

10 specials will mark Uley 40th anniversary



Uley head brewer Ken Lush

Uley Brewery, in Gloucestershire, is celebrating 40 years at the heart of its community and will be marking its anniversary with a range of 10 special beers.

The brewery employs and serves local people, with head brewer Ken Lush (pictured above) in charge of the brewhouse for 35 of those 40 years. A traditional tower brewery, Uley still uses traditional brewing techniques and English hops to make well-known award-winning beers such as Old Spot and Pig's Ear.

The brewery was built by Samuel Price in 1833, on the site of the lower village spring outlet. Brewing and malting continued under the aegis of the Price family and later the Ayliffe family until the collapse of the woollen mill trade at the end of the 19th century. The brewhouse and cellars went on to have many uses, mostly agricultural, but

were being used as kennels until Chas Wright, a local beer wholesaler, was given the opportunity to re-open the brewery in 1984.

He fully refurbished the site, with tanks made locally, until the brewery was ready to open again in 1985. The first pint was pulled at The Red Lion, Arlingham, which still serves Uley beer today.

At the end of 2018, Chas handed over the reins to Martin Brooks, who continues to develop the brewery in line with its traditional heritage.

"This is an exciting year for the brewery," said chief operating officer Emily Brooks. "We have one foot in the past with our commitment to traditional brewing techniques, but are looking to secure the future with new beers and more events for the local community to share in."

IN BRIEF

- Indie Rabble's latest West Coast IPA, The Mob Reloaded, has been named overall beer of the Festival at Indie Beer Feast, in Sheffield. Beers were judged by an experienced panel, including Amelie Tassin and Adrian Tierney Jones.
- Ikon (4.4% ABV) is a new NZ pilsner from Abyss. It's a crisp light lager, "deftly hopped with Nelson Sauvin and Motueka hops grown on the south island of New Zealand," says the brewer.



- I Love You (4.5% ABV) is a new strawberry blonde ale from Thornbridge. "Its soft pink hue is as inviting as its aroma, which brims with delicate floral and fruity notes," says the brewer. "Each sip reveals a burst of juicy berry flavours complemented by subtle hints of citrus, culminating in a crisp and invigorating finish."
- Electric Bear have collaborated with Independent Spirit of Bath and Bailies Coffee Roasters of Belfast to bring back their 5% ABV stout, Shenanigans, just in time for St Patrick's Day. The award-winning brew balances rich Irish roasted coffee and smooth Irish whiskey.
- Fettle has released its first lager (4.5% ABV) since it was established in 2019. It was brewed last year over two days, with organic floor-malted barley and organic whole-leaf Saaz hops. It was fermented slowly then lagered cold, resting in tank for more than 160 days.
- The Walls Leaned Away, a 7% ABV IPA from DEYA, is a further exploration into Vermont Ale yeast. It is packed with new Krush hops, from Yakima Chief Hops, providing layers of tropical fruit.



Licensing agreement for Toast and Freedom

Freedom Brewery is to exclusively brew and sell Toast beers nationwide, with Toast retaining ownership of their brand.

The businesses will remain distinct, independent entities, but will work together to deliver the same range of beers, but with greater choice and availability, and an even stronger sustainable impact.

Toast beers have always been brewed in partnership with other brewers, making use of spare capacity. This has allowed the brand to establish and grow without capital outlay, while avoiding the environmental cost of setting up new facilities. Toast co-founders, Rob Wilson and Louisa Ziane, will continue to lead the brand.

WHAT'S ON HIGHLIGHTS

10th-16th March

Sheffield Beer Week at various venues.

Until 16th March

Beer festival at JD Wetherspoon bars nationwide.

14th and 15th March

Chester Beer Festival at the Town Hall.

Harrogate Charity Beer Festival at the Crown Hotel, Harrogate.

15th and 16th March

Peterborough Cider Festival at the Parish Village Centre, Werrington.

