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■ The Bailey Head in Oswestry celebrates being named the best pub in Britain by CAMRA. Pic: Graham Mitchell.

PUB IS NAMED BRITAIN'S BEST

**Bailey Head is named
the very best in Britain
by ale aficionados**

OSWESTRY'S Bailey Head pub has sealed the most remarkable turnaround after going from a struggling boozer to being named the best pub in Britain.

Owners Duncon Borrowman and Grace Goodlad said they were in a "bit of a daze" after finding themselves in the national spotlight after the

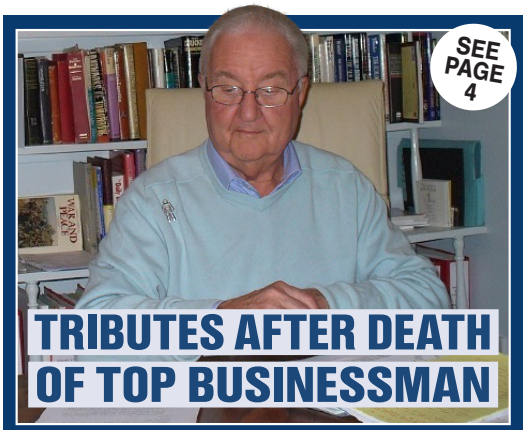
By Ruairi Walsh
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Campaign for Real Ale named it the UK Pub of the Year. The couple took over nine years ago after CAMRA had stepped in to prevent the pub being redeveloped.

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A visit to the best pub in the UK



■ The Bailey Head. Image: Ruairi Walsh

WHEN my editor said: "I have a job for you, I want you to pop to Oswestry's multi award winning pub and see what makes them so good", I have to admit it didn't require a huge amount of arm wrenching.

The Bailey Head which has just been named the CAMRA UK pub of the year has been growing a phenomenal reputation both locally and nationally since couple Duncan Borrowman and Grace Goodlad took over nearly nine years ago.

The first thing you notice when you walk in is just the friendliness of everyone. As someone new through the door you couldn't help but notice the warmth and friendly cheekiness of everyone there.

The couple are hugely proud of this and say they work hard to make sure absolutely everyone is made to feel welcome when they are there.

"We're very intolerant of intolerance," said Duncan.

"It's really easy," added Grace. "Just be treated as you would like to be treated yourself."

The pub is very much just a pub, not serving food and focusing on beer – but it is done to just very high level of excellence.

I ordered a stout, I was given the option of at least four and the handpull variety I was served was truly excellent and was definitely very 'moreish'.

When I asked the customers what it so special and why they kept coming back I was surprised just how many different reasons people loved the place.

"It is a very relaxing atmosphere, very friendly," said one customer.

Others expressed their pride in having it in the town: "It is a cornerstone of the town after very few years it has done extremely well."

Chirk Castle closed for maintenance

A NATIONAL Trust property has been closed this week while "essential maintenance" work takes place.

Chirk Castle confirmed on its Facebook page that it would be closed from Monday, January 20 until today, Wednesday, January 22 so the work could take place on the driveway.

The statement said: "We would like to inform our visitors that Chirk Castle and Garden and our estate will be closed on 20, 21 and 22 January due to essential maintenance work on our driveway.

"We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience this may cause and appreciate your understanding as we work to keep the estate safe and accessible.

"We look forward to welcoming you back when we reopen on 23 January."

Bailey Head owners celebrate



■ Cheers: Duncan and Grace

THE owners of the Bailey Head in Oswestry have been in "a bit of a daze" after being told they were CAMRA's UK pub of the year.

Duncan Borrowman and Grace Goodlad have said they have been left a bit stunned after receiving the news after a "bumpy" eight years in charge.

The award is the second major top UK accolade after being named pub of the year by the society of independent brewers (SIBA) in 2020.

"It's the second ultimate award," said Grace. "One is over there already from the independent brewers and they say we are the best – so that's pretty special. This one is from the other side from the consumer."

"It sounds a bit cocky but it kind of completes the set.

"We've known for a little while and have not been able to tell anyone.

"The local CAMRA branch chairman came in the day after he had surgery and discharged himself

from hospital to tell us because it is just massive news.

"The first two weeks have just been disbelief I have just been waiting for them to tell us we changed our mind."

Duncan added: "I think it is fair to say we have not been at a point of celebrating, we have just been in a bit of a daze.

The couple are expecting a large turnout today with people coming from all over the country with fellow landlords, breweries - including Oswestry's Stonehouse brewery – expected along with massive attention from the national press.

The couple have even been the receipt of special gifts including 36 roses. However this has come after years of hard work in an extremely difficult time for the industry.

"It's been a bumpy ride," said Grace. "It was the Castle Tavern when we first came here and it had been shut.

