

Ed's Pint

East Dorset's CAMRA Magazine

Spring 2026



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Ed's Pint



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Spring 2026

A very warm welcome to the spring edition of *Ed's Pint*. We are excited to bring you news of Barking Cat Brewery, the next step in the plans of those behind the award-winning Barking Cat Alehouse; the result of equal parts determined independence and creative flair, this is proof that new breweries are still being born from passion rather than spreadsheets, and a reminder that real ale remains a living, evolving craft. Our travels then take us further afield, with the second part of our Riga trip. Latvia's capital continued to delight, offering not just fine beer but warmth, generosity, and a brewing culture that blends deep tradition with modern confidence.

Closer to home, we join Potswiller on a memorable November branch minibus trip around some of our rural Dorset pubs. This issue's Pub Spotlight shines on the Old Parlour, Spetisbury. Whether it's the welcome at the bar, the care taken with the beer, or the sense that conversation matters here, the Old Parlour stands as a fine example of what a community pub/hub can be.

In Phil's Musings, we're invited to the New Forest. As always, Phil manages to blend landscape, pubs, and observation into something that lingers long after the final paragraph. Best enjoyed, perhaps, with a pint in

hand – LocAle, by preference.

As Steve Charlton waves a fond farewell to his position as branch social secretary, he offers some candid reflections on his experience in the role over many years. As you can imagine, there are numerous stories to tell, so we will be spoiling you with more memories from him next issue!

However, Steve can't get away that easily! We are delighted to announce Steve as our new Branch Chairman. Stepping into this vital job with enthusiasm and much knowledge of the branch (not just as Social Secretary but a previous Beer Festival Chair too), he brings both continuity and momentum, and we look forward to his leadership as the branch moves into its next chapter.

As ever, this magazine is a snapshot of shared experiences – breweries discovered, miles travelled, pubs cherished, and friendships strengthened. Thank you to everyone who contributes, organises, writes, drives, pours, and, of course, drinks. See you at the bar.

Cheers!

Ed

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View from the Chair

Spring 2026 East Dorset CAMRA update

Greetings, fellow beer drinkers. I hope you enjoy reading this edition of *Ed's Pint*. As I type these words, the dust is settling on our branch AGM, at which I was successful in my nomination to become the new branch chairman. I've been actively involved with the branch for more than twenty years and during that time have held the positions of Social Secretary and Poole Beer Festival Chairman. I hope that I can bring the knowledge I've learnt fulfilling these positions, as well as my overall understanding of the branch, to help me in my new role. Over the next few weeks, I'm sure I'll have a lot to learn while I get an understanding of the duties that the job requires. This is therefore something of a short introduction and I'll have more to report on branch activities

and the focus of the branch campaigns in future magazines.

In the meantime, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing chairman, Neal Hook, and the other committee members that have stepped down, for their efforts over the past twelve months; your contributions are appreciated however big or small. I'd also like to thank all those that have offered their time and services on the new committee, and I look forward to working with you all and presiding over this fantastic branch.

Cheers

Steve Charlton
Branch Chairman



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BREWERS FOLLY OPENS

The Brewers Folly Tap Room is now open at Long Close Farm, Wimborne BH21 1NR. It will be open Friday 2-8pm and Saturday 12-8pm at present. There is a good selection of their own beers on draft, cask and keg, cider and soft drinks are also available. Food can also be obtained from a visiting mobile kitchen.

They are in the process of moving the actual brewery to the same location. We look forward to visiting and having this as a regular feature alongside Eight Arch for Wimborne locals and visitors alike.



BRANCH PRESENTATIONS



Presentation Barking Cat WPOTS



WRPOTS presentation to Owls Nest

WINTER PUBS OF THE SEASON

It is our great pleasure to announce our Winter Pubs of the Season: Urban Pub is the Barking Cat, presented to Mark & Michael Ambrose at our AGM by Neal Hook.

Rural Pub of the Season is the Owl's Nest, West Parley, presented to Richard and Jacqui by Steve Charlton.

The winners of our Pub of the Year for 2025 competition were The Barking Cat (Urban) and Eight Arch Brewery Tap (Rural). We will have presented these awards by the time of publication but will celebrate both in the next edition.



Beer of Poole Beer Festival

On 6th December, Beer Festival organiser Phil Newby, accompanied by a small group from the branch, went to Drop The Anchor to present them with their certificate for Beer of Poole Beer Festival. It coincided with their 12 Beers of Christmas mini-festival.

