

MerseyAle

CAMRA Liverpool & Districts Magazine

Winter 2015

FREE

**Save the Roscoe Head
43 years in the Good
Beer Guide
..... then sold down the River**



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE



Rally Round the Roscoe Head

Join us Saturday 7th November 12.30 see page 5



The WHEATSHEAF

Grade II Public House and Restaurant

The Wheatsheaf is a unique building which boasts a number of exciting and homely rooms. The fantastic bar and pool room is perfect for those sports enthusiasts. They contain a number of legendary memorabilia, and two huge big screens to watch the latest sporting events.

The pub is a British heritage building, as its historic interior has remained intact for many years which adds to its traditional and architectural importance.

Visit us today to avoid missing out on fantastic, food, service and atmosphere.

The unique building attracts customers from all over the country and even international visitors. The slanted' floors alone, are worth visiting the business for! The traditional and homely decor provides the perfect surrounding for a family occasion. The building boasts a fantastic beer garden and bowling green, which is an ideal place to spend a hot summer's day, and if that wasn't enough the sports bar exhibits a vast range of memorabilia for those sports enthusiasts!

The Wheaty - Real Ale Real Food

visit: thewheaty.com

Visit us on facebook at www.facebook.com/TheWheatsheafOfficial for all the latest updates on what sporting events are being shown at the Wheatsheaf.



Our award winning food is definitely worth visiting the pub for. We serve fresh, fast and home cooked food for every occasion. Our homemade chunky chips are the best around! We would advise to book a table, especially on weekends to avoid disappointment.

Mill lane Sutton Leach St Helens 10 minute walk from Lea Green Station Telephone 01744 813994

MerseyAle

CAMRA Liverpool and Districts Branch

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MerseyAle Advertising

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Contact

adverts@liverpoolcamra.org.uk

MerseyAle - Read online at

www.liverpoolcamra.org.uk

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Web Sites

Liverpool and Districts

CAMRA Branch

www.liverpoolcamra.org.uk

www.facebook.com

/CAMRALiverpool

@LiverpoolCAMRA

QR Codes page 55

Isle of Man CAMRA Branch

www.isleofmancamra.org.uk

CAMRA national site

www.camra.org.uk

This edition Cover

Photograph by Neil Lloyd



Previous edition



Winter Edition

The opinions expressed in MerseyAle are not necessarily those of the Editor, the CAMRA Liverpool Branch or CAMRA Ltd.



Welcome to MerseyAle and ManxAle

Save the Roscoe Head Campaign

Our front cover once again features the Save the Roscoe Head Campaign and the highly successful Rally held to support the pub and celebrate its achievement of 43 consecutive years in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide, making the Roscoe Head one of the Famous Five pubs, the only pubs in Britain to have been in EVERY edition of the Guide since 1974 (see pages 4 and 5). A second Rally is scheduled for Saturday 7th November at 12.30 (page 5). For new readers there is The Story So Far on page 7 and you can live the story in verse on page 9. To borrow from Alex Salmond of the SNP, we need to hold NewRiver Retail's feet to fire over the future of this classic community pub, especially as their Chairman, Paul Roy, has failed to respond to any of the many hundred letters he has received urging the company to sell the pub to its long established licensee, Carol Ross.

The Threat to the British Pub is a Challenge for CAMRA

Real Ale Needs Pubs and Pubs Need Real Ale

Across the country pubs are closing at a rate of 30 a week. In addition pub companies (PubCos) are selling off pubs as a desperation measure to reduce their unaffordable levels of debt. Many more pubs are likely to be sold off for other uses, as Punch Taverns has done in selling 158 pubs to NewRiver, including the Roscoe Head.

The challenge to CAMRA and to you the drinker is that if there are no pubs then where are you going to drink real ale from cask? This is the unique selling point of the pub. Real ale needs pubs and pubs need real ale, as shown by the Cask Report page 27. The Report shows

that real ale is on the rise and outperforming the rest of the beer market, but that pubs are increasingly under threat. CAMRA campaigns increasingly focus on Saving the British Pub.

New Real Ale Outlets in Liverpool

We feature a number of new real ale outlets in Liverpool which show that real ale in the city centre is prospering. There is news from Garston in South Liverpool of how the Masonic is bucking the trend of decline in real ale in the suburbs by breathing new life into a community pub through offering real ale at affordable prices (see pages 28-31)

And then The Pub at the End of the Universe

But where is It? What place is it twinned with? And how do you get there? You may be surprised by the answers on page 43 !

Liverpool Beer Festival

'The Only Beer Festival in the World to be Held in a Cathedral', returns in the Crypt of the Metropolitan Cathedral February 18th-20th. See page 52 for details of ticket sales.

Read MerseyAle, Join CAMRA

After reading this edition we hope you agree that now is the time to Join CAMRA and fight for the British Pub and Real Ale. Membership details are on page 53.



CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

John Armstrong
MerseyAle
Editor



Come Together..... Round the Roscoe Head

People Flock from Across the Country to Save the Roscoe Head Rally



Saturday 12th September saw people flock from across the country to support the Save the Roscoe Head Rally. The street outside the pub was packed with over 150 supporters all calling for new owners NewRiver Retail to sell the pub to long established Carol Ross, whose family has run the pub for over 30 years. In addition to a large contingent of Liverpool people determined to show how important the pub was to the city, there were a number of Liverpool councillors and fellow pub licensees who had travelled from as far afield as York, Bradford and London to support the campaign. Save the Roscoe Head pub demonstration. Landlady Carol Ross (pictured), & regulars demonstrate about the sale of the Roscoe Head pub on Roscoe Street, city centre. Geoff Edwards, Liverpool CAMRA Press Officer, said:



"It was a terrific turn-out and we heard some passionate speeches in support of Carol and the pub. We are encouraging people to write to the Chairman of NewRiver Retail, Paul Roy, urging him to sell the pub to its long serving licensee Carol Ross, in order to save

guard the future of this iconic Liverpool community pub, known and loved by people worldwide. today's event shows the strength of feeling about this famous pub and NewRiver should do the decent thing to safeguard the pub and sell it to Carol." (see pages 10-11 'What the Roscoe Head Means to Me')

Message of Support from CAMRA National Chairman

The National Chairman of CAMRA, Colin Valentine, sent a personal message of support from his home in Edinburgh for the Rally and the Save the Roscoe Head Campaign.

"With net pub closures still running at almost 30 a week, we can ill afford to lose thriving pubs at the heart of their community such as the Roscoe Head.

As one of only five pubs in Britain to have been in every edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide, and the only one north of Cambridge, the Roscoe Head holds a special place in the hearts of many thousands of CAMRA member's hearts - and I include myself in that list.

No visit to Liverpool, no matter your reason, is complete without a visit to this most iconic of community pubs..

Carol's family have successfully run the Roscoe for over 30 years and, if CAMRA have anything to do with it, they will do so for the next 30 years.

I would urge directors of the Roscoe's new owners, NewRiver Retail, to travel up from London for a day to find out just much of a community asset the pub is and to meet with Carol with a view to negotiating the sale of the pub to her and her family."

NewRiver Retail Convert Pubs into Retail Shops

Concern for the future of the Roscoe Head is heightened by NewRiver Retail's business model of buying pubs to convert into shops. NewRiver bought 202 pubs from Marston's at the end of 2013 and has already signed a deal with the Co-op to convert 63 of the pubs into convenience stores. By the end of 2014 NewRiver had submitted 39 planning applications to convert pubs to retail use. NewRiver has since purchased 158 pubs from Punch Taverns, including two in Liverpool, the Roscoe Head and the Saddle on Dale Street.

A NewRiver spokesperson said; "There are no plans AT THIS STAGE to develop the Roscoe Head or any of the other pubs we have acquired into convenience stores." (Editor's emphasis)

The company has said it will respect Carol's lease, which runs until 2021.

43 Years in the Good Beer Guide !

... and One of the Famous Five



The Roscoe Head has achieved the remarkable milestone of 43 consecutive years in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide. That is being in EVERY edition since the first

one published in 1974.

There are only FIVE pubs in the whole of the country to have achieved that record. That makes the Roscoe Head one of the Famous Five. The other members of this elite club are all south of Cambridge making the Roscoe Head the standard bearer for the North of the whole country.

Why Don't We Do It In The Road

To mark this occasion the Vice Chair of Liverpool and Districts CAMRA Branch, Jan Sorsby, presented Carol with a certificate recording her inclusion in the 2016 CAMRA Good Beer Guide. The presentation took place in the road outside the pub as part of the Save the Roscoe Head Rally. the award was met with acclaim by the over 150 supporters who filled the road for the Rally. Chants of 'Save the Roscoe Head' and 'Sell the Pub to Carol' left passers-by (and NewRiver Retail) in no doubt as to what the people of Liverpool wanted.

Such was the impact that on the following Monday the Chief Executive of NewRiver Retail, David Lockhart appeared unannounced in the Roscoe Head. His comment to Carol was, "You seem to have become rather high profile lately".

Despite many letters sent to the Chairman of

NewRiver, Paul Roy, by supporters of the Roscoe Head, no replies or acknowledgement have been received by the senders.

'Holding Their Feet to the Fire'

The words used by Alex Salmond when he resigned as leader of the Scottish Nationalist Party about his intention to keep the UK Government to their pledge of greater devolved powers for Scotland. Well, NewRiver, the same words apply to you in relation to the assurances you are giving about future intentions for the Roscoe Head. We will be holding your feet very close to the fire.

**The Next Roscoe Head Rally
Saturday 7th November 12.30
at the pub**

**Guest Speaker, Chairman of National CAMRA,
Colin Valentine**

**Come along and fill the road sending the
message -**

SELL THE PUB TO CAROL

Keep Their Feet to the Fire - Be There!



PEN FACTORY

Pen Factory is brought to you by the innovators of the original Everyman Bistro.

Located next door to the Everyman Theatre, the Pen Factory is equally designed for a swift lunch, leisurely evening meal or a drink with friends.

The team are old hands at providing a sociable space where good company, good food and interesting drinks are found.



6 Hand pumps serving an ever changing selection of cask ales and real cider, plus true continental lagers and an extensive wine selection all served by the glass.

Teas and coffees are also available throughout the day in a relaxed contemporary space.

All food is prepared in our open kitchen from prime ingredients. Salads, small plates, main meals, desserts and more available throughout the day and evening.

We work closely with artisan brewers, independent wine growers, local farmers and specialist food suppliers.

13 Hope Street Liverpool L1 9BQ 0151 709 7887

Opening times

Midday to midnight. Food until 10pm. Closed Sunday and Monday



The Roscoe Head - The Story So Far

Monday 24th August. The Liverpool Echo breaks the news that the Roscoe Head has been sold by Punch Taverns to NewRiver Retail, a company with a business model of buying and converting pubs into convenience stores, as part of a £53.5 million package of 158 pubs. The Saddle on Dale Street Liverpool is also included. Licensee Carol Ross is quoted as saying the sale had come out of the blue with no consultation. She fears for the future of the pub.

The Liverpool Echo reports that Carol is willing to buy the pub from NewRiver Retail to secure its future as a classic community pub with a national reputation as one of the Famous Five.

Wednesday 26th August. Liverpool City Council Councillor, Nick Small, launches an online petition to have the Roscoe Head listed as an Asset of Community Value (this would provide a six month period of grace should a change of use for the pub be proposed). The petition attracts over 1,600 signatures and comments (see What the Roscoe Head Means To Me pages 10-11).

Liverpool CAMRA Branch launches social media campaign to Save the Roscoe Head.

Monday 7th September. The ACV for the Roscoe Head is approved by Liverpool City Council

Friday 11th September. MerseyAle Autumn edition is published with Save the Roscoe Head as the front cover and five pages of coverage.

Saturday 12th September. The Save the Roscoe Head Rally is held outside the pub with over 150 people present including a number from across the country. Carol as the Roscoe Head licensee is presented with certificate marking inclusion in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide for the 43rd consecutive year. (see pages 4 and 5)

Letter Campaign begins urging Chairman of NewRiver, Paul Roy, to agree to sell the pub to its licensee, Carol Ross. (no replies or acknowledgements to these letters have been received)

Monday 14th September. The Chief Executive of NewRiver Retail, David Lockhart, visits the Roscoe Head unannounced, commenting, "you seem to have become rather high profile recently".

