



FREE Magazine from  
The Tayside Branch of  
CAMRA  
Winter 2025 / 2026



Issue 26

All the latest Real Ale News and features  
from CAMRA Tayside Branch



# FARM-FRESH BEERS IN THE HEART OF STUNNING ARGYLL

CAIRNDOW, ARGYLL

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**Hello all and welcome to this, the latest issue  
of the CAMRA Tayside Branch magazine. Well  
done if you have read every issue!**

This is the 26th issue of our branch magazine, the content of which is provided by our well travelled branch members, with occasional items purloined from other branch magazines.

Within CAMRA, there is currently a movement afoot to get us to call the stuff we enjoy drinking “cask ale” (beer conditioned in the cask). Tayside Branch committee are of the opinion that most people understand what “real ale” is and to call it something else will lead to some confusion. So, in this magazine we will continue to refer to ‘real ale’.



Very shortly we will be deciding on our area Pub of the Year. A communication will be issued to branch members shortly so can I please ask all Tayside CAMRA members to cast your votes when the time comes to do so. The current PoTY's are **Airlie Arms Hotel** (Angus), **Bank Bar** (Dundee), **Loch Leven Brewery Tap** (Kinross-shire), **Old Ship** (Perth) and the **Ericht Ale House** (Perthshire) which was also the overall winner.

Finally, please remember that Hooked on Ale would not be possible without the generous support of our advertisers. Advertising provides a source of income which pays for the magazine print cost so I would therefore ask that you support the establishments and breweries advertising in Hooked on Ale.

**Keep enjoying your “Real Ale” , and if you are able, please, score it on CAMRA's website ....beer scoring helps us determine which pubs are nominated for CAMRA's Good Beer Guide.**

**CHEERS THE NOO, Kenny Smith Branch Chair**

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**Disclaimer:** The views contained within **Hooked on Ale** do not necessarily represent the views of CAMRA, the editor or the Tayside Branch.

**Advertising:** If you would like to advertise in the next issue of Hooked on Ale due to be published in Summer 2026, then for more information, please contact us at:

[newsletter@tayside.camra.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@tayside.camra.org.uk)

## Tayside CAMRA Branch Committee

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**Secretary:** Bill Hoy

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**Branch Magazine:** Martin Fox

**Pubs Officer:** Richard Barnes

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To find out more about Tayside CAMRA, visit either our website at [tayside.camra.org.uk](http://tayside.camra.org.uk) or Facebook page CAMRA Tayside

# Tayside Pub News

## Dundee and District

In Dundee, **Maker**, 71 Brewing's pub on Perth Road closed suddenly in February with no sign yet of reopening. Meanwhile the **71 Tap & Bottle Shop** finally reopened in July as **Canvas**, a taproom bar, music and events venue, adjacent to the brewery though no sign of real ale at time of going to print. **Discovery Beers** bottle shop, also on the Perth Road, sadly closed during the summer.

**Phoenix** under new ownership continues to thrive and it appears to be offering a more varied choice of real ales with Law and 71 often to be had.

In Broughty Ferry, the **Royal Arch** is under new ownership following the retirement of Jonathan Stewart (snr), a long-standing supporter of CAMRA and advocate for real ale. The pub has been taken on by John Black and although there are plans for some changes, real ale will continue. (Ed - we hope to include a feature about Jonathan in the next issue of Hooked on Ale.) The **Anchor** stopped real ale, then closed down suddenly and was boarded up, with future uncertain and rumours circulating.

## Perth, Perthshire & Kinross

There have not been too many changes regarding real ale pubs since the last issue of Hooked on Ale.

**Twa Tams** is under new ownership but remains Perth's premier music venue with plans to retain real ale and handpulled cider. The **Tower** in Crieff held another successful beer festival in August. The **Atholl Arms Hotel** in Blair Atholl is up for sale after 25 years under the same ownership. If sold it will be interesting to see if a new owner retains the Moulin ales or opts for something else. The **Pitcairngreen Inn** has recently changed management but no changes are expected.

Although it wasn't a real pub and wasn't on CAMRA's heritage list, a mention must be made of the **Royal Bar**, Perth. Following the tragic fire in June, the building at the Scott Street / South Street corner is being slowly demolished. There has been no indication yet as to what will replace it. If you look closely at the fenced off site there is a wooden box with the word 'glass' on the outside. I believe this to contain the Royal's stained glass windows with Historic Scotland being involved.

By far the best success story is the **Ericht Alehouse** Blairgowrie which was awarded the 2025 Tayside Pub of the Year and continues to be run by community volunteers. Expect to find up to six real ales on. It is currently open from Tuesday to Saturday from 5 pm.

## Angus

Starting with disappointing news, Montrose has become a real ale desert with the **Market Arms** (a former Angus Pub of the Year) and the **George Hotel** no longer serving real ale. This is a poor state of affairs for Montrose residents and visitors alike. In Brechin, the **Caledonian** closed earlier this year leaving the **Brechin Arms** as the only real ale pub in the town.

Disappointingly real ale and real cider are no longer available in the **Commercial Inn**, Letham which is currently on the market.

At least there has been some good news with real ale back on at the **Stags Head** in Carnoustie. There are usually two handpulls available with MòR ales a regular feature.

\*\*\*\*\*

Current real ale pubs that we know of are listed below. Full details of these pubs can be found on our website [www.tayside.camra.org.uk](http://www.tayside.camra.org.uk)

## Contributions from Jim McMahon, Martin Fox, Bill Hoy and Richard Barnes

\*\*\*\*\*

### Tayside Real Ale Pubs

As at 1 December 2025, the following Pubs, Hotels and Clubs (in some cases members and guests only) are known to sell cask conditioned ale. Those known to serve real cider and perry are annotated C. Those known to serve real ale on a seasonal basis are annotated S. Those where real ale not always available annotated O. W denotes real ale usually served at weekends. K denotes keykey dispense.

#### Angus

##### Arbroath

Corn Exchange  
Old Boatyard

##### Brechin

Brechin Arms

##### Carnoustie

Station Hotel  
Stags Head

##### Forfar

Osnaburg

##### Glen Clova

Glen Clova Hotel

##### Kirriemuir

Airlie Arms Hotel

##### Memus

Drovers Inn

##### Dundee & District

##### Broughty Ferry

Fisherman's  
Jolly's Hotel  
Royal Arch  
Ship Inn

##### Dundee

Bank Bar  
Counting House  
Frews (W) (O)  
George Orwell  
Market  
Phoenix  
Pillars  
Speedwell (Mennies)  
Star & Garter

##### Kinross-shire

##### Cleish

Up In Arms (W) (O)

##### Kinross

Loch Leven Brewery Tap  
Muir's Inn

##### Milnathort

Village Inn

##### Scotlandwell

Well Country Inn

##### Wester Balgedie

Balgedie Toll Tavern

##### Perth City

Bunker  
Capital Asset  
Cherrybank Inn  
Cullach (K)  
Glover Arms  
Old Ship Inn  
Silvery Tay  
Twa Tams (C)

##### Perthshire

##### Alyth

Alyth Hotel

##### Ardler

Tavern (O)

##### Auchterarder

Auchterarder Golf Club

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### **Blair Atholl**

Atholl Arms Hotel  
Wasted Degrees (K) (W) (S) (C)

### **Blairgowrie**

Ericht Ale House (C)  
Fair o Blair  
Stormont Arms

### **Bridge of Earn**

Tipsy Coo

### **Crieff**

Quaich Bar  
Tower

### **Dunkeld**

Perth Arms  
Taybank Hotel (S)

### **Dunning**

Kirkstyle Inn

### **Kirkmichael**

Kirkmichael Hotel

### **Meikle**

Kinloch Arms

### **Meikleour**

Meikleour Arms Hotel

### **Moulin**

Moulin Inn

### **Murthly**

Uisge

### **Pitcairngreen**

Pitcairngreen Inn (C)

### **Pitlochry**

Auld Smiddy  
Old Mill Inn

### **Weem**

Ailean Chraggan

If your local pub, hotel or even club serves 'real ale' or 'real cider or perry' and is not included in this listing please let us know.