There were significantly more beers on than 12. All were £5.00 a pint irrespective of strength and there were some strong ones on offer.



Helping Wessex Wishes

Wessex Wishes are a Team of Volunteers who care passionately about the welfare and happiness of local schoolchildren. We believe that every child deserves moments of joy and laughter, and are committed to brightening the lives of those local children facing challenging or difficult circumstances. Our aim is to bring joy, fun, comfort and memorable experiences to these children, creating moments of pure delight and happiness that they will cherish forever.

The money raised, a total sum of £3127.72, supported a Christmas party for a group of local children and a day out for a Ukrainian refugee undergoing post-traumatic stress among others. Beer Festival organiser Phil Thy and members of the AGM Meeting presented Frances Cornelius with the cheque. Wessex Wishes Committee thank Phil, Jenny and everybody who attended today for their fantastic support of the valuable work that we do supporting over 3000 local children.





For Mark and Michael Ambrose, publicans and owners of The Barking Cat Alehouse in Upper Parkstone, opening a new venue, be it another pub or a brewery tap, was always the natural next step for their business plans. It was on the cards just as COVID hit back in 2020 – the search for a new premises was put on hold, and the fight for survival began. But after five years of continuous growth following that ‘great killer of public houses’, thanks to the diligent support and dedication of their patrons and community combined with their own hard work and the skill, passion and integrity of their staff, they have been able to put those long held plans into motion.



Brewery and taproom - work in progress



Michael & Mark Ambrose - outside shot

On a chilly January morning, we sent our diligent reporter, Mr Edward S. Pint, to speak with Mark and Michael to investigate this new project, which is located in historic Arthur Bray’s Yard (on West Quay Road between Poole Bridge and the Twin Sails Bridge).

Reporter Ed quickly noted that it was on a bus route (8 and 9 Poole Circular), with a bus stop just outside of the yard (Dee Way), and another on West Road (outside the Queen Mary), providing site access every 25 minutes from dawn until just after 11 pm.

Entering the yard, which has a somewhat dilapidated but nicely painted early Victorian warehouse, Ed found his way onto the rustic site and into an unassuming pre-WW2 industrial unit next door to Poole’s only distillery “Shanty Spirit”. This is the beginnings of Poole’s latest brewery: The Barking Cat Brewing Company. Once inside, Ed managed to bump into both the Ambroses hard at work assembling pipework for the new brew plant. Here’s what they had to say when Ed first asked Michael what it was all about...

How long has this been in the pipeline, Michael?

“We’ve been at this since March last year when we verbally agreed to take on the site. We had been looking for a good location for the last three years once the pub had comfortably recovered following COVID and had found nothing that had quite fit, having looked at two sites in



Lansdowne and another in Bournemouth, with none suitable. It was serendipitous that my sister and her husband noted a “To Let” sign outside the yard not long after they had moved into their new home along the road, and we really haven’t looked back since”.

What experience have you got in the brewing industry?

“Well, I spent nearly three years at Bournemouth Brewing Company, initially volunteering as an apprentice-come-general dogsbody, learning the science, art and practice of brewing; and more or less been left employed to brew on site alone by the time I decided to leave at the end of 2016. The circumstances weren’t the best, but what I learnt has been invaluable over the course of this last year, when we put out our first two ales we cuckoo-brewed at Brewer’s Folly Brewery in Wimborne: The Daily Echo Chamber (a strong dry stout) at the last Poole Beer Festival to mixed reviews and gladly received constructive feedback, and Ciira-Krush (a session NEPA) which we released at our Barking Cat Xmas Beer Festival in December to extremely positive reviews.”

Tell me about your kit – how big is it and what will your capacity be?

“It is a 6bbl (1000ltr) brewery commissioned by my father and I, with design input from our experienced friend and ‘spiritual’ mentor Dr Alastair Wallace (former Head Brewer of Tisbury Brewery); and built in Jinan, China by Cassman. Unique to this modern brewery, we have two coppers (or kettles) designed to maximise our efficiency when brewing stronger beers in an old brewing technique known as “parti-gyle”, which basically means that the remnants of the sugars left in the mash tun after the first copper is full then get put into the second copper, and a session beer can be produced separately from the same mash as the stronger one – for example: an imperial stout and a dark mild.

