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CAMRA Liverpool & Districts Magazine

Spring 2017

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## MerseyAle

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

## MerseyAle



### Message from the Editor

Welcome to the Spring edition of MerseyAle. With lighter nights and warmer weather just around the corner, the outlook is a positive one as we bring you our first issue of the year.

2017 has certainly been an eventful year to date. A storm named Doris called briefly to batter large swathes of the UK, whilst across the pond, the inauguration of seemingly the most unpopular US President in many a year drew huge global interest.

Closer to home, the Liverpool Beer Festival took place in February and was a great success. As previously, attendance was healthy, the beer range excellent and a good time was most definitely had. Huge thanks to the volunteers and organisers, without whom this fantastic event would not be possible. More about the festival later in this issue.

I sincerely hope you enjoy reading MerseyAle and continue to support our wonderful pubs across the region, at what is a testing time for the industry as a whole.

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to this edition of MerseyAle. As ever, your input is invaluable and very much appreciated, with contributions always welcome.

Cheers.

Dave MacBryde  
MerseyAle Editor

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## GRAHAM MOORE “A gentleman and a scholar”

1943 – 2017

Many CAMRA members were shocked to learn of the recent death of Graham Moore. Graham had been ill for the last few months. Graham was in The Globe in Cases Street, Liverpool, on the night of January 18th 1974 when the Merseyside Branch of CAMRA was founded. He was a staunch supporter of CAMRA and the local branch throughout all the intervening years, and many will recall his regular attendances as a helper at the beer festivals, including the first one at Hope Hall in September 1974. He was a frequent presence at meetings and on trips. His knowledge of the Liverpool beer and pubs scene was wide-ranging, as was his acquaintanceship with licensees, managers, bar staff and customers in many of the premises he had visited.

Graham was born just off Aigburth Road and as a youngster attended Toxteth Tech. After leaving school, he went to work for the Harrison shipping line in the city, which was when I first met him through a mutual friend. He moved on for a spell with the Forestry Commission in Delamere, but eventually joined the Fire Service, where it became obvious that he had found his metier.

It was about this time that he earned the soubriquet ‘Basil the Fireman’. On television, the Basil Rathbone versions of Sherlock Holmes were being shown - and it was Graham’s habit of clenching a curly pipe between his teeth (and occasionally a



Photograph by Neil Lloyd

deerstalker on his head!) as he appeared in the pub doorway on a Friday night, asking “Who do I remind you of?”, earning him the nickname, which many shortened to ‘Baz’. Graham was a gregarious individual who had a gift for making friends, as witnessed by the huge turnout at his funeral. He remained in the Fire Service, where he was a much-appreciated union rep, until his retirement. He was a member of Liverpool University’s Convocation Football Club, which provided opportunities for European travel. He completed an Open University Maths degree and had a keen interest in Irish studies. He was naturally curious about everything that was going on around him and was a mine of information on many topics.

In all the years I knew him, I never heard him raise his voice in anger, nor be anything other than completely relaxed at whatever predicament he might have found himself in. He was always that rare specimen – a complete gentleman. His sense of humour, his candour and his company could always be relied on to brighten the world. He will be greatly missed by his many friends. He and Susan married in 1971 and they lived happily in Aigburth until his death.

BOB THURLOW



## Fire at The Scotch Piper



The thatched roof at The Scotch Piper was badly damaged by fire on the afternoon of December 6th 2016. Thankfully, the fire was brought under control before the main structure of the pub was damaged. Repair work started right away, so hopefully the pub will reopen soon.

## City Centre

It's good news that **The Cross Keys** on Earle Street has reopened, with Neil being the new licensee. **Young's Bitter** is being sold again, with **Hobgoblin** also being on at times. The pub closed again (this time for a refurbishment) for a few weeks in February.

Also refurbished during February were the nearby **Lion Tavern** and the **Lady of Mann**.

The guest pump at **Leaf** on Bold Street has recently served a varying beer supplied by **Liverpool Craft**. **Sticky Bandit** was marvellous on the Thursday before Christmas.

No doubt the brewery delivery van just moves around the corner, as the changing beer at the **Newington Temple** is also normally from Liverpool Craft. Happily, it is usually a different beer from Leaf, with **Camel** being dispensed on the

Thursday before Christmas.

**Ma Egerton's** on Pudsey Street has been selling beers from the **Mobberley Brew House**, with **Solstice** being my choice before Christmas. On my last visit, the more regular **Otter Ale** and the latest **Theakston beer** were on tap.