To find out which of the above pubs are listed in CAMRA's

Good Beer Guide 2026, why not buy the guide or download the Good Beer Guide App. For more information, visit

CAMRA's website

[www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk)



## Tayside Brewery News

**Law Brewery** - Danny Cullen (owner and brewer) reported that he was now concentrating more on the cask production side as there does seem to be an increase in outlets for buying cask ales in Scotland. This is in contrast to kegged and packaged beer products as the number of 'indie' pubs and bottle shops have decreased dramatically in Tayside. The online shop was recently upgraded, and he now has a part-time sales person covering the West of Scotland to increase sales distribution. He is expecting two students from the University of Dundee Internship Module to assist in marketing projects from December 2025. New recipes for cask ales are being developed with a list of new beers planned for 2026 including more barrel-aged beers, and he hopes to continue doing more commissions around Dundee.

**MòR Beers** - Dominic Hughes (owner and brewer) informed Hooked on Ale that a new brewery shed has been constructed to meet additional demand for cask ales across Scotland which continues to grow with new specials released monthly. Some of which like Green Lady 4.6% ABV West Coast IPA, first brewed in 2022, have become regularly brewed flagship ales, and spawned the summer release of Twice the Lady 5.6% ABV DIPA and winter special Little Lady 3.6% ABV West Coast Session. When the additional space was planned, it had been marked for bottling, but there has been such an explosion in demand for cask ale that once again he has had to put bottling back on hold.



As well as creating more space, the new shed allows a much better flow from grain to cask (not quite glass as there's no onsite taproom...yet!) This is why most modern breweries are in large open plan industrial sheds. Dominic said that once you've seen one of these types of big-shed breweries – you'll start getting deja vu, but there are still many people who want to see them all! If you get the chance though a trip to a traditional Victorian tower house brewery like Hook Norton's which is spread over five storeys is well worth a visit to see how beer was traditionally brewed and delivered by Shire horse pulled drays. Or even Greene King's modern 1938 site but be quick, they're planning to move to a big boring shed in 2027.

**Wasted Degrees** - Jack Low (Director) informed Hooked on Ale that Wasted Degrees has had another strong year in 2025, with production output growing 54% year-on-year. Beginning with little more than a homebrew bucket in their parents' garage in 2016, the local brothers behind Wasted Degrees (Conall and Jack Low) celebrated the brewery's ninth birthday in August 2025. Following consecutive years of double-digit growth, it's now comfortably the largest locally owned, independent craft brewery in Perth & Kinross.

Producing upwards of 29,000 litres of beer every month, this year saw further 5-figure investments in additional tanks, a doubling of the number of kegs and casks owned by the brewery, and an automated keg washer to assist in handling demand. Following a successful pilot in 2024, this year also saw Wasted Degrees migrate its entire pale malt supply to barley grown by a single family-owned farm just outside Perth.



In the last 12 months, the core of the brewery's growth has come from the on-trade locally, with 23 new keg taps and 3 cask handpulls added across Perthshire. Wasted Degrees is actively seeking new draught

customers (keg and cask) across Perthshire, offering free cellar installs where appropriate and free delivery to trade customers in Perthshire.

Growth in the “off trade” has also seen the brewery’s canning line exceed a quarter of a million cans packaged since its installation in 2022, and export markets are due to broaden beyond existing countries (Western Europe) with the prospective addition of Iceland in 2026. Incidentally, having chosen cans over glass bottles, Wasted Degrees has saved in excess of 23 tons of carbon equivalents as a result, with each smallpack unit having a 17% lower carbon footprint than the bottles they replaced, whilst also better caring for the beer and protecting flavour.


Wasted Degrees cask ales can be found in the Old Mill (Pitlochry), Perth Arms and Taybank (Dunkeld), Uisge (Murthly), Ailean Craggan (Aberfeldy) and Pitcairngreen Inn (Pitcairngreen). Keg ales can be found in many outlets throughout the Perthshire area.

**Hooked on Ale welcomes updates from all Tayside breweries producing cask or bottled conditioned real ale. For future issues, please contact:-**

**[newsletter@tayside.camra.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@tayside.camra.org.uk)**

Set in the heart of the beautiful Angus Glens, the Glen Clova Hotel has 18 rooms and 12 self-catering properties with hot tubs. So whether you are hill-climbing or just relaxing with family and friends, we are the perfect spot. Locally sourced produce matches perfectly with a pint of real ale in our warm and inviting Climber’s bar. And we’re dog friendly too! ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️



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## Other Brewery News

In this section we now include news from breweries from outside Tayside who support Hooked on Ale by advertising in our branch magazine and which helps pay our print costs.

### Fyne Ales - FyneFest 2026: Celebrating 14 Years of Cask, Craft and Community

Now in its 14th year, FyneFest returns to Glen Fyne from Friday 29 to Sunday 31 May 2026, bringing together beer lovers from across the UK for a weekend of great cask ale, craft beer, food, music and scenery.



From humble beginnings with just 200 people gathered in the courtyard of Fyne Ales, the festival has grown into a highlight of the brewing calendar, welcoming around 2,500 guests to the family-run brewery's stunning estate in Argyll.

Across the weekend, FyneFest will showcase 36 lines of cask ale and 36 lines of keg beer, pouring more than 150 unique brews from independent breweries. A must for any real ale fan, the Walkers Bar is a one-day-only cask pop-up built inside a historic bothy - reached

via an hour's scenic walk through the glen, where fresh cask beer is served right on the riverbank. With brewer talks, live music across four stages, local food, and the warm, welcoming atmosphere FyneFest is known for, it remains one of the most distinctive beer festivals in the UK. More details at [www.fynefest.com](http://www.fynefest.com)



**Orkney Brewery** - The Orkney Brewery originally started brewing in Orkney in 1988, in an old schoolhouse building at Quoyloo. The brewery has been consistently recognised nationally and internationally for the quality of its brewing and range of beer. This was recently demonstrated again by the three Gold Medals and seven awards in total, the brewery received, at the Society of Independent Brewers, Beer Competition, in September.

Arran Sinclair, son of Norman and Christine, the owners of The Orkney Brewery, graduated in May this year, with an Honours Degree in Brewing and Distilling, from Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh. Post further studies, he will be joining the business full time, with the aim of continuing the success, of one of the foremost independent Scottish brewers. His brother, Alistair, has also just started at Heriot Watt in International Finance. So, the family business will be well served in the future.