We have three 1000ltr fermenters and a conditioning tank (which may also double as a flat-bottomed fermenter) which means that in the space of a month, we might be able to brew as much as eight times, with an output of around 25 firkins per fermenter.”

At this point Mark joined us in conversation from underneath the brew plant platform where he had been furiously screwing bits of pipe together on the Mash Tun.

What are your initial plans for opening and brewing?

“Well, at present we’ve one more brew scheduled later this month with Dean over at Brewer’s Folly (at his swanky new site!), which is a Jaggery-infused Extra Special Bitter targeting between 5 and 6% ABV”



Beers coming soon right here



Brewkit



Shiny new brewkit all in place

Mark continued:

"As you can see, we've been slaving away assembling the pipework and moving the kit into perfect position – it's like a giant Meccano set – not much in the way of PVC piping and plastic except off the fermenters and glycol tank – just nice shiny stainless steel! Our target opening date is still some time in March this year."



Mark & Michael Ambrose - inside shot

Michael chimed in:

"We plan to have about six to eight brews ready for launch day, with plans to have our first brew started sometime in February, with various American-style IPAs first up on the priority list. It's important to say that we will probably look at producing our first Dead Brewer's Society beer in this period as well as a session bitter from one of our historic extinct Poole breweries – Dolphin or Towngate breweries, with the support and guidance of Dr Wallace. At any one time, we've a maximum capacity of four full fermenters, so we will produce what we can in time for the opening." Ed exclaimed: "That's certainly an ambitious and exciting timetable!"

Given the scale of things left to do in the brewery, Ed decided at that point to conclude the interview and leave them to their labour with the hope of interviewing them again nearer to the opening date, to which they again assented. Ed then departed to the Rope & Anchor for a delectable pint of Wadworth's Swordfish. A job well done!

Michael Ambrose

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MINIBUS OUTING

NOVEMBER 2025

Our last East Dorset CAMRA minibus outing of the year is on a wet and blustery Saturday on 22nd November. We meet at All Hail Ale in Queens Road, Bournemouth, an excellent micro pub with a good range of ales that I am unable to sample. The minibus is already waiting and I climb aboard to see friendly familiar faces.



The Crown, Ibberton



Inglenook, The Crown, Ibberton

We head out into the Dorset countryside, largely obscured by the misty windows, eventually arriving at Ibberton, a small village about 5 miles due west of Blandford Forum, but somewhat further by road. The Ibberton was previously called the New Inn, and the Crown Inn (the Crown sign is on the redundant front porch, and it is listed Grade II under the name Crown Inn) is said to date from the 16th century. Built of brick laid in Flemish bond

under a slate roof, it is a welcoming local, and although off the beaten track, offers a good choice of food. A large party is enjoying lunch when we arrive. The main bar has a splendid inglenook fireplace with a wood burning stove that is in use, keeping the room warm. The beers on offer are Palmers Copper and Palmers Gold. Both are in very good condition.



The Crown, Winterborne Stickland

Eventually we head out into the gloom to travel a few miles south east to the Crown at Winterborne Stickland, which was featured in the Summer 2025 edition of *ED's Pint*. Do look up Phil's very interesting article to learn more. Needless to say it is listed Grade II. Today the beers available are Dorset Knob, Timothy Taylor Landlord and St Austell Tribute. This is another excellent local, very dog friendly, with a good offering of food and an excellent landlord. Altogether it is a charming thatched village pub.

It is dark when we leave and make our way to the Worlds End at Almer. This pub is situated on the A31 main road, but as far as public transport is concerned it may as well be on Mars. A lovely thatched pub, it has a good food offering to attract customers, and more importantly on this occasion is serving Dorset Durdle Door and Fullers London Pride. Although the pub itself is not listed, the milestone nearby is.

MINIBUS OUTING



The World's End, Almer

Our next stop is The Cock and Bottle at Morden. This former Hall and Woodhouse pub was closed for a while, but re-opened last year, and seems to be trading well. It is certainly busy when we arrive. The ales on offer are Palmers Gold and Palmers Copper. The pub dates from late 18th or early 19th century and is listed Grade II. The Palmers Gold was in very good condition. I understand that the pub relies on having a good food offering.