**Ranelagh's Tavern** has been selling beers from a variety of local breweries. Phil, the landlord, reports LocAles will be regularly available. During February two more handpulls



were fitted (making it five in total), in response to the demand for real ale. Three beers will be served during quieter periods, increasing over the weekend. As part of the change, a beer from **Robinson's** will usually be on sale.

**The Baltic Fleet** has commissioned six new beers from local brewers for the Six Nations Rugby tournament. **Big Bog**, **Neptune**, **Liverpool Organic**, **Baltic Fleet**, **Heavy Industry** and **Facers** are each supplying a beer - one for each country.

**The Abbey** on Hanover Street is now selling real ale again. Four pumps are in active use at the moment, selling nationally recognised beers such as **Sharp's Doom Bar**, **Wells Bombardier** and **Caledonian Deuchars**. CAMRA card

Discount is still being offered.

A new bar is planned for Lime Street. **Sanctuary Bar** is due to open in March at 72 Lime Street, next to the Design 4 Life tattoo parlour. Cask and craft beers are promised.

**The White Star** pub on the concourse of Lime Street station has closed, probably because this part of the station is due to be redeveloped in time.

No stone ever remains unturned for long at **The Philharmonic Concert Hall** on Hope Street. April 2017 sees The Phil take back in-house its bar and catering services from their hospitality partners. From that point, it is likely that bespoke dining on concert nights will cease and the Grand Foyer bar will offer a less formal snack alternative. To enable the transition, The Philharmonic has advertised for a General Bars Manager. The successful candidate will have the clear, but challenging task of trying to lure in The Phil's customers who would normally drink or



dine in the dozens of bars and restaurants that surround the venue.

CAMRA wish The Phil every success with the new venture and hope to see real ale back on the Grand Foyer and Music Room bars soon.

## Aigburth

It has been reported that there are plans for a Belgium-style bar on Aigburth Road, opposite the Toby Carvery. Perhaps the premises will be the currently closed off-licence at number 568.

## Kensington

**The Kensington**, at 189 Kensington, has reopened after a refurbishment and has been selling **Sharp's beers**, but no real ale was available when I looked in.

## Wavertree

Bryn, the manager of **The Willow Bank** on Smithdown Road, reports he will usually have a LocAle on. On my recent visit, **White Star Seafarers (brewed by George Wright)**, along with **Liverpool Craft IPA** were on tap. There will also be brews available from slightly further away. There are a total of twelve hand pulls, with most normally in use at weekends. A good time to visit is Tuesday



evening when all real ales are currently sold at **£2.25 a pint**.

A bit further up the road, a planning application has been made to convert the previous **Handymans** shop at 461 Smithdown Road into a '**public house with food offer**'. The building - originally the **Sefton Park Picturedrome** - is bigger than you might expect. The plans include setting up a '**Nano**

**Brewery**'. These premises will only be yards away from Wavertree's last brewery at the Finch & Firkin, that has long since reverted to **The Brook House**.

## Old Swan

Lee - owner of the Alehouse on Prescot Road - organised a small beer festival, '**Swanfest**', at a nearby church hall early in December. All the tickets sold out quickly. A larger event is planned for April. I congratulate Lee for his work in promoting



real ale in the area, both in his pub and with the festivals. It is not too long ago that I wrote a piece for MerseyAle, titled '**Old Swan Beer Desert**'.

## Woolton

There is a new licensee at **The Derby Arms** on the corner of Allerton Road and Vale Road, near Menlove Avenue. On my recent visit, **Sharp's Doombar** was available, but it has been reported that this alternates with **Jennings Cumberland**.

## Aintree

**The Toby Carvery**, Aintree (previously The Rocking Horse), outside the entrance to the racecourse, is reported to be selling real ale.

## Bootle

The Merton reopened before Christmas under a new individual owner, just a few days after it closed as a Wetherspoon outlet. Five hand



pumps are in use, all dispensing beers from the Marston's group - including **Ringwood Forty-Niner**, that is rarely seen in our area. The food is now all freshly cooked on the premises.

With no work done at all (except to remove Wetherspoon signage), it is planned that the pub will close for refurbishment in due course.

## Waterloo

Debbie, the licensee at the **Royal Oak** on Warrenhouse Road, has reintroduced real ale. **Caledonian Edinburgh Ale** was available during December. Debbie reports a number of regulars have taken to drinking it.

