

FREE

Inn Touch

Rugby & District Branch



Campaign
for
Real Ale

Summer 2026



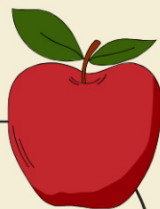
White Horse - Welton

Country Pub of the Year winner

CPOTY

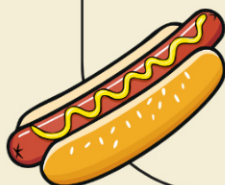
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Pub News, What's on Guide and more



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About Inn Touch

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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.

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



A welcome from the editor

A (hopefully) warm welcome to the summer edition of Inn Touch. There have been a few changes to a few pubs in our area since our last publication.

Quite a few have had licensees changing and some have undergone refurbishment. Notably, it is good to see The Courthouse reopened and selling real ales- we wish them all the best.

The Raglan Arms is also undergoing a refurb to the interior and the garden which should be completed by the time you are reading this.

So hopefully with the warm weather ahead of us, why not take a trip out to a lovely pub and sit in a sunny garden with a lovely pint of beer- bliss!!!!

Have a good summer, everyone.

Steve Durrant, editor Inn Touch

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Country pub of the year



Above: White Horse landlady Ellie, and Richard, Branch Chairman

This year's Country Pub of the Year has been won by the White Horse at Welton. Chosen by CAMRA members in the Rugby district, the pub is a true family run business. Congratulations go to Ellie the landlady and all of the members of the Ponder family who own the pub.

The White Horse - which is right on the edge of the area we cover - was bought five years ago by Carl and Jenny Ponder. It was up for sale and Carl didn't want a large company to buy his local, so he bought it himself. Four years ago Ellie, who was an estate agent, joined her parents

after a series of poor managers to run the pub.

The White Horse features a cosy snug bar on the left, and a tiny front bar reminiscent of the old 'donkey boxes' of the past. There is also a small lounge leading to a dining room on the right. One of its best features is a covered outside courtyard, which is decorated with enamel signs and fairy lights. It's a great place to drink. At the rear is a tree lined garden, with plenty of space for a summer beer.

The beer range is as good as any village pub in the area. Oakham



Bishop's Farewell and Sharp's Atlantic are joined by one or two guest beers. In late May they were running with a range of beers from the excellent Attic Brewery from Stirchley in Birmingham. The kitchen is leased out to multi award winning chef Danny Tompkins, who has catered for Jay-Z and Claudia Schiffer in his time. Meals are served from Wednesday evening through to Sunday lunch.

Finally, the pub will experience their biggest day of the year, when on July the 11th they play hosts to the 2026 Welton Village Soapbox Derby. Teams from all

over the country will be starting from outside the White Horse in this hair raising event. With the help of the Attic Brewery they will run six bars throughout the course, in an event that thousands will attend.

So congratulations once again to Ellie, her brother Dan and their parents Carl and Jenny and all who work at the White Horse on this award. Our Country Pub of the Year 2026.

*Richard
Branch Chairman*

Give a gift membership to the beer lover in your life!

Beers are best shared with others. So, treat someone you like to a CAMRA gift membership and bring them along to the pubs and festivals that matter.

Set the membership to start on someone's special day!

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camra.org.uk/gift-membership



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Live Music [Free Entry]

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- Saturday 8th August: Peter James @ 8.30pm

Dog Walks [No Dog Required]

- First Sunday of every month at 10am

Meet us on the Cherry Tree Terrace for a stroll in the lovely Leicestershire countryside. Wellies and waterproofs advised! Free to join - just pop along for a chat and an amble!

Monthly Quiz Night

- Last Sunday of every month @ 6.30pm

Max. six per team, £1.50 per person - funds raised go to LOROS Hospice. Limited space - booking required.

Mortimer-Lane Wine Experiences [Tickets Required]

- Saturday 8th August - Wine for Summer & BBQs
- Saturday 10th October - Italian Wines

Donna will be showcasing all manner of red, white, rose, fizz and fortified wines from around the world.
Tickets: £40 per person For ticket info and bookings, email Donna at info@mortimer-lane.com

Crime & Dine - The Catthorpe Casefiles [Tickets Required]

Murder mystery meets escape room with a three course meal. Will you be able to solve the case and catch the killer? Next event: Saturday 5th September.

Tickets: £40 per person. For ticket info and bookings, email cherrytreecatthorpe@gmail.com

Proudly supporting:



Mrs Main's cider



Every so often something occurs that you had no idea about. This was the case when I visited the Malt Kiln Farm Shop a few weeks ago. In a shop selling all kind of artisan and local produce was a small scale cider maker from Brinklow. Mrs Main's Apple Juice operates from a smallholding on the Lutterworth Road and they make a scrumpy cider as well.

