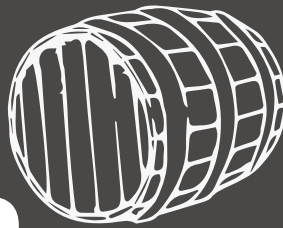


# Barrel Organ



 CAMRA

*The magazine of the Salisbury & South Wiltshire  
branch of the Campaign for Real Ale*

June 2026 - August 2026

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## FROM THE EDITORS

Just imagine armed government officials turning up on your doorstep in Africa and giving you 20 minutes to leave your home and the successful business you had built up over two decades. Suddenly you are left with the clothes on your back and a few possessions you managed to grab. Happy holiday memories brought the Janse van Vuuren family to the gentler surroundings of the Woodford Valley, near Salisbury, where they took over The Bridge Inn. Three and a half months later another government intervened ordering immediate closure because of Covid. Yet somehow the family survived and recently the redoubtable Lorna Janse van Vuuren (pictured on our front cover) was awarded the British Empire Medal for services to the Woodford Valley community during the pandemic. She and her husband Tom were then invited to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party. This issue of *Barrel Organ* tells their story and salutes their grit and determination.

*Barrel Organ* is immensely proud of its local breweries and none more so than Hop Back, which began life in the wonderful Wyndham Arms in Salisbury and now brews at larger premises in Downton. So we are happy to report good news from the Hop Back Annual General Meeting, which announced a pre-tax profit of £110,000 compared to a loss of £125,000 last year, and a dividend for shareholders. The Albion in Winchester, Hop Back's newest addition to its small stable of pubs, is doing well. All this has been achieved against a backdrop of difficult economic conditions and a government that appears to have little understanding of the needs of the hospitality trade. So we raise a glass to Hop Back and suggest that its shareholders spend their dividends on its excellent ales.

**Will, Sue & Neil**  
*Editors, Barrel Organ magazine*

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Branch area: The Salisbury & South Wiltshire branch covers the whole of the south of the county having incorporated the area around Mere, Hindon, Zeals and Semley. While Salisbury is by far the largest population centre in the branch's territory, there are several smaller towns such as Amesbury and Wilton and large villages like Downton and Tisbury. The branch has nearly 140 open pubs selling real ale, about 70% of which are in rural areas.

*Barrel Organ* is distributed to these plus other distribution points.

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# MEET THE GOVERNORS

## The Bridge Inn, Upper Woodford

When Lorna Janse van Vuuren was presented with her British Empire Medal by Wiltshire's Lord Lieutenant Dame Sarah Troughton at County Hall, Trowbridge at the end of March it was in recognition of her extraordinary work on behalf of the Woodford Valley community during the Covid pandemic. But it also marked the culmination of a remarkable story spanning nine years and two continents which would make a good book or movie script.



*Lorna after the BEM presentation with husband Tom to her left and Dame Sarah Troughton to her right. At the rear (left to right) are daughter Emma, Emma's boyfriend Callum and son Robert.*



*Lorna and her daughter Emma behind the bar of The Bridge Inn.*

In 2017 Lorna, who is now the landlady of The Bridge Inn in Upper Woodford, and her husband Tom were living in Zambia, where they had built up a successful construction company. With 800

staff and an annual turnover of US\$35 million, their hard work over the previous two decades had borne fruit. All that changed in a matter of minutes when, out of the blue, armed government representatives arrived on their doorstep, told them the company had been nationalised, and gave them 20 minutes to leave at gunpoint.



*Lorna with her BEM beside a painting of The Bridge Inn*

There was no compensation and they were left with the clothes on their backs and a few paintings that Lorna managed to grab as she left. Although the couple had lived in South Africa and Zambia for many years, they were British passport holders and eventually decided to move to the picturesque Woodford Valley between Salisbury and Amesbury. They had first come there to a New Year's Eve Party in 1992, made friends and returned regularly for holidays.

It was their daughter Emma who was instrumental in getting them to take over The Bridge Inn as she had worked there in her gap year from 2017 and knew that there was a vacancy for licensees at the pub. They took on a five year lease in November 2019 and with Tom having returned to the construction industry – first in Birmingham and now in Ghana – Lorna was responsible for running the pub.

Her only previous experience of the hospitality world had been running a coffee shop in South

Africa. “I didn’t know anything”, she said. “I didn’t know how to change a barrel, I didn’t know how to clean a line. I felt as though I had gone blind.” Over the next three and a half months, with the help of some knowledgeable locals, she gradually felt her way forward.