Work had been due to start on **The Four Ashes** - a new micro-pub on Liverpool Road North, Waterloo, near the Plaza cinema. However, due to circumstances beyond his control, the owner has now informed us that the opening has been delayed and will now probably be sometime towards the end of March.

## Crosby

When **The George** reopened in December, there were four ales available. Wainwright and Bombardier are reported to be future regulars. Two Christmas beers were also available - **Rocking Rudolph** and **Merry Christmas** from Lytham. Happily, the pub has continued to stock a LocAle into the New Year. Real ale is now sold for **£1.95 all day on Tuesdays**.

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## MerseyAle PUB NEWS

### Maghull

A new pub on Liverpool Road South is due to open in early March. Mocha's Cafe is to be rebranded as the Maghull Cask Cafe. It will remain as a cafe through the day, changing into a pub at 4pm on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, with a midday opening on Sundays. Four or five beers are planned.

### MerseyAle Brewerynews Liverpool Craft

A slightly stronger version of Quokka was brewed in November, called **Fat Quokka**. The brewery has developed three new beers that are to join Quokka as their regular cask beers: **Little Albion**, a 3.8% **English Pale Ale**, **Camel IPA** (4.8%) and **Mork**, a 4.8% **Rich Oatmeal Stout**.

A special brew for Christmas was **Sticky Bandit**, a **Spiced Red Ale**. At 5.8%, it was a good winter warmer.

### Ad Hop



Andy reports the brewery is hoping to move to larger premises soon.

Ad Hop was a headline brewery at the Beer Street event, run by Tap & Bottles in Southport before Christmas. The brewery continues to produce beers of different styles and strengths in cask form.

### Rock the Boat

New beers produced recently have been **Liverpool IPA**, a 4.4% beer pale in colour, dry hopped

in the cask with a four-hop mix including **Flyer**, a bitter UK hop. **Faith Hope Charity** is a 4% deep golden bitter - fairly typical of the old North West England style of bitter.



A little malt flavour with a bitter edge. It has a mix of five hops, including **Admiral** for bittering, plus a good whack of **East Kent Goldings** late on. Finally, **Dragon's Teeth** is a 4.3% chocolate stout with a chocolate edge, using five different malts.

### Big Bog Brewing Company

**Morast** (the German for Quagmire or Bog) was originally brewed as a one-off beer, but has become a regular. It is a 4.3% German style beer, using **Vienna Malt** with **German Hallertau Mittelfruh** and **Hersbrucker** hops.

A new seasonable beer, **Peat Bog Porter** (4.9%), was brewed at the end of November. This contains some liquorice root cut. **Frosty Bog** (4.0%), using **Cascade Hops**, has also been brewed for the winter season.

During January, **Bourbier** was brewed to celebrate the first anniversary of the brewery moving to **Speke** from **North Wales**. It is described as a French-style beer, brewed with **Pilsner malt** and **French Strisselspalt hops** (6%). A very light premium beer with a delicate hop aroma.

### Neptune



Two new beers - **Undercurrent**, a 4.7% stout and **Big Sur**, described as a 4.5% west coast pale ale - were available at the **Liverpool Beer Festival**. Les reports he is supplying keg-conditioned key kegs to the **Everyman Theatre**. **Olympus Mons** is available in the upstairs **Street Café**. Downstairs in the **Bistro**, **Fugu** is on tap alongside **Abyss**, that has replaced the **Guinness**. The handpumps in the **Bistro** are also to be revived. Finally, congratulations are in order for **Les**, as **Neptune Brewery** has been awarded **Merseyside Best New Brewer** on **Ratebeer.com** for 2016.

### Black Lodge

A new 2.5bbl plant has been fitted at the **Black Lodge Brewery** on **Kitchen Street**. **Paul** reports that cask beer could be produced in the future to add to the key keg beers currently brewed.

### Peerless



Many **Liverpool & Districts CAMRA** members will have attended a **Thirsty Thursday** event at the **Peerless brewery** in **Birkenhead**. For 2017, the brewery is to open on the last Friday of each month from 4pm, rather than the **Thursday**. The brewery bar will also be open on the last Saturday of each month from 12 to 6pm.

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# Beer Scoring Why Bother?

Scores can be submitted via [www.whatpub.com](http://www.whatpub.com)  
Membership number and password required.

