

MerseyAle

CAMRA Liverpool & Districts Magazine

Summer 2018

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CAMRA Liverpool and Districts Branch

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

Message from the Editor



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

Welcome to the Summer edition of MerseyAle. Just as we went to press, it was announced that Tim Page had decided to step down from his role as CAMRA Chief Executive. In what was important news for the organisation as a whole, Jackie Parker (in her statement on behalf of the National Executive) thanked Tim for his contribution to the Campaign and wished him all the very best for the future. May we at MerseyAle echo those sentiments.

Closer to home, it's yet another remarkable achievement for CASK, who have now pulled off a hat-trick of consecutive Liverpool and Districts Branch Pub of the Year Awards. Hearty congratulations to Ian and Michelle, whose hard work and commitment to serving great beer in a welcoming environment has been deservedly rewarded once more. For more details, see Pages 22 and 23.

Congratulations are also in order for the Northern Club in Crosby, who are worthy winners of the 2018 Liverpool and Districts Branch Club of the Year Award. For more details about this hidden gem, see Page 19.

This issue includes features from Good Beer Guide Editor, Roger Protz and noted Beer Writer, Tutor and Master Trainer, Christine Cryne, amongst other esteemed contributors. As ever, your input is invaluable, very much appreciated and I extend my heartfelt thanks to you all.

Suffice to say, I sincerely hope you enjoy reading MerseyAle and continue to support our wonderful pubs across the region – especially in the warmer months ahead! Cheers.

Dave MacBryde
MerseyAle Editor

Welcome to the Vernon Arms

Cheers from Jimmy and Barbara Monaghan
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MerseyAle PUB NEWS



Maghull Cask Cafe

Fellow branch member, Dave Mernock, has visited the Maghull Cask Cafe and wrote the following review. (This should have appeared in the last edition of MerseyAle but due to the publication date being so soon after our successful Beer Festival, it was unfortunately omitted. Apologies from myself to both Dave and John.)



handpumps were offering **Holden's Golden Glow, Tiny Rebel Fugg Life, Hopsack Summer Lightning and Titanic Plum Porter** - all sampled, all in very good condition. John was telling me that previous beers included **Millstone Tiger Rut** and **Neptune Abyss** (brewed just half a mile away!).



Maghull Cask Cafe (located at 43 Liverpool Rd South) is a café during the day (Mocha), then towards the weekend transforms into an atmospheric



micro pub. Opening times are Thursday to Saturday 4-9pm and Sunday 12-9pm.

The licensee John and his staff are committed devotees of real ale and this shows in the superb beer quality. At the time of my (three) visits, four

Forthcoming beers include **Salopian Lux Nova, Tiny Rebel Marshmallow Stout and Kelham Island Aviator**. The aim is to offer one dark beer every week, with all four beers tapped on the Wednesday, to be replaced on the next Thursday by four new beers. They also offer soft drinks, wine and spirits (particularly gin) and a selection of bottles, including **Erdinger** and **Veltins**. Pies, pickles and snacks are available.

The bar area is cosy, but roomy and conducive for chatting (there are no TV's), with a quieter seating area to the rear of the pub. A car park is also situated to the rear.

Although having only opened at the end of January, the pub is already attracting an eclectic mix of customers and looks like

becoming a firm favourite and deserves continued local and regional support. It is a great addition to the real ale scene in Maghull. The 310 and 300 buses (Liverpool to Skelmersdale and Southport) stop outside.

The Florist

Work converting the Old Blind School pub (Hardman Street) to an exciting new venue has now been completed. The OBS closed suddenly last June and a sign stating "Closed until



further notice" remained in the window for many months. Now the site has been acquired by New World Trading Company (NWTC) and the new restaurant is named The Florist. NWTC have other venues within the branch area - namely, **The Smugglers' Cove** at the Albert Dock and **The Club House** in Chavasse Park.

The Florist offers its famous cocktails, a selection of world ale, alongside a vibrant food menu, which features a deli, rotisserie and grill dishes. They promise to offer beer and ale from around the world...only

time will tell if any will be of the traditional cask variety. The building is Grade II listed and features a striking central staircase with Victorian touches alongside the cosy open fires.

The Book Bar & Eatery

A new bar opened in West Derby Village at the end of March, on the site of an old betting shop. The Book Bar & Eatery (@thebookwestderby) has opened at 8 Mill Lane, L12, selling draught (keg) beers, gins and cocktails, but unfortunately **no real ale**. Hopefully, this may change in time. Food is served in the form of hand-made pizzas.

Stamps Bar

Stamps Bar in Crosby hosted the Caribbean Fusion Supper Club on 21st April. The



evening included a three course Caribbean meal, live music and entertainment.

Blues Bar

Meanwhile, around the corner, Blues Bar on Moor Lane has expanded into the neighbouring shop unit,



effectively trebling the space available.

Old Swan Ale House

The Old Swan Ale House have now launched their Pie Club. Every Friday, from 2pm, you



can by a pie and a pint for £6. Pies include Steak and Ale, as well as Pork and Stilton.

Corner Post

In December 2017, CAMRA member Dave Smallshaw, a Corner Post regular, suffered a fatal cardiac arrest in the micro pub, even though paramedics were soon on the scene.

Regulars at The Corner Post have raised money in Dave's



memory for a defibrillator to be placed on the wall outside the pub. The nearest one is at Crosby Leisure Centre, some 500m away. The Corner Post is on Bridge Road, centrally placed in a busy area, proving the ideal spot for such useful equipment. The collection has now closed and the machine is now installed on the Cavendish

Road side of the pub. Thank you to all who contributed to obtain this important piece of equipment.

Excelsior

It's come to my attention that The Excelsior on Dale Street is now selling Real Cider. I've been told by Matty and Jack that they have been selling **Rosie's Pig** and **Old Rosie** from Weston's for some time now. The cider is served directly from a chilled bag-in-a-box.



Dr Duncan's

As reported in the St Helens Star in May, a St Helens-based businessman has made a further addition to a rapidly expanding group of hotels and pubs by completing the purchase of **Doctor Duncan's**. **The Mikhail Hotel and Leisure Group** has bought the historic



pub, which sits in the shadow of St George's Hall. The group took over the running of the pub on May 3rd.



The company already owns **The Eccleston Arms** and **Punch Tarmey's** in St Helens, as well as **The Bold Hotel** and the **Punch Tarmey's Irish pubs** in Southport. They are also set to open **Lord Street Hotel** and a wine and champagne bar in the town this summer.

Andrew Mikhail, Chairman of Mikhail Hotel and Leisure Group, quoted to the Star:

"This is a really exciting time for us as a group, as we continue to expand. We have always had plans to move into the city centre, but were waiting for the right venue. We truly believe that Doctor Duncan's is that place."

"It is steeped in history and offers a great place to go for city workers and people enjoying a leisurely drink in great surroundings. While we can see what a good venue it currently is, we also see huge potential for what it can become."

"We are looking forward to working with the current staff and getting to know the customers and finding out how they would like Doctor Duncan's to develop."

There are plans to refurbish the pub in the near future, while being sympathetic to the fabulous history of the building.

The pub, which is well known for its elaborately tiled interior, was built for Pearl Insurance in 1901 and is a listed building. It is named after William Henry



Duncan, who was Liverpool and the UK's first Medical Officer of Health.

CookHouse

A popular Liverpool pub has reopened, after being converted into a family-friendly carvery, as reported in the Liverpool Echo.

The English Rose on Macketts Lane has undergone a huge £840k transformation, after being closed for 18 months. The pub is now called CookHouse



Pub & Carvery and opened in early March. Around 45 jobs have been created by the new development.

Colin Stuart, director at Public Urban Bars, who are behind the

new venture along with Star Pubs & Inns (Heineken), said: "My family are all from Liverpool and I still live in the area. The English Rose has always been an iconic site."

The tired building has received a complete external renovation to make it an attractive feature of the neighbourhood.

The large rear lawn has been landscaped to create a beer garden and a children's play area. The interior has been opened up, giving it a light, airy feel and a contemporary look.



A glass atrium-style extension with concertina doors, comfy seating and sofas has been built at the back to allow customers to enjoy the garden from inside. A state of the art kitchen has been installed, as well as an ice cream parlour and a barista quality coffee bar.

The pub opens daily at 9am, with food served all day, starting with breakfast. The menu focuses on delivering great quality at affordable prices, with ingredients sourced locally wherever possible.

As well as serving traditional pub favourites, the pub has a carvery, complete with a rotisserie.

By Andre Fu

CASK



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Rock the Boat Brewery of Little Crosby have brewed a new version of their 3.9% **Yellow Submarine** single-hop beer. This new brew used the UK-grown Jester hop and was available in local pubs during March/ April. Also available was 80/- which was produced especially for the **Baltic Fleet**, as part of their Six Nations Rugby event. It is described as a 4.5% dark, smooth malty brew with coffee notes.