For Jo and Richard Main their entry into apples was a bit of an accident, that has now taken over their lives. Richard has a background in motocross and originally the apple trees were planted to shield the noise of the bikes. Since then and once the smallholding was in his hands more trees were planted. Now there are one thousand trees in what is now a large orchard. They have planted many varieties, with many coming from Ryton Organic Gardens when it closed down.



All the apples are hand picked and are blended ready for pressing over in Upton upon Severn. The juice is then transferred to oak barrels with a

small amount of champagne yeast for up to twelve months. The scrumpy that is produced comes in at a healthy medium 8% and is slightly hazy. It is packaged in 3 litre pouches and these are sold at the Malt Kiln Farm Shop in Stretton under Fosse.

Predominantly Richard and Jo are making apple juice, which is bottled by hand. They also make cider vinegar, a product that takes two years to make. There are also plans to make an apple brandy and calvados, which they will sell directly from the farm. The cider has been on sale at the Bulls Head in Brinklow and at one beer festival.

It is great to see a venture like this in the Rugby area. Good luck to Richard and Jo in their endeavours and we at Rugby CAMRA wish them the best.

Richard





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Gardeners' world

As we head into summer, nothing can beat relaxing and drinking a pint of real ale in a pub garden. The sun is shining in the sky and all is right with the world as you sup your golden ale. You don't however have to get out of the town centre to experience this delight, as the majority of our pubs in town have some kind of outdoor facilities.

For most people when they think about gardens in Rugby they think of the Courthouse. This newly reopened pub has a beautiful tree lined space ideal for a pint. It is the biggest garden in town, but there are other reasonably large gardens as well. The Black Swan and the Prince of Wales gardens are both tucked away, but both are of a good size.

There are some excellent small gardens too. The Victoria has a brilliant secret walled garden to the rear. It comes complete with its very own underground bunker! The Merchant's garden is a continuation of pub itself, as it's adorned with brewery signage. It's also the only garden where you have to cross a road to get to it - a very good use of space. The Raglan has gardens front and back, with the rear garden having its own bar that is open in the summer. Finally the Windmill has what I believe to be the smallest garden in town. Small, but perfectly formed.

Finally we have the pubs with just a few seats in front of the

pub. The Bull, the William Webb Ellis, Rugby Hotel, Bar 29 and the Kanko Lounge all fit into this category. As does the Rugby Tap of course, simply three tables and some chairs with views across the William Webb Ellis statue and Rugby School. This is a great place for a beer.

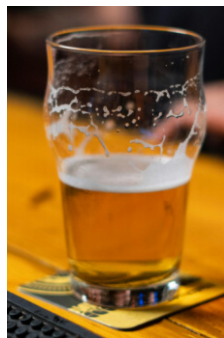
Country pub gardens are brilliant of course, but you don't have to head out for a garden. Just stay in town for your suntan.

Richard

Below two of the gardens in the article



The ever changing face of beer



Are the big breweries right to jump onto the craft bandwagon? It's definitely starting to gather pace, with everyone from Greene King to traditional locals such as Everards and even Phipps exploring this market. This is a tricky one for many, with some seeing it as 'selling out' and others finding it opening a portal into a new world of hoppy, beery loveliness. We've experienced delicious creativity from far flung brewers such as Green Jack in the East and Purple Moose in Wales, Two by Two in the North and pure brewing wizardry from Verdant in Cornwall. All of them combining a range of traditional and craft brewing that has appeal to a wide customer base. Even Guinness have been getting the chemistry set out at the Open Gate operation in Dublin – where Citra and Cascade hopped Nitro-IPA has been catching eyes.

It's highly likely that these shifts are a bid for the struggling giants to cash in on the growing market for quality niche brews, and

we've seen a number of small operations putting out 'hybrid' beers – basically a blend of lager and crisp IPA to wrestle customers away from their beloved 3.4% glass of fizzy misery and hangover. Indeed, one of the most successful beers of recent years has changed style progressively in the hands of a certain Dutch lager giant, and there's a good percentage of people who think they're drinking lager, when it brands itself as a 'session IPA', but as I don't feel that a beer below 5.5% fills the criteria to get the 'I' prefix – whatever your thoughts, it has triggered a few consumers to look at other styles and keeps the converts rolling in.