Have you ever sat in a pub or anywhere else, drinking your pint and thought 'This is a really good pint! I might get the same again?' Did that thought enter your mind either because you liked the taste of that particular beer or that it was in really good condition? Or...maybe both? Lucky you!

Maybe it was a beer you had in a pub that has a good reputation when it comes to keeping and serving beer as the brewer intended.

Whatever your reasons, if you are a CAMRA member, you can give the pub some recognition for each pint you consume - and it only takes a couple of minutes to do. I'm referring to the 'dark art' of **BEER SCORING**.

The information gathered from beer scores for pubs is very useful to the work of the branch and CAMRA in general. We actively encourage any member - local or otherwise - to enter a score via the WhatPub website ([www.whatpub.com](http://www.whatpub.com)) which was created by CAMRA HQ in St Albans, though all the local information about the pubs is supplied and updated by members of the branch committee.

Unlike other popular online beer rating apps such as RateBeer and Untappd, we use submitted scores to help decide which pubs are entered in to the Good Beer Guide for the branch area. Inclusion in the guide is usually a good indication that the pub consistently keeps and serves well-conditioned real ale.

Essentially, the scoring system is a 10-point scale, providing a descriptive narrative for each point to help you decide how you might rate your drink.

The important thing to note is that you are scoring the **CONDITION / QUALITY** of the beer in the glass and not whether you like it. After all, no-one would knowingly order a beer that they don't like, but might get a poorly kept or badly-poured pint through no fault of their own.

To score a beer, you need to have both internet access and a CAMRA member password. You can use either a Smartphone, Tablet or computer to sign into



**WhatPub.com** and access your account. If you need to re-set your password, you can do so by going to [password.camra.org.uk/](http://password.camra.org.uk/)

Scores can also be entered retrospectively, so if you don't have online access at the time of drinking - or you are in good company and don't want to appear to be rude - you can always make a note and then submit the score later.

Be assured that every score submitted, high or low, is counted and gratefully appreciated. So, if you want to make a valuable and meaningful contribution to the work of the branch (with very minimal effort on your part) then PLEASE consider scoring your next pint!

Thank You.  
By Andre Fu



**MOORHOUSE'S**  
*Hitting the High Notes!*

Stray Dog (4.2%) has joined the Moorhouse's line up of six core cask ales and a collection of innovative seasonal brews including Red Ale (4.2%) for March.

Brewed for the legendary New Order band, Stray Dog is a golden premium ale, with hints of citrus fruit and lychee.

More magical Moorhouse's high notes for North West pubs!

Publicans should contact Stuart Hayes on 07791 337727 or email: [stuart.hayes@moorhouses.co.uk](mailto:stuart.hayes@moorhouses.co.uk)

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# HOMEBREWING

## PART 3

### Ingredients used in Brewing

Although you can make great beers from extract or part-grain, you should consider the move to all-grain if you really want to experience the best homebrewing has to offer.

Not only does this give you access to all the ingredients that the professionals use, but you also get complete control over the beer-making process. There are several techniques that you would need to come to grips with to start with all-grain brewing, which are the topic of this instalment.

### Mashing

Mashing is the name given to the process of soaking grains in hot water so that enzymes can

### Sparging

After the mash comes the sparge. Sparging simply refers to rinsing the grain. This rinses any extra sugars from the grain and tops up your volume prior to the boil.

It is important that your sparge



water isn't too hot (above 75°C), as this will extract unwanted bitterness into your final beer.

### Boiling

Once you have collected all the liquid from the mash and sparge (this liquid is called wort), it is time to boil it.

Boiling serves several purposes. It concentrates and sanitises your wort, darkens the colour and drives off precursors to off-flavours. It is also the point in the brew day where you add hops.

Hops added at the start of the boil predominantly add bitterness, whereas hops towards the end of the boil add flavour and aroma.

### Cooling

After boiling your wort, it is important to cool it as quickly

as possible. As you cool your wort, it becomes increasingly at risk from infection. The faster you cool your wort, the faster you can pitch your yeast and this can drastically reduce your risk of infection.

Cooling also allows proteins from the wort to precipitate out, giving you a clearer final beer.

### Fermentation

After pitching your yeast, fermentation should begin (typically within 24 hours). During fermentation, yeast will consume sugar present in the wort and convert it to alcohol and carbon dioxide. Yeast will also produce a variety of flavour compounds during this process.