The Vine garden

Eventually we head on to our final destination, the Vine Inn, Pamphill. This delightful pub is not listed, but very much a local favourite. Palmers Dorset Gold and Moonrakers MoonLight. Both beers were in very good condition. I hope the Vine heeds no description, but if you have not been there, it is a former bakery that was converted to a pub at the beginning of the twentieth century. It nestles against the hillside, and at road level one sees the flank of the first floor. Down a flight of steps you enter a very small bar that seats half a dozen, and having purchased your beer can

climb the internal stairs back to the first floor, or on a fine day, sit out in the garden. There is also another room beyond the bar. It is a true gem and well worth visiting. Finally it is time to reboard the minibus for our ride back to All Hail Ale.

These trips help us keep acquainted with pubs that we might otherwise find difficult to reach, and enable us to assess the quality of the beer they sell and their potential for inclusion in the *Good Beer Guide*. None of this would have happened without Steve, the East Dorset Social Secretary who arranged the trip. I strongly recommend that if you are a member of East Dorset CAMRA who has not previously joined us on a minibus trip, then please make a note of the forthcoming outings and join us. If you live in the area (or elsewhere) and are not a member of CAMRA then these trips are another good reason to join.

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The Old Parlour

(formerly, The Shack)
Spetisbury



options. I also noticed two real ciders. One was Isaac Cider of Beaminster and, yes, there is a link to Sir Isaac; look it up if you are curious. I think the other was from Cranborne Chase, so all very local!

I felt the bar area was very welcoming and warm which isn't a bad vibe to have on a cold January.

The bar space had also seemed to have expanded from its days as The Shack. The old farm shop area is now incorporated as part of the bar creating an L shape with log burners at each end. Very toasty.

In addition to alcoholic drinks, there was also a range of teas & coffees, ice cream and cakes too.

I was told by Ella that beer and coffee are the sellers!

Unfortunately I wasn't able to meet Rob and Andrea, owners

It was a sad day when The Woodpecker in Spetisbury closed for good, some years ago now, leaving the village bereft of a boozier. What fantastic news it must have been then, when "The Shack" appeared on the scene: farm shop, pub and just a place to go and meet up. Great until that too closed. But then the good people of the village decided that they didn't really like not having a pub anymore, so roll on the clock and, like a phoenix from the flames, "The Old Parlour" was born. Pub? Café? Community hub? I suspect all of those things.

What is it like? Is it any good? Only one way to find out, eh? I wasn't just going to turn up unannounced though, so I contacted Ella who is the manager of The Old Parlour to see if I could come along and

have a chat and find out what's going on.

Upon my arrival, I have to say I acted a bit like a secret shopper by not announcing my arrival, just taking it all in.

On the bar in front of me was 6D Best, which is what I opted for (thumbs up!); Butcombe Gold and Stone Henge Heel Stone Bitter were the other two



The Old Parlour Spetisbury

of The Old Parlour, because they were on holiday to warmer climes. A little rude, I thought; they could have cancelled?

I was, however, introduced to Dave, co-business partner with previous experience in the hospitality trade.

Time for some questions, I thought, and it appeared that Ella had drawn the short straw and was shown the Mastermind chair. No passes allowed here though!

Hi Ella. I do believe there is a link between what was once The Shack and what is now The Old Parlour. Would you like to explain please?

Yes, The Old Parlour, previously known as The Shack, has a rich family history. The Shack was originally run by Roberts's uncle, Shaun, who now manages The Old Ox in Shillingstone. When Rob purchased the farm – including The Shack – he returned to the place he grew up with his grandparents, continuing the family's connection to the site.

I see from your website that you are open from 9am to 10pm, 11pm on a Saturday. Does this mean I can buy a pint at 9am? Just asking for a friend.

Yes we open every day from 9am to 10pm (11pm on Saturdays). The Old Parlour serves coffee, cake (and alcohol!) to walkers, cyclists and parents with kids or day time drinkers throughout the day. As the afternoon turns to evening, regulars arrive in



Bar & Events Manager Ella & David, co-business owner



The X8 bus stop, oh so convenient!

shifts to enjoy drinks and good company – whilst also creating a great vibe that newcomers love. The team is committed to keeping the doors open, even during quieter times, so locals always have a friendly place to gather. For Robert and David, success is about doing a job well and caring for the community – the financial rewards follow naturally. This ethos is shared by the entire team.

Yes, you can get a pint at 9am

– perfect for early risers or those “asking for a friend”.

