

FREE

Inn Touch

Rugby & District Branch



Campaign
for
Real Ale

Summer 2025



Chequers - Swinford

Country Pub of the Year winner

CPOTY

Also:

Pub News, What's on Guide and more

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The Wheatsheaf Crick Upcoming Events

July

3rd. Cocktail Night

12st -13th Scarecrow Weekend

21st-26th Ice-cream Week

August

7th. Cocktail Night

18th-23rd Burger Week

Tuesdays. Pizza offer x2 for £20

Thursdays. £10 Meal special offer
from 4.30pm

01788 823824



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
editor@rugby.camra.org.uk

A welcome from the editor

Hi all, and a big welcome to the summer edition of our branch magazine Inn Touch. For the last 18 months I have been helping our editor in producing this magazine and have been amazed at the work involved in getting it to print. It has to pay its way so advertising is an essential part of getting it out and there are also articles needed to make it interesting to the public.

Unfortunately our editor has resigned from the job after doing a brilliant shift at the helm so thanks Steve for that- you will be a hard act to follow. So somehow I find myself running the show (albeit with help from other members), so if anyone reading this thinks they could contribute an article on anything pub or brewery related then please get

on your keyboards- it will be greatly received!

To any licensees reading this: if you would like to advertise your pub in Inn Touch get in touch at the email address above. We also run a What's On page where we will include any forthcoming events at your pub if you let us know.

Hopefully by the time you are reading this edition the sun will be shining and we will be enjoying a pint in a pub garden. Happy drinking to you all.

Steve Durrant, editor Inn Touch

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

Chequers
SWINFORD

HIGH STREET, SWINFORD, LE17 6BL

A WARM WELCOME AWAITS YOU AT THE RUGBY CAMRA COUNTRY PUB OF THE YEAR 2025



- *SELECTION OF 3 REAL ALES AND LAGERS*
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THE RUGBY TAP RUGBY CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR 2024 The only Micropub in Rugby

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Country pub of the year

This year's Rugby CAMRA Country Pub of the Year has been won by the Chequers at Swinford. It is not only a reward for the place the pub has in its village community, but also for its long standing licensee, Brian Priest. He works tirelessly raising money for local and national charities as well as keeping a cracking pint. The Chequers is a deserving winner of this year's award.

Next January, Brian will have been at the Chequers for 39 years, having previously been at the Shakespeare in Rugby where his parents were licensees. Famously, a barrel was rolled in January 1987 between the two pubs and Brian took charge in Swinford. He keeps a lovely pint, with Landlord, Tribute and Wainwrights on currently. The pub has been in the Good Beer Guide for as long as I can remember.

In the last year, Brian and his regulars have been raising money for PROSTaid - a Leicestershire-based prostate cancer charity. It is a cause close to heart as Brian is currently undergoing treatment for the condition. They have raised over ten thousand pounds for the charity and he was rewarded recently with a trip to a royal garden party at Buckingham Palace. He hopes to make his 40 years at the Chequers and then

consider a possible retirement. So once again congratulations to the Chequers and Brian - deserved winners of this year's Country Pub of the Year.



Right: Brian Priest, Chequers licensee and Richard, Branch Chairman



Rugby CAMRA Pub of the Year Runner Up

THE WINDMILL INN



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Last Orders

Quick question for you all: what time do pubs shut? Well, if you said 11pm with 20 minutes drinking up time then unfortunately in a lot of cases you would be wrong. What about opening time then? It's usually 12 isn't it? Well, usually, but in a lot of cases that would again be wrong and in some cases the pub may not even open that day.

In the past, for decades, the 12 till 11 opening hours would be the norm Monday till Saturday. Yes, even on a Friday and Saturday! Hence the popularity in the past of night clubs- a chance to have another beer. Sunday hours were always reduced hours even to this day.

The fact of the matter is that licensees can open and close when they like. What they apply for on a licence and their actual opening hours may not be same, thus giving licensees the freedom to open when the trade is sufficient. With a downturn in trade, many licensees are taking advantage of this flexibility and only opening when it's worth their while.