"The first six months were really hard. But we got onto the good beer guide and the market town pub of the year and we started to win awards and go up.

"That carried on until 2020 when we won the SIBA national prize and then the next week we got shut down and put into lockdown.

"We crawled out of that and then we were hit by the energy crisis."

The couple have said they hope the win will help bring tourism and guests which will benefit the whole town.

"It's not going to be everything but people who like a good pint will come," said Grace. "We already see beer tourism and have come because we are in the final four. If say 2,000 people come to visit the champion pub and they come with a friend or a partner. It's 4,000 extra visitors into the town – that's 80 coaches."

Oswestry pub named the best in the UK



■ Duncan and Grace after they won the CAMRA West Midlands Regional Pub of the Year and West Midlands Regional Cider Pub of the Year in

By Ruairi Walsh

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THE Bailey Head in Oswestry has been named the best pub in the UK by CAMRA.

The multi award winning pub has been named the Campaign for Real Ale's (CAMRA) overall Pub of the Year for the first time.

The Bailey Head had been failing under the ownership of a major pub company and was listed by CAMRA as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) to protect it from redevelopment.

Nine years ago, it was bought by Duncan Borrowman and Grace Goodlad who poured their knowledge and passion into

transforming the pub.

"We have always had a policy of Everyone Welcome, any person should feel happy and comfortable coming in by themselves and enjoying a drink, either on their own or chatting to other customers," said Duncan.

"We thrive on being the heart of the community and a place where people gather to celebrate or commiserate.

"While all of the focus tends to be on us as a couple, this win was also down to our incredible team of welcoming and knowledgeable staff, and to our wonderful regulars who have become very much a community in their own right."

Aside from providing a welcoming atmosphere, the Bailey

Head also boasts an impressive array of cask beer and cider something that has been built up over the last nine years.

"We are thrilled, we hope we can live up to the award. In our wildest dreams we never thought we would win CAMRA Pub of the Year," said Grace.

"When we bought the pub nine years ago it was failing and had been listed as an Asset of Community Value by the local CAMRA branch. That listing made it possible for us to save it from potentially becoming housing and turning it into the pub it is today."

Their dedication means that the Bailey Head has won a staggering roster of awards from CAMRA, the Society of Independent Brewers and Associates (SIBA),

The Shropshire GOAT and TripAdvisor.

Community and inclusion are at the heart of the pub, and it acts as a hub for locals to come together for good causes through events like their charity pub quizzes and live music.

Shrewsbury and West Shropshire CAMRA Chairman David Ricketts said: "The story of the Bailey Head from humble beginnings proves that any pub can become the best in the UK with some hard graft.

"Huge congratulations to Duncan and Grace and their hardworking team at the pub."

CAMRA Awards Director Laura Emson said: "There could not be a more deserving winner for the Pub of the Year than the Bailey Head."



■ Traffic at the Port of Dover. Pic: PA.

North Shropshire MP raises alarm over illegal meat imports at Dover

By Gavin Engelbrecht
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NORTH Shropshire's MP has called for urgent action to combat illegal meat imports at Dover.

Helen Morgan, addressing the House of Commons, expressed fears over the 'serious threat' to UK biosecurity and the livelihood of local farmers. She highlighted the challenges faced by farmers in Shropshire, particularly in the dairy and livestock sectors, and the implications of illegal meat imports.

Ms Morgan raised concerns about evidence presented by border authorities at Dover regarding these illegal imports.

They pose potential dangers, including the risk of 'devastating' diseases such as foot-and-mouth.

In 2001, foot-and-mouth disease resulted in 2,000 cases across most of the British countryside, with more than six million cows and sheep slaughtered.

The UK has been free of the disease since 2007.

Ms Morgan said: "In Shropshire, dairy and other livestock farmers have been having a torrid time recently and they will have read this news with a sense of dread.

"I'm also an officer on the All Party Group for Food Security and we recently heard some eye-watering evidence from the border authorities at Dover about illegal meat imports and the threat that they pose to UK biosecurity.

"Can the Minister explain to the House what assessment he's made of the problems with that process and what he intends to do to ensure that diseases like foot-and-mouth don't arrive in

the UK?"

In response, Daniel Zeichner MP, Minister for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, said: "I thank the Honourable Lady for the concern that she expresses, and I repeat the points I made earlier about the border controls that we have in place.

"Of course we've been aware. "I'm afraid this has been a long-running issue, but we have much stronger border controls in place than we would have done in previous times and we are working hard with the port health authorities to make sure that we crack down on illegal imports of meat."

Ms Morgan's concerns followed a government statement about foot-and-mouth disease, confirmed in the German state of Brandenburg last week.

This led to a ban on the import of cattle, pigs, and sheep from Germany.

