

beertoday

Championing independent beer, pubs and bars

The Newsletter

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Butcombe Group has reported a strong performance for the year ended 25th January. The brewing and drinks business performed particularly well in free trade. Award-winning non-alcoholic Goram IPA Zero, on draught and packaged, and newly-launched Tall Tales Pale Ale Zero grew strongly, driven by increased distribution in the off-trade and free trade.

Cancel NI and business rates changes urges BII

National Insurance contributions changes and the decreased level of business rates relief on for pubs must be cancelled, says the BII's chief executive, Steve Alton.

He expresses this in an open letter to chancellor Rachel Reeves, urging her to postpone the changes until full and meaningful reform is implemented.

"The impact of these devastating tax increases is already being seen in independent pubs, with widespread cuts to staffing, opening hours, and investment plans, said Steve.

"Despite many BII members reporting better than expected trade in January, thanks to the diversification of their businesses, attracting different types of customers, their already high overheads mean this is simply not translating into profit. In a recent members' survey, 80% of operators

expect to be unprofitable due to the planned tax rises. Pubs offer so much more than just a brilliant pint, and operators have worked incredibly hard to provide a safe space for everyone to connect, celebrate and socialise, as well as providing vital local employment and diverse career opportunities.

"The choices made by the chancellor are now fundamentally undermining growth, investment, and employment in our sector, with quality operators having to make difficult decisions regarding their teams and the future of their businesses.

"Cancelling the planned tax increases for pubs, which are in addition to an already unfair tax burden they are facing, will unlock their potential for growth, allow them to expand their teams, providing essential skilled, local employment and prevent unnecessary business failure."

IN BRIEF

- Balance has released Ripple 2023, a 6% ABV wild ale with British raspberries. It's a blend of four barrels from March and May 2023, fermented with saison yeast, lactobacillus, and Brettanomyces, before ageing for two months on carbonically macerated raspberries. Raspberry aroma mingles with subtle fruity funk and woody, vanilla barrel notes. The base beer has its own fruity character and refreshing acidity bolsters the raspberry jelly flavours leading to a zippy, refreshing finish.
- Alien Loomination (5% ABV) is the first instalment of SALT's 2025 Collaboration Series. The hazy DDH pale has been brewed in collaboration with Turning Point Brew Co and hop merchant Charles Faram. It has been hopped with Cascade, Amarillo, and UK-grown Mystic.



- DEYA describes You Can't Grow Concrete, a 5.5% ABV pale ale, as "an ode to Citra in every form". It utilises pellets, T90, BBC, cryo and Yakima Chief Hyperboost to explore the layers and complexity of the hop and squeeze out all the juice that Citra can bring forth. Expect layers of mango, tropical fruits, lychee, and lemon.
- Alcohol-free beer brand Impossibrew has seen a new crowdfunding campaign get off to a flying start. The company, which has been featured on Dragon's Den, is seeking £500,000 of investment and had beaten its target after just one day. The campaign ends in mid-February.
- Northern Monk's triple-dry-hopped DIPA, A Whole Lotta Faith (8.4% ABV) is back. While the beer is the same – packed with juicy, tropical flavours, thanks to a combination of Citra, Columbus, and Mosaic hops – it's now in a full-pint can.

Greene King unveils a strong Cask Releases calendar for 2025



Greene King has released its seasonal Fresh Cask Releases calendar. While the cask category saw an overall decline last year, the cask calendar continued to grow, both in stockists and volume.

This year's Fresh Cask Releases comprise 15 beers. This month, Fireside, the 4.5% ruby winter ale, and Abbot Reserve, the 6.5% premium ale, have been available.

Making a return for February is Six Nations-inspired Scrumdown, a 4.1% ABV fresh golden ale, made with pale malt and classic English hops.

Making its debut on the calendar is Wolfpack Alpha Stout. Wolfpack is a brewery co-founded by international rugby players Al Hargreaves and Chris Wyles. The 4.2% stout is a dark and rich beer, robust barley meeting coffee and chocolate malt.

