

Leicestershire Drinker

Autumn 2026
No 18

FREE

**Hinckley & Bosworth, Melton Mowbray,
Loughborough & North Leicestershire,
Vale of Belvoir and Leicester Branches**



BRANCH AWARDS

**J D Wetherspoon
On The Buses
Trent Valley Towns
Goodbyes**



Editor's Bit...



How's your beer? CAMRA members are urged to score the beers they drink. These scores feed into decisions regarding which pubs are chosen for the *Good Beer Guide*. They also help indicate beer quality on the CAMRA website pubs database. Words have now replaced numbers in a change to the process. We'd urge you to give it a go if you don't at the moment. Your local branch and Pubs Officer in particular will be grateful! (And provide assistance if needed).

Campaigning continues in many areas, please write to your MP or sign a petition if asked.

Cheers, Shawn Collier



News & contributions: editor@leicsdrinker.camra.org.uk

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Front cover: Congratulations to the Pestle and Mortar, in Castle Street, Hinckley on a great double success in the Hinckley and Bosworth CAMRA pub of the year awards (POTY). A presentation evening was held, where they were awarded Pub of the Year for the third time and Cider POTY for an incredible 11th consecutive year, a remarkable achievement. Branch Chair Tracey Ellis with Sue. Congratulations to her and the team.

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DOORS OPEN

5pm Friday 4 Sept

FAMILY SESSION

1pm Saturday 5 Sept

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Community Focus

Empty Chairs

by Shawn Collier

A recent post on CAMRA Discourse from the social secretary of Glasgow & West of Scotland CAMRA attracted my attention. She wrote *"First to talk about is Empty Chairs UK. I'm working with them to promote their work where they have hosts volunteer up and down the country to sit down and offer space to anyone who is suffering loneliness to have some companionship and someone to chat to. The volunteers wear a signature orange t-shirt and invite people to pull up a chair for a natter and a drink."*

Empty Chairs then came into the conversation on a visit to the **Fox Inn**, Oadby. Algorithms did their thing and events began appearing on my Facebook feed. I decided to attend one, that being at the **Gate Hangs Well**, Syston (pictured).

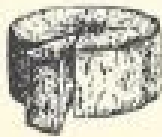
In November 2025, Dean (part of the team at Chicken Rush, a social interaction start up) lost his best friend to suicide and came up with a simple idea - sit in a pub on an evening with an open invitation to anyone who wants to come down and have a chat. It has since turned into a bit of a movement, spreading around the world, with volunteers in orange hoodies or t-shirts sitting down in pubs regularly - offering an opportunity to talk.



No sign-up, no agenda, no pressure, no expectation to stay, come alone, bring a friend, or just say hello and leave. They keep things welcoming and respectful - you don't have to share anything personal. Empty Chairs is designed to be low-pressure. You're always allowed to step away, take a break, or leave. If something doesn't feel right, trust that feeling. Those involved are not trained professionals and this isn't crisis support. If you need urgent help, please contact Samaritans on 116 123 (UK), or call emergency services.

Empty Chairs events are happening in many venues, not only in pubs, though that's the focus of this magazine. The make up of groups varies, its not seven ladies to one male every time! See page 7 for contact details.

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Pub of the year for Melton and District 2025. Pub of the year for Leicestershire, Rutland and Northampton 2023.



J D Wetherspoon

Take a fresh look at the pub chain that changed Britain's high streets

by Steve Collins

J D Wetherspoon, commonly known as Wetherspoons or simply 'Spoons', is one of the most recognisable pub chains in the UK. Founded by Sir Tim Martin in 1979, the company has grown from a single north London pub into a major hospitality business with pubs and hotels across the UK and Ireland. Its success has been built on a simple promise: affordable food and drink served in large, accessible pubs that appeal to a wide range of customers, and offers a consistent brand message.