I suspect The Old Parlour is more than just a pub and quite an important part of the village?

The Old Parlour is more than just a pub; it's an important part of village life in Spetisbury. The community has always been central to its mission with Robert and David – close friends and business partners – reopening

The Old Parlour Spetisbury

and refurbishing the venue to create a welcoming space for everyone. Their founding principle is simple: “for the community and for everyone.” The Old Parlour is family- and dog-friendly, offering a relaxed atmosphere that appeals to all ages. Although it’s technically an old milking parlour, it has the feel of a local pub, supported by both long-time residents and newcomers from Spetisbury and the surrounding area.

What, if any, is your experience of running this type of venture?

David brings previous experience from running pubs and bars, while Rob’s background is in IT, where service and quality is essential. I’m the bar and events manager and have extensive hospitality experience, especially with large events and weddings. Andrea, Roberts’s partner, oversees the business part-time and the rest of the team is made up of locals with strong ties to the area.

Ed’s Pint is our branch magazine that has a pretty

big interest in cask ale and real cider, so I have to ask what is the process in deciding what you have on the bar?

The Old Parlour typically offers two standard ales and a guest ale daily. The standards – 6D Best, 6D Gold, Butcombe Original and Butcombe Gold – are rotated so there is always a choice between gold and a darker ale from both breweries. Guest ales are selected based on personal preference and recommendations from regulars, who are encouraged to share their favourites. Ale is the most popular drink and the team prides itself on catering to true “Ale Drinkers”. While they focus on local beers, they also bring in interesting and recommended ales from further afield.

How successful was your little beer festival in December and are you likely to repeat it? (You never know, we could have a branch trip up there.)

The December beer festival was a last minute success and the team are looking to hold two each year. Any leftover beer

was happily finished by regulars and the temperature was perfect for self service! The Old Parlour also continues the Spetisbury tradition of a summer cider fest and has added an Oktoberfest, which will return this year.

Finally, is there anything else you would like to add?

The team is delighted by the community appreciation for The Old Parlour. Their goal was to create a space that meets the needs of locals and they feel they’ve succeeded. While there’s always room for improvement, they’re proud of the foundation they’ve built and look forward to growing the community.

I’m sure all at East Dorset CAMRA are chuffed to bits the Old Parlour is up and running and serving great beer and cider.

There is no excuse not to go either.

X8 bus from Poole or Blandford. Bus stop right outside (I even have the pic here to prove it!

See you there!

Phil K

Ed’s Pint

Previous editions available online



Did you know?

Research commissioned by CAMRA found that people who have a 'local' are happier and have higher levels of life satisfaction than those who don't.



Source: Dunbar, R., "Friends on Tap" (2016)



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Phil's Musings

Three Old Blokes, Three Micro Breweries & One New Forest

"I say, Phil, would you like to join two other old blokes for a spivin' trip visiting micro breweries in The New Forest?"

"Jolly gosh, yes please Al, but how will we get there?"

"Well if you can get yourself to New Milton, I don't mind easing back on the sauce and driving you and Chris there."

"That's super Al, so that's lashings and lashings of beer for us two and not quite so for you, as I know you are a responsible driver."

I think the conversation went something like that at The Hour Glass pub on a Thirsty Thursday session. So it was on a Saturday morning that I set off with some trepidation as I knew in advance I'd be facing an infamous "rail replacement service".

What could go wrong? Come on, surely that should read, what could go right?

Well the bus/train on the Wareham to Bournemouth leg was showing on time.

Just one problem though, it was 25 minutes late and that's from the start point. It's not like they didn't know this service was needed in advance. P**s up in a brewery springs to mind!

I did finally manage to get to New Milton and I think it was still Saturday.

Now all I had to do was to find my pals who said they'd see me at the station.

I scoured the entrance on the arriving up platform – no sign of them.

Maybe they are over at the main entrance? No. Back across the road bridge to the original start point, still no sign of them.

I rang them, they said they were there.

Were they hiding from me?

New Milton Station for those who haven't visited, is nothing like London Waterloo, so spotting somebody should be easy, as long as they aren't hiding from you, which would make their

behaviour more akin to something from a *Famous Five* novel.

Finally, some worn shoe leather later, they decided to show their presence.

Disguising my chagrin, I climbed into the car and we sped off to the first port of call, The Pig micro brewery, situated in what is described as a large stretched tent bar, just outside of Brockenhurst on the road to Lymington.