*Exterior of The Bridge Inn*

Then, as if some malign deity had singled out the Janse van Vuurens for special punishment, the Covid pandemic arrived. “It was just before Mothering Sunday,” she recalled. “We had 70 covers booked and Boris Johnson said that all pubs had to close. I came downstairs and some of the regulars were here and I said to them ‘what the hell are we going to do?’” She called a meeting of locals she had got to know in the preceding few months and agreed to set up a pop-up shop in the back room of the pub and a delivery service. “We knew that we had a lot of elderly people in the area who did not have access to online shopping,” she said.

Like many other pubs, they started doing takeaways and eventually served 5,000 meals during the pandemic. “It started to gain momentum, particularly the Sunday roasts and the Friday fish and chips,” said Lorna. “The following year we did a Mothering Sunday hamper.” Crucially one of their most regular customers was John Humphreys-Evans, a man in his 80s living on his own in the village, who ate more than 100 consecutive takeaways. Lorna allowed him into the pub’s ‘bubble’ and he was later to show his gratitude in a very practical way.

As the pandemic receded, normality returned and the customers – many of them grateful for Lorna’s hard work on behalf of the community – have also come back. The nearby River Avon flows past the

end of the pub garden as it has always done. The Janse van Vuurens are now more than a year into their second five-year lease with the pub company Stonegate and have quadrupled The Bridge Inn’s turnover since they took it over. Emma works alongside her mother and Tom comes back from Ghana for a week every month.



*The interior of the pub*

Lorna has long since learned how to change barrels and clean lines and has four real ales on during the summer. Two of them – Sharp’s Doom Bar and St Austell’s Proper Job – are permanent and the others rotate. Fuller’s London Pride and St Austell’s Tribute were on tap the day that Barrel Organ called. Under the terms of her lease she has to get her beers via Stonegate.



*Flags and flowers outside  
The Bridge Inn*

The next chapter came courtesy of John Humphreys-Evans, who was an Equerry to the late Queen Elizabeth. His experience of Palace life meant that he knew how to apply for awards and he set about getting one for Lorna. She assumed that she would just get a letter thanking her for her work and was astonished when she discovered that she had been granted the British Empire Medal. The biggest problem was having to keep quiet about it until the New Year’s Honours were announced.

Getting a BEM also guarantees an invitation to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party. When she and Tom walked through the entrance to the Palace in their party finery in May it provided the ultimate contrast to that desperate day in Zambia when men armed with AK-47s stripped them of almost everything they owned. Appropriately, Tom was wearing John Humphreys-Evans’s top hat.

**Will Bennett**

# BREWERY NEWS

## Stonehenge Ales



Yet another accolade at MaltingsFest 2026 – cask Danish Dynamite has received a bronze award at the Society of Independent Brewers' (SIBA) Newton Abbott beer festival in the premium pale section. Stonehenge Ales was again present at the festival which featured about 180 cask beers from the south west. Nicola and James Robinson are delighted with the result. Sales have been excellent for the early spring, and the new five litre minikegs are proving very popular with around 14 days life from opening. They are selling well on the local home delivery routes. As beer suppliers to Urchfont's Scarecrow festival, the annual charity event drawing crowds from near and far, this year over 30 casks were requested for the first May Bank Holiday. By the time you read this, the 40 Summers seasonal ale should be widely available. A seasonal ale for August is currently in the planning stages and may even be a new recipe – watch this space.



*Nicola and James Robinson of  
Stonehenge Ales at MaltingsFest*

## Hop Back



In March Hop Back Brewery was pleased to host the Bournemouth and Poole CAMRA branch for a visit. Its beers have also been featured at a number of festivals including: MaltingsFest in April and at Hop Back pubs The Waterloo, Southampton, and The Sultan, Wimbleton, in May. It is also looking forward to providing beers and sponsoring the beer glasses at the Winchester Beer and Cider Festival 2026 (12/13 June). The bottling line is still working well with preparations being made to take on some contract bottling and trialling Brewery Conditioned Sirocco Lager in bottles. This complements the popular kegged Sirocco that is available at a number of venues. The brewery shop, which also stocks a range of T-shirts and other products, is open from 0900 – 1600 Monday to Friday. You can also ring 01725 510986 to ask what beers are available or to order your beers 48 hours in advance. The specials will include: June – Calypso (3.4% ABV); July - Golden Goal (4.0% ABV) a golden ale made with all English hops; August – Slovenian Rhapsody (3.8% ABV), a summer favourite that is crisp, hoppy and slightly floral.