The latest incarnation of this beer utilises the Ernest hop, which was 'mothballed' in the 1960's for being 'too New World' to be used in traditional English ales at that time. It was found growing in the wild and lab analysis identified it as being Ernest. See article on page 11.

Dave Barker (brewer at Rock the Boat) acquired it from hop supplier, Charles Faram, who had grown a 'trial' crop. He used it in the latest YS beer, along with 20% of the Challenger hop. Dave uses only whole leaf - no pellets, oils or cryo hops. By not over-hopping, he hopes he has created a traditional pale bitter at an ABV of 3.9%.

Flagship Beer (Ship & Mitre) have added Century, a balanced

West Coast IPA (5%) to their fleet, with lots of Centennial and Cascade hops. Additionally, Jar has joined the beers on regular rotation at The Ship and is described as a light-bodied 4.5% Porter. Jar will alternate with Silhouette, a 4.2% dry Irish stout. Meanwhile, Olio (a cask saison at 5.3%) has now been launched. This refreshing wheat and oat



pale will be available in aggressively dry hopped, dandelion, juniper, and orange and black pepper variants over the summer, with the most popular combos becoming regular cask and keg-conditioned offerings.

Neptune Brewery from Maghull had a Tap Takeover Weekend at the West Kirby Tap during the May Bank Holiday (4th-6th May), which featured 12 different cask and keg beers, covering all styles

News regarding Liverpool Organic Brewery for those who may have missed it...

<https://www.liverpoolcocho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/liverpool-organic-brewery-saved-after-14468223>

Big Bog Brewery in Speke have now extended their opening hours on Fridays to 4pm until late (use your own interpretation of what late is!). It con-

tinues to serve beer from both traditional cask and key keg and usually has four different beers available at each session, all priced at £2/pint (£2.50/keg). Quality spirits, premium bottled beers and ciders, wine and soft



drinks are also available, including their own range of flavoured gins and vodka, which is a new development. A selection of bar snacks are also on sale.

Now, as we move forward into the summer months, they have started opening on Saturdays too (from 1pm), but you are highly advised to ring ahead first or check social media before you make a special journey.

74 Venture Point West, Evans Road, Speke, L24 9PB. Tel: 558 0290. Twitter:@bigbog

Ad Hop



Meanwhile, over at AdHop, following on from their runner's-up place at this year's beer festival (and a successful launch night in The Grapes, where a firkin sold out in just four hours), they will shortly be going into full production of a 4.6% honey pale ale, called **Honey I Love You.**

contd on page 11



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Strangers at the Bar

The Guardian reports that two London pubs frequented by politicians - **St Stephen's Tavern** and **The Red Lion** - could soon be seized by parliament and closed.

Under one of several plans to restore the Palace of Westminster, politicians would move to buildings across the road - probably with the Commons moving to Richmond House on nearby Whitehall. This would enclose both pubs in a new £50m security ring until the refurbishment of the Palace

is complete, which means the public will not be able to use either pub. There was talk of The Red Lion being 'nationalised' so that politicians don't lose access to their subsidised drinks, as the Palace bars will also be closed. We can't have politicians paying proper pub prices like the rest of us, can we?

According to **whatpub.com** (where CAMRA members are encouraged to enter beer scores), the nearby Westminster Arms has its own Division Bell, so that toping MPs



can be recalled back to the 'House' for important votes. It must be nice to work in an environment with such a relaxed alcohol policy - unlike the policies most other public servants and other workers have to comply with.

By Tony Morgan

Brewery news contd

Ad Hop enjoyed a very successful tap takeover at Swanfest at the **Old Swan Ale House** during the Easter weekend, with four of their beers on: **Jesse James**, a 4.9% IPA; **Little Secret Galaxy**, a 5.5% IPA; **Equinox XL**, a 6.1% IPA; and the launch of their latest pale ale, **Liver Bird**, a very

tasty and quaffable 4.2% beer. They also have also launched a new 4.2% pale ale called **Paddy's Wigwam**, as well as re-brewing some of their favourite beers - **Enigma**, a 5.5% single hop IPA; **Equinox**, also a 5.5% single hop IPA; and **Little Secret Galaxy**, a 5.5% IPA, including a

variant dry hopped with Lemon Drop hops. Currently maturing and available later in the year are old favourites **Black Widow**, a 10.2% Imperial Stout aged on oak chips, as well as **Liquorice Lady**, a 6.5% Liquorice Baltic Porter.

By Andre Fu

Hopping in Ernest

Rock the Boat have released their latest batch of Yellow Submarine Special; this time with a hop that hasn't been used since 1959. It is called **Ernest** and was first developed in 1921 at Wye College in Kent, which was one of the main agricultural research centres in the UK at that time. It is named after its breeder, Prof. Ernest Salmon, who worked on the development of several commercial hop varieties, including Brewer's Gold, Bullion, Northern Brewer, and Bramling Cross.

Brewing trials conducted by the Institute of Brewing in 1959 concluded that Ernest was a poor substitute for the Fuggle hop variety,



due to its "strong, coarse, American aroma", not at all suitable for British beer at that time. However, times have changed. Subsequently, the variety was put back into the hop collection and not used again until



Hops (after Hope) by Dennis Jones

'rediscovered' recently by brewers looking for 'New World' characteristics.

Ernest provides a fruity flavour, with apricot, citrus and spice notes in the aroma. The current interest stems from wild varieties of the hop reportedly being found in Worcestershire. These were taken for analysis at Charles Faram Hop Merchants, who grew a test crop. Consequently, Rock the Boat brewer, David Barker, managed to obtain some of this crop for this version of Yellow Submarine Special.

By Tony Morgan

Take a walk on The Dark Side

May brings longer nights, warmer weather (hopefully) and CAMRA's annual celebration of my favourite beer style - Mild. Sadly, Mild is scarce in Liverpool, with very few pubs selling it on a regular basis. So, with that in mind, rather than having a Mild pub crawl, we widened our options slightly and went for a dark ale crawl instead. Widening the criteria gave us a greater selection of pubs to choose from, and a special mention must go to The Grapes on Knight Street, as well as The Dispensary. Although we didn't visit these pubs on this tour, they are both a reliable source of great dark beers, all year round. This year, we started at The Augustus John, which



is always a good place to seek out dark beer. On this particular day, we were treated to two Milds - both of which are rarely seen in Liverpool: Teignworthy Martha's Mild and Castle



Rock Juniper Mild. A great way to start the crawl!

A short walk down the hill brought us to Sanctuary Bar on Lime Street. A relatively new addition to



the real ale scene, the pub is becoming a favourite with CAMRA members and is a haven amongst all the keg outlets that have recently opened in the area. There are two dark beers regularly on the bar: Stog (from local brewery,



Big Bog) and one of my personal favourites, Titanic Plum Porter. Both are well kept and served with a smile. A short walk away, our next pub was The Richard

John Blackler. In recent weeks, I've had some great dark beers here, and this visit was no exception, with not one, but two



Milds on offer: Moorhouse's Black Cat (another favourite of mine) and Titanic Mild. Unable to decide which to go for, I opted for a half of each. Should you visit this pub, look out for their CAMRA corner, where you'll find a photo of everyone enjoying the crawl.

The North Western (our second Wetherspoon's pub) - normally busy with travellers using the adjacent Lime Street Station or attending a show at the nearby Empire Theatre - was pleasantly calm by the time we arrived, late in the

CAMRA's annual celebration of Mild



evening. Another pub that often has dark beers on offer, there was an impressive selection, including Rudgate Ruby



Mild, Lytham Stout, and another local beer, the fabulous Peerless Oatmeal Stout.

Our last stop on the crawl was a pub that offers a dazzling array of real ales, including many unusual dark beers, the Ship and



Mitre. I was hoping to have my first taste of Titanic Cherry Dark here, but sadly when we got to the pub, it was still listed as 'Coming Soon'. However, my disappointment was soon expelled when I tried the Ossett Progress Porter - a great beer to finish the night with.



I'd like to thank those people who came on the crawl and helped make it such a success. Of course, a big thank you to all the pubs for their hospitality and excellent beers. There were so many great brews on offer, from a variety of breweries, including a few local ones. We really were spoilt for choice. Here's to next year's crawl!

By Sonia James-Henry





Protz On Beer

Editor of the Good Beer Guide

Twice winner of Glenfiddich Drink Writer award, SIBA 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Brewing Industry

As Mark Twain might have said, **“Reports of CAMRA’s death have been greatly exaggerated”**. Following the campaign’s annual meeting on 21st and 22nd April, I would like to clarify some issues regarding the decisions taken, CAMRA’s work over the past 47 years, and the beer market as it is today.

First, let it be said without fear of contradiction that CAMRA, whatever its faults, is a deeply democratic organisation. Not just those attending the AGM in Coventry, but the entire membership (totalling 192,000) were asked to vote on a series of changes to the campaign’s governing rules, known as the **“articles of association”**. These changes were the result of a two-year consultation known as the Revitalisation Project, designed to make CAMRA more relevant in a beer world that has changed beyond all recognition since it was founded in 1971.