Unlike many traditional pub operators, Wetherspoons became known for taking over unusual buildings such as former cinemas, banks, post offices and department stores. This helped the chain create large pubs with distinctive interiors while also giving disused high-street buildings a new purpose. In Leicestershire we currently have 10 Wetherspoons across the county.

Wetherspoons' popularity is based upon value for money, especially when it comes to the price of its cask ales. The urban myth that their beers are purchased close to their sell by date, and therefore can be sold cheaply, still comes up in conversations I have about 'Spoons today. The fact is that 'Spoons have huge purchasing power which allows them to negotiate price directly with brewers, and because of their fast turnover can avoid excessive waste and operate on smaller margins. The quality of cask ale in 'Spoons is no better or worse than any other pub. Like anywhere else, quality depends upon the cellarmanship of the publican or manager in charge.

In Leicester we are fortunate to have at the Corn Exchange (right) a manager in Warren Mitchell whose knowledge of and passion for cask ale is to be admired, and as a result he is providing a great choice of excellent quality ales. The Kettleby Cross (pictured, page 7) in Melton Mowbray has recently collaborated with CAMRA members on its range and has organised 'Meet The Brewer' events.



Every three months 'Spoons nationally produces a leaflets showing a range of all-year-round real ales, and a list of 30-40 seasonal guest ales from a wide range of excellent British breweries. The leaflet clearly says, 'available to request'. I would urge you to engage with your local 'Spoons manager to suggest ales to stock other than the usual suspects, just as you would with the free houses that we all know and love.

Whilst I would have utmost sympathy with a pub that suddenly finds a 'Spoons appearing in competition just up the road, the bigger picture is that 'Spoons nationally is increasing the availability and volume of cask ale. Breweries always have a choice. If 'Spoons wants their beers, there is always a danger that their brand can appear devalued due to their pricing policy, though 'Spoons demand will often allow breweries to operate at higher volumes, giving them economies of scale and therefore a reduced cost base, which must ultimately be good for everybody in the trade. If the likes of Thornbridge and Oakham want to trade with 'Spoons there must be something in it for the. In the long term we all want and need these superb breweries to thrive!

If you are one of those CAMRA members who understandably want to support their favourite local and have a dismissive attitude towards Wetherspoons, I have met quite a few, I urge you to take a fresh look.



EMPTY CHAIRS EVENTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://emptychairs.org.uk/#venues>

<https://emptychairs.org.uk/get-involved/>

or search Vicki's Empty Chairs-Leicester on Facebook.

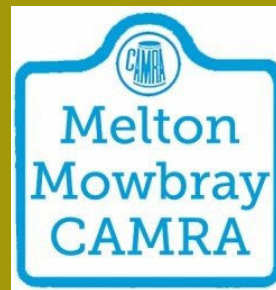
CAMRA MEMBERS

Do you receive updates from CAMRA or your branch? If not, your membership settings will need amending. GDPR rules mean this isn't done automatically for you. Please contact the addresses on page 19 for assistance.

More items can be read on the extra page.

<https://leicsdrinker.camra.org.uk/extra/>

Branch News



LEICESTER

Fox Inn, Oadby (left), has reopened after an extensive refurbishment. A 20 pence discount is being offered to CAMRA members. **The Bulls Head**, Blaby is being refurbished. **The Distillery**, Leicester has closed. Also in Leicester, it has been announced by the Beautiful Pubs Company they will be leaving **The Knight and Garter** in December. They have said the brand may move to a new location. The pub has been advertised by Everards along with those on page 8.



Leicester Branch has introduced a Pub of the Season award. This will commence with the Autumn award which will be presented in October. Branch members should check their email for voting details.

HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH

Following last issue's report on Earl Shilton, **Fernleighs** suddenly closed. The **Bulls Head**, Nailstone reports three beers on handpump.

Restoration work to bring **The Cock Inn** pub in Sibson back into good repair is now under way, marking a welcome step forward for the historic building. The news follows a strong show of local support, with more than 2,500 residents signing a petition presented to Full Council in April calling for the historically significant pub to be renovated and reopened. The Borough Council will continue to monitor progress on the work. If agreed timescales are not met, the council will consider the options available to ensure the building is properly conserved.

