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GUZZLER

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CHAIRPERSON'S COLUMN

Welcome to issue two of the relaunched **Guzzler**! As you can see from the many reviews and articles, it has been a very busy few months for the branch.



The highlight has undoubtedly been our bus trips to visit some of the pubs and breweries in further flung corners of our regions. The first to Argyll was a great chance to visit some pubs you'd normally have to drive to. We went to the **Fyne Ales** taproom where we enjoyed a brewery tour before presenting them with Argyll Pub of the Year award (and sampling their beers, including Oktoberfest specialties).

And down at the other end of our branch we had the Lanarkshire trip, where **The Weavers** in Strathaven was crowned Lanarkshire Pub of Year at our October meeting. This trip gave us a chance to check out **UpFront Brewing's** new location. We rounded off that trip with stops in Biggar and Lanark. All in all we trekked across over 100 miles of our branch on this trip and it was great to catch up with so many of our members - and meet plenty of new members on the way!

Rounding off our Pub of the Year awards, at our November meeting we picked local legendary bar, **The Pot Still** as our Glasgow City pub of the year after several rounds of voting among 10 contenders. Together, these three pubs as well as **The Ashton** in Helensburgh (which won the Dunbartonshire crown earlier in the year) go up against each other for the overall branch award.

We've also had some changes in the branch committee. **James Marshall** handed over the baton as social secretary to **Emily Green**, who's going to combine this role with the social media role. So I'd like to thank James for all his work and wish Emily well - James is staying on as our membership recruitment secretary and Emily is already hard at work planning joint socials with Renfrewshire and Edinburgh branches. And finally, your very own **Guzzler** editor, **Westley McCallum** joins our committee as the branch editor, so welcome Westley and thank you for getting this fine magazine back out into the world!

Stephen Murphy, Branch Chair.

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ARGYLL COACH TRIP & POTY PRESENTATION

In September, the branch organised a coach trip to the Argyll region for the purpose of presenting Fyne Ales with the Argyll and Bute Pub of the Year award for 2025. And, of course, to visit some of the excellent hostelrys in the Argyll area.

The coach was sold out, so it was with a full cohort that we set out westwards from our meeting point at George Square. Some of our more eager members prefaced this part of the journey with a pint in the nearby **Counting House Wetherspoons (2 Saint Vincent Pl, Glasgow G1 2EU)**.

Our first stop at around midday was at **The Village Inn (Arrochar, G83 7AX)**. This picturesque inn on the shore of Loch Long was built in 1827, and originally served as the local manse. With an interior decorated in the style of a traditional Scottish country pub, its handpulls sported an array of Fyne Ales beers, which were all kept in excellent condition. Branch secretary Paul Whitehead started his day off with a **Highlander** (4.8% Premium Bitter), stating:

"We were already heading deep into Fyne Ales territory so I was trying to avoid plumping for a Jarl so early in the trip. Luckily there was a choice, with a fine pint of Highlander on offer. I wasn't disappointed, scoring it a 3.5!" - Paul.



After this great start to the day, we went back to the coach and headed to the **Fyne Ales Brewery and Taproom (Cairndow PA26 8BJ)**. We were treated to some impressive vistas on the way in; the mountain stream from which the brewery is fed dominating the landscape on our right hand side. Social secretary Emily Green said:

"This was the highlight of the trip for me. We arrived to a busy taproom as the brewery was hosting an Oktoberfest-style event with some food specials and live music playing. They even brewed an Oktoberfest-style ale for the event and had limited quantities of the beer available for takeaway. We also had a tour of the brewery - both the main site and The Origins site. The Origins site was something really interesting. We learned a lot about mixed fermentation wild ales and got up really close to the barrels. We got to see the labour of love that goes into the beers as some can take nearly two years before they are even ready as a young mixed fermentation ale." - Emily.

It was fortuitous that our visit coincided with the taproom Oktoberfest event. Although it was very rainy outside, we managed to visit the stall for some Bavarian/Indian fusion food, and sampled the unique German-style beer on offer.

Cont...



Some of our branch members have shared their experiences at the taproom:

"The main event was the Fyne taproom where a tour of the brewery was thirsty work. I was delighted to see the Oktoberfest on cask, with bratwurst and other German delights on offer from the food stall. But the star of the show for me was the Slow Motion, a proper midlands style mild with a rich chocolatey taste." - Paul Whitehead.



"At the taproom my favourites were the Mapmaker Baltic Porter and Atamach wild imperial stout with apple. This was an unusually delicious beer, as much a sour as an imperial stout, but at 8.3% I couldn't go back for seconds" - Melanie Parra-Whitehead.

Having sampled some of Fyne Ales' finest ales, it was time for our Chairman Stephen Murphy to present the Pub of the Year 2025 award for the Argyll and Bute area to manager Stewart McColl.



Leaving Cairndow, we then headed to **The Creggans Inn (Strachur PA27 8BX)** where the bar (named "MacPhunn's" after a sheep rustler of yore) sported two handpulls, both serving even more Fyne Ales beers!

We had originally intended our final stop to be the Loch Lomond Arms Hotel in Luss, but unfortunately upon arrival we were informed by the manager that they did not have the facility to accommodate our group. Thus, we rerouted to **The Esquire House (1487 Great Western Rd, Glasgow G12 0AU)**. This has to be contender for the best 'Spoons in Glasgow, with no sign of any place-keeper cask ales [Cough cough... Doom Bar, cough cough - Ed.]. It is clear that management really care about providing their customers with beers which are unique and hard to find in Scotland.



"I went for Conwy Brewery's Chestnut Brown (4.8% Brown Ale). An ale from an indie brewery from Wales is a rare sight in these lands - doubly so, when you consider the relative unpopularity brown ales outwith Newcastle and its surrounding environs." - Westley McCallum.

Congratulations to Fyne Ales on their well-deserved win, and we hope you can join us on our next coach trip in the new year. Keep your eyes on our socials for details!

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FIVE KINGDOMS

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE MAN BEHIND THE GREAT BRITISH PUB CRAWL

Our branch's social secretary met up with Dale and his wife Holly - the team behind the highly popular Youtube channel **The Great British Pub Crawl** - for an interview about their Scottish sojourn. Emily met them in **The Scotia**, on the first day of their Glaswegian venture.



What first gave you the idea for The Great British Pub Crawl, and why do you think it has connected with so many people?

"Well, I ran pubs for twenty years and I know that the industry is hard. We used to go out drinking in Nottingham on a Saturday night and we'd always go to the same four pubs. So I said to Holly one night, 'why don't we go somewhere different?' She was horrified; 'what do you mean go somewhere different?!' So rather than just go to those same four pubs, we decided to have a drink in every pub in Nottinghamshire. That was originally what it was. We called it the Great Nottinghamshire pub crawl, and we went for a drink in all the Nottinghamshire pubs to see what we thought of them. We put it on social media, and it grew in to

something uncontrollable. We finished all of Nottinghamshire, and then decided that we wanted to keep it going."

You've visited a huge range of pubs. How important do you think cask ale is to the British pub as an institution?

"Absolutely massively important. Because cask ale is really something that is part of our heritage - part of our culture - and for me a proper pub has to serve it. That's where the channel came from; exploring proper pubs and the history that surrounds them. And we need to do everything we can to make sure it keeps on going. We have some wonderful cask ale breweries in this country now, and hopefully they'll continue to thrive."

The modern pub seems to be inundated with shiny craft taps and cocktails. Do you think cask is at risk of being treated as an antique - something quaint but not vital - and if so, how do we change that?

"I don't, really! I think that cask has got its place but I think that there is too much emphasis sometimes on cask versus keg, as if they are enemies. They're not enemies; they can compliment each other in a pub very, very well. You just encourage a broader range of people to come in and use the pub. For me, I think we need to embrace craft beer stuff while also protecting cask, and try to encourage pubs to have both."

What would you say to landlords who argue that cask isn't worth the hassle - that it's too perishable, too niche, or too much faff?

"Everybody knows their own business at the end of the day, so if the problem is that cask isn't selling in that environment then I totally understand where they're coming from. The pub needs to be sustainable. For me, I would prefer that you find a way to make it work. But the sad fact of life is that it doesn't work everywhere. As long as they try their best, and do the best they can to keep the pub doors open - I'm happy enough with that."

Cont...

You've seen pubs in all states of repair; from immaculate flagships to struggling locals. What separates a pub that thrives from one that's just barely hanging on?

"For me, it's the same as with anything: you get out what you put in. If somebody is willing to put the effort in to make their pub work, then it really isn't rocket science. If you've been around, and you've got fresh ideas, and you've been around the trade, and you know you've got to work harder at the quiet times - then it really isn't rocket science. Running a pub can be hard work, but it's rewarding if you put the effort in and think outside the box sometimes as to how to do it. You can pretty much make any pub work with the right people."

What struck you most about Glasgow's pubs compared to the ones you're used to visiting in England?

"Well, there's a real mix of stuff here in Glasgow. It looks absolutely massive for pubs, to be honest. I'm never going to get the full way through it in these two days. Nowhere close. But you've got a wonderful mix of old pubs like **The Old Toll Bar**; this beautiful place **The Scotia**, which is one of Glasgow's oldest; and another 1960s style beauty, **The Laurieston**. We've already seen the diverse range and I'm looking forward to seeing more. Glasgow, I'm ready for you. and I'm looking forward to it."

Scotland doesn't have quite the same historic cask culture as you do down south. Yet there are some cracking spots and breweries here. Did anything surprise you about the Scottish approach to beer?

"The Scottish have got some of my favourite breweries. Not only do I like cask ale, I'm a big fan of craft beer. So being around Edinburgh where brewers like **Vault City**, or **Ardgour Ales** up in this neck of the woods. There are some wonderful breweries and I've been really impressed particularly with the cask ale I've tried over the last few days from **Stewart Brewing**. Not a brewery I've ever seen in England at all, but up here they seem to be everywhere. Certainly in Edinburgh they were around everywhere and I was very impressed with their cask ales. I've tried about five or six different ones already."

Was there a Glasgow pub you didn't want to leave - which, and why?

"I'm kind of struck with **The Scotia**! I'm definitely not in a rush to get out of here. It looks an absolute little beauty. But having not seen very many so far today, I would say I'm very keen on this beauty."

What's next for the channel?

"All we can do is keeping plodding along! The idea is to have a drink every pub in the UK. That's how we do it. It's a full time job now, so I'm out five days a week minimum. This is a nine day tour that we're on at the moment. 7150-odd pubs ticked off so far, and we will continue to go and just try and get out there and promote the industry. The Youtube channel certainly helps - there's over 6500 pubs across the UK that have been covered on my Youtube channel now, so we will just carry on going and try to highlight the great towns and cities that we've got in this country - and their great pubs."