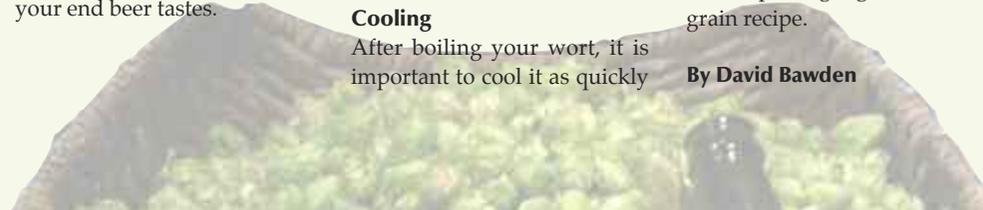
Which flavour compounds are released can be controlled to some extent by the temperature at which you ferment. Ferment too hot and yeast becomes stressed, creating more flavour compounds, including undesirable flavours like fusel alcohols. Ferment too cold and your yeast may not be able to start properly, leaving your wort at higher risk of becoming infected.

In the next instalment, we will look at putting together an all-grain recipe.

By David Bawden



break grain starch down into sugar, which will later be turned into alcohol by yeast. The temperature of the water determines which enzymes are active and this determines how your end beer tastes.



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## **Merseyside Pubs CAMRA Discount (correct as of March 1st 2017)**



### **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)
- **Ma Egerton's**, Pudsey St – 10% off
- **Pumphouse**, Albert Dock – 25p off (pints only)
- **Hare and Hounds**, Liverpool Road North, Maghull – 20p off (pints only).  
Monday – £2.49/pt
- **Richmond Tavern**, Church Rd, Wavertree – 20p off (pints only). Monday – £2.49/pt
- **Abbey**, Hanover St – 10% off
- **The Liver**, South Rd, Waterloo – 20% off
- **Yates**, Queens Square – 10% off
- **Punchbowl**, Lunt Road, Sefton Village – 20p off a pint. 10p off a half
- **Baltic Fleet**, Wapping (20p off pints and 10p off a half at all times)
- **Victoria Cross**, Sir Thomas Street - 20p off (pints only)



### **Discount Days (available to anyone)**

- **Flute**, Hardman St – Tuesday **ONLY**: All day - £2.10
  - **Willow Bank Tavern**, Smithdown Road – Tuesday **ONLY** from 6pm:  
£2.25/pt
  - **Masonic**, Gladstone Road, Garston – Discount Card (£1.00) **10% off real ale for a year. Tues (from 6pm): 4 pints for £5 (discount card cannot be used)**
  - **Mackenzie's**, Rodney Street – £2 Monday to Thursday (pints only)
  - **The John Brodie**, Allerton Road – Tuesday **ONLY**: £1.95/pt
  - **The George**, Moor Lane, Crosby Village – Tuesday **ONLY**: £1.95/pt
  - **Hard Times & Misery**, Maryland St – Cask Ale Club (Tuesday - Thursday): 50p off pints + Buy 10, get 1 free; ask for stamp card at the bar.
  - **The Lion Tavern**, 67 Moorfields – Monday **ONLY**: £3/pt
- Discount available all day every day unless stated otherwise



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

This list is correct as of 1st March 2017; OE&E

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](mailto:locale@liverpoolcamra.org.uk) with details.  
By Andre Fu



For a full list of Local pubs, please refer to Winter 2016 Edition of MerseyAle.  
or visit [liverpoolcamra.org.uk](http://liverpoolcamra.org.uk)

# WHAT IS A BLO AND WHAT DO THEY DO?



A BLO (or Brewery Liaison Officer) is a point of contact and communication between a brewery - be it an independent or one of the nationals - and CAMRA HQ/ Local Branch. Each brewery within the branch area should have a BLO - and although they are co-opted by the branch committee, they do not have to be a committee member. All BLO's are subject to a Code of Conduct.

Currently, there are Thirteen breweries within Liverpool & Districts CAMRA area and some of them DON'T currently have a BLO; three of which do NOT make their beer available in cask form, but this may change (\*) – see opposite.

A BLO has to report to a Brewery Liaison Coordinator (BLC), who has responsibilities for breweries within their region. Our region covers Merseyside and Cheshire.