MELTON MOWBRAY

The White Hart in Melton had closed but has now reopened. **The Bell at Frisby** has introduced Tap Takeovers by local breweries which are proving popular. **Round Corner Brewery** are planning a major expansion with six additional fermenters. The brewery building itself is already full so these will be sited outside. **The Hop Stop** has had a handpump installed. Week Commencing 27 July the branch held its second Wetherspoons Tap Takeover at **The Kettleby Cross**.

VALE OF BELVOIR

Pub reports from the Chair's travels and socials are reported on the branch Facebook page,

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1200 - 2230

FRI - SAT

1200 - 2300



foxinnoadby.co.uk

On the Buses

by Shawn Collier

In this issue we head east from Leicester along the A47. The 1120 departure from Haymarket Bus station on the LC7 takes 55 minutes to reach Uppingham. First stop was Culpin & Son butchers and sausage rolls for lunch. For the afternoon's exploring I had booked the Rutland 'book a bus' service - Callconnect.

Before that there was time to visit a couple of Uppingham's pubs. The Vaults is housed in a Grade II listed 17th century building on the market



square. Five handpumps are available and I drank the Nene Valley Brewery offerings, Simple Pleasures, golden 3.8% and Business Time, a 4.3% pale. Just off the square is The Crown Inn. Here the choice was Everards Kaleidoscope IPA, 4.8%, smooth and fruity.

Leaving The Crown through the rear door it's just a few steps to the bus stops. The minibus duly arrived and we set off for Ketton. As can happen with this service, journeys can be knitted together. We collected another passenger and dropped her off before I alighted.

Walking up Pit Lane a couple of venues are to be found. The **Ketton Sports & Community Club** is open to the general public, though membership is required to join any of the sports and games teams. A cricket match was in progress on the barren looking field. Two beers from Grainstore were on the bar, Rutland Osprey and Triple B. The latter was enjoyed as a few overs were played-out.

Further along the lane is the home of **Bakers Dozen Brewery**. During the summer they host their Pop Up Tap Room and it was nice to be able to call by and see the operation. A good range of their beers were available on cask and keg. Bull Run was my choice, the second 4.3% pale of the day. Company was provided by Melton Mowbray CAMRA on a branch social.



I'd been a little late in the week booking the transport so a return visit will be scheduled. On this occasion it wasn't possible to visit the excellent **Railway** (Melton branch did though). Bland's R5 is a limited bus service between Stamford and Uppingham. If you're in the area it is possible to have a couple of late afternoon hours in Ketton.

Returning to Uppingham I called in **The Falcon Hotel** having not visited before. Wainwright Gold was available along with The Falcon Hotel Best Bitter. This is Grainstore Cooking 3.8%. The staff I spoke to here were enthusiastic for cask but I'm afraid hotel prices for a 3.8% beer are not going to help the cause.

The final pub of the day was reached by catching 'The Rutlander' R1 to Caldecott. **The Plough Inn** rotates two beers, on this occasion Abbeydale Moonshine and Tiny Rebel Cwtch. The Abbeydale was enjoyed while the bus travelled to Corby and back. The R1 offers other pub options along it's route from Melton Mowbray to Corby.

I caught the R1 back to Uppingham then the 1815 LC7 to Leicester.

Photos in order : On the LC7; Ketton Sports and Community Club; Bakers Dozen Brewery; Callconnect in Ketton; Plough Inn, Caldecott.



*****Join CAMRA*****

Membership with CAMRA saves you money on pints, all while supporting the mission to preserve beer and pubs for future generations.

camra.org.uk/membership



Cider & Perry

Cider Makers Turn Attention to Harvest as Bottling Season Continues

by Simon Jones

As summer progresses, orchard owners and cider makers across the UK are entering a crucial period of preparation ahead of this year's apple harvest. While the first fruit is still weeks away from reaching peak ripeness in many regions, cider-makers are far from idle. Behind the scenes, producers are busy bottling last year's cider, refining blends, maintaining equipment and preparing their orchards for what may look like a small harvest.