Watch The Great British Pub Crawl on Youtube: @thegreatbritishpubcrawl

(Interview conducted by **Emily Green**).



A PEEDIE TASTE OF ORKNEY: THE REAL ALE SCENE IN SCOTLAND'S HISTORIC ARCHIPELAGO

In the autumn, my wife and I decided to visit family in Orkney. We figured that it would be our last opportunity to do so before the long winter nights and accompanying tempestuous weather took hold. Familial obligations meant that we would only have two days to ourselves. Naturally, I set one of those days aside for the sole purpose of checking out the local pubs and breweries, and assessing the status of the real ale scene in one of Scotland's most northerly territories.

Orkney is covered by the **Aberdeen, Grampian, and Northern Isles** branch of CAMRA, and (according to the pubfinder on the CAMRA website) sports a whopping 22 real ale outlets. That's very impressive for a region spanning a scant 380 square miles, with a population of just 22,000 people. Having only one dedicated ale day, visiting all 22 locations would have been an impossible task. Accordingly, I decided to focus on the area which has the highest concentration of pubs with cask offerings, and is closest to the islands' two breweries; Orkney's capital, Kirkwall.



With ten real ale spots located in a single square mile, I expected to be spoiled for choice. Unfortunately, the reality was a bit different. It was immediately apparent that the information provided by the CAMRA website was woefully out of date; establishments which were said to maintain three and four rotating handpulls instead possessed just one or two. This wouldn't have been such a disappointment if the selection of beers available were at least somewhat varied. However, this was not the case. The vast majority of pubs only had either **Orkney Brewery's Island Life** (3.7% Session IPA), or **Swannay Brewery's Scapa Special** (4.2% Pale Ale). Now, there's nothing wrong with these beers (in fact, I'm quite fond of Scapa Special) but with an assortment of local output spanning the gamut from best bitter and dark mild to spiced ale and wee heavy, I just expected a bit more variety.

Speaking with bar staff about the decline of cask ale, I was disheartened to receive the usual response: the demand just isn't there, and maintaining casks that will go undrunk is not financially viable. The story is a familiar one, but I was surprised to hear it reiterated in the highly visited home of (in my opinion - and with the corroboration of multiple Champion Beer of Britain awards) Scotland's finest brewery. With such variety and quality close at hand, it was perplexing to witness the preference of Orcadian locals for insipid pints of Tennent's lager.

Apparently, the influx of tourism brought to the island by mooring cruise ships has had little impact on local demand for cask ale either; I was told that visiting day tourists tend not to visit pubs, and in general are extremely hesitant to spend money. On the rare occasions when cask ale is requested, tourists usually seek out something easy drinking and familiar (i.e. containing American hop varieties), and avoid beers which will challenge their palate or showcase traditional Scottish styles - which means that something like **Orkney's Skull Splitter** (8.5% Wee Heavy) is entirely out of the question for a pub that wants to turn a profit

Traveling halfway across the world just to drink a beer that tastes similar to something brewed in Oregon or New England seems pointless to me, but (whether I like it or not) the harsh truth is: when it comes to matters of taste, the customer is always right. And if breweries want to survive, they have to cater and adapt to consumer preferences. Still, I fear that this will lead to increasing homogeneity in the beer world, and the eventual marginalisation or erasure of our traditional British styles.

I'll stop with the doom and gloom now though (**although you can read my article on pages 21-22 about the importance of British hops if you want to hear more about this subject - Ed.**), because I eventually

Cont...

found one of my favourite beers of all time in **Skipper's Bar: Orkney Brewery's Dark Island** (4.6% Strong Dark Mild). With a base of coffee and chocolate, overtones of nuts and dark fruits, and just a hint of liquorice on the end, this beer was in such good condition that I had to stay for a second round.



After supping on this bona fide Scottish classic, it was time to visit the first of two breweries on the Mainland: the home of Dark Island itself, **Orkney Brewery**.

This was probably the best brewery tour I have ever had the pleasure to experience. Our guide Lori was fantastic. She moved to the island from Edinburgh a few years ago, and immediately fell in love with both the surroundings and her now wife - who also works for the brewery! When I asked her what percentage of their output goes to cask, she sought out the head brewer and returned with a very encouraging answer: roughly 35% is put in casks for pub consumption. It's reassuring to see that cask beer constitutes such a significant portion of their product, and the success of Orkney Brewery stands as a testament to the viability of cask ale within a profitable business model.

Once the tour was finished, it was time for tasting. I had a paddle of four, consisting of Dark Island again (of course); **Cliff Edge** (4.7% IPA); **Red MacGregor** (4% Red Ale); and **North to South** (4.3% English Pale Ale)- a collab brew with **Oakham Ales**. My wife had a can of **Lumi**; Orkney's alcohol free pale ale. She was very impressed with it, reporting that it predominantly tasted of honey and pine, and had a full body not usually found in alcohol-free beers.

Our final stop of the day was the **Swannay Brewery** taproom. Unfortunately, Swannay were having some problems with infected batches at the time, so only had two cask lines available. In fact, this was the second time in a few days that we had encountered a brewery that were having problems with batch infection; on the drive up to the ferry terminal at Scrabster, we stopped at the **Moulin Inn and Brewery** in Pitlochry. The brewer at Moulin told us that cask had been unavailable for a number of weeks due to infection issues, and they even had to dispose of 900 bottles of their product.



I spoke with the staff at Swannay about this issue, and they told me that the problem stemmed from the reduced use of pesticides in this year's hop crops. Personally, I don't think that this is necessarily a bad thing. It is common knowledge that British hop crops have always been vulnerable to pests and diseases - indeed, recent breeding efforts by hop farmers have focused on cultivating hardy, pest-resistant strains, with an eye toward reclaiming the Britain's position as one of the world's top hop producers. Thus, I interpret the infection issues as an indicator that hop farmers are beginning to release varieties which need less pesticides during their pre-harvest growth phase. Obviously, this means that breweries will have to adapt their own production methods to accommodate the storage and utilisation of these hops, but ultimately this is just another phase of market adaptation.



Although the cask offerings were limited, I had another pint of **Scapa Special** (4.2% Pale Ale). Swannay's flagship ale, the brew is named for the voluntary scuttling of the interned German fleet at Scapa Flow in 1919. Accordingly, it is brewed with four different hop varieties; three British, one American, and one German. The result is a very well balanced hybrid pale ale with enough biscuit malt to satisfy traditionalists, and the right amount of new world hop zing to tantalise modernists.

And so my Orcadian real ale odyssey was concluded. Ultimately the whole visit served to make me even more appreciative of the wonderful cask ale culture that we have in Scotland, and further galvanised my commitment to celebrate and promote it.

(By **Westley McCallum**).

SCHOLAR TO SUDS: ORKNEY'S NEXT-GEN BREWER

Arran Sinclair, son of Norman and Christine, the owners of The Orkney Brewery, graduated in May this year with an Honours Degree in Brewing and Distilling from Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh.

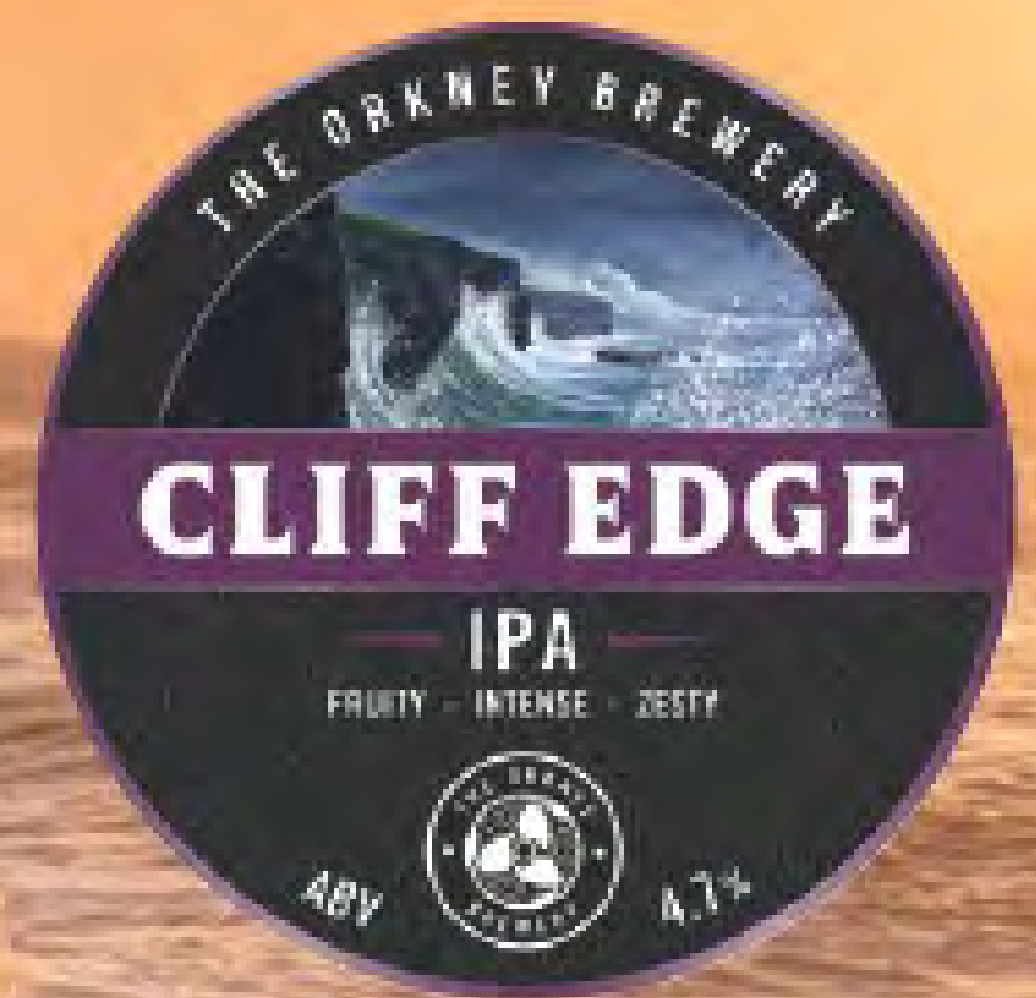
Post further studies, he will be joining the business full time, with the aim of continuing the success of one of the foremost independent Scottish brewers.