Saturday 7th November 12.30 at the pub.

The next Roscoe Head Rally is held to urge NewRiver Retail to sell the pub to Carol Ross. Guest speaker is the National Chair of CAMRA, Colin Valentine (see page 5).

The Story Continues.....

But the Battle to Save the Roscoe Head is Not Yet Won

The ACV Gives Only Limited Protection

The ACV only applies if there is an application for a change of use from being a pub. The pub can be sold at anytime without warning if it is sold as a going concern. This is what has happened with the sale of the pub by Punch Taverns to NewRiver. Even though the ACV had been granted before the sale had been completed it could not stop it from going through. A rent review is due on the Roscoe Head by May 2016 Carol Ross's lease on pub expires 2021 – just five years from now

NewRiver Retail has not made clear what their longer term intentions are for the Roscoe Head as a pub and as a property.

The Campaign to Save the Roscoe Head Continues.....

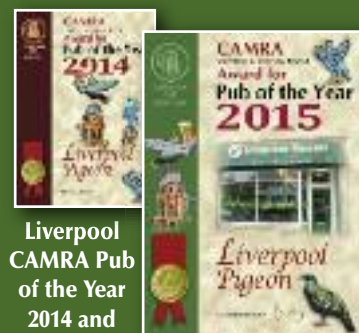
LIVERPOOL PIGEON

14 Endbutt Lane, Crosby, L23 0TR

MicroPub



Liverpool Pigeon is Merseyside's original micro pub. We opened October 2013 and celebrate the fantastic beers we have in the North-West by showcasing beers around the region and further afield.



Liverpool CAMRA Pub of the Year 2014 and 2015

www.liverpoolpigeon.co.uk

- Small single roomed establishment
- Sells real (not fizzy) cider
- No spirits/alco-pops or keg products
- Shuns national or multi-national products
- No tv, juke box or gaming machines
- Conversation as entertainment
- Small range of beer snacks

5 Handpumps
Serving cask conditioned ales



Tues - Fri 4 - 9 Sat 12 - 9 Sun 12 - 5
Closed Monday

Buses: X2, and 47 from Queen Sq L'pool and 54 from Victoria St L'pool



ROSCOE HEAD

Winner of many awards and one of only FIVE pubs to feature in every edition of the Good Beer Guide. Over 40 years of Good Beer Guide entries!



www.roscoehead.co.uk

The Roscoe Head is a true English public house with lots of character. One of the few pubs in Liverpool and indeed Great Britain to have survived the onslaught of the super pub chains and remains unspoilt. The Roscoe Head is a very special watering hostelry. The Roscoe Head is a town local with customers from all walks of life, the backroom debates are always entertaining whether it be politics or football on the agenda the banter is always good.



6
**REAL ALES
TO CHOOSE
FROM**

Try our delicious home-cooked food served Mon- to Fri 11.30am - 2.30 pm

QUIZ NIGHT

Tuesday Commencing 9.30pm -
max 4 players to a team

FREE BUFFET

PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT FOR CASH PRIZES
Tuesday night after quiz

CRIBBAGE NIGHT

Every Wednesday Evening

CAMRA Liverpool & Districts **PUB of the YEAR 2012**

24 Roscoe Street L1 2SX Tel: 0151 709 4365



SAVE THE ROSCOE HEAD



Dear Mr Roy,
As you're probably well aware
My livelihood is in the balance
But, you don't seem to care

Thirty years we've run this pub
So, we'll stand up and fight
For what I and my customers
Believe is only right

We held a rally, gained support
Everyone invited
The press were there and CAMRA too
The city stood united

We sell many ales from far and wide
Our beer is but the best
You can sup a pint of regular
Or try our range of guest

We're one of only five 'best' pubs
In the whole of the UK
We'll invite you down to take a look
If you care to pass this way

We're the hub of the community
A fulcrum in the wheel
The life and soul of Liverpool
So offer us a deal

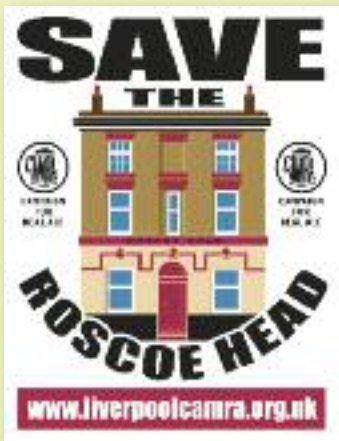
So come, display compassion
Use your influence as a boss
And sell the Roscoe Head
To the lovely Carol Ross !



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

Written by Alan Harrison





What the Roscoe Head Means to Me

Local comments :

"Liverpool needs well run community pubs like the Roscoe Head – not just for the local population but for their contribution to tourism. Many people from other parts of Britain and the rest of the world come to visit the Roscoe Head" (This view is borne out by many other comments)

"Don't let a greedy group destroy this Liverpool icon"

"How much Liverpool heritage must we lose in the name of big business"

"I have been visiting this absolute gem of a pub since the 60s - it's unique"

"I moved to Liverpool 3 years ago. I live in Tuebrook but the Roscoe is my local. It's like finding a doctor, dentist or hairdresser – you have to be happy with your choice"

"I'm on holiday in sunny France – going to the Roscoe is my one consolation when I have to leave and come back home"

"I first visited the Roscoe Head in 1968 when en route to the Liverpool University Students Union.

I liked it then and I like it now. It is as warm and convivial today as it was in 1968. An unchanged gem for over forty years. It is inconceivable that a civilised society would allow this pub to be taken over by a company that converts pubs into shops."

"I first visited the Roscoe Head in 1975 when I began going out with my husband. We were both students at the time. I loved the

feel of the pub, the friendly atmosphere, the cosy rooms. I had my first pint of real ale here. I've been coming in off and on, ever since. It's a talkers pub – you often fall into conversation with interesting people. My daughter loves the pub. It was the first pub she went into when she was eighteen. She says, 'They always put a smile on your face'."

Comments from Around Britain

Worsley - "A wonderful Liverpool institution we cannot afford to lose"

Burton-on-Trent "The RH is one of the best pubs in the UK. This is terrible news for Liverpool drinkers"

Lytham "It's one of my my favourite pubs anywhere in Britain. I live 40 miles away but like to visit every few months"

Scarborough "A regular must on my trips to Liverpool"

Douglas IOM - "It would be a disgrace to lose this little gem. It's a pub with so much history and the landlady is one of the experienced that the pub business could find"

East Grinstead "The RH is part of Liverpool life and the city's heritage. It would be a travesty were it to be lost".

Abergavenny - "I've visited this gem of a pub – great hospitality, great ale and great heritage. It must not be lost"

Poole, Dorset - "This pub is well known to beer drinkers throughout the country, it must be saved"

Newcastle - "I was a regular user of this pub for over 40 years before moving away but I still visit when back in Liverpool. I know how important it is to the local population and to the city's heritage"

Doncaster - "It's the first pub I head for in Liverpool"

Oxford - "The RH has bags of atmosphere, hospitality and history"

Wraybury - "Carol Ross and her team deserve better than to have the rug pulled out from under them by the likes of New River Retail"

Ruabon - "It's one of the first pubs I head for when in Liverpool"

Bingley - "Its reputation has travelled far and wide. I made a beeline for it on recent visit to Liverpool and was not disappointed!"

Appleton - "The Roscoe is a classic – walking through the door always feels like coming home"

Prestatyn - "It's a Liverpool icon. I always visit on my monthly trips to the city"

London - "As someone who lived in Liverpool for six years, I think it's places like the RH that sum up its character. I always visit when back in the area and when I recommend Liverpool as a destination to friends and colleagues, it's because of the city's unique pub culture"

London - "I visited Liverpool specifically to go to this pub"

London - "I'm from Liverpool and this pub is a home from home to me. It's very well run and a much loved institution"

Cork - "As a frequent visitor to Liverpool I think it would be a disgrace to lose this wonderful establishment"

Belfast - "The Roscoe Head epitomises what a good pub should be"

Scotland - "As a Dane, now living in Scotland, I've had many a good pint in the Roscoe Head – it's a great little pub and must be saved"

Cwmbran - "a gem of a pub I've visited many times. It must be there when I come again"

Comments from elsewhere in Europe and the Rest of the World

Waremmme, Belgium - "It's one of favourite pubs when I visit England"

Savonlinna, Finland - "The RH is one of the reasons why I visit Liverpool"

L'Escala, Spain - "One of Liverpool's most iconic pubs"

Australia - "I get such a good feeling when I visit this pub – how many other pubs are this small, cosy, vibrant, cheerful, relaxed, classy, well stocked and well loved? If you asked any English man or woman what their ideal pub would be like, this would pretty much be it"

"I now live in Australia but the Roscoe is the first place I head for when back home. I met most of my lifelong friends there"

Maine, USA - "I'm originally from Liverpool and the Roscoe is part of the fabric of my life. I know it also adds to the tourist experience. We need to preserve these unique places. I have many happy memories of meeting friends in this superb hostelry"

Brazil - "it's the heart and soul of the community"

Northampton MA - "The RH is a jewel amongst the fast disappearing pubs of Great Britain"

Lompoc CH - "I love this pub and when I travel to Liverpool again, I hope it will still be there"

Frequently used phrases – 'pub of great character', 'so much history' – some mention of William Roscoe – 'part of our heritage' – 'must be protected/preserved'.

Clearly the Roscoe Head is an iconic Liverpool pub which is valued not just across Britain but also across the World.

We Must Save the Roscoe Head for Liverpool and the World

List of comments compiled from the petition by Jean Pownceby



"The Roscoe is a classic – walking through the door always feels like coming home"



J.D.Wetherspoon

North Western

The moment you walk into the recently opened JD Wetherspoon, the North Western, you realise you are walking into a piece of Liverpool railway history. As you walk in from the Lime Street Station concourse you will see in front of you on the wall a railway Beware of Trains metal sign, alongside other railway artefacts. To your left is a



3D representation of one of the great railway photos taken by Eric Treacy, one time clergyman at Edge Hill and a nationally renowned railway photographer. This shows a Royal Scot class steam locomotive storming up the deep stone cutting from Lime Street to Edge Hill.

No Head of Steam

In addition to having been part of the London and North Western Railway hotel which closed in the 1930s, the rooms were previously the Head of Steam pub, which was renovated at great expense



in the 1990s. The Grand Hall had a truly impressive bank of twenty hand pumps on the long bar. The pub also had a large and extremely valuable array of railway artefacts, including Liverpool station totems and engine nameplates, but these disappeared after a few years when the pub was leased out to its manager. The Head of Steam never seemed to get up a full head of steam, going into a protracted decline, becoming increasingly shabby with many rooms closed off, resulting eventually in its sale to JD Wetherspoon.

The North Western - Impressive Gateway to Liverpool

An impressive amount of work has been done by JD Wetherspoon to revitalise the rooms. The entrance from the station concourse has cosy corners and exposed brick leading you into the



main room with its high ceiling and large windows providing a panoramic view of St George's Hall. This makes an impressive impact on rail travellers arriving in the city. The gallery has been renovated to provide more secluded seating high above the bustle of the main room. The toilet area is upstairs.

Also in the main room is the rather surprisingly small L shaped bar. Customers often do not realise there is a second face to the bar, with the result that one side can become very crowded with people seeking to be served, whilst the less visible side is very quiet and definitely the side to

use if you need to be served quickly. There are twelve hand pumps spaced around both sides of the L, so you need to view both sides of the bar to know all the beers that are on sale. Again this can be difficult when the bar is busy with people stood in front of the small bar counter.

Gateway to Liverpool

The Grand Hall is now a quieter seating area with larger tables useful for dining. The long bar from the Head of Steam days has been removed. The high walls display a selection of large railway and shipping posters from the National Railway Museum to continue the railway theme. The former unsuccessful American Diner room is now the main kitchens. A useful feature for railway travellers is the availability of food on the usual Wetherspoon menu from 7am until 11pm.

So Liverpool Lime Street now has a gateway to match the style of its North Western Railway heritage, providing an impressive welcome for visitors to the City.

