

Alan Canvess RIP

25 January, 1957 – 30 December 2025

Allan Sykes, Wolds Branch CAMRA



Alan Canvess, a vigorous, passionate Campaigner for CAMRA passed away on 30 December 2025 after a long illness.

Alan was born in Hull on 25th January (Burn's Night), 1957 and was brought up in the Newland Avenue area of Hull, where he lived all his life.

He attended Sidmouth Street Infants and Junior School and later Sir Henry Cooper High School before embarking on his career, mainly in the plumbing and heating industry.

In his younger days he was a keen and active sportsman, particularly he was a well-respected amateur footballer, playing centre attack for a local Hull Sunday League football team Glebe Rangers for many years.

He was also passionate about many other sports, in particular Rugby League (Hull FC), speedway (Hull Vikings) and was also a keen manager and referee for a local ladies' netball team. He was also passionate about supporting his favourite football team, St. Johnstone FC, enjoying many trips north of the border.

Like many teenagers, he developed a passion for socialising and drinking in local pubs and soon developed a very keen interest in real ales. This led him to joining the Hull & East Yorkshire Branch of CAMRA in his early 20's, later joining the Committee before moving up the ranks to become Branch Secretary and then Branch Chairman. For many years he was also the editor of the Branch magazine, Pub Mirror.

He was also enthusiastic and deeply passionate about Pub Heritage and Pub Protection, particularly taking the reins to protect historic pubs. He was instrumental in pioneering initiatives and developing local, regional and national inventories of historic pubs and pub interiors, initially in Hull and East Yorkshire but also later throughout Yorkshire and beyond.

He was a strong and passionate campaigner, stoic and often outspoken but always sincere, polite and friendly with a strong sense of values, honesty and integrity.

As part of the CAMRA National Planning Advisory Group, he was successful in getting a number of pubs statutory Listed status, including the Black Boy in Hull's High Street, The Lockwood Arms (later Bull & Buch), St John's Queens Road Hull and uniquely and famously the entire Bridlington Railway Station in order to protect the unique surviving Station Buffet as well as getting it included in CAMRA's National Inventory of unaltered interiors.

He was also involved in giving heritage and conservation advice on many planning applications affecting historic public houses, often spending many long hours working on research, drawing not only from his own extensive knowledge but also involving like minded companions and sympathetic local historians to present rational and well-reasoned evidence to governmental Planning and Conservation Officers.

Pubs like Hull's Olde White Harte, George Hotel, Polar Bear, Haworth Arms and Black Boy have all been saved to varying degrees from unsuitable or inappropriate alterations.

Unfortunately, there were losses too. Despite well researched and reasonable and rationally presented historic information, sadly losses were encountered. The loss of The Eagle at Skerne (shortly after Alan had been instrumental in getting this rare rural gem listed), was a particularly unsavoury and hard to take hammer blow. Also, despite providing a glossary of historical evidence, the ruthless demolition of the Golden Ball, Hull was a severe indication that local Planning Committees and even Conservation Officers were not always sufficiently sympathetic to the preservation of historic and heritage public houses.

Alan's other passions included animal welfare, he was a vegetarian for most of his life, and other local heritage matters. He was a member of local historic railway societies and part of the Hull Civic Society and the National Civilian WW2 Memorial Trust, the latter restoring the bombed Picture House, Beverley Road, Hull.

His campaigning expertise will be sorely missed by many, but his loss will be more severely acute and leave a huge irreplaceable hole in their hearts of those honoured enough to have known and loved him as a loyal, kind hearted, courteous, compassionate and trustworthy friend.

Rest in peace Alan and thank you.

Friend and former colleagues are meeting at the St Johns Hotel, Queens Road, Hull from 7pm on Friday 20th February to remember and celebrate Alan's life and service. All are welcome.