His brother Alistair has also just started at Heriot-Watt in International Finance. So the family business will be well served in the future!

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



[Pictured: Norman and Arran Sinclair at Arran's graduation, holding pints of Dark Island!]



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MY QUEST FOR THE CREAM OF MANCHESTER

After almost fifteen years, Cask Boddingtons is back. Branch secretary Paul Whitehead grew up with this mythical beer and takes a journey back in time and back down to the Manchester suburbs of his youth to see if the new version lives up to the legend...

Growing up in the northern suburbs of Manchester, Boddingtons Bitter was the first beer I ever tried. My dad was a big fan in the 70s and 80s, and on Saturday nights when he couldn't make it to the pub, he'd treat himself to a few pint bottles of the golden nectar and I'd take his empties back to the off licence for 5p deposits, and occasionally sneak a few dregs out of the bottles or steal some of the froth from the top of his glass when he got up to answer the phone. I'm not sure what I thought of the taste as a 10-year-old. I recall there was a hint of honey, but that could just be an association with the bees on the label - worker bees, symbolising the hive of activity that Manchester had been as the birthplace of the modern, industrial world.

Strangeways, Here we Come!



Boddingtons Bitter arrived on the scene in 1971 and quickly became a popular bitter in its heartland, the new metropolitan county of Greater Manchester that had been forged from a cluster of industrial towns in northeast Cheshire and southeast Lancashire. The Boddingtons Brewery at Strangeways, next to the infamous prison, had a much longer pedigree, dating back to 1778. But until then it had mostly turned out beers that today would be classed as milds.

The arrival of something quite different, something golden, and bitter, coincided with a wider trend in the UK towards continental-style keg lagers, but also with a trend amongst rapidly consolidating brewery companies to ditch cask in favour of keg. Indeed it was that same year that CAMRA was founded in a bid to save real ale from extinction. At around 3.8% ABV, "Boddies" was stronger than the milds it replaced but still not too strong to be a good session ale, and proved instantly popular.

[Pictured: Boddingtons Brewery chimney in Strangeways, North Manchester, prior to demolition in 2007. Credit: Keith Williamson, The Geograph Project.]

"There was a lot of bad beer around. The three dreaded Ws – Watney's, Whitbread and Wilsons," my dad remembers. "We used to speculate that they deliberately made the new keg versions horrible to make you switch to the dearer lager brands the big breweries were now brewing under license."

"Boddingtons wasn't like that. It was clean, crisp and looked great in the glass. And it was cheap. Boddies pubs were usually the cheapest around, so even if you didn't like Boddies bitter, you'd get a cheaper pint of something else. It wasn't hard persuading people to give it a try once they were in."

Over the 1970s and 80s the beer changed its profile a few times as yeasts evolved and recipes were tweaked. Bottled versions soon arrived and then a keg version appeared in the late 1980s, but it remained true to its cask origins, and Boddingtons' pub empire gradually expanded into neighbouring counties of northern England.

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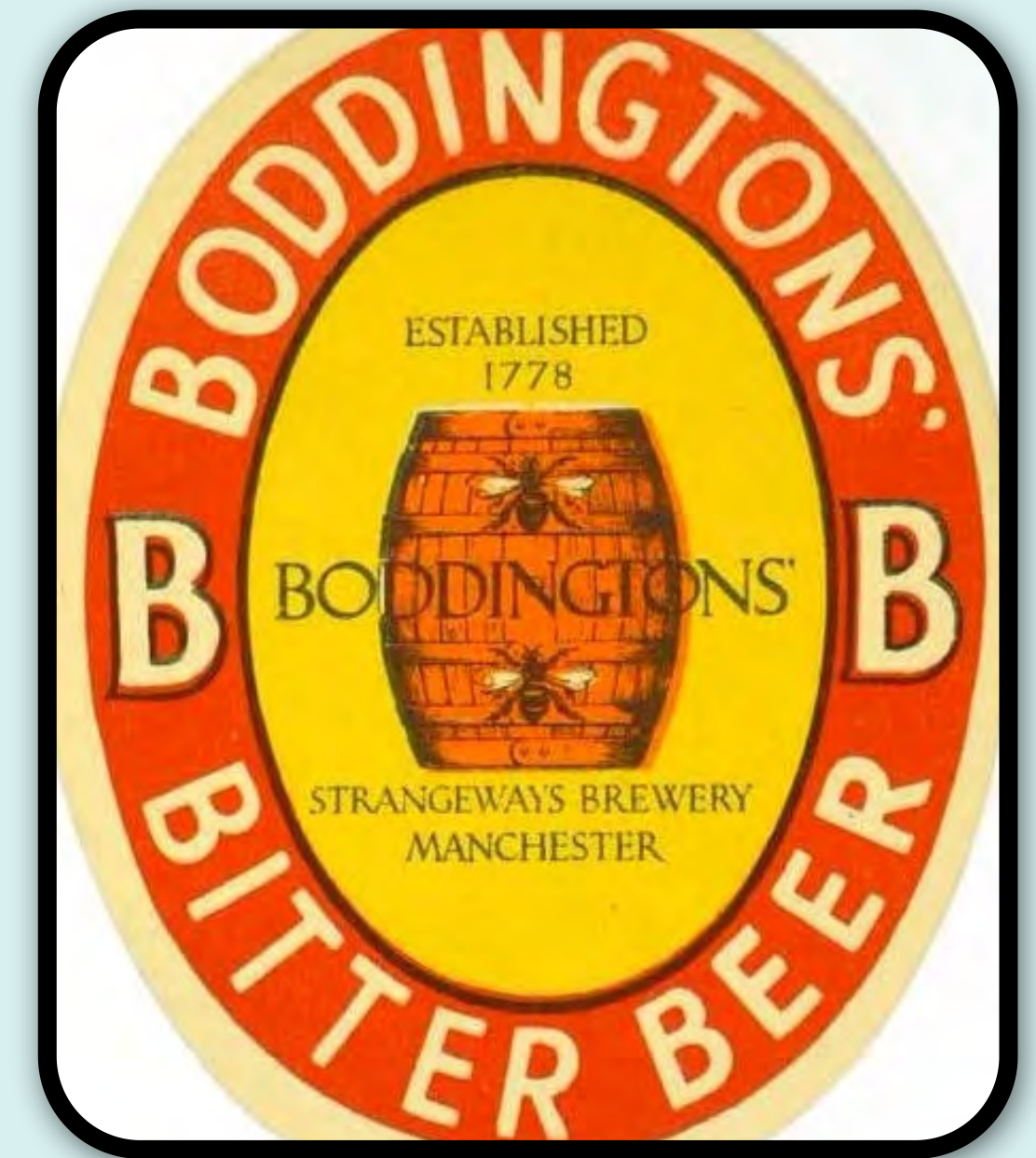
The Cream of Madchester.

By the time I could legally drink in the early 90s, Boddingtons was a big brand that had been acquired by the Whitbread brewing empire in 1989. The new owners wanted a credible cask beer that they could take national and eventually, international. The fact that it was from Manchester was a happy coincidence as the city emerged from its post-industrial gloom to be the vibrant centre of the “Madchester” music scene centered on the Hacienda nightclub and anchored by bands like the Happy Mondays, Stone Roses and, Inspiral Carpets.

Whitbread cashed in on the city’s new fame, marketing the beer nationally as the “Cream of Manchester”. Manchester model Melanie Sykes fronted advertising campaigns where frothy pints were served in cone-shaped glasses from an ice-cream van. They expanded production from 200,000 to 850,000 barrels a year, but much of the product by then had moved into kegs. While I might have been lucky enough to find it in cask at the time, I never tried it. Tragically, as an 18-year-old, real ale wasn’t my scene.

Fast-forward a year, and I’m a student at Heriot-Watt in Edinburgh growing tired of the Fosters and Labbats so ubiquitous in pubs and student unions at the time. After experimenting with keg McEwans 80/-, I was persuaded to try the cask Caledonia 80/- at Bannermans on the Cowgate, and loved it. I went back to Manchester that summer and bonded with my dad anew over my new-found love of ale. We went on a quest to find a pint of cask “Boddies”.

There were still plenty of Boddingtons pubs in the area but the end of pub ties (also in 1989) meant that pubs were now boasting guest ales like Landlord or Theakstons, and kept Boddingtons instead on a permanent keg tap. I sampled that a couple of times, earning my dad’s slight disapproval, but it took a while to track down the real deal. It was quite the revelation – much sharper than the keg version but still with that creamy head, and maybe a hint of lemon or verbena.



My dad wasn’t too impressed, and a quick conversation with the landlord revealed that it was past its prime. The pub sold triple the volume of the guest ales by then, while the Boddies tended to linger on that bit too long. The next time I called in, at Christmas 1994, they no longer stocked it.

Sales of the keg version continued to grow, and a new can version was the first beer after Guinness to deploy a nitro “widget” (real ale drinkers were unimpressed). Sales of Boddingtons peaked in 1997, after Manchester’s music scene exploded once more thanks to Oasis, the Chemical Brothers and The Verve. But by the late 1990s, fashions had moved on and Boddies was on the wane.

In 2000 Whitbread sold its brewing operations to Belgian conglomerate Interbrew (now Anheuser-Busch InBev). The new owners aggressively marketed a stronger canned product as a premium “pub ale” in export markets, but in the UK, demand continued to slide and the kegging line at Strangeways closed in 2003. Cask hung on for a couple of years but various recipe changes proved unsuccessful, and the historic Strangeways brewery closed in 2005, torn down for redevelopment two years later.

[Pictured: Pint of Marble Manchester Bitter as served at the Koelschip Yard, Strathbungo.]

Cont...

Strathbungo Surprise.

Anheuser-Busch InBev still owns the Boddingtons brand and continued to sell it in cans, and increasingly rarely on keg in the ensuing years. But earlier this year rumours began circulating that they were in talks with a Manchester brewery to bring back the cask version. Would I finally get to sample the real deal?

The brewing scene in Manchester has changed dramatically in recent years. Old names like Hydes, JW Lees, and Holt's have launched new hoppier products to appeal to a new generation of IPA and craft ale drinkers. But old favourites like **Joseph Holt Bitter** (4% Session Bitter) remain (still one of my all-time favourite beers). Meanwhile craft upstarts like Track Brewing Co., Seven Bro7hers, and Marble Brewery have burst onto the scene, and I've tried many of their beers over the years, often in the company of my brother who is a big fan of big hop flavours. But I hadn't tried **Marble's Manchester Bitter** (4.2% Best Bitter) until I came across it this spring, right here in Glasgow at my local haunt, the Koelschip Yard in Strathbungo.