John Armstrong



CROSBY BOTTLE BEER SHOP

British and Foreign Bottled Beers



At the last count we had over **500** British Ales. Plus Belgian, German and Italian Beers

Selling beers from all the North West Breweries, the Lake District and more.

Extensive Foreign bottled beer selection.

Including American, Polish and Australian. Our bottled beer range is constantly changing and expanding. Come in and have beer browse!

Mini Kegs ■ Spirits ■ Liverpool Gin ■ Ciders

Closed Monday. Open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday 1pm - 7pm.
Friday 1pm - 8pm, Saturday 10am - 8pm Tel: 0151 949 1834

59 College Road Crosby L23 0RL



@crosbybeershop

8th annual **CROSBY BEER FEST** 2016

showcasing  Ales from Wales + a few local brews!

18th-20th February 2016

Thur./Fri. 5.00pm till 11.00pm
Sat. 12.00pm till 11.00pm

St Luke's Hall, Liverpool Rd.

Admission £5

FREE! Non alcoholic "drivers bar" available

facebook.com/crosbyrotary
crosbybeerfest.com

ALL PROCEEDS TO LOCAL CHARITIES

Food by Pioneer Restaurant

Live Music Friday & Saturday



The lights go on as Mackenzie's opens

Behind the doors of what had become that derelict-looking, closed branch of HSBC bank on the corner of Rodney Street and Leese Street, a lot has been going on since January of this year. It has been transformed, and in late September the doors opened on Mackenzie's Whisky Bar, stocking over 200

Mackenzie's is spacious – "I never knew there was so much space here", said an ex HSBC employee! – and light and airy, with large windows all round the building, providing excellent panoramic people-watching opportunities in this lively area of town. It is tastefully and comfortably furnished, largely in an attractive pale grey for the wood panelled walls and armchair seating, but brightly contrasted with vivid red and blue more informal seating and bar stools, Italian, red glass chandeliers, and Victorian tiles surrounding the



whiskies from across the world, but also sporting five handpumps, free of tie, from which an increasing range of local real ales is promised, together with a changing national beer. The people behind this exciting new venture are the family responsible for two well established city centre pubs, the Richmond Hotel and the Victoria Cross. But its General Manager is Arran Bailey, formerly of the Everyman Bistro before its closure in 2011, and since then until now, the Salthouse Tapas restaurant.



Arran Bailey

artwork adorns the walls, including a large framed portrayal of Admiral George Brydges Rodney, 18th century naval officer and military leader, whose famed portrait by Thomas Gainsborough helpfully points you in the right direction as you descend to the toilets!



Long, mirrored, well-stocked bar. A selection of unusual

And there's more! Steps to the rear lead to a beer garden area, surrounded by greenery and slatted wood panelling, with brightly coloured wrought iron tables and chairs, and an unusual



6 Cask Ales
3 Lagers
3 Ciders

Teas & Coffees

Traditional
Bar Food

THE STAGE DOOR
TAP

at The Queen's Royal

New Brighton's hidden gem for the real ale enthusiast

All Star
Gallery

- EAT
- DRINK
- SLEEP

0151
691 0101



**ALWAYS 6 CASK ALES
plus another 3 conditioning**



Regularly changing choice includes the excellent selection from Phoenix & Hawkshead Brewery, plus many more. Also a choice of speciality premium lagers on draught including Peroni & Krombacher.



**PROUD RUNNERS UP OF
CAMRA'S WIRRAL PUB OF THE YEAR AWARD**

www.thequeensroyal.co.uk

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 /TheQueensRoyal

The Queen's Royal - New Brighton Waterfront - Wirral - CH45 2JT



outdoor sitting room effect with two armchairs and 'fireplace' in the area closest to, and visible from Leece Street. It will probably be getting a bit cold for that by the time you read this but inside there will coal effect gas fires to warm up by!



Other plans Arran told me about, which may also be in place when MerseyAle comes out, are to serve food Tuesday to Sunday from 12 to 6, and to have mid-week live music – and there are plans for CAMRA discount on real ales. Sounds good!

So – why is it called Mackenzie's?

William Mackenzie (1794-1851) was a civil engineer who earned his fortune through a variety of

brother in 1868. In 1985 this unusual memorial feature was Grade II listed by English Heritage. So, obvious local connections. And there's more! Mackenzie was also the subject of legend – he had apparently been an inveterate gambler, and a wonderfully improbable local legend tells of



how he was supposedly entombed at a table with a winning hand of cards! And that's not all – on a dark winter night, it is said a tall man in a large cloak and a top hat can be seen on Rodney Street – the ghost of William Mackenzie.


And now we have Mackenzie's Whisky Bar and Pub

...on the corner of that very street, but no sightings in there as far as I know! However, if you haven't



seen the tombstone, do take a walk along (in the Mount Pleasant direction) and have a look – in the daylight!

Mackenzie's is open every day from 12 to 11.30.

More on Mackenzies Whisky Bar 

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The Whisky Menu – Mackenzie's Whisky Bar

'what whisky cannot cure, there is no cure for'

This is the wise advice on the Mackenzie's Whisky Menu. MerseyAle ran the rule over the whisky offering.

The individual whisky descriptions are well informed and well written by someone who knows malt whisky and can describe the taste and characteristics clearly for both novice and aficionado alike.

There are over 200 whiskies on the list, with 44 Scottish Single Malts, plus malt blends, Irish Whiskeys, Bourbons and Japanese Whiskies. The number of Scottish Single Malts is somewhat low for a specialist whisky bar where you would expect something in excess of one hundred allowing for different expressions of the same

whisky. Indeed in Liverpool, the Lion Tavern, Moorfields, offers over 80 malts including different expressions, whilst in Scotland over 200 is common.

The Mackenzie list does include some different expressions of the same whisky, including Bruichladdich Islay (4), Auchentoshan Lowland (3), Old Pulteney (4) and Lagavulin and Laphroaig Islay (2). A surprising gap in the list is any whisky from Comletown such as Springbank or Longrow. There are also unusual malt blends from Compass Box and Douglas Laing. Prices for a 25ml measure range from £3.50/£4.00 for some of the 10year year olds to around £10 for the more specialist expressions, up to £50 for the rarest, a Michael Couvreur bottling in sherry cask matured in Burgundy, France –



indeed Mackenzie's is a rare outlet for the full range of Couvreur bottlings. There are plans to organise guided tasting sessions of different whisky styles.

Mackenzie's represents a good start in presenting a range of quality whisky, but it needs to go another mile to be in the category of specialist whisky bars, especially regards its rather limited range of Scottish malts. Like the curate's egg, the list can be said to be good in parts.

John Armstrong

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SNOWBALL CAMPAIGN

CALLING ALL WOMEN REAL ALE DRINKERS!

Advance notice!

In celebration of International Women's Day 2016, women brewers across the world are again uniting to raise awareness and promote women in the brewing industry. All breweries will be brewing the same beer on the same day, and other women are invited

Following our very successful women's evening in the Dispensary in June with Lisa, from Riverhead Brewery and Liz from Ossett Brewery (see report in Autumn edition of MerseyAle, pp 11-14), we are invited to take part in the above event at Riverhead Brewery in Marsden near Huddersfield. It will take place on Saturday, 5th March 2016, the nearest Saturday to International Women's Day (8th March), from 10am to 4pm.

If you are interested/would like to know more, email Jean at contact@liverpoolcamra.org.uk. Further information will be sent to all interested parties early in the New Year.



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MerseyAle PUB NEWS

continued



New Real Ale Outlet

The Dough Bar opened in September on the ground floor of the Grand Central student accommodation on Skelthorpe Street, to the left of the side exit from Lime Street station. The pub is run by Matt and Ian who also run the Font that is similarly under student accommodation on Arrad Street behind the Everyman Theatre. At the Dough Bar two hand pumps are serving mainly LocAles, but **Redwillow** and **Purple Moose** will also be stocked. As the name suggests, the main food is Pizza, but other choices are available. Hopefully the Dough Bar will introduce the local students to real ale. Everyone, of course, is welcome

Ma Egerton's Stage Door, next to Lime Street Station, is to be sold by auction at Christie's. Business man and actor, Iain Hoskins, is re locating on a part time basis to Los Angeles USA and feels that he cannot continue to give Ma's the attention it needs, hence the sale. Over a three year period he has greatly enhanced the pub, refurbishing the exterior and



given a renovation set to include new toilets, an improved seated area in the existing beer garden and a new, elevated beer garden above it. The work will also improve disabled access to the Roscoe Street premises. Built in 1783, The Grapes is one of the oldest pubs in Liverpool, with stories and many sightings of ghosts. Owners Anna Slater and Paul Agoro are determined the bohemian feel of the pub will not be lost (not sure about the ghosts!). Anna says: "The pub will remain the same in terms of staff, drinks, music policy and friendly family vibe. We don't plan on changing too much." The live jazz sessions, the Thai food and the changing range of nine real ales, including LocAles, will all continue.

The Beer Emporium on Renshaw Street, once a real ale bar, and later Sals, has reopened again as **Cheeky Jacks**. Unfortunately real ale is not available. Further along the street the cask beer at the **Liffey** did not last long. Poor demand means the hand pump is now unused. Similarly, sales of real ale at **McCooley's** on Concert Square have not met expectations and has not been available recently.



interior emphasising its historic theatrical connections and has introduced real ale to a long time keg only pub. He will be continuing to run the pub into 2016. He will continue to run his other pub, Ma Boyle's, Tower Building, The Strand, with a manager.

The Grapes, 60 Roscoe Street, Renovation scheduled for January 2016. Widely known as 'the Little Grapes' and reputed to be the Most Haunted Pub in Liverpool, the good Beer Guide listed Grapes is to be

Lark Lane - 'Bier Lark Lane' has been rebranded as **'Love & Rockets'** selling Craft Beer and Pizza. Two or three cask ales continue to be served, mostly supplied by Liverpool Craft. Fourteen beer fountains supply keg craft and foreign beers. The pizza menu offers unusual choices and is good value. All day breakfast is also available. Sports television continues to be shown.

Belle Vale to be a Pub Desert? Further to the report in the Autumn edition I have been told the **Cat Whiskers** at Belle Vale has also closed, so if the **Bridge** is redeveloped the area will be a pub desert.

Beer of the CAMRA Sandgrunder Southport Beer Festival in October was **Abyss** from Neptune Brewery of Maghull.

The 2016 CAMRA Manchester Beer and Cider Festival is in a new venue Wednesday 20th to Saturday 23rd January 2016, at **Manchester Central**, formerly known as G Mex and originally the Cheshire Lines Manchester Central Station. This brings the Festival back to the heart of the city (the last two years have been at the Velodrome). The large size of the main former train shed



hall allows the retention of all the features which attracted over 11,000 drinkers to the 2015 festival. The festival will feature a massive choice of over 500 beers, ciders and perries across a range of bars. Pub News by Tony Williams and John Armstrong

THE GRAPES

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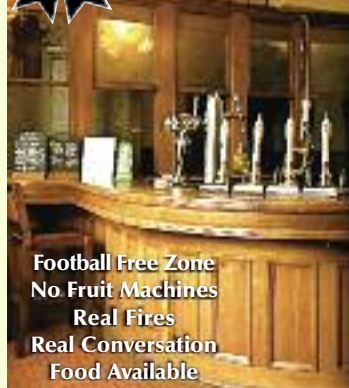
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MerseyAle Cider News



Robin Hood and Little John wins CAMRA's National Cider Pub of the Year

A Nottingham pub that reopened less than 18 months ago has won the ultimate cider award and has been named winner of the CAMRA National Cider Pub of the Year 2015.



The Robin Hood & Little John in Arnold, Nottingham, has been named the best place in the UK to drink Real Cider by CAMRA. The pub has a long history dating back to 1750, but closed down in 2013 before having new life breathed into it in August 2014 through a partnership between Nottinghamshire's Lincoln Green Brewery and Leicestershire's Everards Brewery, under the management of Anthony Hughes and Lorraine Swain.