**Norman & Arran Sinclair**

## Rait Beer Festival

Late in August, the idyllic Perthshire village of Rait once again held its 2025 Rait Beer Festival in the Annat Hall, with outside seating in the neighbouring garden, to enjoy the beers in some fine summer weather. Perhaps Tayside's best-kept secret, this biennial off-grid event has actually been going for over 20 years. Rait is difficult to get to without a lift or booking taxis, but it is possible to walk up and down the two miles of lanes with buses stopping on the A90 by The Horn near Errol.



On arrival, a brief queue for tickets allowed perusal of the beers on offer. A row of six firkins from Scottish breweries was set up to fill glasses under gravity: Orkney Tidal Bay (3.9% ABV); Cairngorm Black Gold (4.4 % ABV), current Champion Winter Beer of Britain; Omnium from Six Degrees North (4.3% ABV); Inveralmond Ossian (4.1% ABV); Cloud Fall from 71 Brewing (4.5% ABV); Harviestoun Citra Project (4.2% ABV). In addition, two live beers were on keg tap from Abernyste Brewery – Vienna Lager and The Haar. A variety of pies from Clark's Bakery were available, with all proceeds going to local charities CHAS and Mindspace Perth. Look out for the next date in Summer 2027.

**By Richard Barnes**

Listed in every CAMRA Good Beer Guide from 1975 to 2012 and making a welcome return since 2014.

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**Broughty Ferry DD5 2AD**

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## The Bank Bar

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Tayside CAMRA Pub of The Year 2022

Real Ales (4 hand pulls)

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### **Brewery Spotlight: Cullach Brewing (Perth, Scotland)**

Tucked away on Princes Street in the heart of Perth, and just a handy 10min walk from the Railway and Bus stations, and Perth city centre, Cullach Brewing ([www.cullachbrewing.co.uk](http://www.cullachbrewing.co.uk)) has quietly carved out a name for itself in Scotland's growing indie beer scene.

Founded by Will Bond, Cullach opened its taproom doors in late 2019 and has been pouring fresh, small-batch beer straight from the source ever since. The brewery runs a modest 10hl kit, keeping things tight and experimental. Their beers are unfiltered, naturally carbonated, and often feature bold flavour profiles—punchy session IPAs, rich stouts, and the occasional fruit-forward sour. Flagships like “Dubh” stout and “Reverb” APA have become local favourites and regularly draw strong reviews.

Cullach's taproom (opposite) open Wednesday to Sunday is relaxed, with a lounge-style setup, dog-friendly policy, and a rotating selection of local and national craft beers. It serves artisanal sourdough pizzas which are hand-stretched to order.

Cullach is proof that small-scale brewing, when

done with passion and precision, can make a big impression on both locals and visiting craft beer fans alike. Whilst not producing cask real ale regularly, Will has 'borrowed' a cask for the occasional local beer festivals and is hoping to make this a more regular feature of his brewing. He also hopes, fingers crossed, to get a hand pump installed in the future.

As a single person operation, with support during busy times from family and friends to



do canning, I eagerly offered to lend a hand in the brewery as and when required to gain more experience of the production process and to build improved CAMRA Tayside relationships. Cheers Will.

**By Alan Murray**

# CULLACH BREWING



**Craft Microbrewery & Taproom  
based in Perth, Scotland.**

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50 Princes Street  
Perth  
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[www.cullachbrewing.co.uk](http://www.cullachbrewing.co.uk)

## The Thirstday Group's Jolly July Jaunts

Buying into my desire to visit as many "dead end" railway stations in Scotland as I can, the Thirstday Group came up with a couple of grand ideas during July.

First off, on the 9th, a bus journey to Ainster (Anstruther) and visits to the Dreel Inn and The Bank. I can't remember what ale was on in the Dreel though the Bank had Old Jock, Old Golden Hen and HOPO Proper IPA (from Broughton Ales) which I opted for. Walking from the Bank to the harbour, we caught the bus to Lower Largo.

The Railway had an excellent choice of five ales, Natural Blonde 4.0% ABV (Harviestoun), Spey's Cadet 4.5% ABV (Spey Valley), Pentland IPA 3.9% ABV (Stewart), Sunshine on Keith 3.4% ABV (Spey Valley) and Deuchards IPA 3.8% (still branded as Caledonian). The first two were had along with a tasty peh (sorry pie).

We moved round the corner to the Crusoe Hotel where disappointingly there were three hand pulls in evidence, but no ale was to be had. Mike returned to the Railway whilst Gregor and I opted to give one of their craft ales a try, before returning to the Railway for Pentland and Sunshine on Keith.

Making our way to the most acoustic bus stop I've ever been in (under the railway viaduct), we awaited the arrival of the bus to Leven; it was late and by the time it got to Leven our train was departing (we had planned to stop in Kirkcaldy for a pint). After working out how to get the required tickets from the ticket machine, the next train arrived. On boarding we found that it didn't go our way, but round the Fife Circle, so we had to disembark.

Gregor at this point decided to go and check out the East Dock Bar in Methil whilst Mike and I had a wee wander and found an Italian ice cream parlour that had just closed. The nice lady sitting outside offered to get us a cone

each, which we gratefully accepted (it was one of the hottest days of the year!).

The next train to Edinburgh duly arrived and we boarded it for the short journey to Kirkcaldy where a change of platforms saw us on the train back to Dundee.

Our next excursion took place on the 31st to North Berwick. A 10:14 departure to Edinburgh Waverly where we met up with Des from Edinburgh & Lothians branch before the connection to North Berwick. Local knowledge took us out via a side gate, through a housing estate onto the main road in from Edinburgh, where a left turn and a few hundred yards along brought us to the Nether Abbey Hotel where we enjoyed Northern IPA 5.2% ABV from Hadrian & Borders. (Haggis Hunter was had when we returned later in the day).

A good walk into town and we ventured across Lockett Bros., a bottle shop with 2 hand pulls, Peelywally 5.0% ABV from Winton was our choice, the other option was American Pale from our own Wasted Degrees.

Further along on the same side of the road we came to the Golfer's Rest, where we sampled Landlord (Pentland IPA when we returned later). After a look at the beach, we reached The Auld House with Abbot Ale, Jarl and Schiehallion on offer. The final pub in the town centre was the Ship, Lawless Village and Jack Back which we had with Jarl being the third ale on.

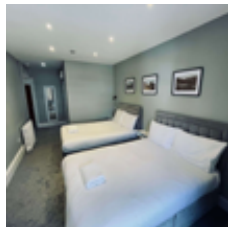
We retraced our steps calling back in at the Auld House, Golfer's Rest and Nether Abbey Hotel before boarding the train back to Edinburgh where we had time for Dark Island (Orkney) in the Halfway House before catching the 19:31 (on time) back to Dundee.

I would heartily recommend North Berwick if you fancied a day out in a place that is easy to get to by train.