18,000 voted, which is broadly typical of active engagement in a large membership organisation.

All the proposals except one



“Reports of CAMRA’s death have been greatly exaggerated”

were agreed, and these were progressive, including embracing greater diversity and equality.

The one that failed was seen as the major key to change: to make the campaign speak for all pub goers and beer drinkers. 72.6% of those voting supported that recommendation, but under company law (and CAMRA is a limited company), 75% had to vote in support. As a result, the proposal failed by less than 3%.

The conference also voted to

allow CAMRA beer festivals to stock beers other than cask-conditioned real ale. That is already happening and I suspect the trend will grow.

One successful candidate for the campaign’s national executive, Lynn Attack - and I do not believe these old school, dogmatic views to be typical of the executive - said that if CAMRA became the voice of all beer drinkers and supported modern craft keg beers, there would be a return to the 1970s, when keg beer ruled and cask ale was almost wiped out.

The facts prove otherwise. In spite of the dramatic increase in the number of breweries, overall consumption of beer is in decline. Cask ale has fared better than other types



of beer. Figures for 2017 show total keg (that includes such traditional keg beers as John Smith's and Tetley) down by 25%, lager by 11% and cask by just 5%.

The British Beer and Pub Association (the voice of big brewers and pub companies and not a great friend of CAMRA’s) says **“Cask is out-performing the market”**.

In spite of all the noise and brouhaha around craft keg beer, it accounts for just 5% of the beer market. It did grow market share in 2017, but remains a small sector. It’s not a threat to cask beer: research by Heineken shows that most drinkers of craft keg were previously lager drinkers. In other words, craft keg is not in general taking sales away from the real ale sector. The reason why global brewers such as AB



InBev, Carlsberg and Heineken are buying or investing in craft keg breweries is that while it’s a small sector of the market, it is highly profitable.

To those who argue that CAMRA - as a result of the AGM decisions - is no longer relevant, look at the campaign’s history. When it was founded in 1971, a wave of takeovers and mergers had created six national brewing groups, whose main aim was to foist dreadful keg beers such as Double Diamond and Watney’s Red Barrel, along with dismal parodies of European lager on the British drinking public. Old family breweries were disappearing at a rate of knots.

Young CAMRA was a small organisation, but with a powerful voice. As a result of its campaigning, beer festivals and publications such as the Good Beer Guide, it created

In spite of all the noise and brouhaha around craft keg beer, it accounts for just 5 per cent of the beer market.

such a demand for traditional cask beer that the sector started to revive, takeovers slowed down and more and more pubs stocked hand-pumped beer again.

Let there be no doubt that but for the efforts of CAMRA back in the 1970s and 80s, there would not be 2,000 breweries operating today. We would all be drinking the likes of Stella Artois, American Budweiser, Heineken and John Smith’s Smooth.

I voted for change. I would like CAMRA to be the voice of all pub-goers and to campaign to save pubs. While I will always drink real



ale as my beer of choice, I recognise that many modern craft keg beers are of excellent quality and worthy of attention.

But I also accept that, as a result of its founding aims, real ale must always be central to the campaign’s activities. No other country produces large amounts of cask-conditioned beer. It’s part of Britain’s history and heritage and it is to CAMRA’s great credit that it has been saved, restored and revived.

This is not the time to resign from CAMRA or tear up membership cards. In a few years’ time, it might be possible to revisit the call for the campaign to speak for all pub-goers and the necessary majority may vote in favour. In the meantime, let us salute CAMRA’s achievements and continue to support a movement that campaigns for good beer and the pubs that serve it.

By Roger Protz

For more news from Roger, Editor of CAMRA’s Good Beer Guide, visit:

<http://protzonbeer.co.uk/>

Trappist News

UK's first Trappist Brewery

Fans of Belgian beer may want to consider a trip to the East Midlands instead of Flanders, due to the opening of the UK's first Trappist brewery in Leicestershire.

After visiting other abbeys where beer is brewed, the monks of **Mount St Bernard Abbey** near Whitwick (west of



Loughborough) decided to look into starting their own brewery. They subsequently began making experimental brews. The monks were then given planning permission to build a brewery last year, converting a redundant part of the 19th century Cistercian monastery to create only the 12th Trappist brewery in the world.

Having received help from other Trappist monks and local brewers, they have now created the first English Trappist Ale, bringing together the traditions of both the continental Trappist brewers and English brewing.

The Mount St Bernard Abbey brewery has a 20 hectolitre capacity, which means they can brew 2,000 litres or about 440 gallons of beer at each brew.

The 7.4% beer will be available in 330ml

bottles and sold nationally (via a distributor) and locally in their own shop and selected outlets.

Any profits will go to the Trustees of Mount St Bernard - a registered charity, responsible for maintaining the abbey and paying the monks living expenses.

The name of the beer and launch date is due to be announced soon.

Trappist Troubles

We often hear of supermarkets selling beer cheaper than the local pubs can and undercutting them in the process. However, a cheeky supermarket chain in Belgium has been selling Trappist beer at a higher price and still getting into bother!

Trappist monks at the St Sixtus abbey in Westvleteren (West Flanders) brew three beers: Westvleteren 12 (XII), Westvleteren 8, and Westvleteren Blond. Annual production is very low, with the monks taking their own supply and releasing around 5,000 hl. for sale to the public. That's just about enough for 1.5 out of every 10 Belgians to enjoy one Westvleteren each year.

Under the abbey's rules, the beer is only available by the glass at the abbey visitor centre or by the crate, under strict conditions. Indeed, according to the Saint Sixtus abbey's website, those seeking to buy bottles of Westvleteren in bulk must have "a lot of patience and luck".

A buyer can reserve a maximum of two crates of 24 bottles, every 60 days at a price of roughly €40 per crate (equivalent to €1.70 per



bottle). They must pick them up from the gate of the abbey at the agreed date and time, having registered the licence plate of their car in advance.

The monks were horrified to discover that the Jan Linders supermarket chain - without the permission or knowledge of the abbey - had been selling their renowned beer at approximately five times the price charged by the monks.

A spokesman for the abbey said: **"A price of nearly €10 per bottle goes against the ethical standards and values that the monks face. Every beer lover knows that the Trappists of Westvleteren do not pursue profit maximisation; they only produce as much beer as is necessary to provide for their livelihood. All the profits made go to the abbey charity."**

A spokesman for Jan Linders stated that the supermarket had wanted to reward loyal customers with the specialist beer, and had allowed the purchase of a maximum of two bottles at a time. He said that while the stock of 300 crates of 24 bottles sold out

within hours - with reports of customers queuing outside - the supermarket's profits were negligible, as it needed to pay off unidentified suppliers.

Gineke Wilms, the company's marketing manager, said: **"The beer was purchased through a number of links, which is why the price was this amount. We emphasised to the abbey that we had really good intentions. We respect the exclusivity of beer enormously."**

An abbey spokesman said: **"We especially hope that it will not happen again."**

By Tony Morgan



Good Beer Guide Belgium

In April 2018, CAMRA launched the eighth edition of its Good Beer Guide Belgium. The book is jam packed with information on Belgian breweries, beers and bars, amongst other essentials.

Since the guide's inception in 1992 (which then included Holland as well), this trusty tome has become an indispensable companion for any discerning fan of Belgian beer – or indeed novice. Authors Tim Webb and Joe Stange are authorities on the subject and their passion shines through on every page.

This is to be Tim's last Good Beer Guide Belgium however. Having worked on the project for three decades, he is "not retiring – never has been – but feels the need to become a user." He's most certainly earned the right. The guide provides much more than a mere list of bars and beers though, with nigh on 400 pages comprising comprehensive advice on getting there, as well as details of beer festivals, what to eat, where to stay and



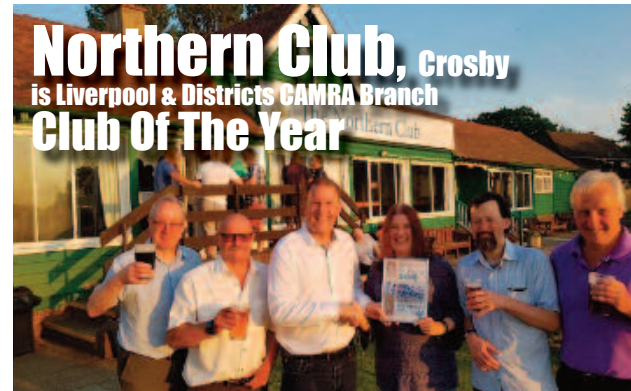
how to bring the best of Belgium's beer offering back home with you. Furthermore, there are sections devoted to beer and food matching, Belgian history down the years and even an educational look at 'Brands without breweries'. Following my first visit to Belgium in 1998, I've been a fairly regular visitor ever since, with Bruges a personal favourite. Those initial trips were spent sans guidebook, with no online beer apps to hand either (the likes of which are commonplace these days). Beer hunting for me involved mainly leisurely strolls, whereby bars were stumbled upon by chance or recommended word of mouth.