## Dead Duck



At the end of March, Dead Duck hosted its first 'Pop-Up Bar' at the Old School in Lover, which proved very successful. So successful, that Paul Bartlett, the brewer, had to return to the brewery several times to collect more stock. The summer months are also going to be busy for him with further stalls confirmed for the Cuckoo Fair in Downton in May, and, looking ahead, Froggham Fair (27 June), New Forest Beer Festival (4 July) and New Forest Food Festival (15/16 August). The latest design for the labels used on the cans now includes a 'what3words' element, these give

an insight into the inspiration behind the beers. All five Dead Duck beers are available in both cask and canned live beer format and can be found at an increasing number of venues, these now include: Belgian & Blues in Southampton and No-1 Shaftesbury Street in Fordingbridge. Local groceries also stock his beers in cans and you can purchase directly from his website.

## Dark Revolution



2026 kicked off in true DR style, with great beer, food, music, and even better company. The Dark Revolution Taproom came alive on New Year's Eve, packed with energy and that unmistakable DR atmosphere, the perfect start to what is already shaping up to be a huge year for the brewery. Alongside releasing a new beer every week, Dark Revolution has four highly anticipated brews lined up for launch throughout the year. Leading the charge was 'The Fog', a 5.4% ABV hazy Double Dry Hopped pale that completely sold out on pre-sale before it even hit the taps. At the end of April, the brewery hosted its very first trade day, inviting customers behind the scenes for an exclusive look at the brewing process, followed by a tasting and networking session in the Taproom. With demand continuing to grow, the team is now on the lookout for a new brewer to join them and help keep up with the pace.

## Downton Brewery



A successful beer festival was held at the brewery Taproom over the Easter weekend where 14 beers from the Downton range were available together with guest beers from Hop Back, Dead Duck, Hattie Browns, Dark Revolution and Rude Giant. A summer beer festival is planned for 12-13 June. Monthly beer specials for June and July are Mad Fox, a 4.4% ABV complex red ale, Lion's Tale, a hoppy Summer Ale at 4.5% ABV and Bogus Buffalo (4.4% ABV), a US IPA, respectively. The mobile bar will be selling beer at a number of local

events during the summer including Wallop Wheels and Wings on 11 July.

## Stone Daisy



A new brewing team has taken over at Stone Daisy - head brewer Nikki Rowe, working with Harrison Hooley. They have added two new seasonal beers to their line-up: Bake Barn, a session bitter at 3.6% ABV brewed from October to January, and Fonthill Flanker, a session porter at 4.0% ABV brewed in February and March. Both are available in firkins and pins.

*Contributors in order: Steve Stringer, John Hinton Sarah Hughes Nigel Allison and Andrew Ward*



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## VARIETY AND QUALITY SOUTH WILTSHIRE PUBS AND CLUB OF THE YEAR

The winners of this year's South Wiltshire CAMRA members' vote to pick pubs and a club of the year were a city hostelry that has become a byword for serving good real ales, a rural pub that has adapted brilliantly to the realities of running a modern country inn, a club that is the beating heart of a village and a watering hole that has turned the cider trophy into its personal property.

The **Duke of York**, in York Road, Salisbury, was chosen as the local 2026 **Pub of the Year**. It has seven handpumps and the range and quality of its real ales together with its atmosphere and community focus won it the title. Members of the Salisbury & South Wilts branch of CAMRA voted it their City Pub of the Year and an independent panel then decided between it and the members' choice as local Rural Pub of the Year for the overall South Wiltshire title.

Manager Paul Postance and landlord Jonty Newbery were presented with the winner's certificate by Keith Foster, Pub of the Year co-

ordinator for the local branch of CAMRA. Keith described it as "a true local asset." Landlord Jonty had a simple explanation for its success. "It is a nice pub, full of nice people," he said. The panel which made the final decision between city and rural winners was led by John Buckley, from CAMRA's North Hampshire branch.

The **Fox & Goose** at Coombe Bissett, near Salisbury, was voted local **Rural Pub of the Year**. Landlord Keith Smith also received the **Derek Blackshaw Trophy**, founded in memory of the late Derek Blackshaw, who was chairman of the local CAMRA branch and a great campaigner for country pubs. It is the first pub to receive the Blackshaw Trophy twice. Both awards were presented to Keith by Andrew Hesketh, chairman of the local CAMRA branch, who said: "The real ales are kept well, the food is excellent and the pub has become a key part of village life."