Now, this works fine if it's your local and you are regular there you can just wander up to the bar and ask what the opening times are, and if they are changing they will no doubt let you know. But what about if it's a pub you haven't been to before

or maybe not for a while? Who among you have driven out to a pub to find it shut and maybe even permanently shut? Having driven out to a pub to be caught out by opening times doesn't exactly encourage you to go again.

So, how can you reliably find out what pub opening times are? Well, the most obvious place to look is Google. But are the times correct? The pub is responsible for letting Google know. So if they change and don't inform Google then they will be wrong. So, not the most reliable. What about the Good Beer Guide? Unfortunately a lot of the info including opening times can be quite old so again not the best. What about Facebook? Most pubs have an account and can edit it very easily, however, again this can get overlooked. Web pages can also be horribly out of date. So what are we left with? Well, you may just have to go old school and ring them.

So my plea to licensees is please keep your Google, Facebook, chalk board, whatever, up to date with opening times. Thank you.

Stu Caldwell



Is it OK to drink lager?



Above: Richard enjoying the Braybrooke Beer Company tap

As your local CAMRA chairman, I'm here to represent the Campaign for Real Ale in the Rugby area. For me, real ale is the best way a beer can be drunk. A good pint of real ale easily outstrips any other beers on offer, whether they are craft, bottled, canned or any other method it is served.

I'm not a traditionalist though, and every beer has its merits. In fact there's nothing better than trying something unusual or different. So when I saw an existing brewery had opened a brand new brewery tap less than 20 miles from town, I was itching to pay it a visit. The only issue being, a: it was a craft and b: its standard products are LAGER!!!

The Braybrooke Beer Company was founded in 2017 by three friends: Nick, Luke and Cam. It is situated on Braybrooke Farm, just 2.5 miles southeast of Market Harborough. Their aim

was to produce really good, proper lager. They have now built a brand new brewery tap to showcase their unfiltered, unpasteurised and naturally carbonated beers.

Their love for lager grew from their travels around Germany and it was in Bamberg - a city in Franconia in southern Germany - where they found beers that they truly wanted to try and reproduce. It was there they met Stephan Michael, owner and head brewer at the famous Mahrs Brewery in the city. He put them in touch with the best malt, yeast and hop suppliers, with the aim to make the best lager they could. These imported ingredients are added to the local Northamptonshire water which is then deliberately softened to produce a smoother beer.

So to the beers. Their biggest seller is the 4.8% Keller Lager. It is a full bodied dark bronze beer, which is complex and very drinkable. Next I tried the Helles. Brewed with Munich and Pilsner malts, it's a straw coloured beer with a grassy mouth feel. Also on the bar that day was a collaboration with the Utopian Brewery from Devon and their own impressive 8.5% Baltic Porter.

The taproom itself has good views of the immaculate brewing kit and enough seating inside for about 40 people. Outside there is an abundance of benches, probably trebling the seating



capacity. There is also a children's play area and a food truck serving up all sorts of tasty goodies.

And so we come back to the question, "Is it OK to drink lager?" For me the answer's simple - of course it is. It's not something I'm going to be

drinking every day, but if I was in Germany I'd be lapping it up and saying what a fabulous beer it was. So why don't you go over there and give it try? If you don't like it, go to the Swan in the village and have a pint of Everards.

Richard - branch chairman

www.camra.org/join

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Village pub crawls



The last Friday in March saw us visiting a few village pubs. We started at the Denbigh Arms in Monks Kirby, a very picturesque village. Since the closure of the Bell this is the only pub left in the village. However, it was quite busy with a few diners and locals having a beer. I had Twickenham Brewery Naked Ladies which seemed very popular with us. Butcombe Original and Doom Bar were also being served. Next up was the Raven at Brinklow which was busy in the bar area so they opened up the back room so we could all get in. Beers on tap were Taylor's Landlord (my choice) and again Doom Bar. The landlord was really good and the staff very helpful. Down the main street to the White Lion, another busy pub with a group watching the football on TV. Beers on here were Byatt's Coventry Bitter and Taylor's Landlord both in good condition. Round the corner we found ourselves in the Bulls Head. Beers were Adnams Ghost Ship and you guessed it, Doom Bar. The Ghost Ship was excellent. A short drive now to the Old Smithy at Church Lawford, still quite busy when we arrived although most of the diners seemed to have finished. Beers available were Courage Directors and Wainwrights. I'm not sure who brews Directors now but it was in good nick. The last port of call was the Lawford Arms, with a good band of drinkers still in this Black Country Ales

establishment. Mauldons Magpie sat alongside Doom Bar (again!!!), Mauldons being the choice of most. My thought for the night with all the pub closures still happening was how good it is to see Brinklow still have three pubs that all seem to be doing well.