Owner of Lincoln Green Brewing Company and Lincoln Green Public House Company, Anthony Hughes said;

"Firstly may I say how delighted Lorraine, Mark and all of us at Lincoln Green are to have won this amazing award! I'd personally like to say a huge thank you in particular to Ray Blockley for the support and



advice he's given us over the last twelve months in all things 'apple' – I know that much of our success is as a result of the little things we've implemented after many discussions with Ray and we're very grateful to him."

Since its reopening and new management, the pub has won the Nottingham CAMRA Cider Pub and Nottingham CAMRA Pub of the Year 2015 as well as being named the East Midlands Pub and East Midlands Cider Pub of the Year.



The pub has become famous for its 'real cider' which is made from pure fruits with no additives or chemicals and served naturally still, unlike commercially produced cider which is force-carbonated to give it fizz. Real perry is produced in exactly the same way as real cider but with pear juice instead of apple juice. Sarah Newson, the organiser of the Cider Pub of the Year competition had this to say about The Robin Hood & Little John; "This is an amazing achievement for a pub that not only just re-

opened last year, but had never even been in the competition before. A great feature is its 'cider wall' which enables the cider and perry to be served at a consistent cellar temperature, providing the customer with an excellent drinking experience."

The pub's cider wall features eight ciders and perries which are always from smaller producers rather than big brands.

Anthony Hughes had this to say about CAMRA's decision at the 2015 Members Weekend and AGM in Nottingham to adjust its definition of real cider;

"We fully support CAMRA's definition of real cider and acknowledge the recent amendment to remove the criteria that 'no added flavourings to be used' and to allow 'pure fruits, vegetables, honey, hops, herbs and spices, yet no concentrates or essences' to be added."

Anthony Hughes added, "We aim to ensure that our customers understand the provenance of our ciders, and what it contains with informative articles in our table top menus."

CAMRA voted at their last AGM in Nottingham to widen the definition of real cider to include versions produced with natural added fruits and spices, such as the popular 'Blush' ciders which have raspberries added after fermentation giving both a unique flavour and colour to the cider.

Merseyside's representative in the National Cider Pub of the Year competition was the Good Beer Guide listed Cricketers in St Helens.

The Globe

The **Globe** is a small, very cosy traditional two roomed local opposite Central Station and close to main shopping area. It is a very lively pub and is popular with both locals and visitors alike. Watch out for the sloping floor!

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5 cask ales
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MerseyAle Cider News contd



Keeping Real Cider in the Pub Successfully

We've all seen a forlorn tub of cider balanced on the end of the bar – as the licensee tries his hand (again) at selling real cider – probably in the height of summer. It's fine for a few days, with customers trying the odd pint or two (at 6.5%abv they aren't drink too much), but then it starts to turn a little sharp and then quickly becomes unpalatable, resulting in perhaps half a tub of cider being used as drain cleaner.

It's enough to make the cider maker weep – not to mention those who hand-picked the apples! In order to satisfy the demand for cider, the licensee is then enticed into the world of kegged and gassed apple-flavoured fizz. The world of the alcoholic fizzy apple-flavoured squash that is 90% plus of the kegged cider market presents a solution that ticks the 'cider' box for many publicans.

For many licensees therefore, the selling of real cider poses several problems – not the least of which is the concern that they won't sell enough, it will go off and they will have to throw it away – which is clearly not what they are in business to do!

However, with a basic understanding of a few salient elements, the selling of cider becomes, not a

risky sideline, but an easy way to engage with the rapidly emerging demand for high quality, often locally sourced products from small scale producers who care passionately about what they make.

This is a market I have seen that brings a customer base into pubs who wouldn't otherwise go there. All that is needed is an understanding of a few basic points;

Key Points for Keeping Real Cider

Firstly, real cider is produced once a year – around September. Many cider makers keep cider back from previous years production to blend with 'new' cider in order to keep consistency and to help give depth and roundness to their product. I know of one cider maker who has got cider he made 15 years ago. It is in exceptional condition. Cider therefore does not need to go off. It simply needs to be kept properly – and that is not at the end of the bar counter!

Secondly, real cider is susceptible to the same elements that will make beer 'go off', namely air, heat and humidity. You wouldn't (I hope!) leave a tub of beer balanced on the end of the bar and expect it to remain drinkable for weeks, the same is true with cider.

So, with these two points in mind, we need to transfer theory into practice. In my pub, we don't use pumps – all ciders and ales are gravity fed from the Tap Room – which is air conditioned (as are most



pub cellars, thereby dealing with the heat and humidity problems). This works well for us, but I realise it would pose a problem for many to be going backwards and forwards to the cellar every time someone wanted a pint of cider.

Bag in a Box and Hand Pumps

There are methods out there to connect 'bag-in-a-box' to a hand pump – thereby providing an easy method to dispense real cider in good condition on a consistent basis. If you do go down this route, make sure you use micro-bore pipes and clean them regularly and frequently to avoid yeast build-up problems in the pipes. We also use a lot of 'bag-in-a-box' ciders. Real cider kept in a 'bag-in-a-box' in an air-conditioned cellar at around 8-10°C will keep for between 6 and 13 weeks, which should be ample time to sell it.



Alternatively, there are systems out there to keep tubs and 'bag-in-a-box' drinks at chilled temperatures, often seen at beer festivals. Finally, real cider and perry in a 'bag-in-a-box' should be readily available from almost any wholesale beer supplier – with one or two 'brands' being available nationwide. However, with not more than a few minutes spent on the internet, you should be able to track down a local real cider producer, many of whom will be delighted to supply the local pub trade.

Ian Pinches
The Railway Arms, Downham Market – CAMRA National Cider Pub of the Year 2013 and one of the 2014 competition runners up



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Real Ale on the Rise Cask Report 2015



Cask Ale (another term for Real Ale) is on the rise. That is the clear message from the annual survey report on the British beer market and the position of real ale in that market. Written by beer writer Pete Brown, the report highlights the following:

- Cask ale is in sustained volume growth, significantly outperforming the On Trade Beer Market.
 - Cask is forecast to hit 20% of on-trade beer by 2020 - hugely significant when beer accounts for 64% of the average pub's wet sales.
 - Cask ale cashes in on what people want from pubs today - a premium experience that can't be replicated at home.
 - Cask drinkers visit the pub twice as often as the average person, and influence the choice of pub in mixed groups.
 - The cask ale drinker spends £967 a year in pubs - almost double the average spend per person
- Cellar management training improves yield by at least 7%.

- Improve quality and therefore sales.
- **Creates genuine enthusiasm, meaning they stay longer in the job and sell more beer while they're there.**
- Training on cask ale is available FREE via the Cask Beer Uncovered e-learning programme.
- **Allow your staff to train you! They may well have skills that can promote the range and the pub more broadly.**
- Apply for the Cask Marque Award.

Importantly Stock a Broad Range of Cask Beers

- 'Flavour' is a huge social trend as well as the main reason people drink cask ale.
 - Most people drink cask occasionally. They'll drink it more often if it can satisfy their curiosity.
 - **Bitterness is a significant barrier for nondrinkers.**
- A broad range of styles and opportunity to try before you buy helps blow that perception away.**

Importantly Hold a Pub Cask Ale Beer Festival as this;

- Encourages trial amongst non-cask-drinkers.
- Gets rare cask drinkers into the pub, encouraging them to see the pub as the best place for cask.
- **Emphasises cask's diversity and range – the key reasons people drink it.**
- Gives occasional pub-goers a reason to visit more often.

Invest in Glassware

- Cool, stylish glassware helps address the 'too masculine' barrier for some female drinkers.
- Drinkers like a choice of measures - e.g. new beers in a half pint, strong beers such as IPAs in two-thirds measures.
- **Branded glassware premiumises (sic) the drinking experience. Consider bespoke pub branded glassware.**

The Cask Report 2015 can be read in full on line at the cask-marque.co.uk website

Message to Licensees - Why Cask Ale is a Source of Profit and How to Promote Sales

Cask Ale is a unique selling point for the pub. It is only in a pub that people can enjoy cask ale – a vital strength for the pub over drinking at home. Advice to Licensees is; **Promote Your Offer**

- Cask drinkers use social media and expect their pubs to. **If they like your pub, they'll tell their friends.**
- Most people don't know much about cask ale. Encourage trial through education with tastings notes, Try Before You Buy etc.

Most Importantly Invest in Staff and Beer Quality

- Staff training is the easiest way to improve returns from cask.

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The Masonic Pub - Alive and Well in the Suburbs

But that wasn't the case three years ago. When Tony Murray bought the Masonic in Garston in November 2012, he told me it had been on the verge of closing. He had grown up in the area and was shocked to find a pub that he had known to be a really busy hive of activity in those days (none too recent – I'm sure he won't mind me saying!), in such a sorry state.

“My dad would bring me here as a young lad and then as a teenager. I'd moved away from the area long ago but had returned a few times in the 10 years prior to 2012 and I'd seen this pub go slowly into decline. It had been a Marston's pub and had a series of temporary and holding managers”.



he has a long history in the licensed trade and in the promotion of clubs and bars in London and abroad.

Prior to taking over the Masonic, and since about 2005, Tony had owned the 'Best Pub Company' which comprised a group of eight pubs that he leased from Pub

Marquis of Granby that beat the record, going from £1200 a week to £8000. It was very rewarding but very time consuming and it became too much”.

He slowly ceased involvement with each of the pubs and leases were transferred directly by PubCos to managers. But his appetite for reviving pubs was whetted again when he returned to his community roots and saw the plight of the Masonic on his own home ground.

“It was a daunting task to start with. The pub was drab, needed a good clean, it had virtually no clientele and certainly no real ale, but some people in the area still knew me and had faith in me”.

Re-introduction of real ale

Tony said he recognised the potential of real ale to increase sales in general. His first two handpumps were installed in January 2013. At first, locals said he'd never sell it, but slowly they began to drink it and the pub now

has six handpumps serving cask ales and one serving real cider.

“I think it helped that I launched it at the low price of £1.75 a pint. That might reduce the profit margin per pint but if you're selling lots more of it – well, it's a no brainer!”



Even now the beer is only £2.20, with cider marginally dearer at £2.50 a pint.

But Tony knew it wasn't all about what's behind the bar – it's about creating an environment that people want to be in and, he feels very strongly, where they feel safe to be.

“I took my time, I own the pub so no one was going to move me on. I spent the first 12 months building the support of local men and then in the next 12 months organising events and activities that would encourage them to bring their wives and girlfriends in. And in the last year, many of those women come in without the men!”

A local community pub

The Masonic is truly just that. It has darts and cribbage leagues, bingo nights, quiz nights and live entertainment at weekends. For sports lovers, Sky Sports are also shown. The pub also hosts occasional social events for people in the local community – birthdays and other celebrations – and organises charity fundraising events. There is a strong family emphasis too – Tony has recreated that positive intergenerational mix he himself experienced as a boy- **“It's known as a 'Dad & Lad' pub - there are still third and fourth**

generation families of old customers - who are all historians in their own unique way”.

And now the Mums come too! Fancy dress, Christmas parties, family days out - you name it, they seem to have it!

On my first visit, some time ago, I was surprised to find it unobtrusively blended in with the houses, curving round the corner of two terraced streets. I'd thought such pubs were long gone in our city and was delighted to find I was mistaken. The curved area accommodates some outside seating and can be quite a sun trap on summer days. Inside the pub there is still a proper public bar with darts board and where dogs are allowed, and, round the corner, a comfortable lounge bar with traditional pub décor and pictures of 'olde Garston' adorning the walls.

Tony told me the pub was originally built in the late 1800s and has always been called The Masonic. It is rumoured that the local Masonic lodge met here until they acquired their own premises around the corner on Island Road.

Back to the beer

The beer range includes beers from Liverpool Organic Brewery and JW Lees in Manchester, plus various changing guest beers. On my last visit, there were two beers from the Vale of Glamorgan. Tony justifiably won our local CAMRA Award for 'Most Improved Beer Range' in 2014. Learning now that he had been there only 18 months at the time and had taken over a pub with no real ale at all, and very few drinkers at the time to support it, makes this even more impressive.