**Netheravon Working Mens Club**, which was founded more than a century ago and remains at



Keith Foster (centre), CAMRA's local Pubs of the Year co-ordinator, presents the winner's certificate to Duke of York manager Paul Postance (left) and landlord Jonty Newbery (right).



CAMRA branch chairman Andrew Hesketh (left) and Keith Smith, landlord of The Fox & Goose, Coombe Bissett, with the latter's Rural Pub of the Year awards.



Keith Foster (second from left) presents the winner's certificate to Netheravon Club representatives (left to right), Gary Davis, Allan Smith and Andy Linscer



Andrew Hesketh hands the Cider Pub of the Year certificate to Nik Amplianitis, landlord of The Cuckoo Inn, Hamptworth.

the heart of community life in the village north of Amesbury, was chosen as the local **Club of the Year**. Allan Smith, the club's chairman, Andy Linscer, its secretary, and longstanding club member Gary Davis, received their winner's certificate from Keith Foster. Allan, who heads a team of volunteers which keeps the club going, said: "This is the social hub of the village."

Wiltshire's finest cider pub after being chosen as local **Cider Pub of the Year** for the fourth time running. The pub in the picturesque village on the edge of the New Forest has at least 24 different ciders on sale and the range and quality of these and the skill that landlord Nik Amplianitis shows in ensuring that they are served in top condition has repeatedly won him the CAMRA award.

The **Cuckoo Inn** at Hamptworth has indisputably established itself as South

Will Bennett

## Get out of the group chat and into the round



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## ON THE BUSES

A venture to **Romsey** proved successful with 10 braving the miserable February weather and converging on the Flack Manor Taproom. Like all our bus trips, this was open to the public and just like so many other trips, although only five embarked on the bus journey from Salisbury, others joined at different places. The Three Tuns offered Flack's Double Drop, ubiquitous in Romsey, Flower Pots Gooden's Gold, and Old Smokey and Spire Ale from Stonehenge. The party then diverged either to the Cocky Anchor, which featured London Pride, Romsey Gold masquerading as Anchor Ale and of course Double Drop, or directly to the Flack Manor Taproom, where we found the predictable Double Drop, alongside Romsey Gold, Roby Dark Mild and New Forest IPA.



*CAMRA party at The Three Tuns, Romsey*

**Winchester** was enough of an attraction to convince 10 stalwarts to turn up, and we arrived near The Old Gaolhouse, where we incarcerated ourselves for an assortment of beers, coffees and breakfasts, and were joined by two more. Although eight ales were on offer, almost everyone opted for the delightful Kirkstall Three Swords, with Theakston's Old Peculiar also popular. At the recently refurbished Westgate, a Young's hotel, we found Flower Pots Bitter and Goodens Gold, with Young's London

Original still settling. Finally, on to the Albion, a popular local, which offered four Hop Back ales alongside Downton's Elder Quad. It would not be a CAMRA outing without some bus jeopardy, and emergency roadworks disrupted routes through the city.



*Released from The Old Gaolhouse, Winchester*

A trip to two very interesting venues in **Southampton** started with just two of us embarking on the train but the party grew to six, with the others converging on Belgium & Blues. Both B&B and the second venue, the Bottle & Stoa, offer an extensive range of cask and keg beers as well as a bewildering choice of bottles and cans. Gander, an American bitter from Two Flints, was on offer at B&B, as well as Boddingtons, Vibrant Forest Evoke, and Lip Service, a glorious session pale from Floc Brewing, and at B&S we found the familiar Perridge Pale from Flower Pots, a NZ pale from Steam Town, Iron Tusk - a mild - from Fownd, and Bristol Bitter from the New Bristol Brewery. Not surprisingly the theme at Belgium & Blues was Belgian beers and food, with lovely frites. Both venues were very popular, although the atmospheres were different - Belgium & Blues a dark cellar bar with nooks and crannies and great music, but Bottle & Stoa is basically a high street shop.