That's it to the next one. Cheers!

The end of April saw us boarding our bus for another trip round some village pubs.

First up was the Friendly Inn in Frankton, living up to its name with the staff and locals alike. They also offer a discount to CAMRA members. My choice here was Wye Valley Butty Bach which was very good start to the evening.

Onto Birdinbury club next, somewhere I'd never been to before. Inside was comfy with youngsters playing pool and sport on the TV. Two beers were on and I went for Purity Gold, the other being a brewery conditioned beer.

Next up was one of my favourite village pubs: the Old Olive Bush at Flecknoe, a small but lovely village inn with a lovely garden. Beers were mainly from Church End and my choice was Goat's Milk, a former champion beer.

Next was the Boat Inn at Stockton. When we arrived the pub was in darkness but the door was open. In we went to be told

they had no beer on so back on the bus for a short drive to the Crown in Stockton. What a contrast- this was probably the busiest I've ever seen a village pub! A real mix of all ages enjoying Friday in the pub with a choice of four beers on tap- mine was Wye Valley Hopfather.

Last call of the night was Shoulder of Mutton in Grandborough. The pub has recently been taken over by Essence of India who were formerly at the Black Horse Marton. We were told they intend to keep it as a traditional pub with an emphasis on Indian food to eat in or takeaway. Two beers were on and both were good- my choice was Phipps IPA. As we left we all took a menu

with us as it's always nice to find good beer to go with a good curry. I'm sure some of us will be trying it shortly.

The end of another trip around some lovely village pubs.

Cheers again!

Steve Durrant

For forthcoming local CAMRA events, see branch diary at:
www.rugby.camra.org.uk/diary

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CV21 2AB



LAWFORD ARMS

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Long Lawford
Warwickshire
CV23 9AY



A night at the theatre

Pubs do many things to bring customers in for a beer and this is especially true in our local village pubs. Hardly any rely on a simple wet-led formula and pretty much all of them offer food, quiz nights and sports teams. Earlier this summer the Red Lion in Crick and the Admiral Nelson in Braunston paid hosts to the Mikron Theatre Company. A great way to fill the pub with something completely different.

Mikron are a summer touring company that travel England on canals. They play mainly villages and often in pubs during their tour. They are performing two shows this year: Operation Beach Hut, which played at the Nelson, and Hush Hush!, which I saw at the Red Lion.

So it was on a cool but dry evening in early June a 150-strong audience sat down in the pub car park to a tale of life in Bletchley Park. The story centered on an 18-year-old Peggy Valentine, who negotiates her way through a high pressure world of secrecy and the new journey of friendships and feuding colleagues. Each actor takes on multiple roles, as well as numerous musical instruments and sound effects. It all combined to make a memorable evening at this most traditional of pubs.

The Red Lion is one of only a handful of thatched pubs in the Rugby area and can be dated as an inn as far back as 1766. It was

obviously used as a coaching inn as it has a large front entrance and a building for stabling to the left. The pub has been run by the Marks family since 1979, making it probably the longest family run pub in the area.

It is comforting to know that nothing much has changed in that time. I can't remember it looking any different to how it looks now. It's a very friendly local and a great place for a traditional British meal. It's famous for its pies, liver and onions and faggots, chips and peas. Then for pudding it's jam roly poly or perhaps spotted dick.

It always serves a fine selection of real ales. On the bar in early June was Landlord, Adnams Ghost Ship and the locally brewed Dow Bridge Summer Light. This guest beer changes weekly and often comes from Phipps of Northampton.

It really was a fantastic evening. Just another good reason to visit our country pubs.

Richard



New look at the Crow Pie

The Crow Pie on Bilton Road has a new look. The front bar has been refurbished and new windows have been installed with the crow logo. New signs have also been added and now the 'Pie' is more visible.