**By Kenny Smith**

# THE AIRLIE ARMS HOTEL & RESTAURANT

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## Tayside CAMRA Branch Diary

For details of branch meetings and social events, please visit the branch website:

[www.tayside.camra.org.uk](http://www.tayside.camra.org.uk)

All Tayside CAMRA members are welcome to attend meetings and social events but please always check the Tayside CAMRA branch website or the branch Facebook page prior to meetings and socials to confirm venue and start time.

**Trading Standards Offices:** For issues such as consistent short measures or no price lists, contact:

**Angus - 03452 777 778**

**Dundee - 01382 434 000**

**Perthshire - 01738 476 476**

# STAR & GARTER

## WHISKY SALOON Traditional Dundee Pub

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### Non-CAMRA Ale Festivals

During the year, several non-CAMRA ale festivals are held in Perthshire. These are mainly run by local community and sporting organisations.

The two largest ones are organised by Perthshire Rugby club on the North Inch, Perth and by Blairgowrie Rugby Club at St James Park, Blairgowrie. These have been established for several years and combine various sporting activities to promote rugby alongside beer festivals and feature a range of cask conditioned ales, keg beer and cider as well as gin and other refreshments. This year, the Perth RFC festival featured 15 cask ales from across Scotland including Wasted Degrees, 71 Brewing and Cullach from Tayside. The Blairgowrie festival had 14 beers, again from all over Scotland. Admission is free to these events

On a smaller scale, the Tower Hotel in Crieff holds two festivals every year in the hotel

garden. The latest featured seven cask ales including three from Wasted Degrees as well as keg beers, wine, spirits and food, again with free admission

The Auchtobberfest held in Auchterarder's Ayton Hall and now in its third year is run by the local community council. With three cask ales, a CAMRA compliant cider as well as a selection of keg ales, gin and prosecco, admission to this event was £12 including a glass and a pint. (This year CAMRA members also got an extra free half pint.) In Glenfarg there is a pop-up pub (see page 17) as part of the Glenfarg Festival whilst the Rait festival (see page 11), a biennial event is run by the local community. Both feature cask ales.

All these events promote real ale and are well worth attending and help support good causes.

**By Bill Hoy**

## Scoring beer in pubs is really easy!

All CAMRA members are encouraged to score any real ales you may drink in pubs around the country on the new CAMRA website [camra.org.uk](http://camra.org.uk). It is an easy to use system that has been designed to assist CAMRA branches in selecting pubs for the Good Beer Guide. Whilst on the website, if you notice any errors in the content of the pub listing then you can also submit an update. If you are not a member, why not join Europe's most successful consumer organisation?

### What Do the Scores Mean?

The National Beer Scoring System (NBSS) is a 0-5 (0 = No cask ale available) point scale for judging beer quality in pubs.

0: No cask ale available - This can be because the pub never has it or it's run out

1: Poor - Beer that is anything from barely drinkable to drinkable with considerable resentment

2: Average - Competently kept, drinkable pint but doesn't inspire in anyway, not worth moving to another pub but you drink the beer without really noticing

3: Good - Good beer in good form. You may cancel plans to move to the next pub. You want to stay for another pint and may seek out the beer again

4: Very Good - Good Excellent beer in excellent condition

5: Perfect - Probably the best you are ever likely to find. **A seasoned drinker will award this score very rarely.**

If scoring a pub with a very low score (0, 0.5 or 1) it is helpful to include a comment why that score is given.

If you have any news about your local, please email: [whatpub@tayside.camra.org.uk](mailto:whatpub@tayside.camra.org.uk) And finally, we are reliant on you, whether CAMRA members or not, passing on information about pubs and breweries in the Tayside area. So even if not having a beer, if you are passing a pub and it is convenient, why not just pop your head around the door and see what is going on.

### Perth & Kinross Pop-up Pubs

Glenfarg Community Centre (the village hall and adjoining former schoolhouse) has opened up twice as a pub, featuring cask ales and craft beer from Harviestoun. It was advertised locally as the **Festive Village Pub** over Christmastime, and then **Glenfarg Summer Pub** in August. Check the CAMRA Website for details near those times.

Meanwhile the **Up in Arms** opens in Cleish, normally on the last Friday evening every month. Cask beers from Beath, Salt Rock, and Born have appeared in 2025; check opening dates on Facebook search **The Up in Arms - Cleish's pop up pub**

By Richard Barnes

## Beer Tasting in Prague: A Hoppy Adventure from Monks to Model Trains

Prague isn't just a fairytale city of spires and cobblestones — it's a full-on pilgrimage site for beer lovers. The Czech Republic boasts the highest beer consumption per capita in the world, and after spending a few days sampling its brews, you'll understand why. On a recent trip 8yrs on from my first drinking visit, I set out with the family to explore the wonderful city sights and to encourage sampling of the beer culture. I managed to sneak in a mini beer tour through the city, hitting up three very different and very Czech beer spots: **Strahov Monastery Brewery**, **Vytopna Railway Restaurant**, and the local dive, **Hany Bany**. Each offered a unique window into Prague's beer soul. But first, before you sip a single drop, you should know about one of the most sacred elements of Czech beer culture...

### The Czech Pour: Foam Is Not the Enemy

In most countries, a beer with a big foamy head is considered sloppy pouring. Not in the Czech Republic. Here, foam is essential. Czech bartenders are trained in the art of the pour, with three traditional ways to serve a Pilsner:

1. **Hladinka** – A classic pour with a thick, creamy head (about 1/3 foam). This is the standard pour for flavour balance and freshness.
2. **Šnyt** – A small beer with a larger head, typically served as a "just one more" option when you're close to done but not quite.
3. **Mliko** – Literally "milk." A full glass of wet foam. Sweet, creamy, and usually downed quickly by the locals.

Most of the time don't be surprised when your beer arrives with a generous crown of foam. It is intentional — and part of what makes Czech lagers taste so clean and alive as the foam protects the beer from oxygen and enhances aroma and mouthfeel.



Alan Murray & the "art of the pour"

They respect the pour as much as they respect their beer!



### Strahov Monastery Brewery – Where Monks Meet Malt

Tucked behind the majestic Prague Castle lies the Strahov Monastery, a stunning 12th-century complex with a not-so-secret weapon... its own brewery (**left**). Monks have been making beer here on and off for centuries, and today's Klášterní Pivovar Strahov carries that legacy with pride. After a climb up from the river via the Charles bridge and a wander around Prague Castle I suggested lunch and a fine excuse for a beer or two in the sunny courtyard allowing me to go into beer geek mode and wander around chatting to staff delivering grains and brewing onsite.

Their flagship St. Norbert IPA is a bold, modern Czech take on the style — generously hopped with citrus and pine notes balanced by a strong malt backbone - delicious. Other highlights include a

seasonal dark lager, a Vienna red, and their amber semi-dark which all went down far too well in the sun accompanied by local goulash soup.

### Vytopna Railway Restaurant – All Aboard the Beer Train

Next up I suggested an evening meal out with a shift from the sacred to the surreal. Vytopna, located right on bustling Wenceslas Square, combines beer and toy trains in one of Prague's quirkiest restaurants. The entire venue is laced with a model railway system, and of course — your drinks are delivered by miniature trains straight to your table, lovely.