The key activities of the position include:

- To establish and maintain constructive relationships with the brewery, promoting CAMRA's policies and campaigns.
- To provide regular reports to the BLC as requested, via the Brewery Information System (BIS). This is usually done on a quarterly basis.
- As and when requested, to report to the branch and region where the brewery is located.
- To take part in - or help organise - any CAMRA campaigning venture (local or otherwise) that involves the brewery to which they have been appointed.

- To answer queries regarding the brewery from CAMRA members in any branch.
- To inform the BLC of any major changes to the operations of the brewery as soon as possible.
- To let local branch magazine, MerseyAle, know of any newsworthy items for the Brewery News section and the monthly newsletter.
- To keep BIS updated at all times, ensuring that the beers listed and other details - such as the description, contact and address - are correct. This information is used for the Champion Beer of Britain Competition, as a basis for the Good Beer Guide and by beer festival organisers.
- To proofread relevant brewery section of the Good Beer Guide, prior to publication.
- To liaise with the Tasting Panel Coordinator (as and when required) to maximise the number of beers that have a full tasting description.

I used to be the BLO for Liverpool One Brewery until they were sold on to a third party, but now I work with BIG BOG and have done since they moved from North Wales to Speke last February. Currently, the role takes up 1-2 hours a month of my time.

Andre Fu

## Other branch BLO's

AD HOP	-Steve Downing
BLACK LODGE *	- VACANT
LIVERPOOL CRAFT	-Tony Williams
LIVERPOOL ORGANIC	-Martin Powell
MAD HATTER *	-Ian Simpson
NEPTUNE	-Sue Daniels
REPUBLIC OF LIVERPOOL	-VACANT
ROCK THE BOAT	-Tony Morgan
SHIP & MITRE	- VACANT
STAMPS	- Alan Lloyd
TOP ROPE *	-VACANT
WAPPING	-Carol Cherpeau

All of the above can be contacted via: [contact@liverpoolcamra.org.uk](mailto:contact@liverpoolcamra.org.uk)  
Please use the same address if you are interested in taking up one of the vacant positions.  
Conditions apply.

Other local breweries in neighbouring branches:

## SOUTHPORT & WEST LANCASHIRE

- 3 POTTS
- BURSCOUGH
- CRAFT BREWERY



- PARKER
  - RED STAR
  - SOUTHPORT
- Contact:  
[rd.merseyscheshirewales@camra.org.uk](mailto:rd.merseyscheshirewales@camra.org.uk)

## WIRRAL

- BRIMSTAGE
- BRITMAN
- PEERLESS

Contact:  
[davehutchinson@wirral.camra.org.uk](mailto:davehutchinson@wirral.camra.org.uk)

## ST HELENS

- CONNOISSEUR
- GEORGE WRIGHT
- MELWOOD

Contact:  
[sthelenscamra@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sthelenscamra@hotmail.co.uk)

If you think I have left any LOCAL MERSEYSIDE breweries off the above lists, please let me know.

Andre Fu

**BLO – Big Bog**  
LocAle Co-ordinator –  
Liverpool & Districts CAMRA  
[andre.fu@liverpoolcamra.org.uk](mailto:andre.fu@liverpoolcamra.org.uk)

SHIP & MITRE

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## LIVERPOOL BEER FESTIVAL CIDER BAR REVIEW 2017



This year, festival organisers recognised that the Cider Bar was at a crossroads in terms of what we traditionally offered and what cider customers now expect.

There is plenty of evidence gathered from other Liverpool beer festivals to illustrate that the CAMRA mantra of “100% pressed fruit with nothing added” satisfies long standing CAMRA stalwarts (myself included), but misses the

requirements of younger up-and-coming customers who enjoy sweeter and lower strength products, often with a synthetic flavour.

So, do we as CAMRA festival organisers turn our backs on new and younger customers or tease them to our cider bar with one or two ‘fruity’ boxes, then chat and persuade them to try the real thing? At Liverpool this year, we tried the latter approach and it did seem to get some positive results.

Of the festival itself, we had 34 boxes on offer over the six sessions. Without doubt, **Rosie's ciders** from North Wales are an ongoing success story. Our four boxes sell out quickly and we could simply offer a Rosie's Cider Festival without any other products.

Occasionally however, unknown gems appear - and repeat customers who stay on a single product for an entire session indicate that a new champion has been found. This year that new ‘Cider of the

**Festival’** had to be **Seacider Medium (5.8%)** from Brighton.



Made from cooking and baking apples, this cider had a lush, sweetish taste that reminded you of apple pie. Seacider was started by two brewers only recently, who have won awards along the south coast already.

