

FREE

# Inn Touch

## Rugby & District Branch



Campaign  
for  
Real Ale

Spring 2025

# Pub of the Year 2024



# 1st

## Rugby Tap

# 2nd

## Windmill Inn



**Also:**

**Pub News, What's on Guide and more**



# BLACK COUNTRY ALES

## The Windmill

1 North Street, Rugby,  
Warwickshire, CV21 2AB



## The Raglan Arms

50 Dunchurch Road, Rugby,  
Warwickshire, CV22 6AD



## The Lawford Arms

13 Main Street, Long Lawford,  
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# About Inn Touch

Inn Touch is the self-published 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.

Inn Touch is proud that it only covers Rugby and the closely surrounding area, rather than multiple towns, or even counties. Therefore if you are reading this and enjoying a pint in the Rugby area, all the content will be geographically relevant.

Visit the branch website or contact the editor for more information.

**[www.rugby.camra.org.uk](http://www.rugby.camra.org.uk)**  
**[editor@rugby.camra.org.uk](mailto:editor@rugby.camra.org.uk)**

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**Views expressed in this magazine are those of the individual authors and not necessarily supported by CAMRA.**

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Pie & Pint Wednesday 5.30 pm - 8.30 pm.

Check out our Facebook page for events including coaches to Leicester Tigers, charity quizzes and live music.

# Merchant's still has the wow factor

The Merchant's Inn is now over 20 years old. The pub in Rugby town centre has seen some changes recently, so we thought it was time to look at the Rugby institution again.

For many people coming to town it is the first pub they visit. It still has that wow factor when you enter and it's hard to forget that the building has only been a pub for 30 years. It started life as the Royal Warwicks and then had a short period as Cafe Noir. It was only when Gary Burliston bought it to add to his burgeoning chain of freehouses that things really took off. They are now one of 16 in the group, as they have a new start up in Bury St Edmunds.

In Rugby, Keely Askew has taken over the role of pub manager after working for the company for 6 years. Ian Atkinson looks after the cellar and the beers and it is his efforts that keep the ales in top form. It has also helped the Merchants win our Pub of the Year competition two years in a row recently.

The bar has been rearranged, now with 10 hand pumps front and centre. Nethergate Suffolk County, Oakham Bishop's Farewell and Purity Mad Goose are joined by five guest beers and two ciders. One of the guest ales is always a dark beer and they thoroughly enjoyed running their first dark beer festival last year. They are planning more of these specific festivals in the future, as well as tap takeovers and Belgian and cider festivals.

Gary Burliston is also the majority owner of the Nethergate Brewery in Long Melford, Suffolk. The brewery has plans for a new visitor centre and on site brewery tap. Their new pub in Bury St Edmunds will bring much relief in a town dominated by Greene King.

After over 20 years the Merchant's continues to be an amazing place for a beer and a great place to watch rugby. It's a pub that's rightfully called the Pub of Rugby.

*Richard Potter*  
Branch Chairman

**Dark Beer  
Festival  
31st March  
- 6 April**

Below: Pub  
manager  
Keely Askew



# A pint of Banks's

Late last year Carlsberg/Marstons took the decision to close Banks's Brewery in Wolverhampton and delist 10 cask ales from its portfolio. These included the iconic Banks's Mild.

The beer has been brewed for over a century and has been accommodating the thirst of the Black Country for all this time. Rugby got its first taste in the 80s when Le Papillon became the William Webb Ellis. It meant that the town had another permanently available mild to join milds from M&B and Ansells.

At its best it was a beautiful beer. Brewed used pale, crystal and black malts and, as with all milds, moderately hopped. I particularly remember

Christmas in the Webb, when we could have a pint of mixed: half a mild and a bottle of the 11% Banks's Old Ale.

My fondest memory of the mild was at the Chetwynd Arms in Brocton on the Cannock Chase. One Sunday the beer was so good that my mate Andy and I were late for lunch. We just couldn't resist three or four pints.

The demise of Banks's Mild is all down to money and has nothing to do with local tastes and sentiments. Staff have lost their jobs, Wolverhampton has lost its brewery and customers have lost their beer. Carlsberg Marstons seem to have lost their love of beer. It's all down to their profits.

