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UK Brewery Closures Threaten Historic Cask Ale Heritage

August 23, 2025

— *Categories: General News*

A series of closures by major European lager companies has sparked fears among campaigners that Britain's traditional cask ales could face a steep decline. Banks's Brewery in Wolverhampton is the latest to face closure under Carlsberg, following previous shutdowns including Wychwood Brewery in Oxfordshire and Ringwood Brewery in the New Forest.

Heineken has also announced the end of more than 150 years of brewing at Scotland's Caledonian Brewery, known for its Deuchars IPA. While some well-known labels, such as Wychwood's Hobgoblin, continue to be produced, they are now brewed far from their original locations. Others, like Banks's Mild, affectionately known as "Black Country Milk", have been discontinued entirely.

Ash Corbett-Collins, chairman of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA), expressed concern over the trend, stating: "For giant global brewers to abandon UK brewing heritage is a worrying sign of where the market is heading away from tradition, flavour, and community, and towards cost-cutting and consolidation into fewer, more remote hands."

Industry experts have challenged the justification offered by Carlsberg and Heineken, which cite a lack of demand for cask ales as the reason for closures. Beer writer Roger Protz highlighted that several independent brewers have reported strong or even record sales. Timothy Taylor's and Theakston in Yorkshire, Thornbridge, Wye Valley in Hereford, and St Austell in Cornwall have all reported increasing demand for their cask products.

Jane Peyton, founder of Beer Day Britain, warned that the loss of regional breweries would weaken the connection between communities and their local beers. “The recent closures forsake brand individuality, break the bond locals have for ‘their beer,’ and reduce consumer choice,” she said. “Cask ale is a symbol of Britain and differentiates the nation from its brewing counterparts.”

Despite the closures, Carlsberg Britvic maintains that it remains committed to cask ale production. A company spokesperson said: “We are hugely passionate about creating a sustainable and successful future for cask ales. We are delivering an ambitious long-term ale strategy, which includes new launches in cask ale.”

Campaigners argue that continued support for local breweries is essential to preserve a key element of Britain’s cultural and brewing heritage. As more historic sites close their doors, concerns grow over whether the unique character of British cask ales can survive in an increasingly consolidated market.