For many producers, July and August are dedicated to bringing the previous harvest's cider to market. Matured over the winter and spring months, ciders from the 2025 harvest are now being bottled, labelled and distributed to local markets, a small collection of retailers, and cider enthusiasts. The process marks the culmination of months of fermentation and careful maturation, allowing makers to showcase the unique characteristics of last year's fruit before attention shifts fully to the incoming crop. The summer has also seen a packed calendar of cider competitions and awards ceremonies across the UK. Established producers and emerging craft makers alike have been recognised for their innovation, quality and commitment to traditional cider-making techniques. From regional CAMRA festivals to national cider championships, awards have highlighted the growing diversity of the British cider sector and the increasing confidence of our local independent producers.

One of the strongest themes emerging from this year's new releases is the rise of single-variety ciders. Rather than blending multiple apple types, producers are increasingly showcasing ciders made from a single variety, allowing drinkers to experience the distinctive flavour profiles of individual apples. Varieties such as BlackDabinett, Filbarrel, Tanners Red and Ingrid Marie are appearing on labels with greater prominence, reflecting growing consumer interest in provenance and authenticity. Single-variety ciders offer makers an opportunity to celebrate the unique character of their orchards while demonstrating the influence of climate, soil and growing conditions on the finished product. Much like winemakers highlighting individual grape varieties, cider-makers are finding that drinkers are eager to explore the subtle differences between apples and discover how each contributes its own balance of sweetness, acidity, tannin and aroma.

Meanwhile, orchard management remains a top priority as harvest approaches. Growers are monitoring fruit development, managing pests and diseases, and assessing crop volumes following another season shaped by unpredictable weather conditions. Many orchards have reported healthy fruit sets, although final yields will depend heavily on conditions during the remaining weeks of summer. Equipment maintenance is also underway, with presses, milling machinery and fermentation vessels being serviced and prepared for the intense workload that harvest brings. For producers, a successful cider season depends as much on preparation as it does on the quality of the fruit itself. With bottling lines running, award-winning ciders reaching consumers and orchards steadily moving towards harvest, the UK cider industry is entering one of its most exciting periods of the year. The months ahead will determine the shape of the next vintage, but for now, producers are enjoying the opportunity to celebrate past successes while laying the groundwork for another season of cider-making excellence.

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Everards News

Couples say cheerio!

By Claire Cannell



Mick and Linda have announced their retirement from the **New Inn**, Enderby after topping an incredible thirty years in the trade, the majority spent at the New Inn.

They've been keen fundraisers during their time there, with various charities benefitting from the generosity of their locals over the years, building a great community spirit.

Also moving on are Alan and Sarah; from the **Black Horse, Aylestone**. They've spent 15 years supporting the local community and will be greatly missed by them.

During their time they've ran many jam-packed events, including quizzes, beer festivals, comedy, and music and have helped the local community with food banks.



We wish them all well and all the best for the future.

Pub News Extra

The people behind **The Britannia**, Queniborough have taken on **The Crown**, Anstey. The team that runs **The Cradock** and **The Clarendon** in Leicester have added **The Donkey**. Both pubs will be refurbished before reopening. In Seagrave **The White Hart** is set to reopen. By Benjamin Pimlico that run the **White Horse**, Loughborough and **The Castle**, Leicester.

Congratulations to **The Railway**, Ketton - CAMRA East Midlands Pub Of The Year. They'll now be in the Regional Round, the last 16 pubs nationally.

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For more information and transport scan



Three Towns By Train

by Chris Greenwood

Tamworth is an historic town, with an impressive Motte and Bailey castle, plenty of attractive buildings and some very good pubs. With an early start, you can also visit a couple of establishments in nearby Nuneaton and Atherstone.