Our trip up the **Wylve** attracted seven to the charming Rainbow on the Lake, with its bucolic views across the valley. Rocket's Revenge and GFB, both from Hop Back, were on offer, as well as a magnificent lunch. Back down the valley to The Pelican, featuring Hobgoblin Gold - a treat if you have only sampled the bottled version - alongside Ringwood 49er. The third bus of the day took us a little further down to Great Wishford, where the Royal Oak welcomed us with Proper Job, Stonehenge Danish Dynamite, and Rude Giant Juicy IPA, Best and Oat Stout - that last one being the favourite of the day.

In April we returned to **Southampton** to the tiny but delightful Witch's Brew. But first, a pint at the Wellington Arms, which is still equipped with the wooden booth seating which cannot be much younger than the pub's 160 years. Only two of us made the train trip but this was understandable, with beer festivals and parties abounding. The trip was nevertheless well worthwhile - the fresh barrel of Gales HSB in this back-street boozier was in tip-top condition. Also on offer were Adnam's Golden Gull, Theakston's Yorkshire Haka, and Sharp's Sea Fury. By contrast, the Witch's Brew, a micro-pub, focuses on smaller breweries and some beers you have likely never come across before. That day they had the familiar Perridge Pale, alongside Triple F Moondance, Alfred's Othala, Electric Bear Ya Who? and Wantsum Golgotha (an oatmeal stout), those last two proving the favourites.

A sunny day at the end of April saw eight members embark on a bus ride up the **Nadder Valley** to the Wyndham at Dinton, travelling on one of a new fleet of small vehicles for rural routes. At the Wyndham we were greeted by an enthusiastic landlady and four ales - Solstice and Apple Blossom from Downton, Mary's Meddler from Hatty Brown, and Butcombe Original. Mary's Meddler was soon polished off to be replaced by the excellent Snail Creep Hanging from local brewer Stone Daisy. After

the Wyndham the party split - some venturing further west to The Phoenix at Gillingham, and the others returning to Salisbury - with one jumping ship at Burcombe to try out the newly reopened Ship, which had only Otter Bitter, on gravity dispense.

**Andrew Ward and Pete Matthews**

*Photos: Owen Cligg*


## Barrel Organ


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## THE CUCKOO INN



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 The Cuckoo Inn Hamptworth

*The Cuckoo Inn, Hamptworth road,  
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# PUB NEWS

Here is a round-up of local pub news since the last issue of *Barrel Organ*.

It feels like a long time since I had a whole column without any new pub closures but happily I have one now! And also happily, there have been some great openings. The big news locally is that having been either closed or an Italian restaurant for some time, **The Ship Inn** at Burcombe has been reopened as a Zia Gastro Pub by Aleena Jacob of Zia Pizzas. The team are keen to welcome back locals who are pleased to have the place open as a proper pub again.

Just as eagerly received has been the reopening of **The Swan** at Enford under new management, with continued volunteer help from the community and the support of Hollywood actor Rupert Everett. New Landlady Hannah and her team opened **The Salisbury Arms** on Endless Street (now the Salisbury Arms Endless Street Tap) recently and much to the delight of CAMRA members they now serve real ale! The pub was previously a cocktail bar with no real ale so this is a very welcome improvement for beer lovers.

Tom and Zara left **The White Hart**, Bishopstone at the end of February to take over the Churchill Arms, West Lavington. New team Heidi and Ed are settling in well, offering a classic pub menu on Fridays and Saturdays with roasts on Sundays and, like many pubs, are closed on Mondays. **The White Horse**, Quidhampton finally found new tenants in mid-March, enabling the Kershaws finally to move on. They remain in the village and will no doubt become regulars at the pub! Ying and her team offer a full menu including several Thai dishes and host Thai tasting evenings, Thai buffet nights and quiz nights.

**The Victoria and Albert**, Netherhampton remains closed and the owners' planning

application to convert to residential accommodation is currently under consideration following appeal. There is still an Asset of Community Value order in force and a local councillor has joined the community in a campaign to restore the premises as a pub. The Parish Council has applied for an Asset of Community Value order for **The Rose and Crown** at Tilshead, currently operating primarily as an Italian restaurant. Other ACVs either new or relevant at the moment apply to **The Bell Inn**, Winterbourne Stoke (now closed) and **The Boot** at Berwick St James, currently open and working very hard to build trade back up after a nearby bridge was closed for 10 weeks limiting access.

