



Good Beer Guide and Pub-of-the-Year Voting Procedure

One of the most important functions that we perform as a branch of the Campaign for Real Ale is survey pubs throughout the year and then select, vote and write-up a selection for publication in the Good Beer Guide (GBG) as well as select and publicise our own branch Pub-of-the-Year (POTY).

Although surveying must be a year-round activity, along with reporting back to the branch, it obviously makes logistical sense to select, re-survey and vote for both purposes over the same period. The branch therefore maintains a Long List of pubs that members consider to be good enough for GBG consideration throughout the year.

The Stages

1. A Long List of potential GBG pubs is reviewed at each branch meeting.
2. The Long List is closed at the October branch meeting.
3. The Long List voting form is sent out by post or e-mail to all branch members.
4. Votes are counted after the deadline. The top 12 pubs are put forward for GBG (9 allocated entries plus 3 reserves) and the top 5 put forward for POTY.
5. The POTY voting form is made available on the website after the deadline.
6. The top 12 pubs from the Long List are accepted as GBG submissions, with the bottom 3 becoming reserve entries, and POTY votes are counted at the February branch meeting. The branch POTY is announced.

The Long List

The list of pubs in the current GBG along with others that are considered to be good enough to be included (if space was not an issue) is maintained throughout the year. It is available at branch meetings and on the branch website. Please note that HQ dictates the current number of pubs that can be submitted by Tendring Branch for inclusion in the GBG. This number is 9 but due to publication variables and other factors we have up to 3 reserves – the exact number of inclusions can vary from year to year. Pubs can only get onto the list if they have been suggested at a branch meeting – the last meeting for nominations being the October meeting after which the list is frozen. A pub that appears on the Long List must be approved by at least two members. This mechanism means members have ample time to test pubs prior to short-listing and voting.

GBG and POTY Finalist Selection

Following the October branch meeting the Long List is presented as a voting paper for selection. Members are asked to choose a number of pubs from the list. This number is the number required for inclusion in the GBG plus 3 spares – currently 9 plus 3. Members cannot vote for more pubs but they are entitled to vote for fewer.

When voting is complete the votes are counted with the 12 most popular being put forward for GBG selection and the 5 most popular being put forward as POTY finalists.

GBG Entries

It is quite possible that some members have fully completed GBG entry forms prior to the January meeting as they are often circulated beforehand. At the January meeting any pubs listed for inclusion that do not yet have a completed entry form need to have someone allocated to survey and write-up the entry.

POTY Voting

The 5 most popular pubs from the Long List voting are put forward for Branch Pub of the Year and survey/voting takes place between the top 5 being announced in December and the February meeting. Members who wish to vote must visit all 5 pubs and score appropriately based on the guidelines. (NB: If a pub wins for two years in a row it will be ineligible in the following year).

Final Selection

At the February branch meeting the GBG entry forms are collected and the final review takes place with the 9 main entries plus 3 reserves being decided. The POTY voting forms are also collected, so scores can be totalled to find an overall winner.



Good Beer Guide and Pub-of-the-Year Selection and Voting Guidelines

Generally speaking pubs that are listed, short-listed and selected for inclusion in the Good Beer Guide or as a branch Pub of the Year should conform to all the expected CAMRA guidelines – being a true public house and serving real ale in good condition being the most obvious two! After that there is tremendous scope for variation and it is left to individual members to make their mind up whether a pub is suitable or not – the following notes are intended to act as a practical guide.

Stability

Remember that what is decided in January doesn't go into print until September and the year on the cover will be one year on – adding up to a “shelf life” of two years or more! So – we don't want to send a visitor to one of “our” pubs that was put in because a temporary manager was running the place really well for a couple of months! Keep your ear to the ground and get to know what is going on - your decision should be based on recent history and your experience of whether someone is serious (and realistic!) about what they are doing.

Beer Quality

The single most important factor **MUST** be beer quality. Don't restrict your surveying to busy weekends – try going in on a Monday evening for a half and see if there is a difference. A pub that serves 2 excellent real ales is better than one that tries to keep 5 but 3 of them are vinegar!

Ambiance

CAMRA certainly has a leaning towards the “traditional” pub environment – no loud music, no noisy fruit machines, no big-screen telly but much of this is left to individual choice – if a pub serves its community by screening the occasional big sporting event or having gambling or gaming machines in one corner then it is simply doing its job as a public house.

Food

In today's difficult trading environment more pubs are turning to food to draw people in and increase profits. Whilst this seems entirely acceptable in evolutionary terms we have to watch out for the pubs that lose their community feel by becoming very close to a restaurant. If you don't feel comfortable at a very small bar or get asked if you have made a reservation you should probably reach for the panic button. That said good pub grub is often a very important part of a pub's appeal and good, wholesome fare should always make an ideal companion to good beer.

Community

A good pub is a meeting place, an escape, a place to unwind and a place to do business. A good publican can draw seemingly disparate people together and the loss of a village pub can have a very negative effect on a community. So – we must take into account how much a pub does for its community both by its very existence and by being pro-active.

The Bottom Line – Choosing Your 12 and Casting Your Vote

So – only select pubs you would recommend to someone and don't just tick boxes to make up numbers – remember you can select as few pubs as you like.

Please mark POTY votes out of a maximum of 10 on **ALL** the key factors - you have to visit **ALL** 5 pubs!