

Warm Beer, Pubs and Labradors: A Shared Britain

Adam Tugwell | 29 September 2026



Ambient Real Ale, country pubs with roaring log fires, and Labradors in every direction are good for everyone. We should be working to make that kind of reality accessible to all - not wasting the opportunity to do sober, constructive good for everyone by telling those who already enjoy it that they are somehow wrong.

When public figures reach for phrases like *warm beer, pubs and black Labradors* as shorthand for “right-wing” Britain, it reflects a wider trend in our politics: cultural point-scoring that reduces shared experiences to partisan symbols.

It's not about the individual who said it. It's about how easily our national conversation now slips into caricature.

The irony, of course, is hard to miss. "Warm beer" is an old Americanism - a cliché used for decades to caricature British culture. But historically, ambient or cellar-temperature ale was a working-class staple, not a symbol of privilege. For much of the industrial era, beer was safer to drink than water in many towns, and pubs were the informal meeting places where early trade unionism and the Labour movement itself took root.

The idea that warm ale or country pubs belong to one side of the political spectrum simply doesn't stand up to history. When these things are casually labelled as partisan, it shows how disconnected our political shorthand has become from the realities that shaped British life.

A few weeks ago, we dropped into Jeremy Clarkson's Hawkstone Arms for a pint and one of the fantastic burgers from the van. We arrived around midday on a Saturday. The marquee adjoining the array of reutilised shipping containers - now a bar, an outlet for the Diddy Squat shop and a meeting room - added just one more ingredient to the long line of things that have made Clarkson's post-motoring-journalism destiny so much more than anyone expected. And the thing that topped it all off, the detail that made this makeshift bar in the middle of the Cotswolds work even better, was the line of smiling Labrador-led couples and families emerging through the open flap door.

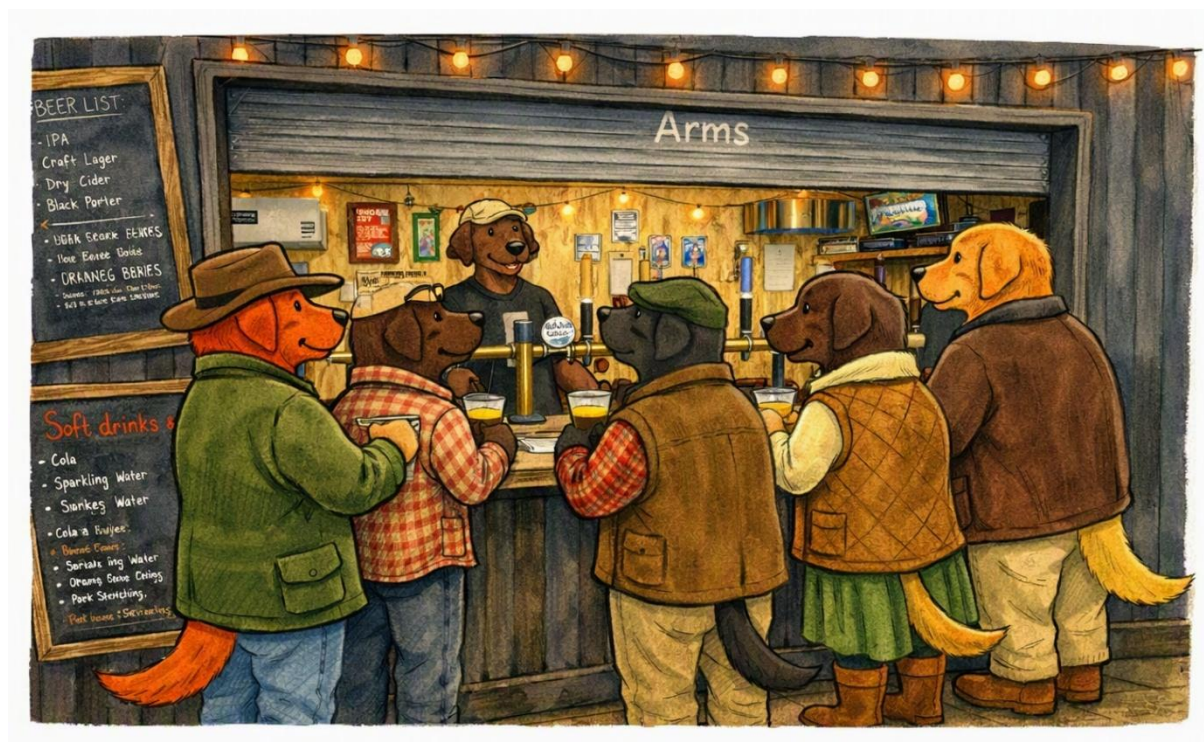


Figure 1 – 'Labradors are Always Welcome' – Inspired by The Hawkstone Arms

I've seen this scene repeated many times before. Not just in Gloucestershire, but across the UK. On an autumn or winter afternoon, the presence of a happy Labrador, a pint of

genuine British Real Ale - kept ambient or cellar-cool because its ingredients demand it - and even a countryside uniform or two, gives a warm and cheery feeling. More importantly, it offers a fitting reminder of what British pubs are really all about.

I've written before about the realities beneath the troubles facing the hospitality and pub trade - realities that have far more to do with political decision-making on all sides than any of our political class might like to admit. (For anyone who wants the deeper dive, the piece is here: [The Pub Crisis](#))

Before going further, I'll again say that the trade doesn't always help itself. In an age when normal life is quickly becoming unaffordable, people of all backgrounds know the difference between good and bad value - whether it's a pint or a basket meal. Being able to discern between a good and bad pint based on who brewed it and where is becoming more important than ever when deciding whether to return somewhere.

Pubs are in trouble. And whilst those who have an issue with alcohol consumption may be quietly thrilled, anyone celebrating the demise of the British pub - and any scene that captures what it represents for community, socialising, enjoying a trip out, or conducting formal and informal business alike - is overlooking something fundamental.

The loss of such places within every community, Labradors and country attire or not, illustrates one of the greatest travesties unfolding across our society. We are having every framework, guardrail and infrastructural rite of passage stripped away.

The outcome is that young people and upcoming generations are losing the opportunity to learn life and social skills through their environment - skills everyone used to absorb naturally.

Whether politicians choose to caricature this as a bucolic dream or rural idyll, whether they see it as a convenient way to talk up division between us in terms of an increasingly misappropriated left and right, the point is being missed.

The problems our legislators may hope to solve in Westminster are effects that all drill down to the same underlying causes. And one of the factors making everything worse is the political desperation to keep our current economic and governance model going - a forlorn attempt to stop it from imploding.

This desperation produces a constant flow of comments, narratives and policies that work in isolation, cherry-picked to play to certain tastes and audiences. And when set out without any consideration for the interconnectedness of public policy or what's really happening under the surface, they simply make everything worse.

The role of money, wealth and profit play a significant role in the ills of our society, and we will all have to face up to that before very long. But aspiring to be like others, improving ourselves, and spending time in environments that feel good for us is not always part of that problem.

It's regrettable that our public conversation so often drifts into framing ordinary parts of British life and culture as symbols of division, when they are anything but. Nobody benefits from that. It distracts from the real issues changing lives and communities across the UK - issues that deserve far more attention than cultural shorthand ever receives.

Warm beer, country pubs, and Labradors aren't right-wing. They're part of a shared cultural inheritance - one that should be protected, expanded, and made accessible to everyone.

The tragedy is not that some people enjoy these things. The tragedy is that fewer and fewer people have the chance.

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