Intrigued, I wondered if this was the "new Boddies" I'd been hearing about?

It certainly poured like a Boddies with that quintessential foam rising in waves up the glass to form a rich creamy head. At 4.2%, it was a little stronger than the session Boddies of old and once it settled, it seemed just a little on the dark side, but with a good fusion of cascade and ekuanot hops it boasts a very similar profile to the cask Boddies I remember – that crisp bitterness and lemony aroma. I quickly sent off pictures and tasting notes to my dad.

"Too dark" was the instant response. And when I told him the ABV, he was quick to point out that it was too strong. And besides, if this was the new Boddies, why weren't they calling it that? I knew, of course, he was right.

Second (home) Coming?



Finally, in July, the news broke that Boddingtons was indeed coming back, with its own branding, under a joint venture between Anheuser-Busch InBev and JW Lees, an historic brewery based in Middleton just to the east of the city. My dad remembers their beers weren't always great but in recent years they've really turned around, with their **Manchester Pale Ale** (4.1% English Pale Ale) a firm family favourite. I couldn't wait to try their attempt to recreate the cream of Manchester.

Brewed at 4%, the new version promises to appeal to newer taste preferences while still capturing the essence of the old classic. The recipe includes a modern British hop Jester, which, according to the brewer, contributes a citrusy, grapefruit-like note on the nose with a hint of banana, while the taste profile is of caramel, toffee and grapefruit.

The new Boddingtons, launched in Manchester in September and rapidly sold out almost everywhere it was stocked, as local beer fans and influencers flocked to try it. My brother grabbed a pint in central

Cont...

Manchester and said it was good, but admits that it's not his preferred beer style, and as he's a few years younger than me, he'd never sampled the good stuff on cask.

I couldn't wait any longer so headed down south in early October to catch up with my dad amidst rumours that it would be coming soon to one of his locals in Harwood, a village on the northern fringes of Greater Manchester. And so we embarked on a Friday night pub crawl, enjoying some fine pints of **Lancaster Blonde** (4% Golden Ale) **Bowness Bay Swan Gold** (4.2% Golden Ale) and the ever-delicious Holts Bitter along the way, until we called into the last pub, my favourite "The House Without a Name". And there it was: cask Boddingtons, replete with a black and yellow bee pump clip. Like the Marble bitter I'd had in Glasgow, it poured smooth and creamy in the glass. We let it settle, and then once again my dad piped up: "it's too dark!". And it was – a hint of brown rather than the golden beer we'd once known.

Still the proof of any toffee and banana pudding is in the eating, or the drinking in this case. We lifted the glasses, taking in the grapefruit and banana aromas, smacking our lips with foam and then taking a decent gulp, only to then pronounce in unison: "That's not Boddies!"

And sadly, it wasn't. It tasted like a decent pale ale with a good floral hop aroma, but it didn't hit the mark, not even for me with my very limited exposure to the classic cask bitter. My dad who'd drunk gallons of the real stuff had no doubt. We enjoyed it all the same, but ordered another pint of Holt's Bitter before calling it a night. Now that's a fine Manchester bitter that never disappoints, but if it's Boddingtons you're after, you may need to figure out how to use one of those Police Phone Boxes we still have dotted around Glasgow.

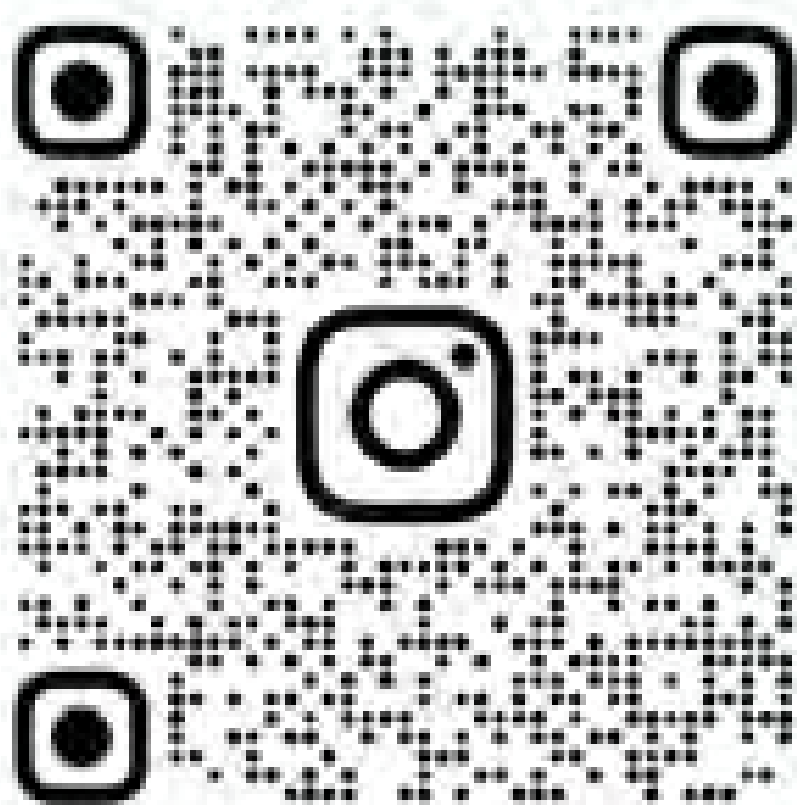
(By **Paul Whitehead**).

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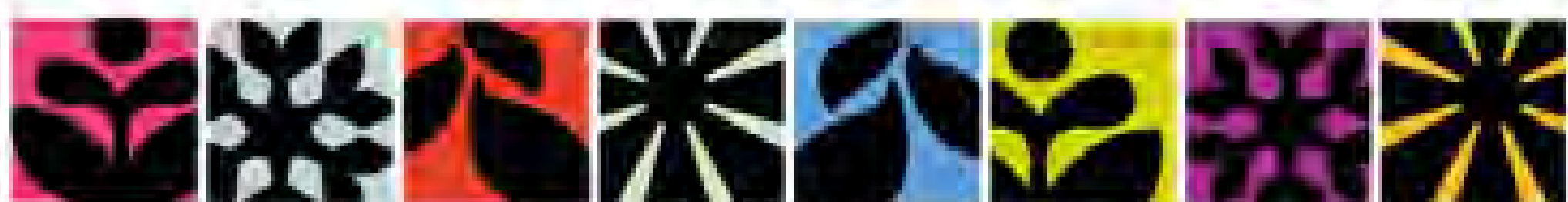


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21ST CENTURY TALL FOUNTS

[Reprinted from Pints of View Issue 84, Summer 2025, with the permission of author Colin Valentine and the Edinburgh & South-East Scotland branch of CAMRA; <https://edinburgh.camra.org.uk>].

These days, very few pubs use traditional Scottish air pressure dispense and tall founts for their real ales. **The Bow Bar** and **Diggers** still use this system of dispense but in the past 30 years many publicans have either taken them out or just stopped using them as they were simply too difficult to maintain and there was no one to maintain them in any case.

However in April this year, Diggers trialled (on a temporary basis) the first brand new tall fount to be installed in some 40 years and certainly the first brand new one I had ever seen. As I watched Brian Menagh install the fount – returning later that day after the pub had opened to have my first pint from it – I wondered what had inspired him to revive this almost forgotten method of dispense and the following is what he told me:



"I could see that the Aitken founts that were once prevalent in Scottish pubs seemed to be on the decline. I, like many others, have a soft spot for these old founts and realised that they were in danger of being consigned to the history books. I started asking about them and I was told that they have problems with leaking and have to be switched off under the bar after each pour, and they are also in a poor state of repair."

"As I have an engineering company and previously worked for a company that makes steam driven pumps, I have experience of heritage engineering. I was in a position where I could do something about these founts and reached out to a few Edinburgh publicans, asking if they would be interested in having them repaired. This offer was met with unbelievable enthusiasm!"



[Pictured: CREO Engineering Solutions CEO Brian serving the first pint from his newly installed Aitken fount at Diggers].

"I started repairing them in February. Although I was able to get them to near perfect working condition, it was very time consuming and parts were expensive to produce. Servicing them is not an ideal situation as you have to take the fount out of service for the time it's in the workshop, and there was a lot of back and forth changing out founts. Again, as I'm a Design Engineer I got to thinking about a better solution."

"As valves have moved on a lot since the 1930s, I was of the opinion the ideal situation would be a new valve that looked like the old one on the outside and has modern workings on the inside. That way there would be no leaks or drips, and the servicing could be undertaken on the premises in under an hour as this would only involve replacing seals."

"As it was important to keep the external aesthetic in the same style as the existing valve, ultimately I envisaged offering the valve as a retrofit to the original Aitken, bringing them up to modern standards. I had also been asked about the new Aitken founts which reinforced my thoughts on making a modern valve. I set about designing a new valve that would cover all the bases, with being easy to fit and service a high priority."

Cont...

"We made a one-off in our factory in Glenrothes, for testing and promotional purposes: this was a completely new fount with a design simplified for manufacture. The valve itself would need to be able to fit our new fount body and also the existing Aitken with minimal modifications. Initial testing is looking good - the fount itself looks stylish but not too modern and has been very well received."

I cannot wait for more pubs to install these either for the first time or to replace ones that are no longer able to be used. Well done to Brian and his colleagues at CREO Engineering Solutions for coming up with a modern take on a very traditional dispense method.

(By **Colin Valentine**).

[There are a few operational Aitken founts in Glasgow; namely those in the Pot Still (154 Hope Street, G2 2TH) and The Clockwork (1153-1155 Cathcart Road, G42 9HB). The Laurieston (58 Bridge Street G5 9HU) also sports a few non-operational examples. The tall fount is an important part of Scottish beer culture, and every effort should be made to revitalise these iconic systems. If you are a proprietor or publican and wish to have your Aitken founts repaired or replaced, contact Brian at CREO Engineering Solutions (brian@creosolutions.co.uk) - Ed.]



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THE IMPORTANCE OF BRITISH HOPS

You walk in to a pub, immediately scan the bar, and note that there are four different cask ales available - a session IPA, a hazy pale, a session pale, and a blonde. All are brewed with the usual American varieties of hops; Citra, Mosaic, Cascade, Chinook, and Simcoe. Are we in a craft beer taproom in Seattle? No. We're in Glasgow, and the offerings come from the roster of various popular domestic breweries.