Watch this space...Zoe Guild, new owner of **The South Western** at Tisbury has been refurbishing the place and is hoping to be opening soon. Taking over The Bridge Tap on Bridge Street, Salisbury, **Bill's Bar**, part of the Taste the World Hospitality Group, hopes to be open in time for the FIFA World Cup and **Jimmy Goose's Bar** hopes to be opening soon in Tinga's former premises on Salt Lane, Salisbury. Managed by the previous team from the Salisbury Arms, they promise more of the same features as before. The much loved **Castle Street Social Club** on Scots Lane, Salisbury remains closed following some management and financial issues. The future of the members' club is still uncertain.

**The Green Dragon**, Alderbury is opening on Mondays again and the **Dark Revolution Tap Room** is now open until 9pm on Fridays and Saturdays. **The Royal George**, Bedwin Street offers 20% off real ale every Wednesday and **The Bell and Crown's** Monday Club gives £1 off all pints from 12 - 8pm. The following are now open following recent refurbishments:

**The Queen's Head**, Broad Chalke, **The Dog and Gun**, Netheravon and **The Radnor Arms**, Nunton.

**The Fox & Goose**, Coombe Bissett, Cider Pub of the Year **The Cuckoo Inn**, Hamptworth and Club of the Year **Netheravon Working Men's Club**.

Finally, representatives of the branch were pleased to present certificates to our annual Pubs and Club of the Year award winners. Lots of congratulations go to Pub of the Year **The Duke of York**, Salisbury, Rural Pub of the Year

**Sue Turner**  
Pubs Officer

## BEERS OF WINTERFEST 2026

Beer-lovers attending Winterfest 2026 in Salisbury Guildhall were asked to vote for their favourite **Beer of the Festival**. The winner was one of the many ales from the Midlands and northern England which provided festivalgoers with a wonderful range of beers not normally found in this part of the country. **Old Mill Stout** from **Little Eaton Brewery** in **Derbyshire** emerged as the winner. A 5% ABV full-bodied stout with a backbone of chocolate and biscuit malt and a hint of plum, it had already received rave reviews from other drinkers around the country. Sadly, CAMRA's local finances were not up to organising a minibus trip to the East Midlands to present the winner's certificate so branch chairman Andrew Hesketh posted it to them.

No such geographical restrictions applied to the **Dead Duck Brewery** in **Hale** on the edge of the New Forest. **Hale Ale**, a 3% ABV American pale ale brewed by Paul Bartlett in his micro-brewery, came within a handful of votes of a South Wiltshire beer festivals hat trick. Paul had won Beer of the Festival at Winterfest and Summerfest last year, but this time had to be content with the runners up certificate. Such is the enthusiasm among South Wiltshire CAMRA members for Paul's ales that a substantial party risked the quirky local bus service and then walked over the Hampshire

boundary to present it to him. This arduous duty having been performed they then relaxed in his back garden amid spring sunshine to sample his wonderful beers. It was dirty work, but somebody had to do it.



*Paul Bartlett (left) of Dead Duck Brewery receives his runners-up certificate from CAMRA branch chairman Andrew Hesketh*

Third place in the Winterfest poll went to **Twisted Citra**, a 5.3% ABV pale ale from **Mad Brewer** in **Ashby-de-la-Zouche, Leicestershire** while fourth was **English Stout** a 5% ABV stout brewed by **4T's** of **Warrington, Cheshire**.

**Will Bennett**

# CITY SAUNTERS AND BEYOND

Are you puzzled by the title City Saunters? Don't be! Think of them as regular Salisbury-based pub tours, operating at a leisurely pace and offering CAMRA members an opportunity both to socialise and to taste some great beers.



*The relaxed atmosphere of a City Saunter*

The monthly saunters concentrate on pubs within the city itself. We enjoy nine Salisbury-based saunters each year, always on the third Wednesday evening of the month, along with one month allocated to the Wilton Wander, and another given over to the Amesbury Amble. In December we organise an annual *Good Beer Guide* (GBG) saunter, when we attempt to visit every city pub included in the latest *Good Beer Guide*, currently six. We switch the evening of that expedition to a suitable Friday night, giving participants more chance of a lazy recovery opportunity the next day, should they need it.

So, what happens on a city saunter? Ideally, three pubs are selected that are within reasonable walking distance of each other. Often just a few minutes, but sometimes a little further apart. Occasionally a fourth pub may be added if there is a suitable candidate nearby. We only visit pubs that serve real ale and we encourage members to score the beers they taste. Obviously, beer quality is one of the main subjects for discussion, but conversations can swing from beer to

cooking recipes via music, Basil Fawlty and recent books read. The atmosphere is very light-hearted. People join and/or leave the saunter at times convenient to them. The organiser produces a rough schedule in advance, although we may linger if the beer in one of the pubs is particularly good. The Amesbury Amble and Wilton Wander involve bus trips at the start and end of the evenings, but these are fairly short.