20th-23rd March

Scarborough Beer Festival at the Corporation Club, Scarborough.

21st and 22nd March

Fakenham Gin and Beer Festival at the Community Centre, Fakenham.

PLAN AHEAD ...

26th-29th March

Wandsworth Common Beer Festival at Le Gothique, London.

26th-30th March

Spring Beer Festival at Billericay Brewery.

27th-29th March

Burton and South Derbyshire Beer Festival at the Town Hall, Burton.

28th and 29th March

Larbert Real Ale Festival at Dobbie Hall, Stenhuismuir.

Chelmsford Craft Beer Festival at Chelmsford Social Club.

29th March

12th Anniversary Beer Festival at Siren Craft Brew, Finchampstead.

2nd-5th April

Egham Beer Festival at the United Services Club.

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

Keystone Group to expand distribution of Hofmeister

Keystone Brewing Group has announced an exclusive GB-wide sales and distribution partnership with Hofmeister, named world's best lagers at the International Wine & Spirit Competition (IWSC).

First brewed in the UK in the 1970s, lifelong friends Spencer Chambers and Richard Longhurst relaunched Hofmeister after acquiring it from Heineken in 2016, moving brewing to Bavaria, the birthplace of lager. There, 500-year-old purity laws mean the beer is brewed from just three of the very finest local ingredients. In

The award-winning Hofmeister range is built on premium authentic Bavarian beers — Helles Lager (5% ABV) and Weisse (5.1% ABV), a Bavarian wheat beer. The brewery has also recently expanded into the low and no market with its Bearly Any, 0.5% ABV Helles.

The new partnership will enable Hofmeister to leverage Keystone's extensive on- and off-trade distribution network throughout Britain, with the aim of tripling its production output over the next three years.



Alcohol-free beer breaks records at Firebrand

Cornwall's Firebrand Brewing Co has started 2025 with record-breaking sales, in spite of it being traditionally the quietest time of the year for breweries. Their alcohol-free January sales were up 12% on the same month last year and 11% on December 2024. And they have enjoyed a 227% increase in subscriptions to their alcohol-free beers since the start of the year.

"We have been brewing beer since 2013 and have become used to the traditional patterns of business," said Joe Thomson, co-owner and head brewer at Firebrand Brewing Co. "In the past, most of our revenue was generated in the summer beer-drinking months, with another spike around Christmas. Meanwhile, the first few months of the year were always very quiet. Since we started adding alco-

hol-free beer to our range, things have changed, and this year has been the busiest January ever."

A report by global drinks data and insight provider IWSR says the UK no/low market more than doubled in 2024 versus 2023. No-alcohol sales grew 20% in the same period.



Lager is all about brewer's origin | UKHospitality: delay NI changes

Vocation Brewery is bringing its new premium lager, Hilltop, to the on-trade in a keg format, with supporting branded glassware.

Inspired by the brewery's iconic hilltop location, the lager marks a major step in Vocation Brewery's next phase of growth. At 4.3% ABV, it's crisp and refreshing, combining flavour and substance with easy-drinking approachability, says the brewer.

"Hilltop Lager is a tribute to where we started, a small independent brewery founded 1,000 feet above sea level in Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire," said Vocation marketing manager Chris Mitchell.

"We wanted to capture that sense of adventure and resilience that has always been a part of our story."

Looming April cost increases have caused hospitality business confidence to plummet to its lowest level since October 2022, says UKHospitality. That was when inflation was at a 40-year high.

With hospitality businesses about to be hit by £3.4 billion in additional annual costs in April, only 14% of businesses feel optimistic about the hospitality market, according to CGA by NIQ's Business Confidence survey.

Ahead of chancellor Rachel Reeves' spring statement, UKHospitality is highlighting the urgent need to delay the reduction in employers' National Insurance contributions threshold. The change alone will cost the sector an additional £1bn per year and will bring 774,000 hospitality staff into the threshold for the first time.