The family-run pub is the only pub in the country with this name and is well known for its live sports, skittles and darts. There is a happy hour every Friday and a free jukebox from 5-7pm.

There are two hand pumps in the back bar and we have been told that they only sell cask ales during autumn and winter. So if you go in, ask for a real ale and

hopefully it may persuade them to put one on all the time.

Good luck to the Crow Pie. It's pubs like this that are the backbone of the community.



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Pub news

Congratulations to **The Squirrel** and **The Cherry Tree** at Catthorpe for getting into the Telegraph top 500 pubs in England book
www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/best-pubs-england/

The Arnold Arms, Barby has reopened selling real ale.

Half Moon: work is still ongoing and we believe it might be a cafe.

Bar 29 has reopened. No real ale.

The Crown in town have reduced the real ales they keep.

The Fox, Lutterworth has reopened. We think George (formerly of the Shambles) is running it.

Red Arrow, Lutterworth is only selling one real ale at present.

Rugby Tap are looking to increase their choice of ales.

Prince of Wales and **The Green Man** are reported to be selling consistently good beers.

Shoulder of Mutton, Grandborough has been bought by Essence of India. On a visit the beers were very good.

The Rose Inn Willoughby has been sold and hopefully will re-open as a pub. One of only three thatched pubs in our area.

Head of Steam, Lilbourne have recently had Pot Belly beers on.

The Boat, Stockton had no real ale available on a visit.

The Crown, Stockton was very busy on a Friday with a mixed clientele and a choice of ales.

The Old Olive Bush, Flecknoe licensee told us she is leaving at the end of June. Hopefully they will have someone ready to take over this beautiful country pub.

Three Horseshoes, Princethorpe is being delisted in What Pub as it is now a house.

The Crown, Newbold will be closing later this year for a refurbishment. It will reopen under new management.

The Boat Inn, Stockton has a new license.

The licensee at the **Denbigh Arms, Monks Kirby** is leaving soon. Hopefully someone will be taking over quickly.

The **classic car events** in various pub car parks have started for the summer.

CAMRA cycling

Throughout the summer months a group of local CAMRA members cycle on Wednesday evenings. We always start at 7.30pm at a desired location and we post this on our Facebook page a few days before going. We are not Lycra wearing athletes, just people wanting to get out to some of our country pubs in the daylight the summer brings.

We start in May with some simple routes like Hillmorton or Bilton and Lawford and as the nights get longer we venture further afield. Already this year we cycled from

Dunchurch out to Braunston and Granborough and from Newbold out to Monks Kirby. Later this year we will visit Brinklow, Walcote and South Kilworth and Crick and Yelvertoft. As the summer draws to a close we cycle shorter routes again like Kilsby and Barby.

We would love more people joining us. All you need is a decent bike and some lights. It's one of the highlights of our CAMRA year and as I always say on our Facebook page - absolutely everyone is welcome.

Regular local pub entertainment

Often 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)



Raglan (alt. Thursdays)

Victoria Inn

T & C Club (last in month)

Save the White Lion - Pailton

Village Hall (monthly)

Music

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

Quigleys - live music

Knightley Arms, Yelvertoft - folk
(last in month)

Bingo

Royal Oak, Crick

Tuesday

Quiz night / Other

The Bear

Bull

Waterside, Hillmorton

Raglan - Board Games Club

Music

Arnold Arms (2nd in month)

Friday

Music

Quigleys - live music

Prince of Wales - karaoke

Wednesday

Quiz night / Other

George, Bilton

Royal Oak, Crick

White Hart, South Kilworth

(every other)

Quigleys - Games Night

Music

Squirrel Inn - open mic



Saturday

Music

Quigleys - traditional Irish music

Prince of Wales - live music

Squirrel Inn - live music

Sunday

Quiz night

Red Lion, Crick (last in month)

Red Lion, Kilsby (last in month)

Rugby Tap (third in month)

Victoria Inn

Windmill (fortnightly)

Music

Lawford Arms (fortnightly)

Prince of Wales - karaoke

Rugby Tap open mic (1st in month)

Squirrel (most Sundays)

Windmill (most Sundays)

Thursday

Quiz night

Admiral Nelson, Braunston

Friendly Inn, Frankton

(last in month)

Lawford Arms