As enjoyable as that was, my first purchase of the Good Beer Guide Belgium in 2010 (by then in its sixth edition), added a whole new dimension to beery Belgian meanderings and helped hone my taste buds further.

Although all the hotspots (notably Brussels, Ghent, Bruges and Antwerp) are covered in earnest, it is perhaps the more obscure bars and breweries featured that bear greater testament to the painstaking research that has gone into the guide. So much so, it's previously given me immense pleasure to find gems - courtesy of the guide - in such places as Tongeren and Namur, not to mention drinking from a chalice in the local haunt of ex-Newcastle United footballer, Philippe Albert, in Charleroi (which was more a stroke of luck than anything else!). Given the coverage afforded to the varying styles and traditions, it's easy for any reader to gain a better understanding of the Belgian beer world as a whole. All in all, Good Beer Guide Belgium is a must-have for anyone with even a passing interest in Belgian beer and a more than worthy investment.

By Dave MacBryde

To purchase Good Beer Guide Belgium, visit the online CAMRA shop at: shop.camra.org.uk



On Thursday 24th June, branch members visited the Northern Club in Crosby to present them with the branch Club of the Year award for 2018. The Northern is a true hidden gem, tucked away in the Moor Park area of Crosby, just off the A565 on the way to Thornton. Founded as a cricket club in 1859, the Northern moved to Moor Park in 1907.

On the evening of the presentation, those attending were rather spoilt for choice as far as beer is concerned. Three Rock the Boat beers (Dragon's Teeth, Bootle Bull, and Yellow Submarine Special) were being



served in the function room where we met, with Red Star Formby Blonde, Hawkshead Bitter, and Brimstage Trapper's Hat available in the main bar.

As the evening was blessed with warm, sunny weather, the presentation itself took place outside, next to the main cricket pitch. Sonia James-Henry, Chair

of Liverpool & Districts branch, presented the award to Colin Blanchard (Club President) and John Rearden (Club Manager). Presenting the award, Sonia explained that the Northern had impressed the local CAMRA committee, due to the work put in to increase the range of real ales on offer in recent years, and also because of the important role the club plays as part of the local community. In reply, Mr Blanchard expressed what an honour it was for the club to be recognised in this way and thanked Liverpool & Districts CAMRA for the award on behalf of the club committee and members.

At the Northern, members of the Club Committee and Club Manager have worked together to improve the range of real ales on offer. The hand pumps in the main bar regularly feature beers from Rock the Boat, Brimstage and Hawkshead breweries.

Also, three pumps have recently been installed in the function room, and the Club Manager, John Rearden, is happy to source a particular beer to suit individual tastes if you book an event at the club. However, the Club of the Year is

not just about beer, as the award takes into account a club's place within the local community. The Northern has five senior cricket teams, squash and racketball courts, hockey pitches, two bowling greens, and snooker teams. Many of the sports have strong junior sections, which are training up the next generation of sportsmen and women. All this makes the Northern a local community asset and a worthy winner of this award.

Although the Northern is a members club, card carrying CAMRA members are admitted on Wednesdays and anyone can visit when there are home cricket matches taking place.

Like the Pub of the Year (POTY) competition, Club of the Year is a national CAMRA competition, run on similar lines to POTY and has similar judging criteria. The Northern is now in competition with other Merseyside and Cheshire CAMRA region clubs. These are: Poynton Royal British Legion Club (High Peak & N East Cheshire); Broken Cross (Macclesfield); Appleton Thorn Club (North Cheshire) and The Nantwich Club (South Cheshire).

Clubs can be listed on WhatPub (<https://whatpub.com/>), so if you know of any social, working men's, ex-servicemen's, political, religious, student unions or sporting clubs which sell real ale, you can either add them to the WhatPub database or let us know on publicaffairs@liverpoolcamra.org.uk or contact any member of committee.

By Tony Morgan

the Head of Steam
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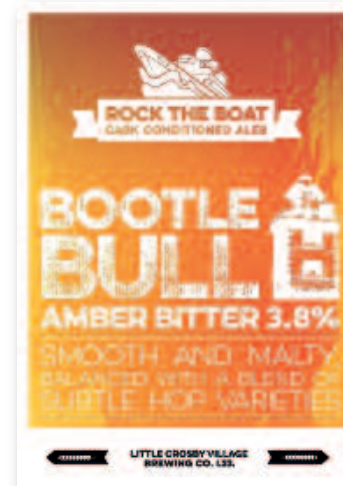

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 for the facts about alcohol

Rock the Boat BOOTLE BULL



If you've ever bought or seen Rock the Boat beers in pubs, you might have noticed that their names all have a local connection. In fact, some are named after local landmarks or features, with a few having musical connections.



For instance, their 3.8% bitter, Bootle Bull, is named after the foghorn in the old Bootle or North Wall lighthouse. The lighthouse was built by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board in 1877 on the seawall between Hornby Dock - at that time the most northerly of the docks (now filled in) - and Alexandra Branch Dock No.3. It was 70 ft (21 m) high, with a brick built square tower surmounted by an iron balcony and a circular lantern room.

The lighthouse and the 'Bootle Bull' went out of service in 1927 when Bootle docks were expanded with the construction of

Gladstone Dock. Subsequently, a new lighthouse was constructed to the north of the new dock.

An internet search reveals several black and white photographs and a couple of sketches of the lighthouse. Also, local artist Mike Booth has produced a colour painting of the lighthouse. This can be seen in the Corner Post in Crosby.

By Tony Morgan

Ref: <https://whatpub.com/pubs/MER/401/corner-post-liverpool>



Mike Booth

Pub of the Year

It's a Hat-Trick for **CASK!**



It occurred to me recently to think about the origins of the term 'hat-trick'. Obviously, I know it's closely associated with several sports, but was curious to find out when, why and how it was first used.

A quick bit of research on that 'internet thingy' revealed the following:

"The term first appeared in 1858 in cricket, to describe H. H. Stephenson's taking three wickets with three consecutive deliveries. Fans held a collection for Stephenson, and presented him with a hat bought with the proceeds. The term was used in

print for the first time in 1865."
Source: Wikipedia (27/05/18)

Now, I know you can't believe everything you read on Wikipedia, but other sources seem to concur, which I was relieved about. Apart from real ale, cricket is my other 'passion', despite the national team and Lancashire not having a great time of it at the moment!

You may be wondering by now what all this 'rambling' has got to do with real ale and MerseyAle etc. Well, it's quite simple really. Back in March, I had the pleasure of announcing CASK as our branch Pub of the

Year (POTY) for the third year running, thus securing a 'hat-trick' of wins.

To my knowledge, in the 'modern era' (i.e. in the last five years or so), this hasn't been achieved since the Ship & Mitre won in consecutive years, at a time when the whole POTY process was very different from what it is now.

On Sunday 6th May, committee members along with CASK regulars gathered in the winning venue to make the official presentation of the certificate and POTY Shield to Ian and Michelle.



Michelle, Ian, Andre and Branch Chair Sonia

I was 'warned' by our Chair to keep my 'presentation speech' short...which I duly did. As usual, Ian was very gracious, but a 'man of few words', although Michelle made up for that by first thanking those branch members who nominated the pub, the judges for their 'efforts', but mostly the loyal customers they have attracted over the years that make it all possible and worthwhile.

This is the third (and last) time I've had to write an article such as this. So much so, I have now run out of superlatives that the judges used this year to describe why they scored CASK as they did. All that can be said is that they are a worthy winner once again.

As stated in the previous edition of this magazine, this is the last year I will be the co-ordinator of this competition. During my three-year term, I can certainly say it has been a privilege. I have taken it very seriously and done it to the best of my ability, but sadly I cannot say it has always been a

pleasure. The whole selection and judging process is as open and transparent as I can make it and I've had terrific support from all the judges I've appointed - both from the committee and outside. To all of them...I am very grateful.

However, I have been very disappointed with the level of apathy amongst the branch in

general when it comes to nominating pubs to make the shortlist. We have a local membership of nearly 1,800+, but in the last few years I have received less than 150 nominations each year. Then, to cap it all, those that don't express a choice pass negative comments on the outcome, either regarding the makeup of the shortlist or the eventual winner.

My comment is this: if you want to affect the outcome of the process you need to VOTE and play an active part in the competition, rather than simply pass comment after the event.

I wish my successor the best of luck...and look forward with anticipation to the outcome of next year's competition.