**Our top five festival ciders for 2017 are:**

- Seacider, Medium**  
5.8% Sussex
- Rosie's Perfect Pear, Perry**  
6% Wales
- Rosie's Black Bart, Sweet**  
6.8% Wales
- Top O' The Hill, Dry**  
5.5% Dorset
- Made in Devon, Sweet**  
6% Devon

We look forward to seeing you all again at next year's CAMRA Cider Bar.

By Steve Berks

## Best Beer in the North West for Hawkshead Brewery

**Windermere Pale is Champion Beer of the North West.**

The Hawkshead Brewery beer is on the march to the Champion Beer of Britain finals after being declared the best beer in the North West by CAMRA (Campaign For Real Ale) at its Liverpool Beer festival, on Wednesday night.

Windermere Pale has been given multiple awards by the Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA) since it was launched in 2009, plus it has a silver medal from “the Oscars of the brewing industry”, the International Brewing Awards. It is a low gravity (3.5% ABV) hoppy session beer. The signature hop is Citra.

This is the second time Hawkshead has had the North West champion beer – “Cumbrian 5 Hop” won the title in 2013. As a result this will

be the 7th year in a row that Hawkshead Brewery has had a beer in the Champion Beer of Britain finals.



## THE LION

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Winner of the 2016 CAMRA brewer of the year award

**BREWED TO ENJOY**



## TO ADVERTISE IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF MERSEYALE

See Page 47 for details of rates and deadlines



# Sale of the Punch Pub Company

The pub company Punch Taverns is being sold, with the only bidders being a consortium called Vine Acquisitions. This consortium consists of **Heineken UK** and a company called **Patron Capital**. This is a private equity company which invests in financial institutions, health-care, hotels, leisure, consumer and property.

On Monday 13th February, 99.6% of Punch shareholders voted to agree to the sale to the consortium. As part of the deal,



commitment to consumer choice, the Pubs Code and entering further discussions with CAMRA should the bid for Punch Taverns succeed. Here is the full text of the letter:

**Open letter from CAMRA HQ to Lawson Mountstevens, Managing Director of Heineken's Star Pubs & Bars.**  
**To: Lawson Mountstevens, MD Star Pubs & Bars**

Dear Lawson,

I write to you as the National Chairman of the Campaign for Real Ale, which represents more than 185,000 beer drinkers and pub users across the UK.



Heineken will immediately acquire 1,900 of the former Punch Pubs to bring its total Star Pubs & Bars estate to just under 3,000. The remaining 1,100 pubs will transfer to Patron Capital, who describe themselves as “the leading opportunistic real estate managers in Europe”. CAMRA are concerned about the potential detrimental effect this could have on consumer choice and access to market by small brewers and cider makers, as Heineken has previously stated its intention to increase the percentage of its own brands in the pubs it owns. CAMRA published an open letter to the company, calling on it to make assurances about their

We note that with the only other likely bidder to acquire Punch Taverns plc having withdrawn from the process, it looks extremely likely that Heineken will end up increasing its Star Pubs & Bars pub estate from 1,100 to 3,000 pubs.

We recognise the potential positive outcome of the deal, which looks set to allow the pubs in Punch's estate to continue as going concerns. We also note your positive track-record of investment into improving the pubs it currently owns.

However, we are concerned that the proposed acquisition could lead to a lessening of competition in the on-trade



Lawson Mountstevens

beer market and therefore a reduction in choice, not only for our members, but for the many millions of beer drinkers and pub goers across the country. We note that Heineken already has an existing market share of 24 per cent in the on-trade and has a declared policy of restricting the access of competitors to the pubs that they own.

**CAMRA is concerned that the effect of the planned takeover of these Punch Tavern pubs has the potential to be considerably detrimental to the interests of customers. We believe that customers are likely to not only experience reduced choice in the range of cask beer from small and regional breweries in pubs owned by Heineken, but also in the wider market, as it becomes harder for new brewers to emerge and for existing brewers to increase the availability of their products.**

I'd invite you to reassure myself and CAMRA members, as well as all beer drinkers and pub users across the UK, by giving unqualified assurances that you will ensure that the provision of the kind of choice