His commitment to real ale was amply demonstrated recently when he held a beer festival, with 20 cask beers on tap, in the pub. Unfortunately, word did not seem to have circulated well outside the area, with ourselves at CAMRA only aware it was happening quite late in the day. So, whilst it was well attended by local people, Tony would like to see CAMRA members and other real ale drinkers from around the city next time. And we have no excuse this time! Tony has given very good advance notice – it is to be held in April, from Thursday 14th to Sunday 17th, during normal pub hours. Day passes, whereby you pay a certain amount and can then



By no means new to the pub industry

Tony first ran a pub in London in 1981. In 1992 and for the following 10 years, he headed for warmer climes and ran bars in Tenerife, including one he built himself! So

Companies. These were pubs that were about to close, or in one case, closed and the challenge for him was to turn them round into successful pubs.

“The turnover increased in all the pubs but it was one called the



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'As well as maintaining healthy stocks of **Titanic's legendary Plum Porter** to get you through the dark winter months, we will now be featuring **ONLY** local beers on our other three handpulls, **all priced at just £2.95**

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Events email:
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The Masonic Pub - Alive and Well in the Suburbs contd

drink as much as you like, will be available again, as in September. But, for those who find the potential amount of alcohol too much, Tony was keen to assure me that you can just walk in and buy a drink or drinks individually, as you would usually do, but with a greater choice in that particular special festival period.

But don't wait till April! Tony really appreciates the support of the local community but would dearly love to welcome more new

faces. The area is served well by public transport with South Parkway Station and the 86 bus route being a short walk away, as is St Mary's Road which is served by the 82 bus. (See map on advert, pX)

And whilst real ale is alive and well in this particular pub in the suburbs, there are several other pubs in the area that don't currently sell real ale and Tony reckons might with encouragement. I recall good pub crawls in the Garston area in the

early days of CAMRA. They may not now be the same pubs but it would be good to have a real ale revival in this area. Another campaigning challenge!



Vote Now for Liverpool and Districts Pub of the Year

It's that time of the year again and voting for the 2016 Pub of the Year is now open but you **MUST** be a member of CAMRA to vote.

As last year, voting can be done on-line (www.liverpoolcamra.org.uk/index.php/awards/poty-2016) and, as usual, you must be a member of the Liverpool and Districts CAMRA Branch to vote.

The closing date for voting is **31st January 2016**. This is to give ample time for the judging process.

Members are invited to vote for **their favourite city centre pub AND their favourite suburban pub**, but you do not have to vote for both. You may vote for a city centre pub and leave the suburban box blank or vice versa. This is the means by which we select the pubs that go forward for judging our Pub of the Year.

Nominated pub(s) **MUST** be within the Branch area (i.e. not in St Helens, Wirral or Formby etc) so please, don't waste your vote on pubs outside the area.

We define **city centre pubs** as those on the main body of the pub map, which can be found on the branch website, along with a list of the suburbs contained within our Branch area. If you are unsure if a particular pub is within the Branch area, you can check this by searching on the **WHAT PUB** database (www.whatpub.com). The responsible branch will be stated at the bottom of the entry. You **DO NOT** need to be logged onto WhatPub to do this.

Only one vote per member will be allowed.

Votes can also be cast by completing a nomination form which will be made available at this year's remaining Branch Get-Togethers, the coach trip to Birmingham and at the Christmas Party Social – see Diary Page 55.

Alternatively, your vote can be submitted by email, using poty@liverpoolcamra.org.uk and detailing your name, membership number & nomination(s).

The Judging Process

As in previous years, the 3 city centre pubs and the 2 suburban pubs that get the most votes will go forward for judging. This process has been devised to recognise the fact that there are so many good pubs in our Branch area, and is a means of fairly reflecting this in the voting system.

Each pub will then be visited twice by a panel of judges chosen by the competition co-ordinator and agreed by the Branch Committee. The judging process will be conducted using the guidelines used to judge the National CAMRA Pub of the Year competition. Further details of these can be found on the branch website.

The results of the competition will be announced at the March Get Together, there will be one Pub of the Year winner.

Finally, I would like to make it clear that I compile the results and therefore do not get involved in the judging process. Intimidation of any member of the Liverpool and Districts CAMRA committee regarding this, or any other matter, will not be tolerated. Action will be taken against licensees or members who initiate any form of intimidation (including via social media). Any comments or queries regarding the competition should be raised either at a Get Together or a Committee Meeting.

Andre Fu – the Co-ordinator for Pub of the Year

The Dispensary Liverpool

Liverpool CAMRA Pub of the Year 2010 and 2011



Liverpool CAMRA PUB OF EXCELLENCE 2015



A Warm Welcome to the Dispensary (CAMRA Liverpool & Districts Pub of the Year 2010 and 2011) from Pauline, Dave and all their staff

Good Beer Guide singles out "the landlord's impeccable attention to beer quality".

Up to **8 BEERS**

Available at any one time kept in superb condition

The Dispensary provides a varied and interesting selection of real ales from the best Micro Brewers in the country. You will be surprised at the choice

RENSHAW STREET, LIVERPOOL
(Formerly The Grapes) 0151 709 2160



A Day in the Life A Postcard from the underworld



He was from Stoke on Trent, I'm not sure why he used cockney rhyming slang.

Processing

The process from cask full of sludge to beautiful glass full of ale takes 3 days (give or take 3 days).

The barrel needs stillaging i.e. putting on a stillage, this is why many cellar-persons have 'cellar-person's-back'. There is a knack, but like the magic-circle, we don't share this.

Introducing air

We pop the top (shive) with a soft spile. This allows air into the cask to let the ale finish fermenting, and to allow the gases (along with projectile beer spray) out. This



Half of my working week is spent in the bowels of the Albion Ale House, Conwy, a damp, cold and beautiful workshop where ales that have been dropped through the hatch are turned from casks full of a sludge-like liquid into the beautiful, crystal clear, delicious beverage that the brewer intended it to be.

This is a lot of pressure to bear. The brewer has put thought, care, effort and time into their ales. As a cellar man (person) I am finishing this process off and hopefully doing justice to the brewer.

Cleanliness

Is paramount. A lot of cellar work (as is the case with brewery work) involves cleaning. Washing down floors, keeping equipment clean and (the laborious and dreaded) line-cleaning. This is essential if we want to get it right. My first boss once told me;



"look after your lines and the lines will look after your Jack and Jill (till)"

process can take a couple of days. All this time, the ale is settling- the finings are doing their job, drawing all sediment to them like a magnet and taking them to the belly of the barrel.

Tapping

A tap is banged into the front of the front hole (keystone) with one Bang of the mallet- you cannot mess around with this for fear of the wrath of the finings, if they get disturbed, they get disruptive.

Once the ale is ready, finished and settled. Hard spile!

This replaces the soft spile and holds



the ale in temporary suspended animation, allowing neither air in nor out. A breath of fresh air is a good thing but too much can rearrange the furniture and allow the ale to taint and turn sour.

Timing

This is where timing comes into it. Once a beer is connected to the line and being served, air is drawn into the cask, which starts the deterioration of the product. This will take 3-4 days max. The whole cask needs to be served within this time frame. This is where some pubs get it wrong by using bigger barrels than they can empty in this time, or by having too many real-ales on their bar for their amount of sales.

Therefore a good cellar-operative will always be thinking 3 days in advance. In a pub such as ours, which can easily have 40 different ales a week, this is the head-scratcher.

All this scurrying around of the cellar-rat happens before a pub opens its doors and is greatly under appreciated by the reveller or 'quiet-contemplator' (to quote ATJ), but for someone with a passion for real ale and happy punters, it is so rewarding.

Stuart Chapman-Edwards - Licensee of Albion Ale House, Uppergate Street, Conwy, North Wales

Ye Cracke

RICE STREET LIVERPOOL

Wonderful early 19th Century Public House with **6 Handpumps**
Serving a varying range of Real Ales Plus a Real Cider
REGULAR ALE THWAITES

"HUNDRED BEST PUBS in the COUNTRY"
2010 2011 Daily Telegraph

0151 709 4171
12-11.30 midnight Fri & Sat

Have a drink in John Lennon's Old Watering Hole

The AUGUSTUS JOHN

Known locally as the AJ, the Augustus John is a CAMRA Good Beer Guide listed pub set in the heart of campus, behind Blackwell's bookshop on Brownlow Hill. A warm welcome is offered to students; university staff and anybody else lucky enough to stumble upon us. As many will testify, a night in the AJ is an education in itself!

5 ROTATING CASK ALES

- Regional Cider and Perry Pub of the Year 2012
- Liverpool and District Branch CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year 2012/2013
- LocAle accredited • A Minimum of 6 Real Ciders available

The AJ

Opening Times
Monday 11.30am - 11.00pm
Tuesday 11.30am - 11.00pm
Wednesday 11.30am - 11.00pm
Thursday 11.30am - 11.00pm
Friday 11.30am - 11.00pm
Saturday 12.00 noon - 11.00pm
Sunday Occasional
12" Chicago Town Pizza available daily until 10.00pm
Great selection of sandwiches and bar snacks available daily

PEACH STREET L3 5TX (Off Brownlow Hill, next to Blackwell's Bookshop) 0151 794 5507

What Your MPs Say

A number of our local MPs have been active around the Merseyside pub-scene recently.

Louise Ellman MP (Liverpool Riverside) pledged her support for the "Save the Roscoe Head" campaign, promising to raise the issue with Liverpool City Council. Mrs Ellman also took to Twitter to support Councillor Nick Small's petition to get the Roscoe Head listed as an Asset of Community Value (ACV).

Bill Esterson MP (Sefton Central) "Tweeted" congratulations to pubs in his constituency that had made it into the Good Beer Guide 2016. He has also been active recently visiting local pubs such as the **Scotch Piper** in Lydiate, and the **Corner Post**



Micropub in Crosby. Mr Esterson also made a visit to **Red Star Brewery** in Formby.

Peter Dowd MP (Bootle) took to Twitter to spread the news about pubs in Waterloo and Bootle getting listed in the Good Beer Guide 2016. Liverpool & Districts CAMRA will keep in contact with all local MPs to make them aware of the importance of our pubs as a valuable part of local communities.

Tony Morgan - Liverpool CAMRA Public Affairs Officer

Peter Dowd MP @Peter_Dowd Sep 21
Congrats to: Old Bank, Volunteer Canteen, Queen's Picture House - Waterloo for getting in #GoodBeerGuide16 @CAMRA_Official @Liverpool CAMRA

Peter Dowd MP @Peter_Dowd Sep 21
Well done @Stamps_Too @LiverpoolPigeon for getting in the #GoodBeerGuide16 @CAMRA_Official @Liverpool CAMRA
Bill Esterson MP (Sefton Central).

Bill Esterson @Bill_Esterson Sep 22 Maghull, England
Great new micro pub in Bridge Rd Brighton Le Sands. Just what a local should be.
@TCornerpost

Bill Esterson @Bill_Esterson Sep 22 Formby, England
Formby's own micro brewery. @Redstarales thanks for inviting me and good luck.

