

FREE

Inn Touch

Rugby & District Branch



Campaign
for
Real Ale

Autumn 2023

Country pub of the year



Beer of the festival winner



Also inside: **Day by day guide of regular events in our local pubs (page 11)**

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About Inn Touch

Inn Touch is the quarterly magazine of the Rugby and District branch of CAMRA. It has a print run of 2000 copies and is distributed by branch members to over 100 pubs in the local area.

www.rugby.camra.org.uk or 

In the autumn edition

5 Editor's intro

Introducing the autumn edition of Inn Touch magazine.

Annual beer festival

Branch bulletin regarding the future of the annual beer festival.

6 Beer of the festival 2023

Cover article. The award is presented to the Alter Ego brewery in Derbyshire for a delicious stout.

7 Country pub of the year

Cover article. This year's award goes to the Lawford Arms. The pub was packed for the presentation.

8-9 And now for the future

Ivan concludes his trilogy: taking a look at what the future of pubs may look like, and is it what we really want?

Also some late news regarding a new bottle shop / tasting rooms.

11 Regular local pub events

A new feature which lists the quizzes, live music and other regular entertainment hosted by our local pubs.

12 Contacts

Contact details for committee members and officers of the Rugby and District branch.

The views expressed in this magazine are those of individuals and Rugby and District CAMRA accepts no liability in relation to accuracy of advertisements.

Advertising is much appreciated, as Inn Touch magazine can only continue if its costs are met by advertising revenue. Rates are reasonably priced at £75 - half page, £125 - full page & £150 - inner front / back page.

To place an ad in the spring edition please contact the editor before February 2024 (see back page for contact info)



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Editor's intro

This bears out the government statistic showing that England and Wales is losing two pubs every single day. In general pubs are having a rough time.

However, last Christmas I was heartened to see many of our boozers brim full of people happily quaffing and enjoying the festive season. This was despite the constant news on the TV that the cost of living crisis will kill it for anyone but the most wealthy of us. I'm hoping for more of the same as we wave off 2023.

Forever the optimist? Maybe; I'm off to support a local pub and reflect over a decent pint of real ale. Cheers.

Steve

CAMRA membership is £28.50 per year & includes £30 of real ale vouchers.

camra.org.uk/joinup

Left: the editor at the Farriers Arms, St Albans

Below: the wall plaque for the first CAMRA meeting in 1972



Welcome to the autumn edition of 'Inn Touch'. My last one as editor, for a while at least. I've enjoyed compiling these magazines, but I'm taking a break to catch up with other stuff.

Although I have been a CAMRA member for a long time, involvement with the local branch as editor has led to interesting excursions and nights with lively conversation alongside some particularly good ales. I thoroughly recommend joining up.

Since the previous issue, the Rugby & District area has lost a handful of long standing pubs.

Annual beer festival



Branch bulletin

Rugby CAMRA have decided with deep regret not to run our annual beer festival in its current form next year. The festival which is run entirely by CAMRA volunteers has become increasingly expensive and difficult to staff. It is a massive undertaking especially for our organiser Chris.

We also feel if CAMRA in the area is going to continue to flourish we need to break out of

the festival formula and embrace a format that attracts a younger audience. What exactly this is at the moment we are not sure.

We will continue to support our excellent pubs running beer festivals and of course produce our quarterly magazine Inn Touch.

Richard Potter
Rugby CAMRA chairman

Beer of the festival



In mid September, the Rugby CAMRA branch eventually presented the 2023 Beer of the Festival award to the Alter Ego Brewery from Alfreton in Derbyshire. The winner, called Milky Joe, was a velvety chocolate milk stout that wowed our festival goers. Named like all their beers after characters from the Mighty Boosh, we had the chance to sample a similar beer called Nanatoo in the brewery taproom.