WHAT'S ON HIGHLIGHTS

6th-8th February

Bent and Bongs Beer Bash at the Roller Rink, Atherton.

Tewkesbury Winter Ales Festival at the Watson Hall, Tewkesbury.

Winter Beer and Cider Festival at TQ Beerworks Taphouse, Torquay.

7th and 8th February

Chesterfield CAMRA Beer Festival at the Winding Wheel Theatre, Chesterfield.

Elysian Winter Beer Festival at The Maltings, Ely.

PLAN AHEAD ...

12th-15th February

Great British Beer Festival Winter at Magna Science Adventure Centre, Rotherham.

13th-15th February

Liverpool Beer Festival in the Metropolitan Cathedral Crypt, Liverpool

Warwick University Beer Festival at the Students Union Building, Coventry.

21st-23rd February

Darlington Beer Festival at Hopetown Railway Museum, Darlington.

27th February-1st March

Bradford Beer and Cider Festival at Victoria Hall, Saltaire.

Wigan Beer Festival at the Robin Park Sports Centre, Wigan.

28th February-1st March

Gosport Winterfest at Thorngate Halls, Gosport.

Neepsend Craft Beer Festival at the Peddlar Warehouse, Sheffield.

**There are more – many more – listings, with maps, at beertoday.co.uk/events
The biggest beery events guide in the UK? Could be...**

Staffordshire venue is CAMRA's Club of the Year



The Firs Club, in Codsall, Staffordshire, has won the Campaign for Real Ale's (CAMRA) Club of the Year Award for 2024.

The multi-award-winning social club — named West Midlands regional Club of the Year three years in a row — is a must-visit for cask beer fans.

It has an on-site microbrewery, opened in 2017, which features in its November festi-

val, a real highlight in the local beer calendar. As well as Firs beers, the bar offers five locally-sourced ever-changing cask beers, usually including one mild.

In the comfortably furnished club, guests can enjoy a pint in the bar area, relax in the quiet lounge, play pool and darts in the separate sports lounge, or play snooker upstairs.

Now Wrexham Lager is heading to Hungary



The Wrexham Lager Beer Co is expanding into the Hungary market. The deal will see Wrexham Lager, Wrexham Export, and Wrexham Pilsner sold in 440ml can, 330ml bottle, and five-litre keg formats.

Now co-owned by actors Rob McElhenney and Ryan Reynolds, alongside the Roberts family, who took over the running of the brewery in 2011, the new listing follows the company's recent expansion into the US, Australian, and Scandinavian markets.

Seven beers mark seven years

Polly's Brew Co has collaborated with seven other breweries to devise a collection of seven new beers to mark the brewery's seventh anniversary.

The collection of pale and hoppy IPAs, a decadent imperial stout, and a zingy fruited sour showcase "why craft beer is the most wonderfully unique industry", says Polly's.

The beer line-up comprises: Imperial Stout (10% ABV), a collaboration with Lost Cause Brewing Co; Triple IPA (10% ABV), with Pomona Island; White IPA (6.9% ABV), with Thornbridge; West Coast IPA (5.9% ABV), with Duration; Double IPA (8.4% ABV), with Sureshot; Passionfruit and Lime Sour (7% ABV) with Pastore; and India Pale Ale (6.1% ABV) with Spookton.

Porterhouse Turner celebration

On 14th May, the 250th anniversary of the birth of the artist JMW Turner will be celebrated, and it so happens that that birthplace is now one of London's most famous bars. The Porterhouse, Covent Garden, will be hosting a special event at which The Turner Society will place an anniversary wreath below the artist's existing blue plaque.

Award-winning artist Adam Dant will unveil a striking 10 ft sq map tracing Turner's life and legacy. Adam is currently artist in residence for the City of London's Lord Mayor, Alastair King.

The festivities will include a limited-edition Turner-inspired beer. The Porterhouse will also invite artists to create an interpretation of one of Turner's famous paintings live on the Terrace.