They pour a house lager brewed by a local Czech partner, which is crisp, bready, and refreshing — nothing fancy, but a solid session beer. They also offer a few rotating taps with other Czech standards like Starobrno, and their food menu leans into hearty pub fare with a family-friendly twist. This is definitely a touristy stop, but it's undeniably fun. Watching a tiny locomotive hauling four frothy pints to your table is an

experience you won't forget soon!

### Hany Bany – Dive Bar Perfection in Žižkov

This had been my favourite bar during the previous visit. To balance out the ancient, the tourist traps and scenic views you need to seek out cheap pints, unpretentious vibes and local gathering place giving a feel of the underground conversations of the Prague spring revolution. Hany Bany

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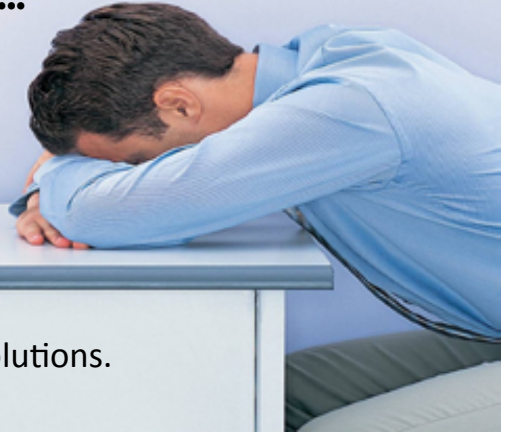
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delivers the goods. Amazingly only a stone's throw from the tourist trap Charles Bridge it is nestled secretly in Prague's artsy Žižkov.

It's the kind of bar where locals stop in for one and stay for five. Pilsner Urquell is the star of the show here, and the pours are consistently solid — a proper hladinka every time. Occupied by local regulars, students, and travellers in the know, the prices are beautifully low for beer and hearty local food (€2 for a half litre). The atmosphere is pure Prague grit and very, very real - no craft beer frills, no tasting notes — just beer, people, and conversation. Wonderful.



### Final Sip:

Prague's beer scene is as rich and varied as its history. Whether you're sipping centuries-old recipes in a monastery, chasing pints by train, or getting cozy in a smoky dive, there's a pint for every palate — and every mood. Na zdraví!

By Alan Murray

### Hooked on Ale in Prague

## In CAMRA HQ's Backyard: St Albans and Harpenden

Several times a year I meet up with my brother in Lincoln, our home city, and spend a few days with family and friends enjoying a pint or three in wonderful pubs such as the **Strugglers** (often mentioned in Hooked on Ale) and the **Tiny Tavern**. My brother Ian, lives in Radlett, close to St Albans, the home of CAMRA HQ. Back in the heady days of summer, a family occasion planned for a Saturday in Kent provided an ideal opportunity to spend a long weekend in Radlett. Ian suggested that we could spend the Friday visiting a few of the real ale pubs in St Albans and then likewise in nearby Harpenden on the Monday.



With St Albans being steeped in history, Friday started with a visit to Verulamium Park close to St Albans Cathedral. The park contains ancient roman walls and housed undercover, a very impressive mosaic and hypocaust. Close by, a well preserved Roman amphitheatre is still used today for outdoor performances.

Our first pub of the day was **Ye Olde Fighting Cocks** (left) close to St Albans Cathedral. One of the oldest pubs in England, this picturesque and characterful hostelry reputedly housed

Oliver Cromwell for one night during the English Civil War. With four hand pulls on offer we opted for The Old Man and the Sea, a 4.1% ABV stout from Mighty Oak, Malden and a local beer, Blonde 4.2% ABV from 3 Brewers of St Albans, both in very good condition.



Our next port of call was the **Boot Inn**, another old pub dating back



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to 1422 and centrally located next to the clock tower in Market Street. With six hand pulls to select from in this very busy pub, we both opted for Tring's Side Pocket for a Toad 3.6% ABV described as "crisp, gold and hoppy" which it certainly was.

We moved on to the **Mermaid** (right), just a short walk from the city centre and near the railway station. This pub has an attractive interior boasting a wide selection of pub signs, old mirrors and other breweriana. Full Pints, the Ayrshire Branch magazine was on prominent display In the CAMRA magazine holder...I should have had a supply of Hooked on Ale with me! There is a large



beer garden, and this community focused pub also holds regular beer festivals. With six hand pulls there was plenty of choice although unfortunately my first pint, Nethergate's Umbel Ale was off and had to be returned. Replaced without any quibble, Goff's Black Knight, a 5.3% ruby red porter went down well.

Our last destination of the day was the **Robin Hood** (right), even closer to the railway station than the Mermaid. This large single bar pub with beer garden was the local CAMRA Pub of the Year in 2024 and 2025 and Cider Pub of the Year in 2023 and 2024. (The Mermaid won the 2025 Cider Pub of the Year award.) With three hand pulls, Tring's Moongazing 4.2% ABV, Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter 4% ABV and Wantsum's Montgomery 4% ABV American Pale Ale were



on tap. All sampled and in excellent condition. Alongside the real ale hand pulls, a separate section of the bar (left) was devoted to cider and clear evidence as to why the Robin Hood has won the local Cider Pub of the Year award a number of times. A cider menu was available detailing both real ciders (by CAMRA's definition) and other non-real ciders. A very welcoming and friendly pub to finish off our short St Albans tour.

Monday saw us taking the short train journey one further stop up the line from St Albans to Harpenden. Our first pub and probably the highlight of the day was the **Cross Keys** (right). Another historic and characterful pub comprising of a bar and snug furnished with comfortable leather sofas and a real fire. The bar has a rare pewter bar top, flagstone floors, an oak beamed ceiling and bench seating. Plenty of beer memorabilia is on display adding to the overall ambience. The





three hand pulls offered Tring's Side Pocket for a Toad and Fanny Ebbs 3.9% ABV, and Timothy Taylor Landlord again all in excellent condition.

Lunch in the **George**, part of the Castle pub chain, was enjoyed with a very good pint of London Pride from the one hand pull. We moved on to the **Cock Inn** (right),



a Charles Wells pub where we both sampled Anchorman 4.1% ABV from Brewpoint. Adnam's Ghost Ship and St Austell's Tribute were also available on hand pull. Our next pub was the **Inn on the Green**, a Greene King pub where we sampled the house ale which I scored a 4. Returning to Radlett, we managed a swift pint of Chiltern's Beechwood Bitter 4.3% ABV in the **Red Lion**, a Youngs pub.

Overall, a great weekend providing an incentive to return to St Albans and visit some of the other real ale pubs, several listed in the Good Beer Guide, which we didn't get to. There is also the St Albans Real Ale Festival usually held in September which must be worth a visit!

**By Martin Fox**

## Abernyte Brewery Visit



Tayside Branch members visited Abernyte Brewery in October. For more information about this outing please read the article on page 33.

