

CAMRA's Good Beer Guide warns of the impact of COVID-19

- *Expert commentators in the Guide, including celebrity chef Tom Kerridge, warn of the impact COVID-19 will have on the industry.*
- *The Good Beer Guide 2021 contains 387 pubs from across the West Midlands of which 88 are new entries in 2021.*
- *The Good Beer Guide 2021 reports 142 breweries across the West Midlands including 4 new breweries.*

This year's Good Beer Guide warns of the impact COVID-19 could have on the pub and brewing industry, as the national brewery numbers decline for the first time in nearly two decades.

Across the West Midlands, there has been 4 breweries opening and 8 have brewed their last pint (based on data collected up to the end of August 2020). CAMRA campaigners in the West Midlands fear this could mark the start of a decline in independent breweries in the area due to difficult trading caused by ongoing COVID restrictions and the threat of localised lockdowns.

Cy Day, Regional Director for the West Midlands said: "Thanks to the flexible approach the regions breweries have adopted since March; introducing new packaging formats, home deliveries, local collection from the brewery and a myriad of other initiatives there has been few closures. I'd like to thank the publicans and breweries who have continued to work so hard to ensure a safe environment is available so that we can enjoy beers and ciders while meeting friends and family. We look forward to continuing to support our local pubs and breweries in the year to come."

Nationally, the 2021 Guide has found the total number of independent UK breweries has dipped from 1,823 in 2019 to 1,816 in 2020* - the first time CAMRA's guide has recorded a decline in numbers since the explosion in UK breweries started in 2008. While most of the recorded decline will be from data captured pre-COVID-19, the trends in breweries no longer producing raises concerns the real impact of COVID has yet to be felt. CAMRA is currently calling on the Government to go further with its support package, arguing that it has not been able to mitigate the damage done to a sector that has been scarred by ongoing restrictions and curfews.

CAMRA's National Chairman, Nik Antona says: "Many pubs and breweries have fought hard and the majority have survived the first lockdown, but it's clear the industry was already in a vulnerable position when COVID-19 hit. Since then, breweries have all but been forgotten about, and may even be hit with higher taxes as the Government considers changes to Small Brewers Relief. "This is a pivotal time that could make or break the industry. Our pubs and breweries are going to need significant long-term support and funding throughout the coming months to survive. Otherwise, I expect to see substantial closures in future editions of our Guide."

The Good Beer Guide has also warned of the impact of COVID-19 on pubs, with celebrity chef Tom Kerridge penning the foreword, urging the country to 'stay strong and stay positive' despite the ongoing challenges. Mr Kerridge says: "We are now facing a difficult year of lockdown restriction and social distancing measures and, while every sector across the UK has felt the burden of COVID-19, brewers and pubs have most certainly taken the brunt of the impact. He adds: "The one thing that I think we have all missed during lockdown is human connection and social interaction, which above all else, is everything that the Great British Pub provides - a warm, happy and friendly place for people to drink and eat. It is imperative that we continue to support our breweries and pubs to preserve them for generations to come."

The Good Beer Guide is the Campaign for Real Ale's premier publication, featuring the very best pubs in which to find a great pint across the UK. Despite being hampered by a national lockdown and ongoing restrictions, thousands of independent volunteers have worked together to compile this year's entries, helping to identify significant trends and themes locally and nationally.

The Good Beer Guide 2021 is now available from the CAMRA shop at <https://shop1.camra.org.uk/product/the-good-beer-guide-2021> and there is an updated app version available for download on both iOS and Android devices.

Every effort has been made by CAMRA volunteers to ensure the accuracy of the Good Beer Guide but due to the ongoing restrictions and local lockdowns taking place, please ensure that you check directly with pubs for their latest opening times.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS: *Data collected at the end of August 2020.
A full PDF of pubs per county is available upon request for publicity purposes.

The new breweries across the region are:

- **Mashionistas**, Coventry, West Midlands
- **Printworks**, Stourbridge, West Midlands
- **Little Dewchurch**, Hereford, Herefordshire
- **Brothers of Ale**, Stourport on Severn, Worcestershire

The closed breweries across the region are:

- **Blue Bell Brewhouse**, Warings Green, Warwickshire
- **Bullen Brewing Co**, Ledbury, Herefordshire
- **Custom Head Brewery**, Lichfield, West Midlands
- **Dogbreath Brewery**, Kinver, Staffordshire
- **Evolution Brewery**, Shrewsbury, Shropshire
- **Marts Brewery**, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire
- **Pershore Brewery**, Pershore, Worcestershire
- **Punchline Brewery**, Wolverhampton, West Midlands

CAMRA Press Office (For full PDF enquiries)

Katie Wiles, Senior Communications Officer, 01727 798 452, press@camra.org.uk

West Midlands CAMRA

Cy Day, Regional Director, 07957 451190, rd.westmidlands@camra.org.uk