I started my adventure in the **Felix Holt** in Nuneaton. It has an attractive, low ceiling, with a lot of light brown wood panelling. The friendly young woman at the bar served me two of the guest beers. The Limestone Stone the Crows was sweet and malty, with dark berry flavours and liquorice notes in the finish. The Exmoor Beast was dark and moreish, malty and sweet, with some balancing bitterness. I then travelled to Tamworth to do some site seeing, before further imbibing.

First up, **The Globe** (right), a pub with a noteworthy facade of brick, tile and stone. Inside there's a pleasant brown and white wooden ceiling, a few stained glass windows. Decorated fireplace and a large dark wood bar. Faced with the choice of Doom Bar and Bass, I chose the Bass. It was a decent mix of malt and hops, with some bitterness in the finish. Next up was the **Bole Bridge** an imposing, whitewashed stone building with a really long single room, with lots of pictures of old Tamworth and a light blue and white ceiling. The lively manageress called me babs, which was a nice blast from the past. The Kirkstall Three Swords was a hoppy pale, with a bitter tingle on the tongue.



The **Market Vaults** has an etched glass window and attractive frontage, leading into a narrow, historic interior. There's old black timber beams, a couple of decorated fireplaces and grand Joules mirrors. I drank the Joules Citra Blonde, a predominately malty beer with hints of its namesake hop and a sweet finish. Opposite is the **Tamworth Tap**, already busy on opening. Award winning, with friendly staff and eight beers. A buzz of conversation, brewerania, dark wood and a pretty upstairs drinking area. The Good Chemistry Foot Tap had plenty of flavour for a 3.4%, with a decent balance of hops and malt, with a bitter sweet ending. The Pentrich Lifesaving Nerds, a tasty hazy pale was fruity, with citrus notes and an enjoyable grapefruit finish.

Just down the road is the **Old Bank House** (right), a beautiful brick facade leads into a luxurious interior, chandeliers, lots of opulent rooms, with a variety of furniture and seating and a good view of the castle. The BOA Peace Out was generously hopped, with marmalade / orange peel notes with a citrus finish.



Continued on page 18...

SAMARITANS

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& Rutland

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X (was Twitter) - SamsBeerFest



facebook.com/SamsBeerFestival

...Continued from page 16.

Open on Friday and Saturday is the **Moat House** inside a beautiful listed building. An Extravagant brickwork exterior leads into a wooden beamed interior, with an eclectic selection of grandfather and other types of clocks. A friendly chap served me an Oakham Citra, which was in good condition, with plenty of hops in the mouthfeel and a dry, bitter finish. So, onto the **Robert Peel**, a real locals pub, with friendly regulars and staff. The Empire Blonde was an easy drinking best bitter, with a good mix of malt and hops and fruity ending. The Castle Rock Golden Ratio was a good mix of Idaho 7 and Citra, with citrus notes and a bitter and fruity ending.



The King's Ditch is a small welcoming micropub with hops and beamed ceiling and a small upstairs drinking area. The friendly owner offered me a taster or two. The Tollgate Old Rasputin was a dry stout, with a little bit of sweetness, roasted barley and a bitter finish. The Shiny What a Life was a good mix of Bru 1 and Mosaic, with fruity notes and orange peel notes and a citrus finish.

Atherstone is the next stop on the train, so I went there. **The Market Tavern** is a lovely old pub, with attractive, wooden beamed rooms, especially in the upstairs room. From the choice of six real ales, I had the two Silhill brewery beers. The Superstar was a well made West Coast IPA, with a generous amount of US hops. It had a balance of Citra, Equanot and Mosaic, with a pleasant grapefruit mouthfeel and a long hoppy ending. The Blonde Star was just as good, with a generous amount of US hops and a citrus mouthfeel and a grapefruit notes in the finish.