"Abernyte bottled beers are supplied to selected Tayside pubs, off-licences, delicatessens (like Provender Brown) and farm shops (like Loch Leven's Larder) - see map on Abernyte Brewery website"

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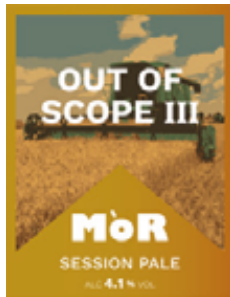
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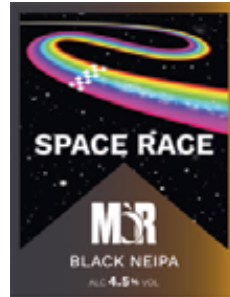




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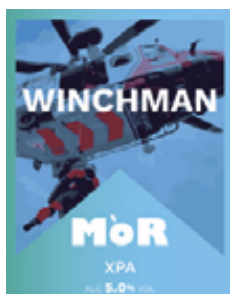
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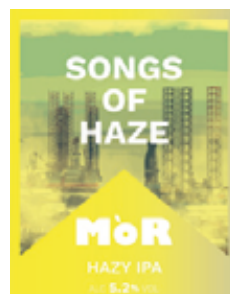
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## A Day in Rotterdam

Technically, it's incorrect to say I spent a day with a Dutch friend in Rotterdam recently – we actually took the train (from Leiden) to Schiedam, and then along to Delfshaven for the first beer in the **De Pelgrim Stadsbrouwerij** (below) on Albrechtskolk, just after it opening time.



De Pelgrim first opened for business in May 1995, although the building is some centuries older; I was actually there within a week or two of the opening, but missed the great day. I've been there a few times since, and it has become more of a tourist magnet over the years, but hasn't changed physically. Besides the tasting room, there is a courtyard at the back, and a terrace overlooking the canal at the front, both of which get busy on sunny days. There is also the Gildezaal upstairs, which can be hired for meetings, parties, or group dinners. The draft beer selection is not huge, but good, and fresh.

After leaving, on the way to the tram stop, we stopped just around the corner at **Café de Oude Sluis**



(left & right) – and what a good idea that was! As well as eight beers on tap, there is a very extensive multi-page menu of bottled beers, and a superb view of Albrechtskolk from the window of the sitting room. De Oude Sluis also has a small terrace.



Then we entered Rotterdam proper – we could have walked the whole way (not far), but were lazy and took the tram from Delfshaven to Eendrachtsplein and then walked along Nieuwe Binnenweg to Oude Binnenweg, which boasts a famous statue, The Kabater Buttplug (left), and **Bar-Restaurant Sijf** (below right) where they also brew their own beers, including a witbier and more than one (American-style) IPA.

After that, we avoided a rain shower in **Café Timmer**, which claims to be one of the oldest remaining cafés in Rotterdam (most of the city centre having been bombed to rubble – by the British – during WW2). I don't know if the claim is true, but it does have an old-fashioned

“brown café” feel about it, and is definitely a locals' favourite. It's basically a Heineken pub, but they also have Paulaner Weissbier on draft.

Heading towards Rotterdam Centraal station, we had a “comfort break”



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and a forgettable cold-and-fizzy beer in a large Brewdog establishment on the corner of Halvemaanpassage, behind the Stadhuis (city hall) before stopping off at the **Biergarten** on Schiestraat, which is not one bar, but a shared space for three-or-four cafes and bars. It's not just American-style, but frequented by many Americans. I'm not quite sure what attracts them, but can only guess that it's the burgers and pizzas. There we had some Neubourg pilsner, much improved since it first came on the market about twenty years ago, before we headed back to Leiden.

**By Ken Donald**



## **Forth Valley CAMRA Alloa Real Ale Festival**

November brings one of the highlights of the ale drinker's year – the Alloa Beer Festival organised by CAMRA Forth Valley branch. On the Friday opening day (7th November), Kenny (our branch Chair) and I caught the 11.15 from Dundee to be joined at Perth by Bill, Julia and their son Duggie. This train connects handily at Stirling with the Alloa service which also had on board ale enthusiasts from Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Securing a seat at the festival is (for me at least) essential, so Kenny and I walked very rapidly from Alloa station to get ahead of the thirsty trainload. From a good way off we saw a knot of bald or white-haired heads queuing outside Alloa town hall where the festival is held. Fortunately, it wasn't raining so the 15 minute wait for opening time was not too uncomfortable and there was some good banter among the crowd.

Safely in after paying the entrance fee, collecting a glass and beer token cards, we managed to obtain seats and keep some saved for fellow branch members joining us a few minutes behind. The festival programme revealed a huge range of over 50 ales and 20 ciders, and with ales to suit all tastes from blonde citrusy ales through amber traditional bitters to porters and stouts. Just to illustrate

how personal taste comes into it, I enjoy a 70/- from Devon Ales which one of our party (Ed: Me!!) did not like at all.

One of the aims and delights of a real ale festival is to provide the opportunity to try beers from far flung breweries as well as more local ones. I particularly enjoyed a Bristol Beer Factory Milk Stout 4.5% ABV, a Mighty Oak mild (Oscar Wilde 3.7% ABV and a Pennine Amber Necker 3.8% ABV. Pies and stovies from a local butcher to help soak up the alcohol are available and the programme informs enigmatically that "alcohol free beer is available from the cider bar".

It is good to note that any unspent balance on payment cards goes to charity. Several ales later we have an uneventful if snoozy journey back to Dundee, agreeing that it had been a great day out.

We thank Forth Valley CAMRA branch for putting on an excellent real ale festival and we look forward to their next venture, the Larbert Real Ale Festival 4th - 5th April 2026 which undoubtedly we will try and attend as well as later in the year, the Alloa festival once again.

**By Mike Jarron**

*In February 2026, Stuart McMahon steps down as CAMRA Director, Scotland after a four year tenure. In a recent article in Full Pints, Ayrshire and Wigtownshire branch magazine, Stuart wrote about the benefits of being or becoming a CAMRA member. The following has been reproduced with Stuart's kind permission.....*

## **From your Regional Director**

### **Why become a CAMRA member?**

First and foremost, membership of CAMRA signals your support for real ale, real cider, and the unique culture of British pubs. CAMRA's activism has been instrumental in saving countless pubs from closure, lobbying for beer tax reductions, and encouraging breweries to preserve traditional brewing methods. As a member, you are directly contributing to the ongoing campaign for quality, choice, and authenticity in the drinks served across the UK and beyond.

Becoming a CAMRA member brings with it a range of discounts and special offers, making it not only morally rewarding but financially savvy. Individual members receive £30 of 50p discount vouchers which can be used in Wetherspoons, Stonegate, and a number of other outlets. Additionally, many pubs and breweries offer reduced prices on pints or bottles upon presentation of your CAMRA membership card.

From January 2026, CAMRA members will also gain free entry to all CAMRA-run beer festivals across the country. Glasses and programmes will still need to be purchased though. CAMRA also partners with a variety of retailers and event organisers. Members receive discounts on merchandise, books, and even travel, including railcards and holiday packages designed for beer lovers. You also get access to members-only content on the CAMRA website including the new Learn & Discover section with informational videos on beer, cider and pubs.

### **But what do you get out of your membership locally?**

You are automatically enrolled as a member of your local CAMRA branch, of which there are over 200 in the UK; 10 branches cover the whole of Scotland. Hopefully, you'll have your membership contact preferences set up to allow the branches to contact you periodically about their local activities - socials, meetings, beer festivals etc.