Bill Esterson @Bill_Esterson Sep 19 Maghull, England
Enjoying a pint of 'Dirty Tackle' @TheScotchPiper
Congratulations on being in @CAMRA_Official beer guide

Bill Esterson @Bill_Esterson Sep 10 Liverpool, England
Congratulations to @TheScotchPiper on being included in the #GoodBeerGuide16 @CAMRA_Official @LiverpoolCAMRA

Bill Esterson @Bill_Esterson Sep 10 Liverpool, England
Congratulations to @StampsBar on being included in the #GoodBeerGuide16 @CAMRA_Official @LiverpoolCAMRA

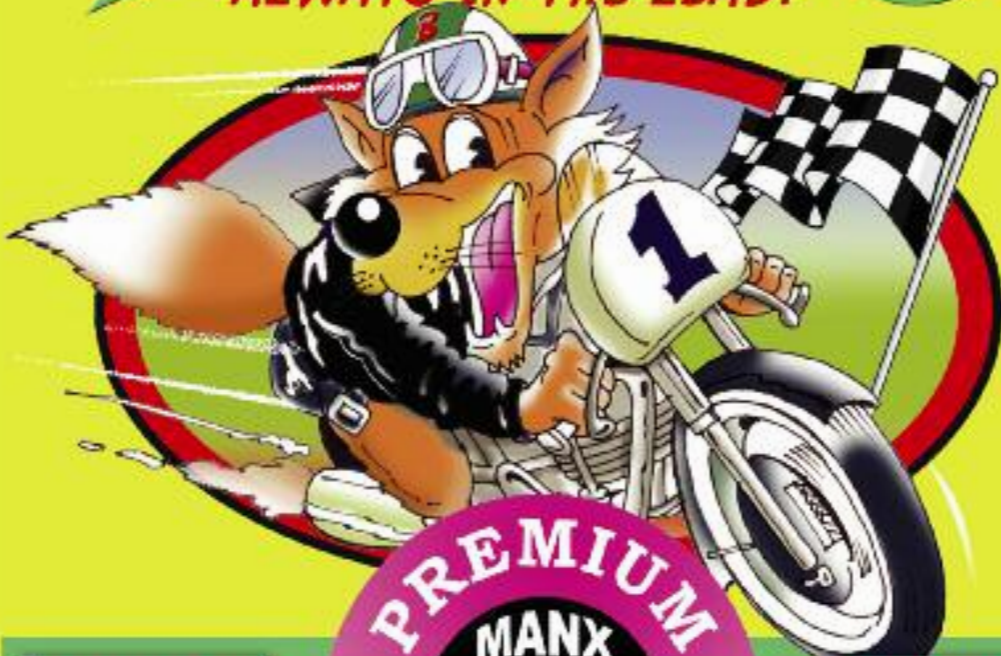
Louise Ellman MP (Liverpool Riverside).
Louise Ellman gave her support to the Save the Roscoe Head campaign by promising to raise the issue with the local authority.
I support this campaign and will raise the issue with the city council as requested.
I will contact you further. To discuss progress.
Best wishes,
Louise Ellman.

She also retweeted Councillor Small's Tweet regarding the ACV petition:

Louise Ellman MP Retweeted
Nick Small @CllrNickSmall Aug 27
Please sign petition to get @RoscoeHead listed as community asset - please RT @joeforliverpool @LouiseEllman

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"ALWAYS IN THE LEAD!"



PURE BY LAW

PREMIUM MANX ALES

DOUGLAS ISLE OF MAN

1ST AT THE T.T.

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www.bushys.com



ManxAle

From Dave Halliwell MerseyAle Isle of Man Correspondent

-  **The Home of Real Ale**
-  **Island Breweries Food Festival Showcase**
-  **Hooded Ram Gold Award and Expansion Plans**
-  **Douglas Rotary Club Beer Festival Success**
-  **Apple Orphanage Cider Company**
-  **Bushys Celebrate Thirty Up**
-  **The Pub at the End of the Universe**



The Prospect, Douglas, the 'Home of Cask Ale'

In the Spring 2015 edition of MerseyAle, we reported that the Prospect on Prospect Hill in central



Douglas had just been fitted with fourteen hand pumps, the largest number of any outlet on Island. The Prospect is owned by **Heron & Brearley** (H&B), the parent company to Okells, which for some time had been looking for the right venue in central Douglas within range for both the tourists and locals alike, in which to showcase cask ale in a major way.



The Prospect to be, 'The Home of

Cask Ale', and a Bank Holiday pub beer festival swiftly followed. As the summer progressed the fourteen pumps have been used consistently, and many knowledgeable real ale enthusiasts from both brewers to locals and visitors alike, have been hugely impressed by the ales on offer. Quality has been excellent, but much more importantly, and in keeping with some of the premier real ale outlets in the U.K., there has been an excellent choice, not only in beer styles but also strengths, from session ales to beers at 6% and above. Furthermore, the guest ales featured have not previously been seen on Island. The Prospect seems to be mirroring some of Heron and Brearley's former Market Town Taverns pubs in Yorkshire, which the company purchased a few years ago and which had long been held in high regard for their range and quality of cask ales.

Good Beer Range and Pricing

Pricing on Island remains very competitive, even for the high strength beers. Three or four of the Prospect's hand pumps regularly feature Okells beers, notably **Okells Bitter** and the very well regarded **Okells MPA**, both still available at under **£2.95** a pint, whilst on a recent visit an **Acorn brewery Imperial Stout at 6% ABV** was only

£3.35 a pint, and **Kirkstall Dissolution IPA at 5% ABV only £3.15**. Furthermore, one or two ciders and perries feature on a regular basis. A note for visitors is that the real ales are displayed over three separate banks of hand pumps on different areas of the bar. On the right hand wall there is a large board detailing the beer

BREWERY	ALE	STYLE	ABV	PRICE
Okells	Bitter	PALE ALE	4.5%	£2.95
Okells	MPA	PALE ALE	4.5%	£2.95
Okells	Imperial Stout	IMPERIAL STOUT	6%	£3.35
Kirkstall	Dissolution IPA	IPA	5%	£3.15
Apple Orphanage	Cider	CIDER	5%	£3.35
Bushys	Celebrate Thirty Up	CIDER	5%	£3.35

names, brewery, price, strength, and style; all vital information for the beer novice perhaps nervous of trying something new (and for many of those professing to be more knowledgeable if the truth be known!). Rarely seen in The Isle of Man, these boards are common in key real ale houses in the U.K.

Heron and Brearley have very noticeably bitten the bullet by providing Douglas with a cask ale outlet and range to match the best in the UK. The winter months can prove more testing on an Island with fewer tourists, but mid-week in October it was reassuring to see a full range of ales and ciders available and in good condition.



BORN & BREWED



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PICK UP DIP IN CHILL OUT SHOP OPEN FRI/SAT 12-6PM

BEER & PIE TASTER NIGHTS POP IN SUP UP

OPEN NIGHTS ALL WELCOME 1ST FRIDAY EVERY MONTH FROM 5PM

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BREWERY TOURS

AVAILABLE ON 1ST & 3RD FRIDAY EVERY MONTH OR BY ARRANGEMENT

WINNER OF THE 2015 CAMRA ISLE OF MAN BEER FESTIVAL - BLACK PEARL OYSTER STOUT 5.2% RUNNER UP OF THE 2015 CAMRA ISLE OF MAN BEER OF THE FESTIVAL - LITTLE KING LOUIS IPA 6%



Hooded Ram Expansion and Gold SIBA Award

Rob Storey (owner and brewer at Hooded Ram Brewery) has recently recruited Kevin Holmes as an



additional brewer, in order to give Rob more time to develop the business. Kevin is from a family of brewers and has previously worked with Thwaites, Okells and Bushys. He comes with a wealth of experience and knowledge in brewing. Additionally Kevin has an infectious enthusiasm for brewing and innovation, and importantly for a relatively new start up, has a finger on the pulse regarding the more artisan developments in the U.K. brewing scene.

Rob has many irons in the fire at present and is very much hoping to expand, so watch out for developments very shortly. As MerseyAle goes to print there is much going on behind the scenes and at some stage an outlet separate to the brewery may appear.

Hand Bottled Beers

Not resting on his laurels, Rob continues to develop his beers both in cask and bottles. Interestingly his range of bottled conditioned beers are now widely stocked in restaurants across the Island,

including 14 North (Douglas), Little Fish (Douglas), Tanroagan (Douglas), The Boat Yard (Peel), Filbies (Peel), to name but a few, as well as being stocked in The Steam Packet On Board shop, in a special gift pack box.

Hooded Ram is the only Manx brewer to bottle their own beers on Island. A hand bottling plant is used and Rob and the team have been perfecting this labour intensive technique to a fine art. They are now capable of bottling up to a thousand 330ml size bottles an hour using four people. As machine bottling plant is very expensive, many brewers contract out the work. Having visited Orkney Brewery last year, they were using tankers to have the Orkney beers taken to England for bottling in Manchester. At the time



of my visit, Orkney Brewery had been full of beer to capacity, due to adverse weather and boats not sailing, a problem which all the off islands have to grapple with!

First Friday Brewery Evenings and New Beers

Hooded Ram continues to innovate at pace. The Brewery runs tasting evenings on the first Friday of the month. At a recent evening three new beers were available; Mosaic, Pacifica, and Hooded Hooker. The Mosaic is particularly moreish

single hop pale ale coming in at 5% ABV.

The Pacifica, also 5% ABV, is described as Cascadian dark ale. In the region of Western North



America a style of dark ale is produced, though the beer is hoppy. The colour for this beer arises by unusually adding the malt to the copper during the brewing process. By doing this, the dark colouration

is generated without the usual stronger chocolate malt flavours.

Hooded Hooker is a renamed beer that is going to be used as a seasonal during rugby festivals, and comes in at 4.1% ABV. In a lovely touch to celebrate the life of local CAMRA member Clare Ashworth who passed away recently (reported in MerseyAle Summer 2015), observers will note a small pentagram symbol on the beers pump clip. Clare was a pagan, and this brew had been her favourite Hooded Ram beer. Her partner, Wint, had done plumbing work for Rob during the start up at Hooded Ram brewery.

Hooded Ram Mosaic Wins Gold at SIBA

Mosaic received a GOLD Society of Independent Breweries Award in the Strong Bitter & Pale Ales category at the SIBA North West brewers competition held in Bolton in October. This is a major achievement for Hooded Ram and means their beer is recognised on a national stage and will go forward to the National Final of the SIBA Champion Beer Competition.

Douglas Rotary Club Beer Festival at Villa Marina

The Rotary club of Douglas have declared their inaugural beer festival in mid-August to be a success and that it will be repeated



in future years. The festival featured around 120 real ales, in addition to ciders, craft beers and wines. Douglas Rotary is the largest of five Rotary branches on the Isle of Man. Proceeds from the festival were to be distributed to local charities, of which Douglas Rotary has assisted over sixty in recent years.

The event itself was staged over two floors at **The Villa Marina**, Douglas, with **Heron & Brearley** providing excellent and extensive technical support, with some additional assistance from Bill Smith, the CAMRA Isle of Man Beer Festival organiser, plus use of some CAMRA equipment. Beers were supplied by Heron and Brearley.



In addition to serving guest ales from the cask, there was a separate hand pump bar designated for the Islands local beers. Okells produced a unique 'Festival Ale' 4.1% ABV for the event, which was pale gold in colour. In addition to several other ales from the Okells



range, the hand pump bar also featured local beers from both **Bushys** and **Hooded Ram**, not forgetting the **Bosun Bitter** from the Island's smallest microbrewery. Old Laxey, based at **The Shore Hotel** in Old Laxey, several miles North of the capital Douglas.



Great credit here should be afforded to H&B, as the Island's dominant brewer, for featuring other local beers in this way on



behalf of 'Team Isle of Man', in support of this charitable fund raising event.

Isle of Man Food and Drink Festival Showcase

Team Isle of Man promote Real Ale In a further example of on Island cooperation, the **Isle of Man Food and Drink Festival**, held in the **Villa Marina gardens**, was a huge success with over 5,000 visitors

benefiting from the good weather. A beer tent, staffed by CAMRA volunteers led by Charles Miller, once again showcased all the Island real ale brewers and cider makers. Beer is purchased from the breweries for the event; CAMRA staffs the bar and promotes it free



of charge; whilst the breweries assist with technical arrangements. By pooling resources, the event can become a viable showcase for the Isle of Man brewing and cider industry, thereby serving the Island well in competitive times.

This year's festival gave many an opportunity to sample a new brew from **Okells, Gorley Doo**. At 5% ABV, the beer is described as a Black IPA. The term has become



to be used widely in recent years, though the purist beer experts insist there is no such beer, as of course IPA stands for India Pale Ale – not black!

However the style (black in colour but tasting very hoppy like an IPA) has recently become popular and Gorley Doo (meaning Black Death in Manx) was certainly well received. Tasting notes described it as piney, followed by citrus lemon notes and a dry finish.

Apple Orphanage Cider Tent at the Food and Drink Festival

As well as the heavily promoted **Manx Cider Company**, there is on Island a less well known cider



producer, **Apple Orphanage**. Despite having been in operation for a greater length of time than Manx Cider Company and having been featured in The Financial Times as an innovative start up business, the Apple Orphanage company is not well known. The firm produces apple juice and very limited quantities of cider, which is available only in a couple of restaurants, and to purchase at the



Tynwald Mills delicatessen close to St Johns. However, uniquely for the Island, all produce comes directly from Island-grown apples. Whilst orchards have been planted with some four hundred trees to date and there is a plan for up to a thousand, these will take time to (literally!) come to fruition. Abiding by this strict self imposed Isle of Man-grown apples only rule means that only small (but increasing) quantities of cider are available each year. Current production is between 3,000 to 4,000 litres per year.