By Andre Fu
Pub of the Year Co-ordinator





Liverpool Pubs CAMRA Discount



Discounts on production of a valid CAMRA card

- **Central & Commercial**, Ranelagh St – 20p off (pints only)
 - **Willow Bank Tavern**, Smithdown Road – 10% off except Tuesday after 6pm (see below)
 - **Flute**, Hardman St – 10% off except Tuesday (see below)
 - **White Star**, Rainford Gardens – Mon to Thurs selected beer £2.50
 - **Pumphouse**, Albert Dock – 25p off (pints only)
 - **Hare & Hounds**, Liverpool Road North, Maghull - 20p off (pints only) ex Monday: £2.49/pt
 - **Richmond Tavern**, Church Rd, Wavertree - 20p off (pints only) ex Monday: £2.49/pt
 - **The Liver**, South Rd, Waterloo – 20% off
 - **Yates**, Queens Square – 10% off
 - **Ale House**, Prescot Road, Old Swan – 20p off (pints only)
 - **The Baltic Fleet**, Wapping - 20p off a pint, 10p off a half
 - **The Punchbowl**, Lunt Road, Sefton Village – 20p off a pint, 10p off a half
 - **The Crown**, 43 Lime Street - 20p off a pint, 10p off a half
 - **Victoria Cross**, Sir Thomas Street - 20p off (pints only, except Saturday)
 - **Sanctuary**, 72 Lime Street - 10% off (Loyalty card available)
 - **Head of Steam**, 85-89 Hanover Street - 20p off a pint, 10p off a half
 - **Courtyard Bar & Kitchen**, 89 Roe Street - 10% off (pints only)
 - **Jolly Miller**, 176 Mill Lane - 10% off
- Discount available all day, every day unless stated otherwise**

Discount Days (available to anyone)

- **Flute**, Hardman St - Tuesday ONLY: £2.10/pt
- **Willow Bank Tavern**, Smithdown Road - Tuesday ONLY from 6pm: £2.25/pt
- **The John Brodie**, Allerton Road - Tuesday ONLY: £1.95/pt
- **The George**, Moor Lane, Crosby Village - Tuesday ONLY: £1.95/pt
- **The Lion Tavern**, Moorfields - Monday to Friday: 20p off a pint

Note: All discounts at management's discretion; Subject to change at short notice.

This list is correct as of 31st May 2018; E&OE

Any new offers since the last issue are in **RED**

Message to licensees / real ale drinkers:

This list is not exhaustive, so if we have left anyone off OR if the discount no longer applies, please let me know by emailing: locale@liverpoolcamra.org.uk with details.

By Andre Fu



Where to Find LocAle in Liverpool (correct as of May 2018)

- Augustus John**, Peach Street, L3 5TX
- Baltic Fleet**, 33 Wapping, L1 8DQ
- Barkers Brewery**, Archway Road, Huyton, L36 9UJ
- Barbacoa**, 47-51 Mersey View, L22 6QA
- Belvedere**, 8 Sugnall Street, L7 7EB
- Blackburne**, 24 Catharine Street, L8 7NL
- Butchers**, Booker Avenue, L18 4QZ
- Caledonia**, 22 Caledonia Street, L7 7DX
- Cavern Pub**, 5 Mathew Street, L2 6RE
- Central**, 31 Ranelagh Street, L1 1JP
- Childwall Fiveways**, 79 Queens Drive, L15 6XS
- Cobden**, 89 Quarry Street, Woolton, L25 6HA
- Corner Post**, 25 Bridge Road, Crosby, L23 6SA
- Courtyard Bar & Kitchen**, 89 Roe Street, L1 1EP
- Crown**, 43 Lime Street, L1 1JQ
- Dispensary**, 87 Renshaw St, L1 2SP
- Edinburgh**, 119 College Rd, L23 3AS
- Excelsior**, 121-123 Dale Street, L2 2JH
- Fall Well**, Roe Street, L1 1LS
- Flanagan's Apple**, Mathew Street, L2 6RE
- Flute**, 35 Hardman Street, L1 9AS
- Font**, Unit 3, Arrad Street, L7 7JE
- Four Ashes**, 23 Crosby Rd, North, Waterloo, L22 0LD
- Frank Hornby**, 38 Eastway, Maghull, L31 6BR
- Gibberish Brewpub**, 15 Caryl Street, L8 5AA
- Gold Balance**, Newton Gardens, Kirkby, L32 8RR
- Grapes**, 60 Roscoe Street, L1 9DW
- H1780 Tap & Still**, 62-64 Bridgewater St, L1 0AY
- Hard Times & Misery**, 2b Maryland Street, L1 9DE
- Head of Steam**, Hanover Street, 85-89 Hanover St, L1 3DZ
- Hub**, 16 Hanover Street, L1 4AA
- Lime Kiln**, Fleet Street, L1 4NR
- Lion Tavern**, Moorfields, L2 2BP
- Liver**, 137 South Road, Waterloo, L22 0LT
- Liverpool Pigeon**, 14 Endbutt Lane, Crosby, L23 0TR
- Love & Rockets**, 52 Lark Lane, Aigburth, L17 8UU
- Masonic**, 35 Gladstone Road, Garston, L19 1RR
- Mackenzie's Whisky Bar**, 32 Rodney Street, L1 2TQ

- Navigator**, 694 Queens Drive, Old Swan, L13 5UH
- North Western**, 7 Lime Street, L1 1RJ
- Old Bank**, 301 Aigburth Road, Aigburth, L17 0BJ
- Pen Factory**, 13 Hope Street, L1 9BQ
- Pumphouse**, The Colonnades, Albert Dock, L3 4AN
- Queen's Picturehouse**, 47 South Rd, Waterloo, L22 5PE
- Que Pasa Cantina**, 94, Lark Lane, L17 8UX
- Raven**, 72-74 Walton Vale, Walton, L9 2BU
- Refinery**, Josephine Butler Building, Hope Street, L1 9BP
- Richard John Blackler**, 1-2, Charlotte Row, L1 1HU
- Richmond Tavern**, 23a Church Rd, Wavertree, L15 9EA
- Roscoe Head**, 24 Roscoe Street, L1 2SX
- Royal Hotel**, Marine Terrace, L22 5PR
- Sanctuary**, 72 Lime Street, Liverpool, L1 1JN
- Ship & Mitre**, 133 Dale Street, L2 2JH
- Sphinx**, 160 Mount Pleasant, University, L3 5TR
- Stamps Bar**, 5 Crown Buildings, Crosby, L23 5SR
- Stamps Too**, 99 South Road, Waterloo, L22 0LR
- Thomas Frost**, 77-187 Walton Road, Kirkdale, L4 4AJ
- Vernon Arms**, 69 Dale Street, L2 2HJ
- Victoria Cross**, 1-3 Sir Thomas Street, L1 6BW
- Volunteer Canteen**, 45 East Street, Waterloo, L22 8QR
- Welkin**, 7 Whitechapel, L1 6DS
- Willow Bank Tavern**, 329 Smithdown Road, Wavertree, L15 3JA
- Ye Hole in Ye Wall**, 4 Hackins Hey, L2 2AW

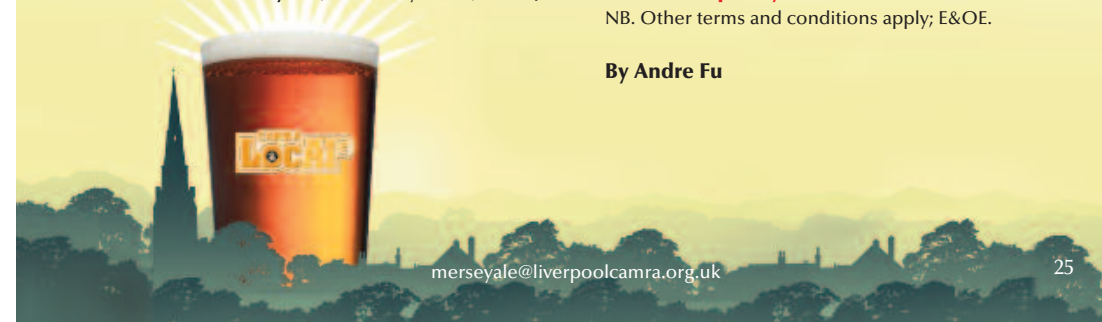
Total 63 **New additions are highlighted in RED
A MESSAGE TO PUBS:**

If you think your pub should be included in this feature, please email: locale@liverpoolcamra.org.uk explaining why.

A LocAle beer is a REAL ALE BREWED WITHIN 30 miles of the pub by road.

NB. Other terms and conditions apply; E&OE.

By Andre Fu





St Helens CAMRA News

St Helens boasts many well established real ale pubs and you can have a great day visiting them. Now though, there are three new names to add to the list: **The Bard** in Prescott, The George in the town centre and **The Cowley Vaults**, next door to The Turks Head.

The George has been a little hit and miss on the real ale front for several years, but has



The George

now been restored to a real ale haven. Situated in the George Street quarter of St Helens, the pub is just a minute's walk from both the bus and train stations.

The owner (from Wigan Brewing Company) and manager are committed to providing quality real ales in a comfortable setting. Since re-opening a few weeks ago, the lounge has been refurbished and the bar and beer garden have also been undergoing extensive work.

There are currently two real ales and one cider on offer, but this will go up to six real ales in the next few months, as well as foreign beers.

CAMRA members receive a 20p discount on each pint.

We had a great Mild crawl around St Helens on the last

Saturday in May, visiting several pubs offering a great range (and different styles) of Mild. The weather certainly helped, as we were able to enjoy the delights of several beer gardens en route. Most importantly, we finished on time, just before the football started.