Above: Matt Makins from Alter Ego receiving the award

The brewery was the brainchild of Matt Makins and his wife Theresa. Matt, who was a homebrewer for nine years before going professional, started the business five years ago in nearby Heanor. In 2022 they moved to a much larger premises in Alfreton and started using it as a taproom as well the brewery. In addition to the taproom which is open on a Saturday, they also run the highly successful Tip Inn micropub in Loscoe. Here you can try their beers on cask as well as other guest beers.

Visiting the brewery was just one part of a fabulous day out touring south east Derbyshire. From the Belgian style Burnt Pig in Ilkeston, through the micro pubs of Heanor and on to the World Heritage Site that is Belper. They were followed by two absolute classics in the Dead Poets Inn at Holbrook and the Holly Bush at Makeney. It's just the sort of trip that Rugby CAMRA run so well - come and join us next time.

Richard



Country pub of the year



In August, the Rugby branch of the Campaign for Real Ale presented our Country Pub of the Year award to the Lawford Arms in Long Lawford. The award chosen by local CAMRA members can be won by any pub outside the town and we were delighted to hand over the certificate to Sharon and Murray Illidge, landlady and landlord of the Lawford Arms.

Sharon and Murray run an absolutely fabulous pub, doing all the things village locals are meant to do. Helped by a recent refurbishment, the Lawford Arms is warm and welcoming. The range of beers and ciders is excellent for a village pub. There are six hand pumps featuring the company's own BFG, Doom Bar and two guest ales. One of these is always a dark beer. They also sell two hand pulled ciders.

On the night of the award the pub put on a delicious buffet and all the locals, area manager and Angus the director joined us in a wonderful evening. I don't think I've been to a pub more happy to win an award. Their success is now displayed outside on a new Black Country Ales banner.



The pub is owned by Black Country Ales, who also run the Windmill and Raglan Arms in town. It's special though, as it was the very first pub that director Angus McMeeking bought. He was landlord for a while, but soon realised owning pubs was his thing and not being behind the bar. As we were handing over the award the company was about to open their 50th pub, the New Inn at Tutbury.

Above: Richard presenting the award to licensees Sharon and Murray

Right: the new banner

Well done to Sharon, Murray and all the team at the Lawford Arms. A deserving winner of the Country Pub of the Year. Great duck eggs too!

Richard

And now for the future...



In the last couple of issues of ‘Inn Touch’, I have looked at the changes to the number of pubs in Rugby and our surrounding villages and the decline of the once ubiquitous mild. This time, I thought I would have a think about what might come next. It is said that “the past is a foreign country” - well if this is true then the future must be another planet. Only a fool would try and predict that, so here are the musings of a mad man!



Technology is the obvious solution if you are a short sighted accountant...

If I was an accountant running a pub company (which thankfully I am not), I would be looking to reduce costs and increase my bonus. One of the biggest costs is staff. You have to pay them when working regardless of customers being six deep at the bar or there being one old boy sat there nursing the same half he ordered six hours ago. Staff also get sick, have time off when the cat dies and go on holiday, all of which you have to pay for. Technology is the obvious solution if you are

a short-sighted accountant, which is likely to mean more apps for ordering as this removes part of the bar staff’s job and allows you to cut their numbers. Pub ordering apps have been gaining traction for a few years but were super charged by Covid restrictions that stopped us ordering at the bar. They are generally hated by traditional pub goers, especially those of us with fat fingers who press a button to order a pint of real ale but end up having a cocktail with a pink umbrella delivered to our table! Apps also remove the need to take cash, which slows down the purchase and has to be accounted for and deposited in the bank which all increase costs.

Apps are beloved of big companies as they supply them with the life blood of modern business: data. If I know what you have purchased I can then try and use this data to either entice you back or encourage you to buy more. In-app notifications like, “You’ve visited us the last three Fridays, come in next week and we will give you 20% of your first pint”, or, “Good going- that’s three pints of cold, fizzy, tasteless premium lager in the last hour, try a £2 whiskey chaser if you

order another in the next 10 minutes” are possible if they know what you are doing. I can’t see this approach going down well with the health lobby who are trying to stop us drinking, but I am sure someone will try it.