Four bottled ciders are produced, including **Huntsman, Huntress, and Aristocrat**, all free from artificial sweeteners, sulphites, and any other additives. Naturally wild yeasts are also utilised. The company has been in existence for some years, but at the request of the owners in the early years



MerseyAle only gave the company only a brief mention. This was due to the small production level and the owners not wanting to disappoint customers when the year's supply became exhausted. The purist Island grown apples only rule will in due course provide a unique selling point as the trees grow and the apple crop increases in yield. This will be another excellent opportunity for a small locally based producer to showcase Isle of Man quality produce.

Bushys Go Over to The Darkside and Celebrate 30 Years

Bushys are about to launch a new beer, **Darkside**, at 4% ABV, though it is not likely to be available widely. The pump clip celebrates Guy Armstrong Rossiter, the licensee of the **Rovers Return**,



Douglas, who performs as Darth Vader with the Manx Troopers using Star Wars costumes at charity and fund raising events.

Furthermore, in September after 30 years of Bushys being in the brewing business, the Rovers Return, Douglas, was celebrating by selling Bushys Bitter at 68p a pint for the evening, representing the cost of yesteryears beer. This unadvertised offer (for obvious reasons!), was a fitting thank you to regular and loyal supporters of the Rovers and the brewery. A typical gesture in the generous but understated style of the Bushys camp,

Congratulations to all at Bushys on thirty years of fun and fine ale!

Make it a Double Header

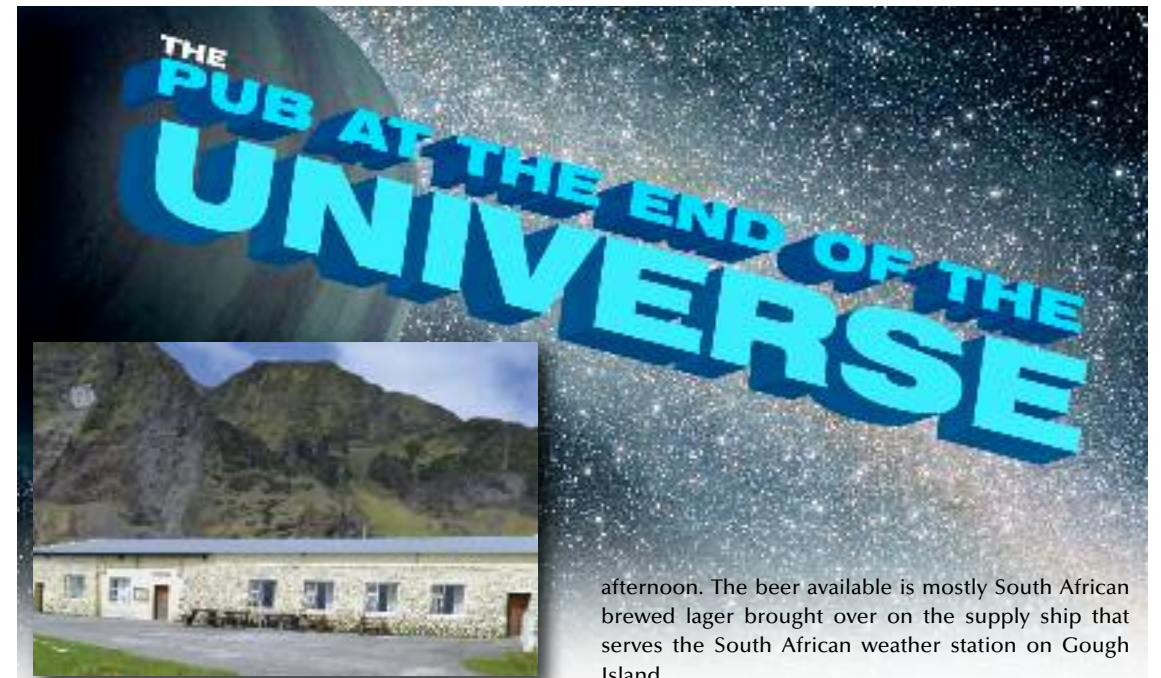
The 2016 CAMRA Members Weekend will be held in Liverpool



from **Friday 1st April to Sunday 3rd April**. A number of people are taking the opportunity to combine this with a visit to the Isle of Man for a short holiday, including exploring Island pubs and a visit to the **CAMRA Isle of Man Beer Festival at the Villa Marina Douglas Thursday 7th April to Saturday 9th April**. The beers will be in the main auditorium which will help avoid any overcrowding with plenty of seating upstairs. There will be even more real ales, ciders and perries this year. So look at the Festival advert on page XX and make a date in your 2016 Diary.

Dave Halliwell
MerseyAle Isle of Man
Correspondent

OKELL'S. PURE PERFECTION.



The Pub at the End of the Universe... and it's twinned with the Isle of Man

Galactic Hitchhikers will be familiar with Milliways, the Restaurant at the End of the Universe (watch the universe end nightly over dinner and cabaret), but may not be so familiar with the Pub at the End of the Universe, the Albatross on Tristan da Cunha. No, not an undiscovered planet, but the British Island Territory in the middle of the South Atlantic.

Tristan da Cunha is the most remote inhabited island in the world. An archipelago of small islands, only one of which is inhabited, the nearest speck of land, St. Helena to the north, is a whopping 2,430km away, and it's over 2,800km to the nearest continent, Africa.

The settlement was established by the British in 1818 as an act of military strategy. It is a territory of the United Kingdom, officially administered by the government of St Helena, which lies thousands of kilometres to the north, but fully autonomous in practice.

The Albatross in 'The Settlement'

The 'capital', Edinburgh of the Seven Seas, known locally as "The Settlement," is home to the population of around 300 and was established at the base of the volcano. It is here in the Prince Philip Hall that the Albatross pub is located. It consists of a newly refurbished bar in the single room, having been rebuilt after a hurricane severely damaged the building in 2001. The bar is open in the evening Monday - Saturday and for a few hours on Sunday

afternoon. The beer available is mostly South African brewed lager brought over on the supply ship that serves the South African weather station on Gough Island.

Twinned with the Isle of Man

Yet despite the remoteness, the Albatross and Tristan da Cunha are now twinned with the Isle of Man and Bushys Brewery through the latter brewing the **World's Most Remote Beer**, Island Brew, which was brewed with Rubrum berries unique to Tristan, picked from the slopes of the active volcano and transported to the Isle of Man. See the World Exclusive stories in MerseyAle Spring and Summer 2015 editions. Island Brew was launched at the CAMRA Great British Beer Festival in August and copies of MerseyAle are now on a three month transit to Tristan and the Albatross pub.

Bushys owner Martin Brunnschweiler has booked passage in 2016 on the Tristan supply ship to visit the Island and the Albatross, hopefully to advise on setting up a brewing operation on Tristan to supply the Albatross and the occasional cruise ships and their passengers that call there.

Any Galactic Hitchhikers looking to visit the Albatross for a pint will need to transport themselves to Capetown in South Africa and book one of the few berths on the irregularly scheduled supply ships for the eight day crossing into the middle of the South Atlantic.

You may need a pint of Island Brew, if not a Pan Galactic Gargle Blaster, after all of that!

Question is - now it is twinned with the Isle of Man will the Albatross be included in the CAMRA Pub of the Year competition? And who will make the trip to do the independent judging!

John Armstrong

Conwy

MerseyRAle Mainline

Our occasional series MerseyRAle encourages use of the train to reach interesting real ale pub locations. This time we take you to a UNESCO World Heritage Site with a castle and encircling town walls dating back to the 12th century, spectacular views across a wide estuary famous for its bird life, a town with Elizabethan architecture, boasting the smallest house in Britain and an array of specialist shops including an award winning butchers, Edwards, plus a large number of cafes and restaurants. So, no shortage of things to do.

Oh, and then there are eight real ale pubs all within easy walking distance of each other, including the pub that won the CAMRA Champion Pub of Wales Award and one that won the CAMRA Abercolwyn Branch Most Improved Pub Award.

The town is Conwy, on the North Wales Coast. MerseyAle's Wales Correspondent Stuart Chapman-Edwards, licensee of the Albion Ale House takes you on a guided tour along the Conwy Winter Real Ale Trail;

The Conwy Winter Real Ale Trail

There is much to do in Conwy, evidenced by the large numbers of visitors it attracts. Then there are

the eight closely spaced pubs to visit. In 2014 a group of us organised a very successful Conwy Real Ale Trail. So successful, that we decided to organise a winter real ale trail to run from **Dec 1st 2015 until March 1st 2016.**

The idea is quite simple - you buy a postcard for a few quid, the card has 8 squares representing eight real ale pubs in Conwy. You visit each pub within the three months and have a pint, get a stamp from each and when you have a stamp from each you get a free T shirt.

Di Kehoe, Ryan Hazeldine and myself decided to do a (not so) dry-run of the ale trail. Di is the former chairman of West London CAMRA, now firmly rooted in Conwy. Ryan is one of our full-time cellar/bar/everything (you know how it goes in this trade) operators.

We Saw Eight Pubs Go Sailing By We started out in the High Street, in a pub named **Ye Olde Mail Coach.** The ales on sale were **Black Sheep Best and Bass.** Maybe quite an uninspired range but in pretty good nick. You could tell that they each sell well. The punters were a jolly, typically high street type. Either just finishing work in their work boots or tourists enticed off the bustling parade of independently owned shops. The

manager, Tracy, was friendly and welcoming. The decor clean and tidy but at odds with the olde-worlde exterior. Very pleasant.

Next stop **The Castle Hotel** in the centre of the High Street. A 15th century Four star A.A. Guide awarded venue and winner of the CAMRA Abercolwyn Branch Food



Pub of the Year 2013. Also a perfect opportunity to try the four **Conwy Brewery ales** on offer. A completely different feeling here. Calm, smart, comfortable and foodie. There is also a rear courtyard seating area. We sat at a table by the window overlooking



the legs of passers-by either making their way to the Quay to go crabbing or heading to the old time ice cream parlour across the road.

Ambling down (appropriately for this article) to the **Liverpool Arms.** Down the cobbled High St. towards the Quay. An iconic pub



recently refurbished after a change of hands and a cat-lick of paint and new furniture. This pub used to be the ticket office and refreshment stop for many travellers for the boat to Liverpool, hence the moniker. The ales on offer were **Bass and Brains S.A.**

It feels quite nautical and urban at the same time. Ale was in cracking form and the view of the river and bobbing boats was unparalleled. The smallest house in Britain is also on the Quay.

We walked along the Quay and doubled back to **The Blue Bell** on Castle Street. Legends say it was the old court house and there is a



square window above the bar serving area that is reputedly the hatch where criminals were hanged. Fascinating and gruesome. This pub is geared towards music fans. Live music at the weekend yet the ales available were super.

Conwy brewery **Welsh Pride** and **Doom Bar.** The pub must have a good throughput.

Next door is **The George and Dragon.** Another old coaching inn recently refurbished. With a massive beer garden. Again uninspired range but full of fresh condition. **Bass, Old Speckled Hen, Conwy Welsh Pride** and an ale named '**George and Dragon Ale**'. I suspect that this was Tetley's. I went to university in Yorkshire and I recognised the taste. It was amusing to watch Ryan try to do the old '20p balanced on a lemon in water challenge' I've seen many an imbibers losing money on this!

Y Bont/The Bridge Inn, on the corner of Castle Street and Rose Hill Street. Recently purchased freehold from Punch Taverns by the consortium of four North



Wales brewers (see below) and sympathetically restored by the current owners, one of whom, Gwynne Thomas of Conwy Brewery, described how he had a soft spot for the Bridge as it had been the best pub in Conwy, so they were determined to restore it to its glory in keeping with its amazing location.