Pubs visited included The Bard in Prescott, The Skew Bridge in Rainhill; it was then into the town centre to Connoisseur Brewery, The George, The Lamb, The Turks Head, The Talbot Ale House and The Cricketers Arms. Many thanks to those pubs for supporting Mild month, as several of them had Milds on throughout May. Look out for future walkabouts on Friday evenings and Saturday afternoons.

The Bard Micropub opened its doors on Valentine's Day this year after a long few months of planning and licensing consultations.



John and Julie

Sprung from the local Melwood Brewery partnership of John and Julie Marsden, The Bard will be showcasing Melwood beers, craft keg beer, artisan spirits and some wines, in addition to an ever changing line up of exciting cask ales from all over the country.

The Bard aims to bring beer to Prescott that no other pub or

bar has, where it will be served in an environment that's comfortable, peaceful and friendly. Named 'The Bard' after the poet and playwright, William Shakespeare, the pub has been set up well in advance of the new Shakespeare theatre and education complex that is coming to Prescott in the next two years.

Indeed, The Bard will be well established by that time and are hoping to have already put Prescott on the map as a must-visit destination. The pub fully supports the town's regeneration, along with the other exciting businesses that are bringing the place alive.

Another of three new real ale outlets in St Helens, **The Cowley Vaults** is once again selling real ale.



Cowley Vaults

A good CAMRA discount is on offer and it is well worth a visit. The Cowley offers a promising choice of beers that are well kept by Darryl, who also owns The Turks Head.

By Gillian Yates



Volunteers' Week is the perfect time to say a big thank you to all those people who give their time to support the branch. Without them, there would be no Campaign For Real Ale or any of the fantastic beer festivals that the organisation hosts throughout the country.

These are interesting times for the campaign. With varying opinions regarding the Revitalisation Project, many people have turned away from CAMRA, stating that it no longer represents them or their views. There are also those who have strong opinions regarding the organisation, despite not being members - or in some cases, being inactive members.

The only way to influence the direction of the campaign is to become and remain actively involved. You may not agree with certain aspects of the campaign, but the more involved you become, the more you'll understand and appreciate the complexities that come with running such a large organisation. Perhaps - as I have found - it will lead you to have a better understanding of why certain decisions are made, allowing your perceptions of the campaign to be more informed. Of course, volunteering for CAMRA has many benefits - particularly those of a social nature. As Staffing Officer for the Liverpool beer festival, I see the pleasure people derive from working at the festival, meeting new people (and old friends too), and of course sampling some great beer.

I'll leave the final word to Steve Berks; when I asked for someone to share their experience of volunteering for CAMRA, this was his



response, which I think says it all:

"I have more than twenty years' experience of volunteering for CAMRA and can highly recommend it. To enjoy volunteering, you need to passionately believe in the cause for which you're volunteering. That for me was no problem, because as a lover of real ale and real cider, promoting that cause was never going to be regarded as work. There are many ways to help your local branch; volunteering at the beer festival always jumps to mind, but that's only once a year. So, think about staffing a CAMRA information desk, delivering MerseyAle to four pubs near your home or assisting the committee on one of its projects.

The personal benefits of volunteering are numerous: increased social activity, camaraderie with other volunteers, gaining personal confidence, learning new skills, exposure to people and places that you wouldn't enjoy in your normal daily life - and above all, personal satisfaction, knowing that you are a giver and not a taker. I have no doubt at all that I'm a more rounded person for giving some of my time to CAMRA."

By Sonia James-Henry, Branch Chair/Beer Festival Staffing Officer



WirrAle Drinker

Beagle Is Wirral's Seasonal Top Dog!



It may have only been open for four months, but The Bow-Legged Beagle in New Brighton is definitely barking up the right tree, as the Wirral CAMRA committee joined many happy customers to celebrate the award of Spring Pub of the Season to owners Andy and John.



'The Beagle' offers a relaxing, friendly environment in which to enjoy some of the best real ale from the Merseyside region and no trip to New Brighton would be complete without spending some time here. Wirral CAMRA would like to thank everyone connected with The Bow-Legged Beagle for an excellent night and wishes them continued success in the future.



Dave Swift and Jan Lawton

temperature. As head of the judging panel, Jan was impressed with their condition and the styles available.

"The Red Fox is a worthy winner in a closely run contest this year", she said.

At the recent awards ceremony, the following fruity offerings were on tap:

Rosie's - Wicked Wasp cider (medium) 6.8%

- Rosie's - Triple D cider (dry) 6.4%
- Rosie's - Black Bart cider (sweet) 6.6%
- Cheddar Valley cider (sweet) 6.0%
- Celtic Marches - Ruby Tuesday raspberry cider (sweet) 4.0%
- Snailsbank - Rhubarb cider (sweet) 4.0%
- Orchard Pig - Ginger and Chilli cider (sweet) 4.0%
- Hecks - Port Wine of Glastonbury cider (medium sweet) 6.0%
- Broadoak - Sloe Gin cider (sweet) 4.0%
- Gwynt Y Ddraig - Two Trees perry (medium) 4.5%

Wirral CAMRA wishes the two Daves and their excellent staff continued success in the future. The Red Fox now goes forward for judging in the Regional Cider Pub of the Year category.

Wassail!
By Gareth Owen
Chair, Wirral CAMRA



Red Fox trots off with 2018 Cider Pub award

For the second year running, The Red Fox in Thornton Hough has scooped Wirral CAMRA's Cider Pub of the Year award.



Dave Swift and Dave Green

Ten real ciders and perries are permanently available and cellared for optimal serving

The presentation was made by Wirral CAMRA's Cider Officer, Jan Lawton, to the main men at the Fox: General Manager, Dave Green and Deputy Manager, Dave Swift.



Wirral Pub of The Year

Every branch has its own way of deciding their Pub of the Year and this is the process we adhere to in Wirral.

The most important factor for CAMRA is of course the beer quality. Beer scoring is a year-round continuous process, which assists us in selecting pubs for the annual Good Beer Guide. Wirral Branch comprises roughly 125 pubs serving real ale and each of those have been visited by members in 2017. Between March and December, we received over 2000 reports

on beer quality. Each November, we ask all members to nominate their favourite pub for our Pub of the Year, via a direct email, on our website, through social media and at branch meetings. This year, 16 pubs were nominated. We compared the nominations with the average beer scores we'd received for each pub to narrow down the list to

those consistently serving the best beer. Subsequently, that left us with ten pubs to judge.

We formed three small judging panels (consisting of committee members and non-committee members who had volunteered to join us) and started our pub visits. Apart from beer quality, each pub is judged in various categories, using



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- HARVEST MOUSE
- THE TAP
- GALLAGHER'S BAR
- COACH AND HORSES

**REAL ALE TRAIL
BUS PASS**




the same criteria as the regional and national competitions:

- **Style, Décor and Cleanliness**
- **Service, Welcome and Offering**
- **Community Focus and Atmosphere**
- **Alignment with CAMRA Principles**
- **Overall Impression**

Some pubs were revisited and comparisons made between the three panels to ensure consistency.

The judges noted some good points; overall hygiene and cleanliness was excellent, price lists and opening hours were usually displayed - although there were some notable exceptions where points were lost. For instance, community activity

was not always evident and there was sometimes little information to promote the locality to visitors. Most pubs visited were active in promoting their real ale and cider by listing beers on notice boards, having small samples on the bar (to show colour) or offering customers a taster before purchase.

On a not so positive note, there were some examples where the bar staff didn't engage with customers on arrival and seemed to do everything possible to avoid eye contact. There were also instances where tables were not cleared of empty glasses and cleaned - even when bar staff weren't busy. Overall though, these were generally isolated complaints and the general impression of all the pubs was very high.

Wirral CAMRA is pleased to announce our Pub of the Year results as follows:

Overall winner: **The Lazy Landlord, Liscard**
Runner up: **The Harp, Little Neston (Cheshire)**



The judges also highly commended three further pubs:

Gallaghers, Birkenhead
The Magazine, New Brighton
The West Kirby Tap, West Kirby

Congratulations to these five excellent pubs which made it to the top of the pile.

By Gareth Owen
Chair, Wirral CAMRA



**Wirral Pub of the Year
The Lazy Landlord**



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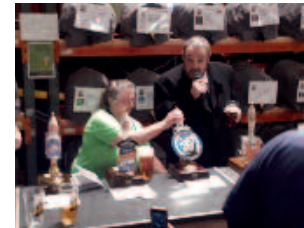
From Dave Halliwell, MerseyAle Isle of Man Correspondent

This quarter, we report on the long awaited arrival of a new format of public house on the island - the micropub. In addition, we review the CAMRA Isle of Man beer festival and also report on a special award for The Pinewood community run club in Pulrose. We summarise local brewery news, focus on the historic Castletown pubs, where Heron & Brearley (the dominant island pub company and Okell's owner) have just completed a major refurbishment of The George. This is their only on island hotel/pub.