*Richard*



## THE RUGBY TAP RUGBY CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR 2024 The only Micropub in Rugby

### OPENING HOURS

Monday 4pm - 9pm  
Tuesday 4pm - 9pm  
Wednesday 4pm - 10pm  
Thursday 4pm - 10pm  
Friday 4pm - 11pm  
Saturday Midday - 11pm  
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# The Red Lion, Kilsby wins prestigious TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Award

Kilsby, UK – February 2024 – The Red Lion Kilsby is proud to announce that it has been awarded the coveted Travellers' Choice Award by TripAdvisor for 2024. This prestigious accolade places The Red Lion Kilsby among the top 10% rated restaurants and pubs worldwide, as determined by outstanding customer reviews and ratings on the TripAdvisor platform.

The Travellers' Choice Award celebrates businesses that consistently deliver fantastic experiences to diners around the globe. Based on a year's worth of

positive feedback from visitors, this recognition is a testament to The Red Lion Kilsby's commitment to excellence in food, service, and hospitality.

"We are absolutely thrilled to receive this award," said Alistair Murray Nichols, General Manager of The Red Lion Kilsby. "Our team works incredibly hard to provide a warm, welcoming atmosphere and top-quality food and drink for our guests. To know that our visitors appreciate and recognize our efforts is truly an honour."

## The Red Lion, Kilsby Pub and Dining.



An award-winning family run, freehouse in the heart of Kilsby. Serving real ales, premium lagers & ciders, wines & spirits.

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# Pub of the year 2024

Rugby CAMRA's Pub of the Year 2024 has been awarded to the Rugby Tap, just months after it reopened last year. It is a huge achievement for Sarah Quinton and her team. She thanked them all and her customers - the Tap family - on the presentation night. Rugby's solitary micropub is the only pub in the area to sell its ales direct from the cask and specialises in selling beers from local breweries.

Second place in this year's competition goes to The Windmill in the town centre.

Gemma and Andy took over the running of this Black Country Ales pub last year and have completely transformed its fortunes. They have introduced beer festivals and tap takeovers and are currently in the middle of the company's Real Ale Trail.

Congratulations go to both pubs and all the other pubs that received votes. They are at the pinnacle of a thriving real ale scene in the town.

*Richard - Branch Chairman*

Below: Richard presenting the certificate to Sarah from the Rugby Tap along with the mayor of Rugby

# 1st



Right: Gemma and Andy from The Windmill being presented with their certificate



2nd

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

# Be part of the CAMRA story

*Real ale is just the start...*

Our story is your story.  
So join us in supporting  
everything from pubs and  
drinkers rights, to licensees  
and breweries, uniting us  
in the story we all love.

Join  
CAMRA  
from  
£30.50\*



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# Village pub crawls

Recently, after a break of two years, I have taken over the mantle of Social Secretary again. As a branch we very much enjoy getting round some of our village pubs.

The first trip took place on the last Friday in January. We headed to Daventry to visit their two micro pubs: Early Doors and The Ale Pole. Both pubs were very busy which was good to see, and a good selection of well kept beers, ciders and craft beers were available at both pubs.

Onwards next to the White Horse, Welton- a lovely country inn with bar and lounge/dining room. Four beers were served by handpull, my choice being Hop Back Summer Lightning.

Next up was the recently reopened Coach House in Ashby St. Ledgers. After a major refurbishment it was great to see this lovely inn back in business.

My choice of beer was Adnams Ghost Ship. Again, the pub was busy with drinkers and diners enjoying the sounds of a live band.

A short trip next to the Red Lion, Kilsby run by Alistair and his team. This is a thriving village local with the emphasis on good beer, food and conversation. As you will see elsewhere they have recently won a fantastic award.

Our last port of call was The Paddox and although late in the evening, the pub was still busy

with drinkers. Beers on offer were Wye Valley Bitter and Butty Bach and Timothy Taylor's alongside a good menu. It seems the Paddox is well and truly on its way back.

Sadly for me it was time to go home while some of the hardier ones carried on into town for a nightcap.