This pub is doing very well indeed thanks. Five local ales and one real cider on the hand pulls. Probably the best view of the beautiful castle in any pub in Conwy town. We all had a half of **Cwrw Coryn** by Nant Brewery. Beautiful malty

amber ale. Ryan and I had lunch/dinner from the menu that features Welsh produce. In my case The Bridge Burger. A massive



slab of meat between quality bread with proper chips, proper coleslaw and salad. Di wasn't hungry but there was so much food that she finished my chips. Food is served 12 - 3 and 5.30 to 8.30 Monday to Saturday with Sunday lunch from 12 noon.

The other ales available were **Brenin** from Nant, **Ynys Mon** from Great Orme, **Clogwyn Gold** from Conwy Brewery, **Glaslyn Ale** from Purple Moose and a corking cider, **Philosopher.** The pub is now offering accommodation (see advert page 50) and won the CAMRA Abercolwyn Branch Award for Most Improved Pub.

Then we went to the newly opened **Bank of Conwy** (Banc for the siarad cymraeg) adjacent to the Railway Station. No real ale here but lots of imported European and domestic keg beers available. Beautifully transformed from a bank into a bar. You must look at the vaults!.

Slightly out of town is **The Mulberry**, Ellis Way, at Conwy Marina, off Bangor Road and



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Morfa Drive. This is a favourite haunt of the sailing ilk. Beautifully sat on the Conwy marina, this pub serves a variety of **Robinsons' ales** alongside a good, if a little bit quirky, menu. Folk enjoy sitting on



the wall to watch the boats.

Note – also on Bangor Road is the GBG listed 17th century **Old White House** (which is not part of the Winter Real Ale Trail card) with three real ales. Buses 5 and X5 from outside Conwy Railway Station Rose Hill Street bus stop.

Finally. **The Albion Ale House**, Uppergate Street, corner of Chapel Street. This pub was once the haunt of many an undiscerning imbibers. Nowadays it's a mecca for



ale enthusiasts with eight real ales plus two real ciders. The choices were **1085 cask lager** from Great Orme, **Tiny Rebel's Dirty Stop Out**, **San Francisco** and

Beachcomber Blonde from Conwy, Great Orme's **Orme ale**, **Black Forest** from Waen, **Brigid Fire** by Celt Experience and another from Waen - **Festival Gold**. The two real ciders were **Tiny Rebel's Rocksteady** and a sweet cider from **Farmer Jim**.

The Albion was judged surplus to requirements by Punch Taverns and closed in 2010 (where have we heard that tale before!). It was bought by a consortium of four North Wales brewers, Conwy Brewery, Nant, Great Orme and Purple Moose, with an ambitious concept of returning it to its former glory, focusing on restoring its 1920s Art Deco interior and on showcasing Welsh real ales. The



Albion was reopened in 2012 and has since won the CAMRA Welsh Pub of the Year Award 2013 and is currently the CAMRA North Wales Pub of the Year 2015 in addition to being Good Beer Guide listed.

This market research is hard work eh?

A final word. Conwy is open 365 days a year so if you can't come during the Winter Pub Trail dates then you can still catch the train and use this article to explore the pubs!

**Stuart Chapman-Edwards -
MerseyAle Wales Correspondent -
Assisted by Di Kehoe and Ryan
Hazeldine.**

Stuart is landlord of the Albion Ale House, Conwy. The consortium of four breweries has also purchased The Bridge Inn/ Y Bont Conwy and The Australia Porthmadog. See MerseyAle Autumn 2015 edition pages 49 to 51.

How to Get to Conwy

Wirral Line train from Liverpool Central by Merseyrail to Chester (every fifteen minute service daytimes, half hourly evenings and Sundays) to change there to the scenic North Wales Coast line for Conwy, the station after



Llandudno Junction (trains two hourly frequency and ask Guard for Conwy as it is a request stop). The journey from Chester takes on average 57 minutes.

Conwy Railway Station is centrally located within the town walls just a hundred yards from both the Albion and the Y Bont/The Bridge. On exiting the arrival platform from Chester turn right down Rosemary Lane and walk thirty yards to the main road Rose Hill Street to find Lancaster Square in front of you. For the High Street cross the pelican crossing and the High Street is in front of you. For the Y Bont/The Bridge turn right along Rose Hill Street to find the pub on the left hand side. For the Albion turn left along Uppergate Street about fifty yards to find the Albion on the left hand side on the corner with Chapel Street.

For the return platform to Chester walk through the car park on Rose Hill Street opposite the station. Conwy is a request stop so put your hand out to signal you want the train to stop.

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MerseyAle Brewerynews



Takeover Creates World's Biggest Brewer Producing ONE THIRD of World Beer

The takeover of SABMiller by AB InBev combines the world's two biggest beer producers into one mega-company that will brew ONE THIRD of the world's beer, that is 140 BILLION pints a year. The SAB Miller board agreed the \$104bn (£68bn) takeover deal which is one of the top five deals in corporate history.

The two big brewers have recently moved into the Craft Beer market (see MerseyAle Summer 2015 pages 23 and 24) with SABMiller buying out Meantime brewery in Greenwich, whilst AB InBev had previously bought out Goose Island in Chicago and Boulevard Brewing in Kansas.

The new mega-company will control a massive number of beer brands.

SABMiller brings brands such as Fosters, Peroni, Miller Lite, Grolsch, Castle Lager which is a massive seller in Africa, and one you may not have realised they now own, Pilsner Urquell from Pilsen in the Czech Republic, in addition to Meantime.

AB InBev owns brands such as Stella Artois, Budweiser and Corona, dominates brewing in South America especially in Brazil and has extensive brewing interests in China.

The attraction to AB InBev of the deal with SABMiller is to gain access to the rapidly growing

African beer market. Africa and China are growth counties for beer sales and brewing. They are also moving to buy into the Craft Beer market as this is another area of growth at a time when many beer brands are declining.

The Guardian newspaper reported; *"The takeover secures AB InBev a target it has long coveted. Backed by Brazil's richest man, the financier Jorge Paulo Lemann, the Belgian-Brazilian brewer has expanded aggressively through big deals including combining with Interbrew, the maker of Stella Artois, in 2004 and buying the US Budweiser brewer, Anheuser-Busch, four years later."*

AB InBev decided to make a move after carrying out research on Africa, where SABMiller, founded in Johannesburg in 1895, is the dominant brewer. The charity ActionAid has criticised SABMiller for paying low taxes on its profits in Africa, including in Ghana."

Big Winners are the Finance Deal Advisors

Already the big winners from the takeover are the top managers and the finance advisors who piloted the deal. According to analysts at Bernstein, SAB's top managers will share a potential \$2.1bn payout of shares and options. Alan Clark, SABMiller's chief executive, is likely to receive more than £80m.

Finance advisors to SABMiller are expected to gain \$100 million to \$120 million whilst, advisors to AB InBev look to gain \$95 million to \$115 million

AB InBev's Next Target – is it to be Coca-Cola?

Word in financial markets is that AB InBev's next target for takeover may well be the mighty Coca-Cola

And What About a New Name? The new mega-company will need a new name. What about BEERHEMOTH?

MELWOOD BREWERY KNOWSLEY

Melwood Brewery is moving into bigger premises on Knowsley Park. The new home is the Kennels – the former home of the gun dogs that worked on the estate and more recently housed Knowsley Community College's rural crafts workshop. Co owner Julie Marsden commented "The move means we can finally do everything we were planning to do with Melwood – with dedicated rooms or all our operations."

NEW LOOK FOR PEERLESS IN MOVE FOR GROWTH



Wirral's Peerless Brewing Company has rebranded its beer range with a striking new look.

The rebranding comes soon after the award winning Birkenhead brewery doubled brewing capacity with investment in a modern, energy efficient, brew plant - capable of producing 120 brewer's barrels-a-week (more than 34,000 pints).

John Armstrong

The Caledonia

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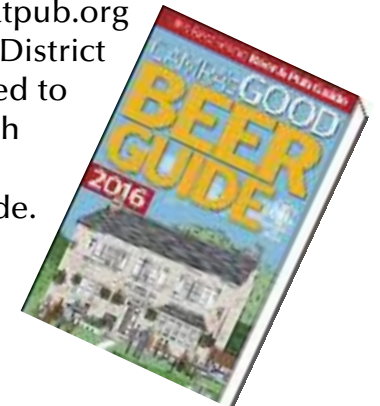
12pm-11pm Mon-
Thurs 12pm-
Midnight Fri & Sat
12pm-11pm Sun



Please send updates on pub details, opening times, beer ranges etc. or information on new outlets to

whatpub@liverpoolcamra.org.uk

Camra members' beer scores entered on whatpub.org for Liverpool & District pubs will be used to determine which feature in the Good Beer Guide.



Liverpool CAMRA Coach Trips

Coach trips are run every month to a variety of destinations.

Coach Trips depart at 10am from opposite the Ship and Mitre, Dale Street, and return there around 9pm. Cost is £12 for CAMRA members, £15 for non members – so it pays to join CAMRA!

For full details of upcoming trips and how to book please check out the coach trip page on the branch website. To book contact social@liverpoolcamra.org.uk or phone Ian Macadam 07521 741 586

Coach Trips depart at 10am from opposite the Ship and Mitre, Dale Street, and return there around 9pm.

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09/01 - Frodsham Beer Festival

13/02 - Staffordshire

19/03 - Bradford area

16/04 - Coventry (Beer festival will be on)

Check www.liverpoolcamra.org.uk coach trips page for updates and details of 2016 trips

The page is updated after the 1st of each month with details of the next trip being launched.

Any non-member considering coming on a CAMRA coach trip can save £15.

FREE COACH TRIP

Anybody who joins CAMRA for the first time and affiliates to the Liverpool & Districts branch, will be offered a free seat on a future branch coach trip. Check Liverpool CAMRA website for details

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Saturday	20th Feb	12:00pm - 4:00pm	£8.00
Saturday	20th Feb	6:30pm - 10:30pm	£7.00

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See www.liverpoolbeerfestival.org

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General Public ticket sales on Eventbrite from 7am on 9th November.

Ticket selling day in person at the Augustus John Pub from 12 noon on Sat 5th Dec.
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Cost is £100 per half page, £200 full page payment in advance.

Opinions expressed in MerseyAle are not necessarily those of the Editor Liverpool Branch or CAMRA

Liverpool CAMRA Diary

Saturday 7th November – RALLY to Save the Roscoe Head 12.30 at the pub.

Tuesday 10th November – Dark and Ruby Ale tour. Starting Baltic Fleet, at 7pm, moving to Bridewell 7.30pm. Additional pubs will be chosen in due course and a further announcement will be made by email, social media and the branch website.

Wednesday 18th November – Branch Get Together and PUB GAMES NIGHT – 7.30 – Lady of Mann, Dale St (behind Rigby's). All welcome at this annual fun evening of traditional pub games. Try your hand at skittles, shut the box, shove ha'penny and more! No experience necessary!

Thursday 26th November – Last Thursday Informal Meet Up in The Abbey, Hanover Street from 7:30.

Sunday 6th December - Manchester Xmas Pub Crawl Meet at 10am outside the ticket office at Lime Street Main Line Station for 10.22 train to Manchester Oxford Road. Trip will include a visit to the Manchester Xmas market and a curry in the famous 'This N That' Indian restaurant.

Wednesday 20th January – BRANCH AGM – Ship and Mitre, Dale Street (upstairs room) – 8pm. Election of your Branch committee, report on past year and future activities. Please bring CAMRA membership card for voting purposes. If you would like to stand for the committee please notify Branch Contact at contact@liverpoolcamra.org.uk

Thursday 28th January - Last Thursday Informal Meet Up in the Lime Kiln, off Concert Square, from 7.30pm

Sunday 7th February – First Sunday Lunch Meet Up – Baltic Fleet, Wapping (close to Albert Dock) – 1pm

CAMRA Liverpool Beer Festival Thursday 18th to Saturday 20th February. See advert page 52 for ticket sales.

CAMRA MEMBERS, please note nominations are now being accepted for Liverpool and Districts PUB OF THE YEAR (see p31 for details).



Liverpool CAMRA



MerseyAle



www.facebook.com/CAMRALiverpool



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whatpub.com Pubs featured on this website have been independently added and updated by thousands of CAMRA volunteers and includes over 96% of Britain's real ale pubs. Enjoy!

Next edition copy DEADLINE Sun January 10th - Next edition DUE OUT early February

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