Personally we think that if you can brew a great range of beers, then don't let history stop you from doing it. BUT we'd also say that if you're going to venture into this category, please embrace it fully – because there are some pretty terrible (lukewarm) dalliances on the market. One of the best routes that we see are 'collabs', where a

brewery that can work wonders with traditional ingredients and methods join forces with a progressive small batch operation and come up with some truly brilliant beers that can encourage fans of one style to embrace another.

Recently we had the chance to pour the brilliant 'Spring' – a lightly hazy 4.5% fruity crisp ale from Sussex favourites Harvey's and (a particular favourite of Kabinett) Beak. By using British Harlequin and Cascade hops, with VERY traditional Plumage Archer malt to make up the base,

then late/dry hopping with New Zealand's superstar Nelson Sauvin, the final product won plaudits from fans of both old and new.

If you enjoy finding these newer beers and want to know more about them, we are always seeking out new brews and brewery visits at Kabinett Vinbar, so please feel free to pop in and register your contact details to stay up to speed with whatever we've got coming up.

Matt (Kabinett Vinbar)

The Courthouse reopens

The Courthouse reopened in May following a £350,000 refurbishment of the whole pub. Now owned by the same people who run the George at Kilsby and the Old Lion at Harbrough Magna, all three pubs have become known as the Machan Group.

The Courthouse now features TVs for big sporting events, DJs at the weekends and a full Asian inspired menu. The garden now has a huge outdoor TV and lots of undercover areas provided by three massive umbrellas.

Two real ales are available, which is more than we hoped for. Landlord and London Pride are both now at a more competitively priced amount after an initial higher pricing.



As you can imagine the full menu looks excellent, with lots of lovely looking dishes. Good luck to the new owners - Rugby CAMRA hope the Courthouse has continued success.

The Red Lion, Kilsby Pub and Dining.

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Travelers'
Choice Awards



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Tuesday 4pm - 9pm
Wednesday 4pm - 10pm
Thursday 4pm - 10pm
Friday 4pm - 11pm
Saturday 3pm - 11pm
Sunday 3pm - 7pm



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More than a pint: why hospitality needs our voice

For CAMRA members, the local pub is about far more than beer.

It is the welcoming local, the champion of independent breweries, the community meeting place and a home for cask ale and beer culture. But the places we value are under increasing pressure.

Across the UK, independent pubs and hospitality businesses face rising costs, tight margins and difficult decisions. CAMRA members know what closure looks like: not just a lost business, but a lost social space, a lost local employer and a lost piece of community identity.

That is why **Hospitality Together** is calling for Government action: a **permanent reduction in hospitality VAT from 20% to 10%.**

This matters beyond the hospitality trade. It matters to pub goers, real ale drinkers, communities and everyone who values independent venues.

Hospitality Together brings together pubs, bars, cafés, restaurants, hotels and hospitality businesses with a simple message: without meaningful action, more independent venues will struggle, and more will disappear.

Pubs support local jobs, suppliers, breweries, tourism and high streets. Yet many operate on margins so tight that absorbing rising costs becomes increasingly difficult. A 10% VAT rate could provide much-needed breathing space: helping businesses keep the doors open, invest, protect jobs and remain affordable for customers, while bringing the UK more into line with many European countries where hospitality benefits from lower VAT rates.

CAMRA members, pub supporters and hospitality businesses can help drive change:

- **Sign up your hospitality business** to support the campaign.
- **Write to your MP** calling for a permanent 10% hospitality VAT rate.
- **Share the campaign** and encourage others to get involved.
- **Support independent pubs and hospitality venues** whenever you can.

If we value thriving pubs, vibrant beer culture and independent hospitality, now is the time to speak up.

Find out more and get involved at **hospitality-together.org** and **www.instagram.com/hospitality.together**





New member feature

In late May this year, there came an opportunity to visit Bath with my brother. Both of us lived in Bath and both moved from there over 45 years ago, so visiting some old and new hostelry was a delight.

Just to whet your appetite, a pic of me in The Grapes, sampling a glass of green ale!!! Well you have to try that don't you, even if it is just for interest's sake: never seen that before! It's called A Sign of Spring from Stonehenge Ales. That brewery's ales cropped up in other pubs and all brews are highly recommended.

A place that was so good on every level was a pub that I don't think we ever went to because it was 'a bit rough' but now what a transformation! Now called The Raven, it's on 3 floors of an old Georgian house, and provided probably the best and biggest range of ales of any pub we visited - really outstanding place! Like The Merchant they had a rack for samples of third glasses; they called it a 'Flight Board' and we chose to have the barman select a range of ales for us. My pick was a stout which they had just had new in that

day; it was called Envy, a Matcha Imperial Stout 8.4% from Brewers Northern Monk, but all were lovely in their very different tastes. The landlady, a very friendly host, said they hoped to get Pub of the Year this year from CAMRA Bath.