Our 2nd village crawl of the year on Friday 28th February started at the Cherry Tree in Catthorpe. Beers from the Dow Bridge village brewery were available alongside a beer from Langton brewery. My choice was the Dow Bridge Centurian. Both beers were in good condition and the pub was doing a brisk trade with the friendly licensees making us very welcome.

Next on our list was the Chequers at Swinford- a great village pub that is very community focused with lots of events going on throughout the year. Run by Brian Preist for the last 38 years, three beers were available and my choice was Timothy Taylor's Landlord. An all round great village boozier.

Onto the Knightly Arms in Yelvertoft- another busy local on a Friday evening. The friendly licensees made room for us by moving some tables round to accommodate us all. My beer here was Woodforde's Wherry which was very good.

A short trip next took us to the Head of Steam in Lilbourne,

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another great village pub which also focuses on good beer and food. My ale here was Wye Valley Butty Bach. This pub is well worth the short trip over the A5.

Last but not least was the Stag and Pheasant at Newton- a thatched village pub that was a former farm house. Again I had the Timothy Taylor's Landlord which was in good condition. Many others went for the Church End Gravediggers Ale which was also very good.

There ends another cracking evening visiting some fabulous village pubs- roll on the next trip. Cheers!

*Steve Durrant*

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For forthcoming local CAMRA events, see branch diary at:  
[www.rugby.camra.org.uk/diary](http://www.rugby.camra.org.uk/diary)

#### **4th to 6th April**

Tap takeover with Fixed Wheel beers. Live music on the 6th

#### **13th April**

Pub quiz in aid of MNDA

#### **20th April**

Music with Simon Buckingham from 5pm

#### **2nd May**

Beer Festival all weekend with 30 beers. Cider and food available

#### **18th May**

Bike festival: pub opens at 9am for ride through. Music from 4pm

#### **25th May**

Pub quiz in aid of MNDA

Craft night: 2nd Tuesday in month starting in May



## **THE WINDMILL INN**

**TAP TAKEOVER- THURSDAY 03/04  
REAL ALE FESTIVAL - MAY  
BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND**

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OUR SOCIALS  
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EVENTS

SCAN HERE FOR  
OUR BEER BOARD



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OUR UPCOMING EVENTS

BOOKINGS AND INQUIRIES

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### The Wheatsheaf Crick Upcoming Events March

6th. Cocktail Night

13th. Monthly Quiz Night

17th. St. Patrick's Day

30th. Mother's Day

### April

3rd. Cocktail Night

10th. Monthly Quiz Night

12th. South African Night. Tasting Menu

20th. Easter Sunday

### May

1st. Cocktail Night

8th. Monthly Quiz Night

13th. National Cocktail Day

23rd - 26th . Crick Boat Show

Tuesdays. Pizza offer x2 for £20

Thursdays. £10 Meal special offer from  
4.30pm

# 01788 823824





# A Goat called Heidrun

The Badgers Arms in Long Buckby has reopened as The Goat. The micropub, which has been closed for about a year, is a joint venture between Richard Mitchell and Three Hills Brewing of Thrapston in Northamptonshire.

Richard, who has been running beer nights at The Real Ale Classroom in Lutterworth, opened The Goat on March 1st. The pub has been completely

refitted, with the bar moving downstairs to a previously underused storeroom. It serves two real ales and has ten craft taps. The two real ales consist of a permanent standard bitter and a hazy guest beer. The ten craft taps have seven beers from Three Hills and three rotating guests.

The name of the pub derives from the first beer brewed by Three Hills. The beer, called Heidrun, was named after a mythological Norse goat that produced beer instead of milk from her magical goat teat. It created a limitless free bar for the Vikings residing in Valhalla. There also is the coincidence that Long Buckby's name derives from its meaning of Goat Hill Farmstead.

Three Hills have three more pubs including one on the famous Bermondsey Beer Mile, a brewery tap and another in Rushden.



Left: Richard from The Goat

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# And then there was one

Time was called on the Caldecott Arms in Long Lawford on the 5th of January. The village, which has a population of over 4500, is now home to just a single pub. We believe the building is to be turned into a Chinese restaurant after its sale by Red Oak Taverns.