Isle of Man Beer Festival

April saw the seventh Isle of Man Beer festival, which was again held at The Villa Marina and attended by almost 3000 visitors over the three days -



several hundred of whom made the journey from the UK, with some lingering on island for a good week. Hollywood actor **John Rhys-Davies** officially opened the event, proving to be a big draw on the Thursday evening. A ceremonial first cask of ale was delivered to The Villa, once again by historic promenade horse tram,



resplendent in Okell's brewery livery.

Mr Rhys-Davies opened the festival with the launch of a brand new Bushy's Ale - **Swift One** - named in honour of The Manx Wildlife Trust, which was the charity of this year's festival. A proportion of the proceeds from sales of Swift One will go to the trust, in addition to monies raised during the event through donations. Many of the beers selected this year had a wildlife name theme to them to help promote the good cause.



Mr Rhys-Davies, in conjunction with local celebrity 'Pullyman' and Rob Storey from Hooded Ram (last year's brewer of the charity ale) then went on to present the Alzheimer's Society with cheques for almost £2000 from the previous year's festival fund raising.

What was particularly refreshing and appreciated by

organisers and festival goers alike was the time Mr Rhys-Davies spent mingling and chatting with regular festival goers after the officialdom was over, much to his great credit. This showcase on island real ale event, held in The Villa Marina Royal Hall, once again proved a great success. CAMRA Isle of Man would like to thank all supporters in any way, particularly the main sponsor, Long & Humphrey Advocates, the excellent Villa staff, and local breweries.

Micropub

May 19th saw the arrival on island of a brand new genre of establishment in the history of the on-trade public house - the micropub, as detailed in a previous issue. Still widely unknown on island, this style of pub is usually small, independently run, carrying a limited number of ever-changing ales and operating to limited opening hours. Typically, they can initially appear quite sparsely furnished to the outsider. When micropubs first began to surface in the UK, it's fair to say that



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Expansive views of Peel bay, harbour and Castle

significant sections of the industry viewed them as a fad that would fizzle out as owners retired, but the genre has gained real traction and there are now several hundred such establishments throughout the UK.

For Manx readers, the style has recently spread quickly across the North West of England. Their attraction is predominantly in their size, which promotes free and relaxed conversations, whilst enjoying different styles of beer in a laid back and convivial setting. Often rare havens of relaxed calm on the bustling high street, many micropubs are situated in former shop units.

Two Fellas

Michael Street in Peel (on the West coast of the island) is the location of the Two Fellas Micropub, run as a joint



operation by Charles Miller and John Wheeler, both residents of Peel. Four real ales are currently on offer, along with **Norseman lager** from Bushy's, now one of the brewery's best sellers. Real ales will change each week. The unit is towards the smaller end of the micropub range, with a maximum capacity of forty and a modest range of other drinks available for those less keen on cask ale. Ciders from both Manx Cider Company and Apple Orphanage Company (also Manx) are stocked, along with a limited range of wines and soft drinks. Opening hours are



Thursday and Friday from 6pm to 10.30pm, Saturday Midday to 10.30pm, and Sunday 12noon to 3pm - unusual for the island, but broadly typical of the micropub phenomenon.

Decor on the opening night was minimal, due to an understandable rush to open prior to the TT race fortnight. It was clear from first impressions though that the fully carpeted unit looked right throughout, while the space with seating and tables was spot-on for developing the classic micropub ambience, with much friendly banter and conversation among the clientele - something which the intimacy of the smaller space encourages. It must be noted here that whilst many of the pub operators on island (particularly Heron & Brearley to their immense credit) have retained smaller multi-rooms in



pubs during refits, this has often not been so in the UK this past twenty years.

As a consequence, the much larger open spaces format has

sometimes been to the detriment of the traditional pub atmosphere, something which the micropubs redress via their small size. Updates from The Two Fellas can be found on Twitter @Two_Fellas_IoM and it's likely that a very interesting and well-kept beer range will be available as time progresses, with John and Charles having had a long-term interest in real ale and significant experience as beer orderers on island for numerous beer festivals. MerseyAle wishes the venture well in this island first.

News Roundup

The Pinewood (Pulrose) was presented with a community award by Martyn Anderson,



Isle of Man CAMRA Branch Chairman, in recognition of a fantastic effort by the Pulrose community to come together to retain the venue as a going concern after Heron & Brearley wanted to step away some two years ago. Now well into its second year, The Pinewood (run as a club by the local community) is more than holding its own, and in addition to **Okell's Bitter**, stocks a 3.8% **Pinewood Bitter**.

More importantly, while



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THE ONLY BEERS TO CONTAIN MANX GROWN BARLEY

community groups in the UK are increasingly attempting to save their community local by various means, each and every one of these projects requires an immense amount of hard work, hence the decision by the Isle of Man CAMRA group to recognise that effort. The achievements of the Pulrose community in saving The Pinewood must not be underestimated, particularly as the pub is not in a naturally high catchment area, or indeed on a main thoroughfare with passing trade. Undoubtedly of great significance has been the



efforts behind the bar of Steve McDowell (seen here receiving the award on behalf of the club). Steve has vast experience of the pub trade on island - invaluable at key moments for any new venture.

Brewery News

Aside from a significant refurbishment of **The George** in Castletown (see later in the text), the quarter has been dominated by anticipation and preparations for the TT motorbike races, with all breweries significantly upping their brewing volumes to cope with the influx of visitors due in late May. However, as detailed in recent issues of MerseyAle, the contract for the Douglas

promenade TT beer tent has this year changed hands after a generation, with all eyes on **Hooded Ram**, who have secured the promenade site. **Bushy's** will now be operating a much larger site within the Douglas Villa Marina gardens (with the famous Bushy's bottle car being recently spotted



outside The Villa). **Okell's** are also retaining and developing their main TT Grandstand site, in what promises to be a bumper year entertainment wise for race fans. Speculation and interest in the three brewery offerings at this key event in the Manx calendar were rife on the eve of TT, with Hooded Ram tent details even making the headline billboards for the local newspapers - such is the draw of TT on island - something that might seem unusual to say the least to UK readers! A full report on how events unfolded once the dust settles will appear in the next issue.

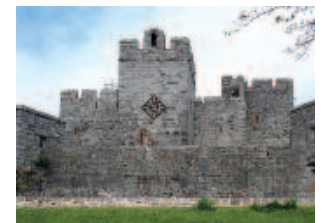
In the meantime, Rob Storey from Hooded Ram took the time out to host a brewery evening for West Pennines Regional CAMRA, who visited the island in May, giving the group a conducted tour around the fully functional new brewery site on Douglas inner quay. The former Hills Meadow site, which the company had outgrown, is now out to lease. The Regional Group held a

meeting the following day in **The Whitehouse Hotel**, Peel, and included CAMRA representatives from each of the branches in Cumbria, Lancashire, and the Isle of Man.

The Sulby Glen (Sulby) is to continue this year with its annual beer festival. To be held in the third week of July, this festival is by far the longest running annual beer festival on island.

Focus on Castletown

The historic and picturesque town of Castletown (the island's ancient capital until 1869) makes for an ideal stopover for those wanting to spend time enjoying the island's pubs and history. Situated 10 miles south of Douglas and only a five minute bus ride from the airport, the town is dominated by the superbly well preserved medieval Castle Rushen, dating back possibly to the 12th century. Pubs wise, there is something for all, including a



variety of dining options, with a blend of the modern and traditional. The six pubs mirror the island as a whole, with three free houses and three Heron & Brearley estate pubs (Okell's). MerseyAle took a day's tour of the town, with all pubs within easy walking distance of each other.

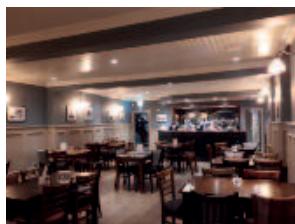


At the heart of Castletown Square lies the impressive **George Hotel**, situated close to the bus stop. Recently refurbished in spring 2018 and fully reopened, Heron & Brearley (H&B) have given its only island hotel a modern and superbly tasteful makeover, in



keeping with the hotel's history, having been built possibly around the 1830s. There are eleven well furnished rooms, much upgraded from previous times to a high standard. Downstairs, the front bar areas have been substantially altered and opened up slightly, though not to the pubs detriment. Meanwhile, the wall decorations, colourings and lighting put a sophisticated, yet informal modern slant on this historic hotel /pub.

As before, there is a room and



bar to the rear, while The George can cater for functions of up to sixty seated or a hundred for buffets/standing. Food is served daily, and as with a number of H&B pubs on island, the company has made very

significant presentational efforts in recent years, notably upgrading the standards. Dining areas and tables are well appointed, and menus extensive. A fifteen gin menu is also available. Most of the H&B pub estate now focuses on its core range of Okell's beers and The George is no exception; **Okell's Bitter**, **MPA** and **IPA** were available at the times of visits, with the **Manx Pale Ale** being in exceptionally good condition. Service was found to be excellent and friendly on multiple visits. The outdoor areas to the rear of the building facing the sun have been similarly refurbished, while the parking facility for the pub has



been retained. In summary, a quality refurbishment, very tastefully done. With other large facilities in the south of the island being limited, this looks like a very shrewd investment at this time from H&B.