Now we have removed the need for bar staff to take orders, how can we remove the need for them to pull the pints? Well, the Dutch have already solved this for us. I visited Taphuys in Arnhem a couple of years back. On entry you go to a desk and use a bank card to purchase another card and load it with credit. You then grab a glass and review the 100-odd craft beer taps against a wall. Upon selecting one you want to try, you insert your card and pour as much or as little as you like and the credit on your card is reduced. This approach is novel and allows you to have several mouthfuls of different beers before you select one to fill the glass, but if every pub took this approach it would soon become very irritating.

One thing I can’t see taking off in the near future is home delivery of draught beer. Although ordering via an app would be easy, by the time the bike courier arrived at your door you would

be left with half an inch of a flat, warm, uninspiring liquid in the bottom of a crushed plastic pot.

“

customers would have great fun putting obstacles in their way...

Something else I wouldn’t recommend trying is robots delivering drinks after the app order, because customers would have great fun in putting obstacles in their way or relieving them of their load long before they got to the table ordering it.

So there you have it: the future of pubs. More screens and less human interaction, which sort of defeats the point of going to the pub. Sad, isn’t it?

If you don’t want the future to look like this, there is a simple solution. Use your local traditional pub, put your phone in your pocket, order at the bar, pay in cash and then sit and hold a conversation with someone. It’s got to be better than the alternative!

Ivan

Late news: new bottle shop & tasting rooms

From Matt at ZeroSix brewery. Opening from the 1st of December at 16a High St Lutterworth will be ‘The Cork and Hop’. Inn Touch will feature a full article in the next edition. Check out the festive events being held at:

www.thecorkandhop.co.uk



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Regular local pub events

The info here is by no means the complete picture and events are subject to change. Please check with the host's website or Facebook page before attending.

Monday

Quiz night

Black Horse, Bilton
Green Man, Dunchurch
Real Ale Classroom, Lutterworth
Merchants (last in month)

Music

Newbold Crown - Open Mic
(every other)
Quigleys - Folk Night

Tuesday

Quiz night

The Bear
Waterside, Hillmorton

Wednesday

Quiz night

George, Bilton
Royal Oak, Crick
The Elms, Lutterworth

Music

Squirrel Inn - live music

Thursday

Quiz night

Town & County club
(last in month)
Admiral Nelson, Braunston
Friendly Inn, Frankton
(last in month)
Lawford Arms
Victoria Inn



Music

Town & County club - jam session
(1st & 3rd in month)

Windmill - open mic
(1st & 3rd in month)

Quigleys - live music

Knightley Arms, Yelvertoft - folk
(2nd in month)

Bingo

Royal Oak, Crick
Prince of Wales

Friday

Quiz night

Boat House, Braunston

Music

Quigleys - live music
Prince of Wales - karaoke

Saturday

Music

Quigleys - live music
Prince of Wales - live music
Squirrel Inn - live music

Sunday

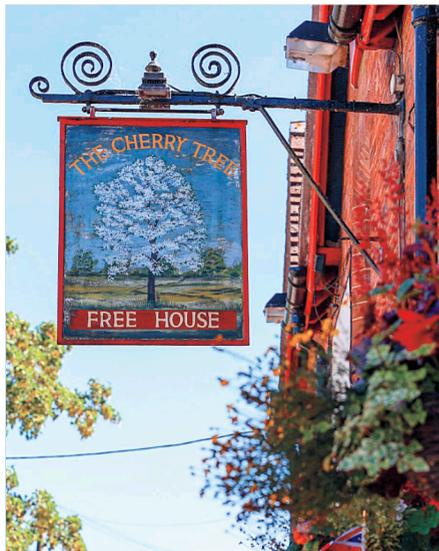
Quiz night

Red Lion, Crick (last in month)
Red Lion, Kilsby (1 each month)
Stag and Pheasant, Hillmorton
William Webb Ellis
Victoria Inn

Music

Red Lion, Kilsby - open mic
(1 each month)
Wheatsheaf, Crick - open mic
(3rd in month)





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