This might sound like heaven to you. If that's the case - fair enough, crack on. But for many of us, it's a nightmare. Personally, I believe that a world in which bitters, ESBs, English IPAs, milds, and porters are becoming increasingly rare (and where every second or third beer tastes like a tropical breakfast fruit) is a bland world indeed.

Let's supplement my hand-wringing with statistics: I was just looking at the voting sheet for CAMRA's Champion Beer of Scotland award - there are just five entries in the mild category, compared to the 50 or so that populate the session and premium pale categories. Shall we place bets on how many of those pales are hopped with American varieties?

Bear in mind: I don't actually have anything against American hops per se, and I respect the influence of American craft brewing on the global beer scene. Jimmy Carter's 1979 deregulation of the beer industry was the catalyst for American brewers to compete on the world stage, and the result was a myriad of new styles with a focus on hop flavours of grapefruit, citrus, mango, and lychee. That's quite an accomplishment for a nation that doesn't have the storied brewing history of Britain, Germany, or Belgium.

But here's the thing: I don't want to drink American beer. And I don't want my pint to taste like a carton of Um Bongo. I'm British, and I like British beer. My earliest beer memories involve furtively pilfering a can of my grandfather's McEwan's Export; having my dad pour me a Guinness shandy (an abomination) as we watched Bullseye together; and skulling tinnies of Boddingtons on the Megabus as I traveled down to watch punk bands in Manchester. These memories are a core part of my identity as a beer drinker. And without British hops and their characteristic tastes, those styles of which I am so fond run the risk of becoming relics of the past.



[Pictured: The British hop industry was once so prosperous that, up until the 1960s, London families would travel to Kent in the late summer to pick hops; a 'working class holiday'. Photos copyright Henry Grant, 1952. Reproduced under the fair use policy of the London Museum.]

Cont...

Maybe you don't like those earthy, spicy, grassy hop flavours though. That's fine - variety is the spice of life, after all. However, I'm sure you'd agree that reducing our collective carbon footprint is important, and decreasing food mileage (well... drink mileage, I suppose) is a viable method of shrinking our carbon emissions. From an environmentalist perspective, the recent decline of the British hop industry is therefore quite worrying. In times gone past, our country was the premier producer of hops. These days, we are down to a scant 50 hop farms - largely due to the shift in consumer taste toward new world varieties.

The thing is; the grapefruity, citric strains which have become so popular in recent years are not exclusive to the US market. In fact, we don't need to be importing them by the tonne. Lately, British hop farmers have been engaged in the cultivation of domestic varieties of popular American breeds. A glance at hop grower Charles Faram's pricing for the 2022/2023 season shows that the imported American strain Chinook is listed at £19.46 per 5kg, whereas it costs just £10.87 for a domestically grown version. So it's actually cheaper for a brewer to utilise product manufactured in the UK, instead of paying premium for US imports.

Moreover, British hop farmers have been developing their own strains which mimic the tropical tastes inherent to the new world. Jester, Harlequin, Olicana, and Godiva are all examples of domestic hops which produce peachy, resinous, citric notes. It's fair to say that British hops can stand toe to toe with their American counterparts.

So what can you do as a regular ale drinker to support the British hop industry? The answer is simple: drink more beers that feature British hops. Here's a few lesser-known Scottish ones to get you started to get you started:

Strangers Brewing - Narrowboat (5.7% IPA)



Although it is billed as being a traditional, malty and balanced British IPA, the use of UK Cascade ensures appeal to fans of the classic US citrus tastes. The addition of exciting new British strain Endeavour also brings a mix of hedgerow berries and fruity lychee to the brew. Frequently spotted on cask in the Forth Valley region, Narrowboat is beginning to make headway in the Glasgow area. Vegan friendly and available in 500ml cans on the brewery website.

Five Kingdoms - Prentice (4.6% Pale Ale)

Modeled in the style of an American Pale, Five Kingdoms released this beer with the specific intent of supporting UK growers. Harlequin and Olicana hops bring the expected tropical fruit notes. Prentice is, in my opinion, indistinguishable from an imported American pale. Available in 500ml bottles on the brewery website.



Mains Brewing Extra Pale Ale (4.6% XPA)



Founder Lewis' mission statement is to champion traditional British and European beer styles. However, his XPA is highly reminiscent of a session NEIPA. Haziness and stone fruit flavours come from a blend of Ernest, Harlequin and Admiral hops. A tangy, peachy soup of a beer. Available in 440ml cans on the brewery website.

The point is: we don't need to be reliant on America for our hops, or for the flavours they bring. We can do it ourselves in Britain, and for half the cost. In doing so, we support the British farmers, whilst simultaneously doing our part to save the planet. UK hops - let's use 'em, so we don't lose 'em.

(By **Westley McCallum**).

INTERVIEW WITH THE BREWER: MAINS BREWING, GLASGOW

Mains are a Glasgow-based brewer specialising in traditional British and European beer styles, combining historical brewing practices and modern brewing science. With their first commercial brews appearing just last year, future plans are to complement the seasonal rotation of fresh session-strength canned beers with mixed fermentation and oak aged bottled beers. The Guzzler met with head brewer Lewis Hamiton to talk about his upcoming plans.

Mains' ethos appears to be centred on producing brews in traditional British and European styles. How did you arrive at this approach?

In short, these are the beers that interest me to brew, and the ones I like to drink. I love understanding the historical development of brewing styles as much as the science and processes to recreate and update them. Most of what we regard as modern beer styles are rooted in traditional British and European brewing, sometimes having taken a journey across the world, receiving a regional twist, and then coming back again.

How much does provenance and regional brewing history matter when you decide to produce a style linked to a particular place or era?

I'm attracted to the idea of beer being brewed with the ingredients that are local to the brewer and give it a sense of place. Lots of great beer styles are a result of the limitations of local ingredients and resources. Whether it was poorly modified barley malt, abundances of unmalted grains, challenging local brewing water or punitive tax regimes. Brewers found their way around restrictions and the results shaped some of the beer styles we know and revere today.

A key idea behind Mains Brewing was to revisit and explore the link between farmers and brewers. Things like Belgian/French saisons or Franconian landbiers of Germany reflected the locally available grain for brewing and it defined the style and flavours of the resulting beers. I've been looking for local producers of interesting grains to use that may not be primarily for brewing - there's nothing like making things hard for myself! The landrace wheat used in my witbier is a mix of old Scottish and Scandinavian varieties and is usually used in making great sourdough. However, the idea of using it in a beer and being able to drive past the fields in Fife where it was grown was irresistible. Similarly, Mains Rustic Lager was inspired by those historical landbiers, and used a large portion of spelt grain sourced from a farm in the northeast of England.

Do you currently condition any of your beers for cask dispense?

Most of the beer output in the first year of production from Mains Brewing has suited the carbonation and chill of keg dispense. As you highlighted at the start, a lot of what I have brewed so far included European styles such as saisons, Belgian blondes and lagers.

The inclusion of cask conditioned beer where it is appropriate to the beer style was always part of my plan going forward. I would have liked to have our nice zingy English hopped extra pale ale in a split of kegs and casks, but I wasn't quite ready to include cask preparation as part of the production process. There will be a handful of casks of Clyde Porter around Glasgow by the time your readers get this issue of the Guzzler, hopefully those pints have gone down well!



Cont...

Are any of your beers can/bottle conditioned?

Not yet, but wait! I'll hopefully be releasing bottle conditioned mixed fermentation beers as the next phase of Mains Brewing's development, those will undergo a slow secondary fermentation in the bottle. Mixed fermentation has been a huge part of my brewing journey over the last decade, but not something I've done commercially yet. The idea of creating a living beer product that matures over months or years has been something of huge interest since first discovering Belgian lambic styles, and the amazing flavours that develop over time as competing microbes slowly do their thing over time. This was another area of brewing science that I immersed myself in while doing my master's degree in brewing.



How has your research background in oak ageing directly influenced the processes you have adopted?

The research and experimentation that I conducted at Heriot-Watt was primarily looking at oak derived flavour extraction kinetics from different methods of oak flavouring and ageing beer. This included comparing traditional oak barrel filling with the use of prepared oak products such as staves, cubes and chips. I also used some fancy analytical chemistry borrowed from the whisky industry to quantify

the level of oak flavour extraction, then compared that to feedback from sensory panel trials to see how different oak flavouring methods compared. If someone gets me talking about it all I could interest/bore them for hours on the subject, but it definitely helped inform the processes that I'll be including in future beer production once I have the resources in place to do it.

Tell us more about your upcoming Clyde Porter; what historical sources or old Glasgow export porter examples informed your formulation, and what should we expect from the beer?

Records of porter being brewed in Glasgow go back to 1775 when a porter brewer was relocated from London to work at the Anderson Brewery on something like a non-disclosure agreement to stop other breweries getting involved for a year. Soon after that year ended, quality porter was also being brewed in the Gallowgate before the same brewer is thought to have shared his knowledge and skill with a well-known brewing family in Dublin at the turn of the century, but that is another story to dig into! Later in the 1800s brewers like James Steel made porter a major export from Glasgow. His publications and archives show that his recipes specified large quantities of amber malt, higher starting gravities, and medium to high attenuation in Glasgow's export porters compared to London's versions.

I have to give a huge credit to Gareth Young of Epochal Ales for his peerless research into Glasgow's brewing history. His blog posts a few years ago on James Steel and porter brewing in Glasgow got Scottish brewers thinking about porter as something that we could own too. Glasgow university also has a large archive of Scottish brewing documentation, and summaries of many of them are available online.

When developing this beer, I took inspiration from Steel's lower strength export porters. I used Baird's malts for all the barley in the grain bill, including a substantial portion of amber malt. The only non-historical ingredients were some caramelised oats (just because I like them in a porter/stout) and some 20th century English hops as well as Goldings.



GLASLADIES: BEER IS FOR EVERYONE FESTIVAL 2025

The Guzzler caught up with Glasladies founder Nix Prabhu to talk about their recent Beer Is For Everyone festival, which ran at the QMU on 1 November.

Give us a brief history of the Glasladies; how long you've been going for; your core aims; how many members you have.

The Glasladies Beer Society is a Glasgow based beer appreciation group for women and non-binary people. It was founded in 2019 to provide a space to meet and make new friends via the common love of beer. Over the years the group has grown to almost 300 members and also in scope, now organising a number of events each year that serve a dual purpose: showcasing indie beer and raising funds for charity.



Our core principles are to engage with women and non-binary people as consumers and subject matter experts; educate group members about the wide variety of beer styles and about notable historic and contemporary women and non-binary persons in the industry; and empower women and non-binary people to play a more active role in the industry as consumers and agents for change.