The Pig Micro Brewery

I was slightly disappointed on arrival at the lack of any cask ale, despite being told the contrary by Al, but hey, I'm not going to give him a hard time, he is literally driving me to drink..



I opted for a pint of Blak Cocoa Milk Stout, and at £5.95 a pint I didn't think that was too bad for keg and for being in The New Forest.

I was also pleasantly surprised that it tasted pretty good too, without too much fizz.

My mood did drop somewhat though when I spied the price for a half, £3.60.

£5.95 a pint & £3.60 a half!

That's a whacking £1.20 mark up.

How do you begin to justify that?

I did think about asking that very question at the time but I didn't think it was too fair on the two pleasant young bar staff who probably have no say whatsoever in the establishment's pricing policy.

Surely though, when based out in the sticks where a lot of people will drive to get there, you would want to promote responsible drinking, and surely that would start at offering affordable and fair pricing for a half?

If anyone from the brewery gets to read this, I'd love to hear their explanation.

Time to move on!

So leaving their very, very expensive halves behind we headed for...



Monkey Brewhouse

The Monkey Brewhouse, a lovely little brew pub and B&B situated just outside of Lymington that I had visited before – cask beers assured and none at £3.60 a half either.

It's a pub that packs a punch, great beer, independent, nice food and a great atmosphere. Beer-wise we opted for Binefresh Hop Ale at 4.6%, one that none of us had tasted before. (Very nice too.) Other beers on were Tollhouse Bitter at 3.6% and Sea Wall, a session IPA at 4.2%.

The last visit of the day was to Brew Forest, just short of a mile away from Monkey Brewhouse, so it had to be done. Run by a brother and sister team, described as a nano brewery and taproom. I really loved the vibe and, although it is mainly keg, I did have a very nice Burning Sky Green Hop on cask. I also loved the quirky signpost outside, pointing out in miles distances to near and

some not-so-near breweries.

I have to thank driver Al Hopkin for a very enjoyable day exploring independent breweries out in The Forest, doing their thing. Also, Chris Allsopp for his good company, most of the time. If you are reading this Chris, just joshing, if you aren't...!?



Chris at Brew Forest



Heaven, this way

Travelling back home on my first leg to Bournemouth the train was late – 25 minutes. Although a little annoying, I thought it offered great symmetry to the day – 25 minutes late, starting out too!

It did allow me to have a cheeky half in The Hour Glass rather than wait on a draughty platform. On the train/bus back from Bournemouth to Wareham I couldn't help musing about "that half"!

Cheers

Phil K

Spring break in Riga



Part 2

Next day, due to rain, I catch a train to Latvia's second city Daugavpils. Along the route, sections of track are being prepared for the Rail Baltica train which will link Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia with Warsaw in Poland. Daugavpils, once a provincial Russian imperial town, is now the home to the largest regional university.

Back in Riga, after a return to the market for a Latvian stew tea, I make a short walk to the old town to visit Ala Pagrabs, a traditional Latvian basement bar which boasts the widest range of local draft beer. The house beer is Hazy New England IPA (3.6%), brewed exclusively for the bar, a typical low gravity with a refreshing taste and easy drinking. I soon discover the bar is the home of the Latvian Folk Club. The trio are dressed in traditional costumes and the catchy tunes are followed by local dancing to the music.

I stop for a second beer and choose a dark beer recommended by the bar staff: Lielais Kristaps (8.5%), an oatmeal stout, full bodied with a creamy head. Leaving, I head for the tram for the short ride to Nurme bar on Avotu Street – a cosy bar, presumably originally a shop. Beers are displayed on a board and I choose Amour (6.2%), described as an Australian IPA. The young bar person informs me it was brewed using Galaxy hops. I realise I have ordered a can beer. Nevertheless, the beer is full of flavour with a subtle hop finish. Keen to try a draft beer, I'm recommended Nuts (6.5%), a full bodied Baltic Porter; it's a different taste to what I had expected with a hint of chocolate and sweetness – more stout than porter. I am advised by a customer that tomorrow is a birthday celebration at the brewery and different beers will be showcased so I look forward to a visit.