Right: Julian at 'The Grapes' in Bath

So, nothing more here about what happened in Bath; maybe that's because 'what happens in Bath, stays in Bath'; or if you can't see any more script, then maybe it didn't get past the censors!

However, a clamour of readers responding could persuade yours truly to try to get some more unredacted classified documents released on the Bath jolly.

Julian

Have fun

JJ

www.camra.org/join

Be part of the CAMRA story

A pint and a paintbrush

There seems to be a growing trend of painting workshops in public houses and when I saw one posted recently it looked like something I would like to try. When this was advertised to take place in the Rugby Tap and on a non school night, this was my opportunity. Mr Potter and I decided this was the perfect way to celebrate 33 years of married bliss!

On arrival the tables had been pulled together and set up to look like a painting studio. Each of us had our own easel, brushes, sponges and most importantly our friendly teacher for the night, Lauren. We were aiming to paint a springtime landscape and “one I prepared earlier” was displayed. Lauren introduced herself and took us through the steps as we chatted and bought drinks at critical points while the paint dried.

The evening cost £20 per person, a price lower than other workshops, as she explained people could return if they got the painting bug. The atmosphere was friendly and relaxed and the session lasted around 2 hours, with the Tap making an excellent venue for the evening.

What a fantastic way of getting people and especially women into pubs, who otherwise might not go. A great way to reignite the idea of socialising. I myself would definitely go again, but I’m not sure about my ability to

paint one of the next subjects - a tiger!!!

The evening was run by Lauren at Studio Fifty Art if you would like to participate in upcoming painting events.

Cheryl Potter

Below: Lauren from Studio Fifty Art

Bottom: Cheryl and Richard with their results





White Horse Welton

The White Horse of Welton, near Daventry, is incredibly grateful to receive the CAMRA Award for 2026 – we're absolutely bursting with pride!

As a family-run business that has been trading for four years, we have worked hard to continually enhance what we offer. During this time, we have introduced a new wine menu and are delighted to welcome Chef Danny Tompkins to our kitchen team. Danny serves a delicious tapas menu from Wednesday to Saturday, alongside our traditional Sunday roast.

We have also invested in improvements to both our restaurant and outdoor spaces, ensuring that our customers can enjoy a comfortable, covered area whatever the British weather may bring. But don't just take our word for it – come and experience The White Horse for yourself!



High Street, Welton,
Northamptonshire, NN11 2JP

Contact: **01327 702820**

Email :
reservations@thewhitehorsewelton.co.uk

Please check our Facebook page for any variations to opening times or service

Bar Times

Mon - Wed	17:00 - 23:00
Thursday	12:00 - 23:00
Fri- Sat	12:00 - 00:00
Sunday	12:00 - 23:00

Food Serving

Thu-Sat	12:00-20:30
Sunday	12:00 - 16:30

Brotherhood House

Rugby Borough Council in their efforts to transform our town centre are hoping to make a compulsory purchase of the former Brotherhood House. They propose to make the building part of a Cultural Quarter in the town centre, after being closed for more than ten years.

Ideas for the Brotherhood - which was formerly the Toad at No. 22 - include the notion of turning it into a space for pop up street food kitchens and a bar run by a local brewery. This formula can be massively successful and Rugby CAMRA members have recently visited just such a venue in Manchester. Mackie Mayor's in the city's Northern Quarter of course appreciates a substantial footfall, but there also sister venues in Altrincham, Macclesfield and Tarporley. All are a similar size to Rugby or smaller.

Mackie Mayor is situated in the former Smithfield Meat Market

that was built in 1857. The grade 2 listed building closed as a market in 1972 and after years of being derelict it was transformed into the current food hall and opened for business in 2017. It features six kitchens, with Thai, Mexican, Chinese and Italian cuisines available. Most importantly it also features a Good Beer Guide listed bar called the Jack in the Box. This is run by Manchester's Blackjack Brewery and features an impressive 8 hand pumps.

It's a fabulous concept that definitely could transfer to Rugby. It just needs some leadership and a will to make it work and I'm sure it would benefit the town centre. Macclesfield and Manchester both have direct trains from Rugby and easy for our councillors to investigate. I'm sure Rugby CAMRA could be persuaded to go along for a beer.

Below left:
Brotherhood
House

Below right:
Mackie Mayor
in Manchester

Richard



CAMRA members village pub crawl

Friday 10th April found Rugby CAMRA members venturing on another village pub crawl.