Some branches also produce regular magazines (such as Hooked on Ale) to keep you informed of CAMRA-related news.

Branches are a great way to meet like-minded folk, whilst supporting local pubs and brewers. It's also good for our social wellbeing to go down the pub regularly. As a CAMRA member you can get involved in a passive capacity simply by nominating your favourite beers for the Champion Beer of Britain Competitions, or by scoring the beers when visiting your local. Or, if you are passionate on certain topics, you may like to write a letter to your local MSP/MP asking for support.

So, can I urge you to consider becoming a CAMRA member if you are not already?

We need your voice to let us continue our Campaign supporting Pubs, Pints and People.

Cheers,  
**Stuart McMahon,**  
**CAMRA Director, Scotland**



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## Abernyte Brewery Visit



The idea of a Tayside Branch visit to Abernyte Brewery was first mooted several years ago but only got off the ground after a chance encounter with Ian Campbell, their commercial brewer, at Rait Beer Festival. Practical hurdles to overcome included maximum numbers, who to invite, how to get there, and what time of day. It was decided to go for a small number of visitors, based on Tayside's Thirstday Group, coordinating travel by bus from various directions to and from Inchtute, and a very generous offer to ferry us to the brewery, bringing us back well before dark.

With Ian unexpectedly called away from Abernyte, it fell upon production brewer Donnie Meldrum to sweep us up from Inchtute that Wednesday afternoon in the brewery van and transport us up the hill to the brewery at South Latch Farm. As soon as we had arrived inside the modern open plan workshop style brewery, we were offered a generous tasting of the Listening Post Pilsner straight from conditioning tank. Two of our group chose not to drink beer that day, and were unexpectedly offered apple juice, with fruit straight from the farm, processed within the brewery.

Donnie introduced us to the Braumeister brewing plant, in which the grist, made up from malts of various types and colours, is step-mashed at increasing temperatures, then sparged with still hotter liquor (brewing water), after which the inner vessel is hoisted upwards, allowing the contents to drain, before the spent grains are removed for animal feed. The sweet worts in the outer vessel are then boiled with bittering hops, and later additions of choicest aroma hops, to match the recipe for each of the eighteen or so ales and lagers produced. Brewing capacity is rated at 500 litres (5 hectolitres or 3 bulk barrels).

The boiled wort is chilled then transferred to a fermenting vessel where dried yeast, selected for each brew, ferments the sugars into alcohol. Temperatures are critical and controlled precisely by sophisticated custom-made electronics; ales ferment at higher temperatures before cooling at the end of fermentation. Lager yeast needs colder fermentations, followed by weeks of conditioning (rather than the few days allowed by the big brewers).

Our visit was certainly not rushed, allowing plenty of time to discuss brewing terms and methods, with Donnie answering all our questions, while pouring samples of a good variety of beers, steadily increasing in strength. Every day is a school day, and one term mentioned early on was indeed new to me; "spunding" is a brewing technique used at Abernyte to capture naturally produced CO<sub>2</sub> during fermentation, carbonating lagers before conditioning without the need for externally applied gas. Several Abernyte beers are racked into 30 litre kegs, which are sold in pubs across Tayside. While these beers may be served under CO<sub>2</sub>, no filtration or pasteurisation takes place, and CAMRA now describes these as "live beer in keg". Most of the full range of up to twenty beers are bottled in a small but very effective bench mounted bottling line. We had a good discussion with Donnie about CAMRA's new emphasis on "live bottled beer" (formerly "real ale in bottle", and superseding "bottle-conditioned beer"). All Abernyte's bottled ales and lagers fit the new description, and were indeed entered onto the list of Scottish beers qualifying for nomination by CAMRA members as Champion Bottled Beer of Britain.

For this competition, bottled beers are split, not into ales and lagers, but into two classes based on alcohol by volume. Nominations closed at the end of October, and the Session Bottled Beers have already been judged in the regional heat by CAMRA's Scottish judging panel. While not making Scottish Champion this time, both Abernyte Ballo Blonde and Listening Post Pilsner achieved

respectable placings alongside old favourite bottled beers from Five Kingdoms and Ardgour breweries. We look forward to the judging of the stronger beers for CAMRA Champion Premium Bottled Beer of Scotland 2025 in the New Year.

Beers tasted from bottle during our visit included Ballo Blond (4.3% ABV Golden Ale - Abernyste's biggest seller); The Haar (4.6% ABV hazy New England style IPA); 80 shilling (4.5% ABV Scottish malty ale with great hop character too); and Fullbore IPA (at 5.6% ABV). We were finally privileged to sample the famous Doppelbock, brewed at the start of the year at a heady 7% ABV, and now ready to warm beer drinkers over the darker months, fortifying us before a lift back down the hill in time for our various buses home. Thanks to both Donnie and Ian for a splendid afternoon at Abernyste Brewery!

**By Richard Barnes**

## **The Thinking Drinkers Visit Kinross & Perth**



This pair of intrepid cyclists had announced through a flyer that they would be passing through Kinross one Saturday morning back in June, making an appearance at Loch Leven Brewery Taproom. Some quick checks online revealed that they are a duo of drinks enthusiasts, blogging wherever they go, attracting sponsors in the industry, but also with a considerable fan club in the comedy circuit, regularly appearing in the Edinburgh Fringe.

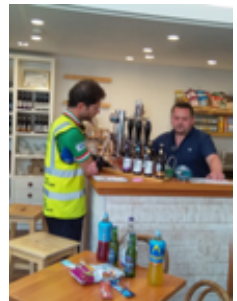
However, this year the Thinking Drinkers, Ben McFarland and Tom Sandham, embarked on a Great British Pub Ride challenge, cycling from Lands End to John o'Groats on their tandem, stopping only at independent pubs on the way, filming interviews and scenery, with the support of a single mobile cameraman and maybe some drone footage.

Studying their Day 10 itinerary, I discovered their plan to cycle from west of Edinburgh direct to Kinross, interview bar manager Gordon at the

Tap, moving swiftly on to the Old Ship in Perth, then the Bankfoot Inn, winding up at the Old Mill in Pitlochry.

Living around the corner, and having been tipped off that they were running late, I duly turned up in my CAMRA t-shirt to fly the flag. I met a friend, who is also a comedy fan, and knew all about the Thinking Drinkers; we bought each other a few pints of fine Loch Leven ales to pass the time before Ben & Tom finally arrived almost two hours late, already suffering from fatigue and apparently unmentionable chafing! Nevertheless, they carried out their interview with Gordon, promoting him to Brewer for the occasion, before heading towards Perth.

All their stuff is online, mostly through YouTube. On checking the Day 10 Debrief (search for thinking drinkers great british pub ride day 10 youtube) I discovered they actually made it to Pitlochry, just as it was getting dark, and had even visited another of our real ale pubs – the Glover Arms – following up another of their sponsors who supply alcohol free beers there.



Altogether, quite a feather in Tayside CAMRA's collective cap to have Thinking Drinkers stop at five of our pubs!