Across the road is the **Angel** (below), with an attractive black and white front and an historic interior with black beams. I drank the Leatherbritches Bohemeni, a dark porter infused with gin soaked damsons, dry, with fruit notes and quite a bitter ending. The Wantsum Ravening Wolf had a good amount of New Zealand hops, very dry, with an astringent finish.

A short train journey and a ten minute walk took me to **The Lord Hop** back in Nuneaton. It's a popular, basic, two-roomed micropub with four cask ales. The friendly owner gave me tasters. The Pentrich Big In Japan had plenty of citrus notes, bitterness and a tropical fruit finish. The Howling Hops London Special Bitter was brown in colour, with a balanced mix of hops and malt, a sweet start, with chocolate malt notes and a bitter finish.

Another enjoyable day. Cheers.



Diary Dates

21 Aug	Leicester Branch Public Transport Social 12:00 (See Website)
25 Aug	Loughborough Branch Meeting, Dew Drop, Hathern 19:30
25-29 Aug	Peterborough Beer Festival (pborobeerfest.camra.org.uk)
1 Sep	Hinckley & B Branch Meeting, Stoke Golding Club 1930
2 Sep	Melton Branch Meeting, Kettleby Cross 1930
3 Sep	Leicester Branch Meeting, Birstall RBL 1930
4-5 Sep	Western Park Beer Festival, St Anne's Church Hall LE3 6FN *
17-20 Sep	Great Central Railway Beer, Cider & Gin Festival*
18-19 Sep	Melton Market Beer Festival, Stockyard, Melton*
24-26 Sep	Samaritans Beer Festival, Oadby RBL LE2 5QA*
25-26 Sep	Hinckley & Bosworth / Hinckley Rugby Club Beer Festival*
29 Sep	Loughborough Branch Meeting, Hall Croft Tap, Shepshed 2000
9-12 Oct	Melton Branch to Edinburgh and Glasgow.
27 Oct	Loughborough Branch Meeting, Organ Grinder 2000
2 Nov	Leicester Branch Meeting & AGM, Ale Wagon 1930
3 Nov	Hinckley & B Branch Meeting, Sapcote Club, Sapcote 1930
24 Nov	Loughborough Branch AGM
1 Dec	Hinckley & B Branch Meeting & AGM, Greyhound, Hinckley 1930
6 Jan	Melton Branch Meeting & AGM, TBC 1930

** Non CAMRA or joint festivals. Please check publicity for admission details.*

All welcome to any meeting or event.

BRANCH WEBSITES & CONTACTS

leicester.camra.org.uk
hinckleyandbosworth.camra.org.uk
loughboroughcamra.co.uk
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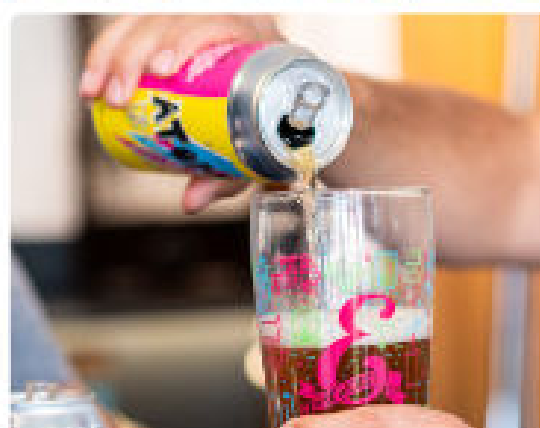
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Maybe it's time to run one...

Brewing great beer is what we do. We've brewed over 100 different beers over the last year – so whether you're into bold IPAs or classic ambers, there's something for everyone. And the best bit? You'll only find our beers in Everards pubs and with those who work alongside us.

We keep our pubs looking fresh. We regularly invest in refurbishments, helping our business owners create standout spaces, attracting customers and providing them the best experience. – from a cosy pint to a lively night out with friends.

We're a family business that knows what makes great pubs thrive, and we've been supporting people to run their own pubs since 1849. If you love pubs, perhaps it's time to run your own.



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