2026 has already seen some very enjoyable saunters. In January we visited pubs in the Salt Lane area, whereas in February the location was focussed on the Market Square. March saw us start in the Rai D'Or, where many of us had a meal, before setting out to the Bell & Crown and finishing the evening in the Wig & Quill. April's saunter visited three great pubs in the east of the city: The Dust Hole/Railway Inn, The Winchester Gate and, finally, The Wyndham Arms.

Our aim is to provide members with an opportunity to visit, at least once each year, every pub in the city that serves real ale, and score the ales tasted. Participants are welcome to bring guests if they share an interest in beer, although they may find themselves gently encouraged to join CAMRA!

The saunters provide another layer of social events that add to the branch meeting early each month, minibus trips (usually in the 2nd week) and public transport outings later in the month. These latter two offer opportunities to visit pubs in the more rural parts of our area. View the plan for forthcoming saunters in *Barrel Organ*, and on the branch and CAMRA national websites.

**Eleanor Roberts**  
*City Saunters Organiser*

# HOP BACK GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

The Hop Back Brewery had lots of good news to report at its Annual General Meeting on 30 March. This was held at The Duck Inn at Laverstock, one of its ten tied pubs, and the meeting was attended by over 40 shareholders including a representative from the CAMRA Members' Investment Club.



*Hop Back's new pub, The Albion, Winchester*

Following the long recovery of the hospitality trade after Covid, Hop Back posted a pre-tax profit of £110,000, improving from a loss of £125,000 the previous year. This follows an 11% increase in turnover split almost evenly between brewery and pub sales. The balance sheet and cash flow statement both remain solid, the latter

reflecting the purchase of a bottling plant for the brewery and the costs of taking on a new pub in Winchester. The Albion is sited at the end of the approach to Winchester railway station and is ideal for the thirsty commuter after a long day. Hop Back announced a dividend of 4p in the pound (£20 in total for the average block share of 500) which it is hoped will be reinvested via several pints of Hop Back's finest.

In his presentation to the meeting, Chairman and founder John Gilbert voiced his concerns at current Government initiatives including the revaluation of business rates and increases to National Insurance. Against that, the new bottling plant has now been installed and following testing it is hoped to increase the supply of bottled beer so that Hop Back will make a re-appearance in supermarkets. He went on to describe the refurbishments of the Duck Inn and the aforementioned Albion, both of which reopened in 2025 and are making a significant contribution to turnover.

Hop Back's pubs are primarily community pubs upon which their strategy has always focused. The Hop Back team has always researched its pub acquisitions very carefully and while there are no further purchases in the offing will always continue to apply those rules. John and his company are hopeful, notwithstanding any potential downturns, to remain a going concern and supply the public with good beers, and good places to drink them in, for many years to come.

**Andrew Hesketh**

# NEW BARREL ORGAN SHORT STORY COMPETITION:

## 'THE ALE THAT GOT AWAY!'

The *Barrel Organ* editorial team are pleased to announce another short story competition, similar to the ones we ran in 2019/2020 and again in 2023. This time we are providing you with the title of your story, '**The Ale That Got Away!**'. It is up to you to construct a story around this title and theme. Good luck!

**Deadline:** 30 September 2026.

**Maximum length:** 1000 words. Single letter words and numbers count as a word.

**Title:** 'The Ale That Got Away!'

**Format:** MS Word or compatible (NOT pdf or Apple Pages).

**Send to:** Send your entry, as an email attachment, to [willbennett1950@gmail.com](mailto:willbennett1950@gmail.com)

**Filename:** Please ensure your story's filename contains your name or initials.

**Prizes:** The winner and runner-up will receive beer-related prizes.

Your story must **not** have been previously published. It remains the copyright of the author but must not appear in any other publication until the results are announced and published in *Barrel Organ*. Submitting authors do not need to be beer drinkers (if you are not, you are really missing out!) or even CAMRA members (though we would love you to be).