On the last full day in Riga, I take a train along the Baltic Sea coast to Carnikava as I had seen advertised a folk concert. Partly held on the beach and in a large town centre park, it features a craft market. There is traditional folk music and dancing, with many of the people dressed in national dress: the women in bright coloured skirts with

matching waistcoat and head scarf, the men in knickerbockers, and sporting black waistcoats and hats. The friendly atmosphere with all enjoying the warm weather and a chance for some traditional cheesecake makes it a lovely afternoon.

Upon return to the capital I head by tram to Vagonu district to visit Nurme Brewery, which is housed in a former factory with a large outdoor area. The range of beers is diverse, so order a flight consisting of Last Summer 4.4%, Amour Fusion 4.6%, Lemon Hazy 6%, a fruity lager, juicy IPA and a hazy, and chat with two Canadians who were on their way to Helsinki. Soon it is time for a last beer. I plump for Tapetum Lucidum (7.3%), described as a fruity porter, a mix of two styles which to me taste like a dark beer with a tart finish. I leave and head to Trofeja, a small nano brewery with a large terrace serving a variety of beer styles from 200l beer tanks. I order a Alens Delons (4.8%), a milkshake IPA, to wash down my homemade Margherita pizza sold on site. Once again, the beer styles are unusual so order a couple of small beers: firstly, Avenes, a raspberry pale ale, a strange combination (glad I only ordered 0.3l). My last beer in Riga is a glass of Doom (7%), a black IPA, a beer that sure packs a punch.

A great few days in Latvia – a country striving to establish its own culture after being under Russian rule.



Reflections of a Social Secretary

Part 1

When I stepped forward to replace Robin as the branch social secretary almost twenty years ago, my experience of our social trips had included someone diving off a minibus to throw up in a garden (not forgotten, Dan!), Robin being shouted at for leaving someone in a pub (Jill was not impressed!), long waits in service stations because the coach driver was out of hours, and trips to the odd closed pub or two. I therefore did wonder what I might be letting myself in for! However, as I now take my leave from the role – visits to closed pubs aside (I can still picture the look on Robert Southam’s face when we turned up at The Saxon, Child Okeford to find it closed. Yet again!) – I’m left to reflect on some great trips out and weekends away with long lasting memories for all that came along. These are just a few of them.

Hidden Brewery was set up in Dinton, Wiltshire in 2003 and it wasn’t too long after this that an opportunity for a branch brewery visit arose. I took a group of about twenty there and, in an age before smart phones and instant access to Google Maps, it took a while to

find – the brewery staying true to its name of course! But find it we did, and after the coach pulled up outside, I went in to meet the brewers. At the time of our visit, Hidden also owned a pub – I think The Bell Inn, Wylde – and as I understood this to be close by, it was my intention that we walk there from the brewery and for the coach to pick us up from the pub. I described this to one of the brewers who acknowledged the plan so I went to tell the coach driver and off he drove with the address of the pub and our pick-up time in hand. Back in the brewery, I’m now describing our plan to the other brewer. “You can’t walk to the pub,” he says, “its miles

away.” Alarm bells. “Well, that’s where the coach is picking us up from and I have no way to contact the driver,” I respond. Both of the brewers have had a drink or two with us by this stage so neither can drive but after making a few enquiries they find someone who can take us to the pub in a Transit van, problem solved! A couple of hours later and with plenty had to drink by all, the Transit arrives to provide us with our lift. It’s panel boarded, there’s a bulkhead dividing the back from the cabin, no windows and the only seats are the wooden boarded wheel arches. We all pile in, the door closes, it’s pitch black! A few people attempt



Arriving at the Beacon Hotel - Fortunately

to perch on the wheel arches but with the effects of the beer and the movement of the van, they don't stay on there long. As we make our way along the winding country roads, we're all rolling around in the back in hysterical fits of laughter. I'm sure the driver took the longest route just to maximise his amusement! Thankfully, we all got to our destination in one piece and soon had pints in hand while we joked and reflected upon our travelling experience. A very unforgettable day! Sadly, the brewery closed in 2010 but we recently bumped into one of the brewers in his local pub near Wimborne, giving cause to recount the day and have a good laugh about it all over again!