A hundred yards to the left of The George upon leaving lies **The Union**, perhaps the most traditional 'local's pub' in the



town. Dating from at least 1843 on the site of a former brewery, The Union is the second of the H&B pubs in town. It retains a traditional games area, with dart boards in both the front and back rooms. The main front bar features some of the exposed stone work of the building, whilst the back room (served by a small separate bar)



is fitted out with several large screen TVs, making for a modern sports bar in a distinct area of the pub. As mentioned earlier, H&B have laudably retained separate rooms in many pub locations on island, cleverly differentiating their pubs operating in close proximity, with contrasting and complementary facilities for the local community. **Okell's Bitter** and one other from the Okell's stable are invariably available in this friendly, traditional wet house pub.

Leaving The Union and turning right towards the castle and harbour side can be found **The**



Tap Room, notable for its bright red door. This free house is of recent origin, having been



converted from a restaurant only a few years ago. It usually features three cask ales, frequently from the UK and often changing. The Tap Room stores and cools the cask beers from behind the bar, which is extremely rare for the island, as nearly all pubs use traditional cellars. To the rear of the building, there is an upstairs outside terrace area for smokers. On the ground floor, distinct from the main bar areas, Thai and Chinese food by the Siam Orchid restaurant is served at lunch and evening times weekdays, as well as in the evenings on Saturday and Sunday. Takeaways are also available.

On leaving The Tap Room and turning right, about 50 yards away on the harbour rests the pub known as **The Gluepot** (with The Castle Arms as its



official title), the third and perhaps most memorable H&B pub in the town. Though many hand pumps are available, The Glue Pot has reverted back to the Okell's core range in recent years. The wood panelling,

small rooms, internal nautical theme, and superb location between the harbour and castle makes the pub (thought to date from the mid 1700's) invariably a favourite for visitors. Outdoor seating areas overlooking the inner harbour - dominated by the castle in the background - are perfect on a summer's day,



as the seagulls wander brazenly amongst the tables in the hope of finding food. They are often disappointed at this currently non-food outlet. In terms of setting and location alone, the pub can rarely be beaten - both in UK terms and on island. For this reason, it's hard not to conclude that more could be made of the pub catering wise, though size and space restrictions may well be a limiting factor.

A third of a mile across the harbour bridge and to the train station can be found the remaining two pubs in town, directly adjacent to the station, facing one another. **The Viking** (on the right) is a free house, currently offering **Bushy's Bitter** and focusing on traditional dining options. There are two bar areas, with the right side used more frequently for dining and the left more as a bar. For many years, the pub decor has had a very individual and bespoke feel about it, which can be quite



refreshing and welcoming in these days of mass conformity! Local produce was available for sale on the bar, including **Manx Honey** from Bride in the north of the island. A former hotel built at the turn of the 20th Century, this location is ideal if waiting for the steam train further south or back to the modern day capital, Douglas. Finally, directly across the road



upon leaving The Viking is **The Sidings**. Most towns have a 'big gun' when it comes to real ale, and this is it in Castletown. Featuring an extensive range of



cask ales across a long straight bar, the first four are from Bushy's and Okell's; permanently stocked are Bushy's Bitter, Castletown Bitter and Bushy's Ruby Mild, along with Okell's Bitter. There is then





a large selection of ever changing guests in this award winning former CAMRA Pub of the Year. At the time of visit, a unique brew by Hooded Ram

and Bingley brewery was available, celebrating links between the two breweries, as the two brewers had formerly been on the same brewing course some years ago. Named **Redneck West Coast** at 5.5% ABV, it may only be the first of such collaborations. Food is served in The Sidings and there have been a steady stream of regular incremental upgrades to sections of the pub in recent years. Through the back of the

pub, there is a garden area in close proximity to nearby passing steam trains. All things considered, Castletown presents itself as a fascinating town - historically, cask ale wise and in terms of variety and dining options. Easily accessible by bus, steam train or via an overnight stop at The George, the character of each of the half dozen hostelrys will not disappoint.

Hooded and Maybe Rammed?



Many people will have heard of Okell's and Bushy's breweries on the Isle of Man, but the third largest brewery on the island is probably not so well known. Hooded Ram was set up by Rob Storey in 2013, originally on the



outskirts of Douglas. Rob had never brewed before setting up the brewery, but he was a keen beer drinker and CAMRA member. It took three years of research and courage before the original brewery came into being, paid for by Rob, friends and family. The need to expand led it to move closer to the town centre and its current site, which is near to the harbour. This time, the investment has involved a partner to bring in the necessary capital.

The new building has space for expansion. The brewery is 10 barrels in length, complemented by eight fermenters and three conditioning tanks. The move took place last November, but not everything has been plain sailing. Some of the kit has not connected and the canning line has yet to be delivered. The rea-



son for this turns out to be a dispute on planning permission, which is being objected to by a local individual, who believes that the brewery will reduce the value of the surrounding property due to 'obnoxious smells'. The issue has now been referred to the Island's Attorney General. Rob commented that "this could go on for years".

However, this limbo situation has not stopped Hooded Ram soldiering on. Regardless of their problems, they have their own pub to supply (which is close by on the harbour), as well as two in the Midlands; one is Wolverhampton owned, while the other is a supply agreement in Birmingham. The brewery is also running a beer tent at the TT event in May, so beer production is paramount. Fortunately, the head brewer, Kev Holmes, has a solid heritage, having worked for Thwaites, Okell's and Bushy's. It's clear that he enjoys what he does. "The opportunity to experiment is the difference in this role. I love it." A quick count of the malts on the brewery's mezzanine testifies to such experimentation, as there were 18 different malt varieties!

So, like so many small business (pub or brewery) there are many hurdles to surmount; to pay for



the expansion means producing more volume. However, there are only around a couple of dozen pubs that are independent and can take their beer. "We do supply some restaurants and shops on the island", Rob added.

The challenge has to be going overseas. Currently, around 30% of the beer produced is sent off the Island - of which the majority is small pack; bottles currently, but also cans when the line is installed.

There are plans to eventually build a visitor's centre, but until they have planning permission, brewery trips are not usually available. But don't despair! Their pub, Hooded Ram at Clinch's (home of the defunct, historic Clinch's) stocks a great range of their beer and the

brewery is easily visible from the pub. If you are on the Island, pay a visit. Being close to the steam railway, it makes for a good pit stop after enjoying one of the many tourist activities on the island.

**By Christine Cryne
Beer Tutor, Writer & Master Trainer**

For more details on Hooded Ram, visit:
www.hoodedram.com

Merseyside Pubs in Peril

The Brooke Hotel on Brooke Road West in Waterloo has closed again. We are unsure at the moment whether this is for refurbishment or there has been yet another change of licensee. A banner on the wall outside that asks for people to attend an EI Publican Partnerships 'Open Day' suggests the latter. The pub is listed as being available on the EI Publican Partnerships website: eipublicanpartnerships.com It can be yours for a down payment of £7,800 (excl. VAT) and an annual rent of £10,000. Also available from EI are **The Chepstow Castle** on County Road (Walton) and the **Eden Vale** on Glovers Lane in Netherton. Even if these outlets don't sell cask beer, let's hope they remain trading as pubs. Meanwhile, the **Cabbage Inn** on Fleetwoods Lane in Netherton is yet again the subject of an-

other planning application to Sefton Council. This time, the proposal is to demolish the pub and build six houses and units, housing twenty four flats on the site. The applicants are One Vision Housing, via Bernard Taylor Partnership Ltd of Stockport. Objections or comments can be made to Sefton Council on: pa.sefton.gov.uk. [/online-applications/](http://online-applications/) This is a former Threlfall's pub and still retains a Threlfall's Brewery Co Ltd design on the Fleetwoods Lane elevation. Perhaps someone will save this.

By Andre Fu



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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

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

*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

July 7th: **Bewdley and Kidderminster.** 9.30 depart

August 11th: **Ilkley and Bingley.** 9.50 depart (Maghull pick-up if needed)

September 8th: **Derby.** 9.50 depart

October 6th: **Oakengates (Telford) Beer Festival and Market Drayton** 9.50 depart

November 3rd: **Cheshire (probably Sandbach and Congleton).** 10.50 depart



CAMRA Branch Diary

Liverpool CAMRA Branch Diary
See website www.liverpoolcamra.org.uk

Sunday 8th July: Annual Classic Bus Running Day around Burscough /Ormskirk, run by Merseyside Transport Trust. Meet in The Court Leet for breakfast at 10.15am or 11am at Ormskirk Bus Station.

This is a free event (donations gladly accepted) and buses stop at various pubs on their routes. The event was well attended last year and a great day out was had by all.

Saturday 4th August: Inter-branch bowls tournament, The Northern Club, Crosby. Time: TBC

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