The entries will be judged by local Wiltshire/Dorset author Michael Hambling, a CAMRA member. Michael advises: "Aspects of a story, such as plot, characterisation, point of view, style, and so-on are important, but to try to judge a story first and foremost by these criteria is to come at it from the wrong end. A story should be judged as a whole. Individual stories differ so much from one another that it is impossible to

adopt a fixed set of criteria, and this was the case in both previous competitions. A useful tip: once you think your story is finished, wait a few days then ask a family member to read it aloud while you listen with a critical ear. Alternatively, if you have an up-to-date copy of MS Word, use its *Read Aloud* feature."

The decision of the judge is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

You can use your real name or a pen-name and only the editor will know who you are until the winners are announced.



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# DIARY DATES *Salisbury & South Wiltshire*

## JUNE

### 3rd Open Branch Meeting.

7.30pm The Pheasant, Salt Lane, Salisbury.

### 6th Bus Social

To Pewsey, including The Shed. Depart 12.25pm on bus X5 from Stand M, Blue Boar Row, Salisbury, arrive Amesbury 12.46pm and Pewsey 1.32pm.

### 12th Minibus Trip

6.30pm pickup Salisbury coach park. Hatchet Inn, Lower Chute; The Old Bell & Crown, Hatherden; The Fox Inn, Tangley.

### 17th City Saunter

7.30pm start at The Greyfisher, then The Rose & Crown and The Old Mill, all Harnham, followed by The Old Ale & Coffee House, Crane Street.

### 25th Bus Social

To Studland. Depart 9.40am on the X3 bus from Blue Boar Row, Salisbury. Then continue on the Breezer 50 to Studland and walk to the Bankes Arms. All other times awaiting publication of the Breezer summer timetable.

## JULY

### 4th Train and Bus Social

To Three Daggers, Edington, near Westbury. Train from Salisbury departs 10.42am, arrives Westbury 11.12am. Then bus 87 at 11.36am, arrives Three Daggers, 11.50am. Return bus 87 1.52pm, visit Railway Inn, Westbury, then train at 3.01pm.

### 8th City Saunter

7.30pm start at The New Inn, New Street, then The Old Ale & Coffee House, Crane Street, The King's Head (Wetherspoons), Bridge Street, and Sips. The Maltings.

### 17th Minibus Trip

6.30pm pickup Salisbury coach park. The Spread Eagle, Stourhead; The White Lion, Bourton; The Benett Arms, Semley.

### 22nd Bus Social

To Whiteparish and Alderbury. Depart 11.40am on X7R bus from Stop D, Endless Street, Salisbury. Arrive Whiteparish 12.06pm for lunch at The King's

Head. Depart 1.21pm on X7R to Alderbury, arrive 1.31pm for The Green Dragon. Depart 2.28pm or 3.31pm on X7 or X7R to return to Salisbury, arriving 20 minutes later. Timings subject to change after new timetables in July.

### 25th Annual General Meeting

12.30pm. Salisbury Rugby Club, Castle Road. Bar open from 12.00.

## AUGUST

### 5th Open Branch Meeting

7.30pm Hettie Bells, South Western Road, Salisbury.

### 8th Train Social

To St Denys, Southampton. Depart 11.56am train from Salisbury, arrive 12.41pm. Visit three pubs – The South Western Arms, The Bookshop Alehouse and The Guide Dog. Return trains at 30 mins past the hour.

### 14th Minibus Trip

6.30pm pickup Salisbury coach park. The Plume of Feathers, Shrewton; The Prince Leopold, Upton Lovell; The King's Head, Chitterne.

### 19th City Saunter

7.30pm Deacons, Village Freehouse and Duke of York, all St Paul's area, Salisbury.

### 27th Bus and Train Social

To Swallowcliffe and Tisbury or Gillingham. Depart from Salisbury New Canal Stop S on the 25 bus at 11.40am, arrives Swallowcliffe 12.47pm for the Royal Oak. To travel on from Swallowcliffe there is no scheduled bus, so you must contact [ptc@salisburycamra.org.uk](mailto:ptc@salisburycamra.org.uk) by Wednesday 19 August at the absolute latest to be included in onward travel arrangements, or be prepared to walk 45 minutes to Tisbury. We will continue to Tisbury, if The South Western Hotel is open, otherwise to Gillingham for The Phoenix. Return to Salisbury by train - timings unpredictable.

To contact our bus and train socials team email [ptc@salisburycamra.org.uk](mailto:ptc@salisburycamra.org.uk)

*Please check all bus and train times due to changing timetables For buses see Salisbury Reds website [www.salisburyreds.co.uk](http://www.salisburyreds.co.uk)*

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