Tell us about the ethos behind the Beer Is For Everyone festival.

At its core, the festival is a "Cheers to Inclusivity". The festival achieves far more than a strong line-up of beer. It brings together a welcoming culture, quality beer from indie breweries, learning, and community support via fundraising. Whether you were sampling from the stellar brewery line-up, discussing beer-festival culture in Laura Hadland's session, or simply hanging out with friends in a dog-friendly corner of the venue - the message we wish to portray comes across very clearly: beer culture can and should be open, fun, and accessible to ALL.

Give us a recap of the festival day: what were the highlights?

On Saturday 1 November 2025, the Glasladies Beer Society brought back our "Beer Is For Everyone" Festival at the Queen Margaret Union (QMU) in Glasgow's West End. The ethos: craft beer culture that welcomes everyone - family-friendly, dog-friendly, accessible, and celebratory. From the very start during setup and once the doors opened, the vibe was upbeat and inclusive, with people of all ages, backgrounds and beer-experience levels coming together.

The festival featured an impressive roster of independent breweries from Scotland and beyond, offering a wide variety of styles to cater to many tastes. In addition to the breweries attending, festival-goers could also try mead, as well as cocktails, cider, and wines. Two free workshops were offered during the festival, both led by beer writer and expert **Laura Hadland (@morrighani)**; "A Beginner's Guide to Beer Tasting" and "How Beer Festivals Changed the Way We Drink Beer"

The highlights of the day were undoubtedly the two awards - Beer of the Festival and Dog of the Festival. Both were voted for by the festival attendees. The first was won by Harry Weskin of **Dookit Brewing** for **St Enoch: Mother Glasgow**, a gruit using bog myrtle, raspberries and foraged elderflowers. It just so happened to be one of the Glasladies collaboration beers brewed to celebrate Glasgow's 850th anniversary! The hotly contested Dog of the Festival is always a favourite part of the event and the 2025 winner was Lorne (@lornekelvinjones), who won everyone over with cuteness and wuffs!

Cont...



What beer or style of beer proved most popular? What beer sold out quickly? What were your own favourite festival beers?

We don't have stats on this because each vendor manages their own sales at the festival and retains 100% of the profits. Besides the winner for "Beer of the Festival" (see above), there were a considerable amount of votes in for **Toadlicker** by **Hand Brew Co.** and **Pure Magic** by **Overtone**.

Personal favourites of the Admin team include: **Opie** (Negroni IPA) from Hand, a wild concept beautifully executed; **Kerroo Brewing's Queenie Stout** with scallops (!) and **Escape**, a Pina Colada beer from **Two Towns Down**.

How much did the festival raise, and how do you choose your charities?

This year the festival raised £3000, which was split between Shelter Scotland and Glasgow Women's Library. We try to balance the beneficiaries between Scotland (or UK) wide charities with smaller, Glasgow focused charity. Additionally, many of the charities that we have raised money for have had a focus on support services for women, such as The Women's Centre based in Maryhill, and Tea in the Pot, Govan. To date, the group has raised upwards of £11,500 for various charities and women's initiatives.

What are Glasladies' priorities for the next 12-24 months? Any upcoming events?

Planning for next year's festival is already underway and we're looking forward to putting on another amazing day for everyone. Additionally, we'd like to do an "away trip" to visit with another women's group and perhaps even collaborate with them on a beer or an event. For the most part, we will continue to meet every month at various bars and pubs around Glasgow and we invite any woman or non-binary person who's keen on beer to join us. Our next meetup will be on Thursday, 4 December at **The Bon Accord** from 7pm onward.

And finally, what's one myth about women and beer you'd like to bust?

We find that most women who don't like beer, actually don't like the experiences they have had in bars or pubs with other beer drinkers. No-one likes to be ridiculed or belittled and often women say that's what happens when they pick the "wrong" beer or choose to have any measure less than a pint.

Women especially are made to feel like we don't belong in the industry if we don't know about the intricacies of brewing or have home-brewed, or cannot rattle off every strain of ale yeast in existence. The reality is that one doesn't need to know anything about beer in order to enjoy it and be part of the beer scene. "Name your top 3 beer styles" is just the beer version of "oh, you like that band... name their top songs". It's totally unnecessary and essentially amounts to a version of gatekeeping.

While there are plenty of amazing women brewers around, there are also many other ways in which we are part of the industry via sales, distribution, marketing, back office and more. Our group is a prime example as the vast majority of members don't even work in the industry (including everyone on the Admin team) and yet with 13 collabs and four festivals under our belt, we are viewed as a key part of the Glasgow - and Scottish - beer scene.



Fact is, beer has no gender, so we should all really try and remember that.

MY REAL ALE JOURNEY, BY BRANCH MEMBER PAUL MURRAY

My first taste of real ale was in a small Strathaven pub in the mid 70s called the Drumclog Inn. It was dark, from the wood and as flat as a pancake! It may well have come from the Strathaven brewery just a mile down the road - but maybe not.



My next real ale experience was with my father, on holiday in Lytham St Annes. He introduced me to Boddingtons Bitter on cask. What an absolute delight it was, slipping down as pleasantly as an ice cream with a flake on the top (part of their promo for this beer was ice cream centred!) A cask ale, it was dispensed from two half pint cylindrical pistons either side of the pump. The cream of Manchester back in the day.

Returning to Scotland, I was forced back on to a regular diet of Tartan Special due to a lack of real ales in my hometown of East Kilbride at that time. All that changed in 1979 when I joined the RAF. I wish I could remember the name of that first English ale I had in the pub just down the road from RAF

Swinderby. That was the start of a joyous voyage of discovery as the RAF moved me around the UK to SW Wales, Wiltshire and finally Buckinghamshire, where my love of cask ale just blossomed along the way.

I have to mention some outstanding ales that I encountered, some of which are sadly no longer available. The most memorable of which was Flowers Original which was their best bitter. Their Flowers IPA was the nicest session beer I've ever tasted. Genuinely sessionable and moreish. I had the good fortune of being based about nine miles from the Wadworth brewery in Devizes. Their 6X ale at that time was sublime. In the winter they brewed a stronger ale called Old Timer which was 6X on steroids! Such happy memories.

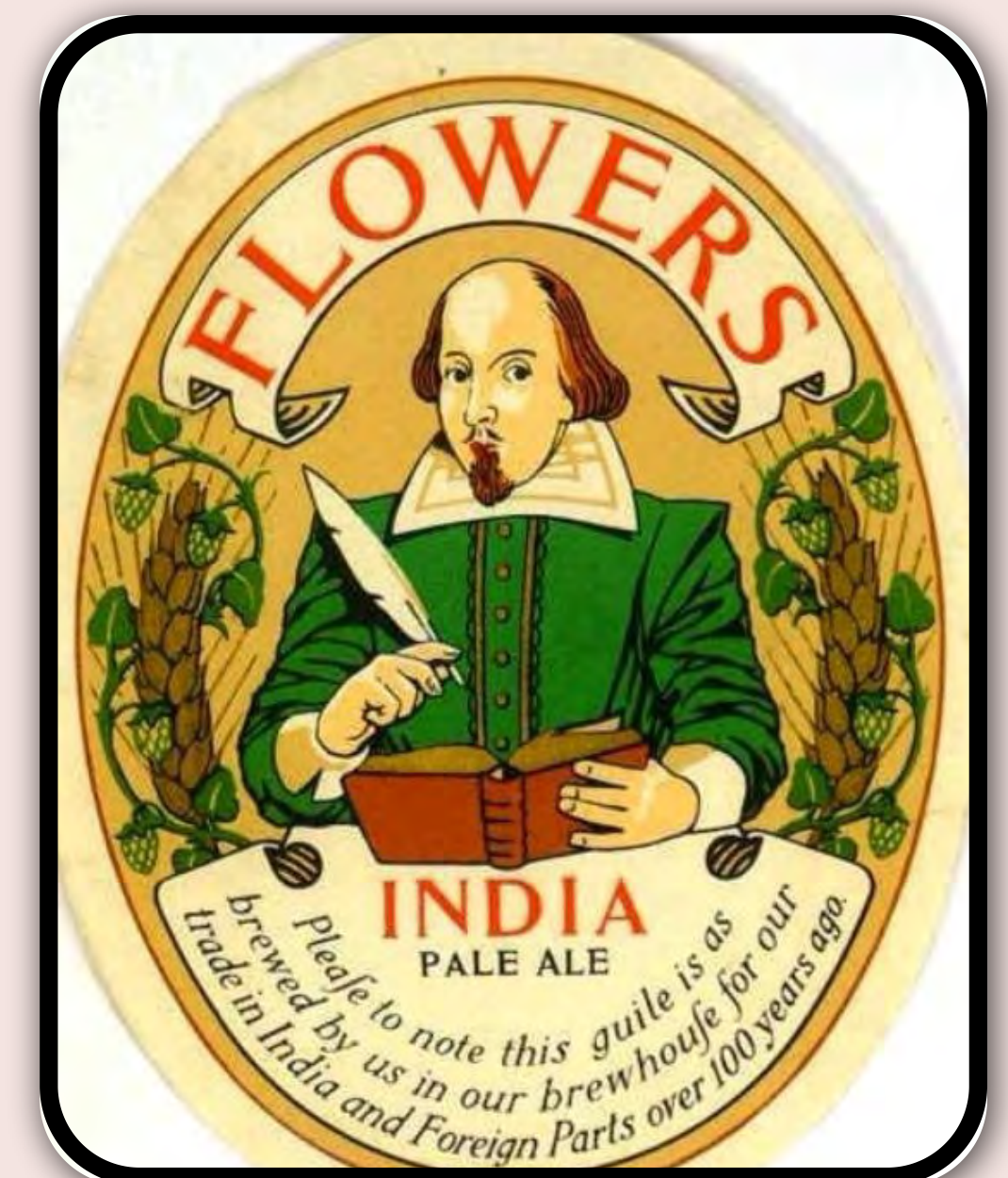
Before I 'demobbed' back to Scotland, Benskins was my tippie in my Bucks local. A short ride away was a pub on a hill where I imbibed Hook Norton Old Hooky. It was half a mile from Chequers. David Cameron took the Chinese Premier there for a pint more recently, as I recall. Arriving back in East Kilbride in 1991, Beefeater opened up and cask Boddingtons and Flowers Original followed me home!