Leaving the Raglan we headed off to the Red Lion in Kilsby. The pub was very busy with both drinkers and diners but we were made very welcome at this friendly village local. My choice of beer was Roman Way Centurion.

Onwards to the Coach House, Ashby St. Ledgers: again we were made very welcome at this quintessential village pub, a lovely old inn with timbers and flagstone floors. St. Austell Tribute for me here.

Next up, the White Horse, Welton: another lovely village pub that is well worth a visit. Usually four beers to choose from here: Timothy Taylor's Landlord was mine and it was in excellent condition with a good mix of diners and locals in both bars.

Into Braunston next where we were to visit three pubs if time

permitted. First up was the Admiral Nelson in a lovely setting alongside lock no.3 of the 6 locks here. Again there was a good mix of customers. My choice here was Everards Sunchaser.

Up the lane to Wheatsheaf next: a proper village local with pool, darts and skittles available and sports events on the screens. I had another St. Austell Tribute to drink. The last call of the evening was the Plough, another friendly local pub with two separate bars showing sports in one and meals in the other. My drink here was Timothy Taylor's Landlord.

On the bus back to Rugby where some went for a late nightcap and some headed home.

Steve Durrant



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

Pub news

Bulls Head Brinklow is up for lease with Stonegate

Raglan Arms refurbishment has been completed and looking very smart. They are having a summer market day on 22nd August with various stalls and food available all day

White Lion Pailton are looking for more funding for works on the pub

Courthouse have had reports of expensive prices

Windmill had a very busy day on the Bike Fest

Denbighshire Arms Monks Kirby has reopened with new licensee

Dun Cow Dunchurch is undergoing some improvements

Rugby Tap is up for sale

London Calling reports of good Church End beers on tap

Regular local pub entertainment

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

Monday

Quiz nights:

Black Horse, Bilton
Green Man, Dunchurch
Real Ale Classroom, Lutterworth
Merchants (last)
The Bull Inn, Clifton
The Bell, Hillmorton (alt.)

Music / Other

Newbold Crown - Open Mic
Rugby Tap - Cheese Night

Tuesday

Quiz night / Other

The Bear
Bull
Waterside, Hillmorton
Raglan - Board Games Club
Royal Oak, Crick (last)

Music

Stag and Pheasant, Newton - acoustic jam (3rd)

Wednesday

Quiz night / Other

George, Bilton
Royal Oak, Crick
White Hart, South Kilworth (alt.)

Open Mic

Squirrel Inn
Buck and Bell, Long Itchington (2nd)
The Bull Inn, Clifton (2nd)
Games Night - Quigleys

Thursday

Quiz night

Town & County (last)
Admiral Nelson, Braunston
Friendly Inn, Frankton (last)
Raglan (alt.)
Victoria Inn

Stag and Pheasant, Newton
Save the White Lion - Pailton Village Hall (monthly check website)

Music

Town & County - jam session (1st & 3rd)
Quigleys - live music
Knightley Arms, Yelvertoft - folk (2nd)
West Indian Club - folk (alt.)

Bingo

Royal Oak, Crick

Friday

Music

The Windmill - live music (1st)
Quigleys - live music
Prince of Wales - karaoke

Saturday

Music

The Windmill - live music (1st)
Quigleys - trad. Irish
Prince of Wales - live music
Squirrel Inn - live music

Sunday

Quiz night

Red Lion, Crick (last)
Red Lion, Kilsby (last)
Rugby Tap (3rd)
The Windmill (2nd)

Music

The Windmill - live music (varying)
Rugby Tap open mic (1st)
Prince of Wales - karaoke
Squirrel (most)
Lawford Arms (alt.)



What's on at The Windmill Inn

Rugby CAMRA's Current
Pub of the Year

Set in the heart of Rugby Town,
A Traditional Real Ale Inn



Yorkshire Taptakeover- Thurs 30/07

By popular demand our Yorkshire Tap Takeover is back all weekend raising funds for MND

2 Years at The Windmill - Weds 19/08

Come and celebrate Gemma and Andy's 2nd anniversary at the Windmill with live music from some of their friends, and some of their favourite beers on the taps

Titanic Taptakeover - Thurs 27th August

Titanic are joining us Bank Holiday Weekend, complete with brewers talk

General Knowledge Quiz- Every 2nd Sunday

Raising money for Motor Neurone Disease Association
4pm start - 6 per team

Live Music - 8pm First Weekend of the Month

Check out our Facebook Page for whose playing
Regular Jam nights on Thursdays



**LOOK OUT ON OUR SOCIALS FOR
OUR COURTYARD GARDEN
MAKEOVER!**

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01788 221303

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