**By Richard Barnes**

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## **“HERE’S GOOD LUCK TO THE BARLEY MOW!”**

### **Traditional music and traditional beer**

*‘Here’s good luck to the quart pot, good luck to the Barley Mow,  
Jolly good luck to the quart pot, good luck to the Barley Mow;  
To the quart pot, pint pot, half pint, gill pot, half-a-gill, quarter gill,  
nipperkin and the brown bowl,  
Here’s good luck, good luck, good luck to the Barley Mow!’*

This is the chorus of a cumulative drinking song, which some of you may know or at least have heard sung, possibly in a pub more likely in a folk club. I was reminded of it – I first heard a version sung in Aberdeen some 50 years ago! – when recently watching a documentary on YouTube about the seminal folk-rock band Fairport Convention. Not because they were singing it, but because the camera lingered on one of the posters for their annual festival in Cropredy, Oxfordshire, where, in print as bold as that advertising the artistes, was the legend “REAL ALE”.

It struck me that, while Fairport were/are hardly in the mainstream of traditional music, they certainly did much to bring it to the attention of many young music lovers in the 60’s and 70’s, the same time that the “real ale revolution” was under way. There has long been a (stereotypical?) link between folkies and real ale (OK, I admit I know real ale enthusiasts who are aficionados of jazz, rap, heavy metal and indeed classical music!) and one would like to think that there’s a link that can be traced back through the years to the “real folk” making their own entertainment in pubs and taverns with such songs as “The Barley Mow”.

There would seem to be some truth in this, given the example of the tradition in some Yorkshire pubs around Christmas time of people gathering to sing their local versions of carols with voices well-lubricated by local ale. Kate Rusby drew my, and others’, attention to this by including some of the carols in her Christmas concerts and albums. She is, of course, a Barnsley lass and while I don’t know her favourite tippie (other than Yorkshire Tea!), I do remember as a child in Yorkshire being baffled by the ubiquitous adverts “BYB IS BEST!” which I eventually discovered was for Barnsley Yorkshire Bitter, a version of which is now brewed by the Wombwell brewery, Acorn.

The “unofficial” carol performances have parallels with church musicians who lost their jobs with the onset of the organ (and sometimes because of their rowdy behaviour!) and moved to the pub, as well as bell-ringers – another group with real ale associations – who would sometimes give scaled-down performances with hand bells. The Church itself held fund-raising Church Ales and similar festivities, often in the local pub, in a tradition that went back centuries.

I speak here of England, of course. I don’t know about the Welsh Chapels’ attitude to alcohol and in Scotland only the Episcopal and Catholic Churches have consistently had a relaxed attitude to it. Scotland’s drinking - and singing – tradition has been quite different. Leaving aside the influence of the Presbyterian churches (many forbade dancing let alone drinking!), there is no real evidence of a tradition of communal singing and music-making in Scottish pubs.

I spoke to Sheena Wellington, Dundee’s legendary singer with a comprehensive knowledge of the history of traditional music in Scotland, and she confirmed my belief that while there might have been music in pubs sometimes, there was not the informal, communal music-making as was commonplace in England. Sheena reminded me that the pubs closed earlier in Scotland than in England in the twentieth century, and that this led to plenty of street singing as well as informal

ceilidhs in people's houses, fortified by a "Kerry-oot" – which might have been real ale at one time, but latterly was cans of McEwans and Tennents!

Earlier, of course, when there was still a large part of the population working on the land, the farm-workers' accommodation – bothies - produced the Bothy Ballads. One example – "Guise O Tough" tells of a bailie (cowman) called Jamieson who goes for a drink:

*"He's gane doun tae Charlie Watt's  
For tae hae a dram'  
But lang afore shuttin time  
The laddie couldna stan."*

suggesting that hard drinking – and spirits at that – rather than singing was the farm servant's way of relaxing. In the pub, anyway, the singing would have been in the bothy!

That farmer and champion of whisky, Robert Burns, must have drunk, recited, sang and played the fiddle in a few hostleries, notably in his Bachelors Club in Tarbolton, Ayrshire, (though that was seemingly a private house) but also, equally famously, perhaps, in David Douglas's Tavern in Edinburgh. There he was welcomed into the Crochallan Fencibles, another "literary" society for whose members he wrote the notorious collection of lewd songs, "The Merry Muses of Caledonia". A more printable piece of verse (well, the chorus anyway!) that suggests he enjoyed (real) ale as well as whisky is "O Guid Ale Comes":

*O, guid ale comes, and guid ale goes  
Guid ale gars me sell my hose (makes, stockings)  
Sell my hose, and pawn my shoon (shoes)  
Guid ale keeps my heart aboon! (above – in good spirits)*

The general picture in England was quite different, and most people will be at least vaguely familiar with the idea of such scenes as that described by the early twentieth century poet Edward Thomas (killed in the First World War):

*"All the men but one leaned back upon the settles or forward upon the tables, their hands on their tankards, watching the one who sang a ballad – a ballad known to them so well that they seemed not to listen, but simply to let the melody surge about them and provoke what thoughts it would.  
...And of all music, the old ballads and folk songs and their airs are the richest in the plain, immortal symbols...They are the quintessence of many lives and passions made into a sweet cup for posterity."  
("One Green Field", Edward Thomas)*

Similarly, folk song collector E.J.Moeran described the scene in a Southwold pub in the 1930's or '40's:

*"...it was crowded with fishermen, one after another in full song. Almost one song in every five was a folk song," and folk music chronicler Steve Roud stated:  
"...after the Second World War [the collectors] found hundreds of individuals still singing in the old style, some families who still valued their songs, some pubs still having regular old-fashioned sing-songs."*

Overall, Scotland went a fair way towards catching up with England in terms of availability of traditional ale and traditional music between the 1960's and 1980's, not to mention Ireland, which was way ahead in music - but lacking in good ale until recently. Folk music clubs and informal

sessions in pubs multiplied in Scotland during this period and there has been another surge of interest in the 2020's. Folk music and real ale can currently be enjoyed in Mennie's in Dundee and the Fisherman's Tavern, Broughty Ferry and probably other venues around Tayside unknown to me. By the time this article is in print, there will probably be more.

**By Forbes Browne**

### **Discounts for CAMRA Members**

The following Tayside pubs currently offer discounts on real ale for CAMRA members.

**Perth- Glover Arms 20p per pint**

**Dundee - Speedwell (Mennies) 10%; Pillars 30p per pint; Star & Garter 10%**

**Broughty Ferry - Royal Arch 10%; Fisherman's 10%**

Please show your CAMRA membership card and note that Landlords reserve the right to remove these discounts at anytime. And remember .....when you join or renew your CAMRA membership, you receive £30 (60 x 50p) in Real Ale and Cider vouchers redeemable at over 1,550 pubs nationwide, including J D Wetherspoon, Stonegate, Brains, Castle Rock and Amber Taverns managed pubs.

Wetherspoon pubs in Tayside include **Counting House (Dundee), Jolly's Hotel (Broughty Ferry), Corn Exchange (Arbroath), Capital Asset (Perth) and Fair O'Blair (Blairgowrie).**



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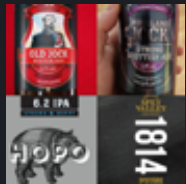
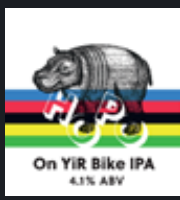
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