Also, a wee village on the outskirts of East Kilbride called Auldhouse stocked Maclays 80/-, another heavenly pint on a good day which disappeared after the elderly landlord passed away. Another recently departed ale was Caledonian 80/-. Just an altogether nicer ale than it's stablemate companion ale (Deuchars IPA), in my biased opinion! I think Edinburgh kept the nicer 80/- in Edinburgh and happily shipped Deuchars over to the west coast.

Which brings me back to the present day. The only two ales that currently excite me are **Theakston's Old Peculiar** (5.6% Old Ale) and **Titanic's Plum Porter** (4.9% Speciality English Porter). Sadly, the most pleasant ale at the Stewart Brewery taproom which I visited last month was a Nitro keg version of their 80/- ale and was nicer than their cask version which wasn't available in their taproom that particular day. That situation beckons a discussion in another article in the next Guzzler!

Still, there's Christmas to look forward to. I'm hoping Wetherspoons has learned their lesson and will make JW Lees Plum Pudding ale a regular Christmas festival ale.

(By **Paul Murray**).



JOINT SOCIAL WITH EDINBURGH FOR GUZZLER LAUNCH

Early September saw the debut of the inaugural issue of **The Guzzler**. We celebrated by running a joint launch party/inter-branch social with **Edinburgh & South-East Scotland CAMRA** in the city centre of Glasgow.

We started off in **The Scotia (112-114 Stockwell St, G1 4LW)**; one of Glasgow's oldest and most beautiful traditional pubs - with half-timbered frontage, wood paneling, dark wooden benches, low ceilings, and a cosy snug to prove it.



With four out of five handpulls in operation, The Scotia had a classic Scottish beer for every taste. I went for **Broughton's Old Jock (6.7% Wee Heavy)**. Named in tribute to the soldiers of the Highland and Lowland regiments, this is a malt-heavy ale which pours a beautiful clear chestnut colour. The primary flavours are roasted nuts and brown bread, with notes of caramel and hints of ripe garden berries. The high alcohol content means that it is definitely one to be sipped and savoured!

Next, we moved on to the **Drum & Monkey (91 St. Vincent St, G2 5TF)**; an old bank which has been converted by the Nicholson's pub chain. Three of the six handpulls bore offerings from Timothy Taylor's, and I had no choice but to go for my 10/10 favourite beer of all time: **Timothy Taylor's Boltmaker (4% Best Bitter)**. For my money, this is the perfect bitter; with sweet, brown bread malt and grassy, herbal hops. Also on offer was the classic **Landlord (4.3% English Pale Ale)**, **Landlord Dark (4.3% Dark Mild)**, and **Bass Premium Ale (4.4% Best Bitter)**, making this an essential stop for fans of traditional British ales.



From there, we moved a few doors down to **The Horse Shoe (17 Drury St, G2 5AE)** where branch treasurer Kenny Gillies met us with a few boxes of the newly-printed first edition of **The Guzzler**, hot off the press. The Horse Shoe dates from 1870 and boasts the longest continuous bar in Scotland (unsurprisingly, in the shape of a horseshoe).

After liberally peppering the area with Guzzlers, I indulged in a **Fuller's London Pride (4.1% Session Bitter)**. The Horse Shoe is remarkably consistent with its cask ales, maintaining a permanent pump for London Pride and Timthy Taylor's Landlord- the epitome of southern and northern English bitters. Even though the place is invariably rammed to the rafters with punters, it remains one of my favourite real ale stops due to the reliability of its live beers.



Cont...



Our final stop was **The Pot Still (154 Hope St, G2 2TH)**. This legendary Glasgow real ale venue is one of just two which boast traditional Scottish Aitken founts (see pages 21-2), and is always packed with tourists and locals alike. I rounded off the day with a pint of **Born Amber (4% Session Bitter)**; in my opinion one of the best and most under-rated traditional beers of Scottish origin to date. Woody, malty, nutty - with just a touch of earthy hop bitterness - this was the perfect brew to round off a most enjoyable day.



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ALES FROM THE DARK SIDE!

There rages a polarising debate in the real ale community of today. I refer, of course, to the battle of opposing tastes: blonde and overly hoppy beers on one side, and darker, more robust ales on the other.

A straw poll among my current small circle of real ale drinking friends has that divide at 60:40; that is 60% favouring a traditional darker bitter or porter over a blonde or straw coloured ale.



I conducted my own Facebook poll some two or three years ago on a Yorkshire real ale page, just simply asking the question, 'What is your usual preferred style of beer when you go out to the pub?' Much to my satisfaction, the question returned stats largely similar to the 60:40 divide mentioned above.

Sadly, Facebook removed that functionality on a recent major upgrade, but it's not beyond the wit and expertise of CAMRA to conduct a similar poll to prove (or disprove) my claim that a majority of regular real ale drinkers fall in the darker side of the spectrum.

But as with all forms of diversity, it would be unfair to state that blonde and overly hoppy and dark, robust ales are the two ends of our spectrum. That honour would fall to sour beers on the left and barley wine on the right; two 'styles' which turn my stomach just thinking about them - but each to their own.

Which ale sits in the middle and appeases both sides? Might I suggest the ubiquitous **Timothy Taylor's Landlord** (4.3% English Pale Ale). Surprisingly, I prefer the darker **Boltmaker** (4% Best Bitter), which I had to go down to deepest darkest Yorkshire to find (**I'm not surprised at all - it's the vastly superior beer, in my opinion. One of my all-time favourites, in fact. But there's no need to go all the way down to Yorkshire to find it. The Drum & Monkey on St. Vincent Street regularly stock it. Although at £6 a pint, make sure to utilise your CAMRA discount! - Ed.**) Oddly, both these beers tasted largely similar to me - alas.

Falling out of fashion

Founded in 2007 by James Watt and Martin Dickie, BrewDog rose to fame in the 2010s amid an explosion in demand for craft beer. Styling itself as a "punk" alternative to mainstream brews, it espoused an anti-corporate rhetoric that won over legions of millennial drinkers.

This was accompanied by over-the-top marketing stunts such as driving a tank through London and serving what it claimed was the world's strongest beer in taxidermy squirrel bottles.

However, in recent years, it has been forced to grapple with a drop in demand from drinkers as hoppy IPAs have fallen out of fashion.

Competition has come from more mainstream drinks such as Guinness and Madri, a faux-Spanish lager brewed in Tadcaster, as well as rival craft brands like Camden Town and Beavertown, which are owned by AB InBev and Heineken.

I take comfort from a recent Daily Telegraph article on Brewdog closing/streamlining some of its pubs, where it was reported that "hoppy IPAs have fallen out of fashion". I take further comfort from one of my blonde and hoppy circle of friends admitting last night that he doesn't care for the US style of NEIPA's (that's New England for the uninitiated!)

Theres hope yet for us all on the dark side!

(By **Dark Side**, our mystery contributor).

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BEER REVIEW: FYNE ALES - SLOW MOTION (3.4% DARK MILD)

Fyne Ales are a brewery that we usually associate with beers on the hoppier end of the spectrum, so it was with mild surprise (pun intended) that I came across their newest cask exclusive release: a traditional, low ABV dark mild by the name of **Slow Motion**.

As its appellation may suggest, **Fyne Ales** claim that **Slow Motion** is a tippie best enjoyed in life's unhurried moments, when one is able to "pause, relax, and enjoy the flow". A look at the beer's malt bill certainly supports this idea; it is clear that great care has been put in to the mixture of the grist, with dark aromatic and crystal malt added to the expected base of pale and chocolate.

However, it was **Fyne's** choice of hops that intrigued me the most - perhaps an odd thing to say, considering the primacy of malt to the dark mild style. **Slow Motion** is single-hopped with one of the most unusual (and underutilised) British hops: **Phoenix**.

Developed at Wye College in 1996, **Phoenix** is a seedling of the now discontinued **Yeoman**. It has an extremely high oil content, and can function as a dual purpose bittering and aroma hop. Most surprisingly, it is said to impart a strong taste of chocolate to its beers. That's right - chocolate from a hop. Crazy stuff.

I got the chance to try **Slow Motion** at the branch bus trip to Loch Fyne and Argyll in September (see pages 5-6 for a comprehensive writeup of this day - Ed.). Despite looking pitch black on camera, it pours the deepest shade of ruby, and sports a robust off-tan head. The chocolate aroma is immediately apparent.



The taste follows: milk chocolate is the predominant flavour, but this is neither overwhelming nor overly sweet. The malt is exceptionally well balanced, and exhibits a roasty mellowness which never encroaches upon the richness of the stronger stylistic categories of dark beer. Clearly, the chocolatey aspect of the **Phoenix** hop is what allows for such a palatable yet distinct flavour to be obtained in a beer with a relatively low ABV. Moreover, the perceptible oiliness of the hop compensates for the lack of depth and body common in beers below the 3.5% watermark, thus ensuring the drinker a fulfilling and satisfying medium bodied mouthfeel.

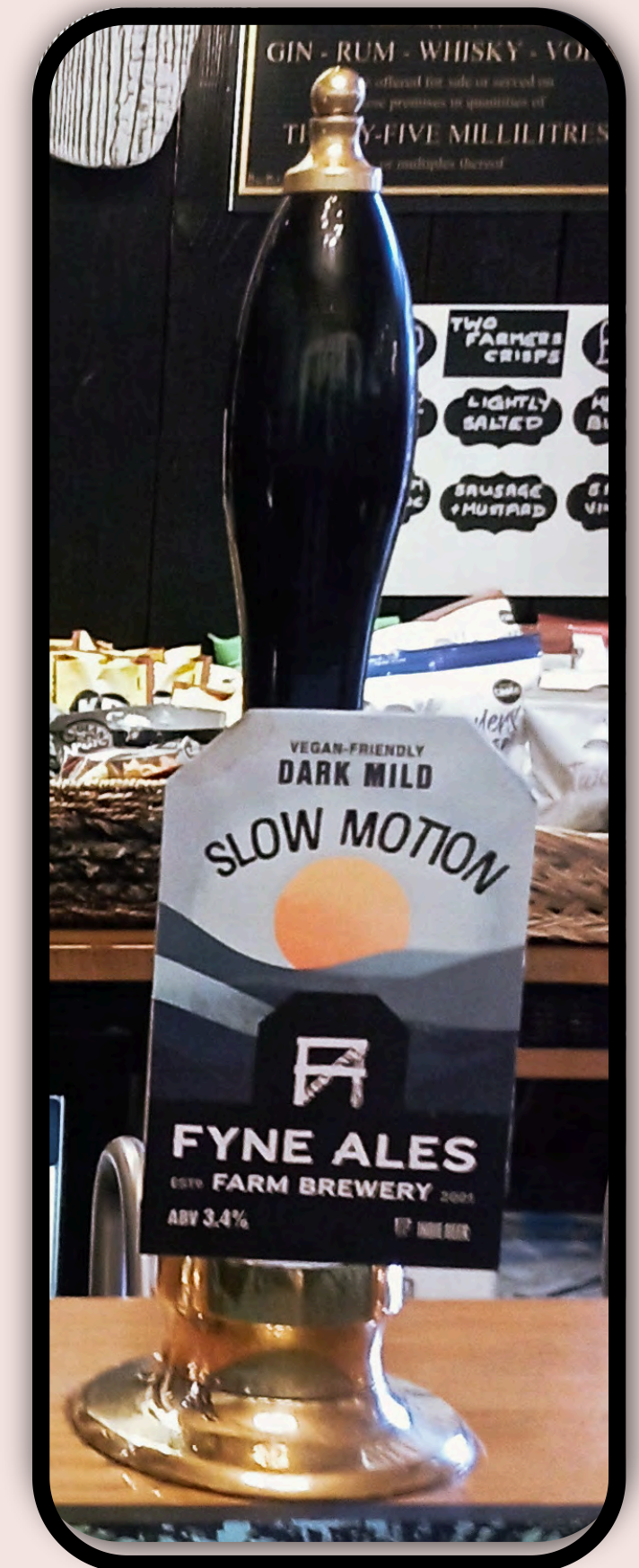
Although achieving balanced simplicity is the name of the game here, **Slow Motion** is not without some complexity. There are notes of dark fruits present, along with a mellow roastiness. The finish is quite dry, which makes the drinker want to come back for more. There's absolutely none of the cloying sweetness sometimes found in the style. The brew is so quaffable, in fact, that I had four pints of it back to back at the **Fyne Ales** Oktoberfest taproom event. If we had more time there, I'd have had a fifth.