It wasn't that long ago that the village had a good evening's crawl, round its four pubs and a club. I think we all remember the Sheaf & Sickle on the Coventry Road. It was a cracking pub in the time it was run by Steve and Sian Jones, winning our Pub of the Year award two years in a row. It had a great atmosphere and sold some excellent Ansells beers and guests from the likes of Judges,

Slaters and Enville. Just as memorable was the Country Inn, which was originally called The Saracens Head. It was an M&B pub and once run by Stan and Ivy Rogers and their noisy mynah bird, which sat on the bar. I remember it being one of the first pubs in the area to sell Church End beers.

The Lawford Arms, which was once called the Railway, is now the last beacon of ales left in the village. Owned by Black Country Ales, it was a recent winner of our Country Pub of the Year and is in the 2025 Good Beer Guide.

Use your local. Pubs will not survive on reminiscences alone.

*Richard*



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# Freespirt brings life to the Coach House



The Olde Coach House has reopened in Ashby St Ledgers. The pub - situated in one of prettiest villages in the area - has now been in operation for a few months. It is the 6th pub run by Freespirt Inns, with their next nearest pub being the Bell at Ladbrooke. They also run the Sun in Hook Norton and the iconic Castle at Edgehill.

The Coach House has undergone

a sympathetic restoration and the installation of completely new kitchen. The great thing about the building is that it is a rare multi roomed village local. It has a fabulous front bar, set aside just for locals.

The manager is Sylvia, who is originally from Poland. Having previously been general manager at The Castle, she now has complete control of her own pub. They are serving food seven days a week and local produce is being used as much as possible.

Beers recently being served were St Austell Tribute, Doom Bar and Adnams Ghost Ship. Keg beers are from the Brew Point stable.

It's great to see the place open once again after it was closed for almost two years. Good luck from all at Rugby CAMRA.

## Other pub news

After over two years at the Raglan Arms, Mark Killeen has left. Rugby CAMRA would like to wish Mark all the best for the future. Taking over the helm is Jade Malone. She has a wealth of experience in the trade having helped her parents running pubs and working in others in Rugby and further afield. Rugby CAMRA wish Jade all the best in her new venture.

The Courthouse has reopened selling real ale and food lunchtime and evenings.

The Paddox has now got a permanent licensee and are selling Wye Valley and Timothy Taylor's which were very good on a recent visit alongside a varied food menu.

The Cherry Tree, Catthorpe has reopened after a short closure for improvements to be completed.

The George, Bilton has had a kitchen refit.

Bar 29 has closed.

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# Regular local pub entertainment

Subject to change. Please check with the host's website or social media for more detail.

## Monday

### Quiz night

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

### Music / Other

Newbold Crown - Open Mic (every other)



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## Tuesday

### Quiz night / Other

The Bear  
Bull  
Waterside, Hillmorton  
Raglan - Board Games Club

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## Wednesday

### Quiz night / Other

George, Bilton  
Royal Oak, Crick  
White Hart, South Kilworth (every other)  
Quigleys - Games Night

### Music

Squirrel Inn - open mic



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## Thursday

### Quiz night

Town & County Club (last in month)  
Admiral Nelson, Braunston  
Friendly Inn, Frankton (last in month)

Raglan (alt. Thursdays)

Victoria Inn

Save the White Lion - Pailton

Village Hall (monthly)

### Music

Town & County Club - jam session (1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> in month)

Quigleys - live music

Knightley Arms, Yelvertoft - folk (last in month)

### Bingo

Royal Oak, Crick

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## Friday

### Music

Quigleys - live music  
Prince of Wales - karaoke

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## Saturday

### Music

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

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## Sunday

### Quiz night

Red Lion, Crick (last in month)  
Red Lion, Kilsby (last in month)  
Victoria Inn  
Windmill (3<sup>rd</sup> in month)  
William Webb Ellis

### Music

Squirrel (most Sundays)  
Prince of Wales - karaoke  
Windmill (most Sundays)

### Bingo

Red Lion, Crick (2<sup>nd</sup> in month)