that very nearly saw the business broken up and sold.



Today, Batemans is thriving, thanks in part to its Survival, Revival, and Development plan, instigated in

March 2020 in response to the pandemic-related lockdowns and trading conditions. This plan has brought to fruition new pub acquisitions, beer development, brewing collaborations, and a pub refurbishment programme.

The 150th year was also seen as an opportunity to evolve its branding, and indeed the most visual part of the business, the pumpclips, with the assistance of Staffordshire branding firm PHd design.

A strong, recognisable new branding has been created, which harks to past brewing traditions, retaining the slogan 'Craft Brewers Since 1874', but positioning the brewery strongly for the next phase of growth. Batemans' key four brands are the first to receive the new

branding — XB, Triple XB, Yella Belly Gold, and the new Five Generations (5G), which will be released in a couple of months. The new branding will be available from mid-March.

Five Generations (4.2% ABV) is being brewed with only English hops — Harlequin, Fuggles, and Olicana —

and local malts. The 150th anniversary celebrations will include the release of a limited edition bottled beer, Tradition With Ambition. This 7.8% ABV beer was brewed more than 10 years ago and has been maturing in bottle, ready for the anniversary.

Batemans' new brewer, Buster Grant, is recommissioning the Victorian brewhouse, which has not been used for more than 20 years. It is planned that it will be used for collaboration brews with Blue Monkey and Buxton Brewery, each celebrating the 150th anniversary this year.

"Brewing is the backbone of our business, and we are looking forward to brewing new beers and collaborating with other breweries," said managing director Stuart Bateman.

"We are exceptionally pleased with all we have achieved over the last 150 years, and look forward to celebrating our past, but also in taking this opportunity to shout about our new achievements, from our new and modern branding to our fresh approach, which will set Batemans on a solid footing for another 150 years."

Congratulations to all at Batemans

on their 150th anniversary. To have successfully navigated all the trials and tribulations that have come their way during that lengthy period and remain an independent family brewer to this day, is a testament to their determination and fortitude. With best wishes for their future endeavours and I'm looking forward to trying their new beers - Ed

Extract from feature article in Beer Today

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

Well, that's about it for another issue. I hope you enjoyed reading it?

Oh hang on, the Craft Beer Connoisseur has just stumbled in looking a little the worse for wear.

"Yes CBC, what can I do for you?"

Have you just come from The Hanging Bat by any chance?

"What's that? You've got more craft beer jokes for the readers ... Oh dear, I was afraid you'd say that!"

"As I'm still in my "Good Will to All Men" mood so soon after Christmas, I'll allow it. What craft beer jokes have you got then? – you must be scraping the bottom of the barrel by now, surely?"

Here are CBC's craft beer "jokes" ...

Why was the craft beer drinker so

sad?

He had seasonal depression.

A zebra walks into a trendy beer taproom and asks for a craft beer. The barman says, "Sorry I can't serve you." The zebra asks, "Why not?" "Because you're barred", replies the barman.

Why do they never serve craft beer at a maths party?

Because you can't drink and derive.



A woman had been complaining about her boyfriend spending all his free time in a hipster microbrewery and taproom, so one night she goes along with him. "What'll you have?" he asks. "Oh I don't know, the same as you I suppose." So he orders two pints of the brewery's award-winning kettle sour beer. She takes one sip and immediately spits it out.

"Yuck, that's terrible. I don't know how you can drink that stuff!"

"Well, there you are then" cries the boyfriend. "And you think I'm out every night enjoying myself!"

Just as I thought CBC ... I think the first three must have come out of your craft beer Christmas crackers! See you all for the next issue when hopefully CBC's fund of craft beer jokes will have dried up! – Ed



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