Kudos to the brewer who devised this one. It's a near-perfect example of how uncommon and rarely cultivated British hops can be used to breathe life in to our country's traditional beer styles. Between this masterpiece and the recent crowning of **Mild** by **Penzance Brewing Co.** as **Champion Beer of Britain 2025**, is it too early to say that a new era of popularity for the mild may be dawning?

Slow Motion is available in cask and 5L mini-cask format. It is suitable for vegans.

Rating: 4.75/5

(By **Westley McCallum**).



CHAMPION BEER OF SCOTLAND 2025



The Champion Beer of Scotland 2025 award was presented at the Ayrshire Real Ale Festival in early October. Newton Stewart's **Five Kingdoms Brewery** picked up not one but two of the coveted awards (gold and silver, no less), with **Cairngorm Brewery** bringing up the rear.

[Pictured: CAMRA Scotland director **Stuart McMahon** presenting the **Dan Kane Memorial Quaich** to **Five Kingdoms'** brewers **Brendon Dennett** and **Nathan Wall** during the festival in **October**.]

The awards were as follows:

Gold (Champion Beer of Scotland 2025): Five Kingdoms Brewery - Dark Storm (6.9% Stout)



Last year's Silver award winner, this full strength stout holds no quarter in delivering a deep, chocolaty, creamy taste, with just a hint of grassy bitterness on the back end. Described as something of a cult classic by the brewers themselves, it is clear that rapt attention has been paid to Dark Storm's malt bill; with a mix of pale, crystal, chocolate, and roasted malts present, plus the inclusion of torrified wheat to add body. At a time when it seems that the Guinness-style session stout reigns supreme in the dark beer demesne, it is refreshing to see a 'classic definition' (i.e. strong porter) stout get the accolade that it deserves.

Silver: Five Kingdoms Brewery - McGregor's Mild (3.8% Dark Mild)

A previous winner of CAMRA's session bottled real ale award in 2022, this is Five Kingdoms' take on the self-admitted "unfashionable" mild style. Its name is a homage to the landlord of the Green Man Inn in the 1973 cult classic folk horror film *The Wicker Man*. An increasingly rare style in Scotland (and, to be honest - increasingly rare in Britain in general), this beer is a stellar example of what made the mild so popular in the post-WWII years. Malty and sessionable, with a small hit of chocolate on the end. **(For my money, this should have been gold. I would risk being burnt alive in a wicker effigy to have Britt Ekland pour me a pint of this beer - Ed.)**



Bronze: Cairngorm Brewery - Wildcat (5.1% Premium Bitter)



At what point can this brew be classified as one of the most iconic Scottish beers of all time? I think it's now. Winning awards year after its initial introduction, Wildcat is a premium bitter which borders on ESB territory; heavy maltiness, toffee and caramel flavours, and dark red fruits dominate, with a dry and bitter finish coming from the use of British Challenger and Fuggles hops. Although it is ubiquitous throughout the Cairngorm area, it is a real shame that this fantastic ale doesn't feature in the pubs of the Glasgow & West branch area as much as it should.

CAMRA Scotland Director **Stuart McMahon**, who presented Five Kingdoms' brewers **Brendon Dennett** and **Nathan Wall** (pictured) with their awards, said:

Cont...

"All the judges were in agreement that Dark Storm was a worthy winner. It is rapidly gaining cult classic status at the brewery with its name reflecting its colour and strength, but is super smooth, rich and creamy on the palate."

"Scotland has some amazing beers of all styles being produced by independent brewers. It is worth seeking out our award-winning brews like Dark Storm, but with global brewers and pub companies having a stranglehold over the market, it is hard for Scottish pubgoers to access the fantastic beers on their doorstep."

"The new guest beer right in the Scottish Pubs Code is a good start helping pub licensees to serve a beer of their choice from a local brewer, but we need the UK government's ongoing Access to Market review to introduce significant changes to help provide true choice for beer and cider lovers by making sure local and independent breweries can get their beers on taps at the bar."

(Photo Credit: **Ronnie Beveridge**).



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BEER SCORING FOR CAMRA: A GUIDE

CAMRA encourages all members to score any real ales drank in pubs around the country on the website at <https://camra.org.uk/>.

Whether you're on your smartphone or computer, this can be done in three simple steps:

- 1) Sign in to <https://camra.org.uk/> with your membership number and password.
- 2) Select the pub you wish to score.
- 3) Select the relevant brewery and beer, and score your drink using the criteria below.

HOW TO SCORE A BEER	
0	Should only be used if no cask ale is available at all.
0.5 - 1 POOR	Beer is anything from barely drinkable to drinkable with considerable resentment. Add a comment why it's poor.
2 AVERAGE	Competently kept, drinkable pint but doesn't inspire in any way.
3 GOOD	Good beer in good form. You want to stay for another pint and may have the beer again.
4 VERY GOOD	Excellent beer in excellent condition. You stay put!
5 PERFECT	Probably the best you are ever likely to find. A seasoned drinker will award this score very rarely.

We have received a grand total of **3636** beer scores this year so far.

Our branch's top rated pubs over the last three months are:

Glasgow Tennent's The Crystal Palace Koelschip Yard	Lanarkshire The Hay Stook	Argyll The Corryvreckan Fyne Ales Brewery Tap The Oban Inn The Village Inn	Dunbartonshire The Kirky Puffer The Ashton
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And the top scoring beers from our branch area over the last three months are:

Fierce - Noir (Stout)	Fyne Ales - Longview (American IPA)
Inveralmond - Ossian (Golden Ale)	Loch Lomond - Lost in Mosaic (American IPA)
Loch Lomond - Silkie Stout (Oatmeal Stout)	Oakham - Citra (Session IPA)
Orkney - Corncrake (Golden Ale)	Spey Valley - Sunshine on Keith (Session IPA)
Thornbridge - Jaipur (American IPA)	Titanic - Plum Porter (Speciality Porter)

REAL ALE ROUNDUP

Northern English pub chain Amber Taverns has recently opened a new location in Airdrie: **The Stirling (4 Stirling Street, ML6 0AH)**. Although no cask check-ins have been made on the CAMRA website at the time of writing, it appears that the establishment does indeed sell real ale. Photographs from the pub's Facebook page show two handpulls in situ, and the Amber Taverns website confirms the sale of cask ale at the premises.



There are rumours that Glasgow's **Old Toll Bar (1 Paisley Road West, G51 1LF)** has begun to sell cask ale again. The pub's Facebook page confirms that **Dookit's Southside Pale (5.4% American Pale Ale)** was on one of the cask lines in late September, but it is unclear whether this was a one-off or the beginning of a cask revival at one of the city's most beautiful and historically significant Victorian pubs.

We are sad to report that after featuring in last issue's **Pub Spotlight (see Autumn 2025 issue)**, **The Last Shift** in Braehead, South Lanarkshire has announced its permanent closure. Unfortunately, it seems that the owners have experienced health issues which make the continued operation of their pub impossible. We wish them a speedy recovery, and hope that The Last Shift's future publican continues to maintain its cask line.

According to recent Facebook story reels, real ale is once again available at **The 78 Bar (10-14 Kelvinhaugh St, Glasgow, G3 8NU)**. In late September, photographs of the pub's beer cellar revealed two active cask lines; one for **Otherworld Brewing's Sail On (3.5% Session Bitter)**, and one for **Williams Brothers' Seven Giraffes (5.1% American IPA)**.



The Pursuit of Hoppyness, a new craft beer shop with both on and off-sales, has opened up at **274 High Street, Glasgow, G4 0QT**. Owner MJ confirmed that they stock a vast range of can and bottle conditioned ales, and have a cozy seating area for in-store drinking. Definitely worth a visit.

The Rock (205 Hyndland Road, G12 9HE) is re-opening under the Nicholson's Pub brand. The proprietors have been tight-lipped about the refurbishment, with no social media posts to date. However, given the propensity of the Nicholson's brand to prioritise cask ale, it would be a safe bet to assume that we're going to have a major new real ale venue in Glasgow's west end very soon.

The Kittoch (1 Stewartfield Cres, Glasgow G74 4US) in the Stewartfield area of East Kilbride - formerly a Hungry Horse and now a Belhaven pub - is debuting real ale in November. This will be the third location in East Kilbride which serves cask ale; making the town something of a mini-Mecca for Lanarkshire ale lovers.

The Thornhill Inn (28 Thornhill, Johnstone PA5 8JG), an Amber Taverns pub in Johnstone, recently underwent refurbishment and has debuted real ale, with two handpulls on show in recent social media pictures. Moreover, recent Real Ale Finder app updates from the beginning of November reveal that they have been serving **Theakston's Quencher (3.4% English Pale Ale)** and **Bowland Brewery's Hen Harrier (4% Golden Ale)**.



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