Not too long after this brewery trip, I arranged a weekend in Dudley/Sedgely for a tour of the six brew pubs located in the area. We all went up on Friday afternoon and started with a great evening spent in The Beacon Hotel, home of Sarah Hughes Brewery and their much

revered Dark Ruby Mild. As we walked into the town centre on Saturday morning and armed only with a Tom-Tom sat nav and the addresses of the pubs, I don't think anyone quite realised that I had absolutely no plan as to how we were going to get around the remaining five pubs or how long it might take. Cometh the hour and cometh the saviour of the day, Pete Smith who met up with us furnished with the bus timetable he'd just picked up from the local bus station. "I think this might help us," he announced. "Oh yes," I replied, with the assurance that this was my intention all along! A read through the timetable in conjunction with my map, and twenty minutes later we were on a bus heading for the first pub, the fabulous Ma Pardoes in Dudley. I can still remember my relief and elation when we arrived at the last pub that evening to complete our goal. I hadn't really considered how we'd get back to our hotel either so I was also grateful when Sue offered to find some taxis. It remains my personal favourite

of all the tours I've organised, as not only did we visit some great pubs but the day could not have gone any better even though I'd pretty much winged the whole thing! I do feel sorry for the singer in the penultimate pub though who unfortunately started her performance just as we were leaving. "Is my voice that bad?" she exclaimed as we all walked past her on our way to the exit!

These are, of course, just a few of the many trips I've organised, and part two will contain a few memories of more brewery trips and presentations. It's been a pleasure to have organised them for you all and I hope that those who have come along have enjoyed them as much as I have. Good luck to Andy and John who now take over; I'm sure you'll do a great job. I have two snippets of advice: don't forget to check the pubs' opening times and stick to the itinerary (particularly you, Mr Brown!).

Steve Charlton



Sign the petition to help
cask beer earn UNESCO
heritage status



Socials

Below are details of branch meetings and social events for the upcoming months. See our website for full listings of branch activities at:

<https://eastdorset.camra.org.uk/index.php/socials-and-meetings/>

To pay for minibus trips see:

https://eastdorset.camra.org.uk/How_to_pay_for_a_social_trip_using_Paypal.pdf

Socials

FEBRUARY

Saturday 21st:

Brewers Folly + RPOTY Presentation @ Eight Arch
Meet at Brewers Folly Brewery @ 1300. Presentation for RPOTY, Eight Arch @ 1700

MARCH

Thursday 5th:

Thirsty Thursday
Meet in The Hour Glass, New Milton @ 1230

Friday 6th:

Cider POTY Presentation
Silverback @ 2000

Saturday 7th:

Portland Pub Tour
Train departs Bournemouth @ 1020 & Poole @ 1037, arrives Weymouth @ 1114

Saturday 14th:

Hop Back/Downton Brewery Visit
X3 bus departs Bournemouth @ 1020, arrives Downton @ 1129. Cost of the two tours to be between £5 & £10/head which will include all drinks. Limited to forty spaces, please let Steve Charlton know if you'd like to book a place.

Wednesday 18th:

Don Spot: Poole
Meet in The King Charles @ 1230

Saturday 21st:

POTY Presentation - The Barking Cat
The Barking Cat @ 2000

APRIL

Thursday 2nd:

Thirsty Thursday
Meet in The Hour Glass, New Milton @ 1230

Wednesday 15th:

Don Spot: Poole
TBA

MAY

Saturday 2nd:

Mini Steam Fair, Poole Quay from 12.00

Thursday 7th:

Thirsty Thursday
Meet in The Hour Glass, New Milton @ 1230

Wednesday 13th:

Don Spot: Poole
TBA

Branch Meetings

Friday 27th February 2026:

Kings Head, Poole @ 2000

Friday 20th March 2026:

Micro Moose @ 2000

Saturday 18th April 2026:

Corfe Castle Club @ 1300
To include COTY presentation

Saturday 17th May 2026:

Firkin Shed @ 1430



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THE BARKING CAT



ALEHOUSE



The Barking Cat Alehouse 182-184 Ashley Road, Parkstone, Poole, BH14 9BY
Check Untappd & Facebook for regular beer updates. Call 01202 258465
Bus routes: M1, M2, 15 & 18. Ariel Taxi order point. Train 10 min walk.

Beer Festivals:
Easter - 3rd -6th April 2026
Summer - 27th - 31st August 2026
Xmas - 16th - 20th December 2026
(Updates on Facebook)



Follow us on Facebook,
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Email:
info@barkingcatbrewco.co.uk

COMING SOON!
TARGET OPENING
MARCH 2026

The Barking Cat Brewing Company, Unit L, Arthur Brays Yard,
4 West Quay Road, Poole BH15 1HT