# Mossley Hill Athletic Club Charity Beer Festival 21-23 April 2017

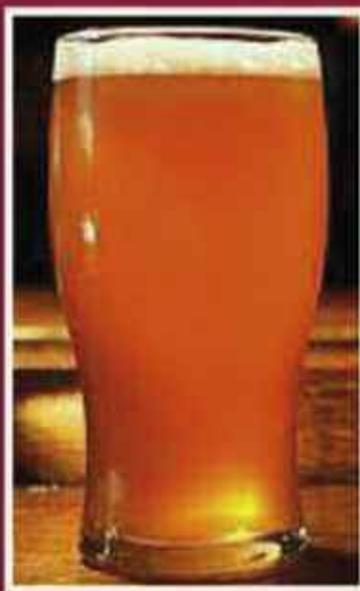
Friday 7pm - midnight

Saturday 1pm - 6pm and 7pm - midnight

Sunday 1pm - 9pm

£5 per session

[www.mossleyhillbeerfestival.org.uk](http://www.mossleyhillbeerfestival.org.uk)



**80 BEERS and CIDERS**

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**Hot and Cold Food**

**Live Entertainment**

**Tickets available from  
the club**

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the website**



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this year's nominated charities.**

that currently exists in Punch Taverns pubs will remain a priority for you if your company's acquisition is successful.

**In particular, I'd invite you to provide answers to these questions:**

■ Will you ensure you maintain a choice for drinkers - most obviously by allowing customers to be able to choose from a range of real ales, ciders and perries?

■ Can you assure us that you will abide by the letter and the spirit of the Pubs Code, including giving tenants the right to opt for a market rent only option?

■ Is your intention to continue operating the vast majority of the acquired pubs as going concerns and that you will discuss with communities before taking any decision to sell pubs for alternative uses?

■ Can you give assurances that you are committed to allowing your licensees flexibility in offering guest real ales from local breweries, which cannot be considered a threat to a company of Heineken's size?

■ Will you agree to further discussion with CAMRA following the acquisition of the pubs, in order to give further assurances about your plans?

We appreciate that you are bound by the regulations and conventions that govern takeovers, but would invite you to be open and transparent about your intentions ahead of the decision by Punch Taverns shareholders on 10th February.

Yours sincerely,  
**Colin Valentine**  
CAMRA National Chairman.

**In response, Heineken issued a reply in which it said:**

■ It intends to work with SIBA's BeerFlex service to give tenants access to a wide range of quality beers from independent breweries.

■ It has confirmed to former Punch tenants that they will not be forced to buy Heineken brands and have "no intention of imposing blanket conditions".

■ It intends to stick to the "letter and spirit" of the Pubs Code.

■ Its intention is to improve the performance of the former Punch estate through investment. Heineken did not take the opportunity to commit to an assurance that the "vast majority of the acquired pubs" would continue to operate as going concerns, but did say when it had sold pubs in the past, the majority had remained as pubs and not had their use changed.

■ The company has agreed to further discussions with CAMRA following completion of the deal.

In addition to contacting Heineken, CAMRA has also made a submission to the Competitions and Market Authority (CMA) to express the concerns about the impact the deal could have on choice and competition in the market. CAMRA has called upon the CMA to launch an investigation into the competition consequences of Heineken being allowed to acquire an additional 1,900 pubs.

**By Tony Morgan, Public Affairs Officer, Liverpool & Districts CAMRA**

## **Proposed deal between Punch Taverns and Heineken to be investigated**

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has launched an official investigation into the proposed purchase by Heineken of 1900 Punch pubs.

It has been initiated to decide if the sale - part of a joint bid between Heineken and Patron Capital - would reduce choice for the beer drinker and reduce competition in the pub sector. The first phase of the investigation will take until 24th April 2017. The investigation only involves Heineken at this stage, as Patron Capital does not currently own any pubs. If a possible reduction in choice is found to be the case, a further merger investigation will be started, which could last until October 2017, unless the parties involved make undertakings to address the competition concerns. If the merger is successful, Heineken will become the third largest pub operator in the UK after Greene King and Enterprise. The CMA has asked interested parties and individuals to submit their views to the CMA by emailing [lasse.burmester@cma.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:lasse.burmester@cma.gsi.gov.uk) by 2nd March 2017.

# Foxy Red - The birth of a beer



Gwynne Thomas

Since I did the 'Brewer for the day' experience at **Conwy Brewery** a couple of years ago (where I shadowed Head Brewer, **Gwynne Thomas** and learnt hands-on about the brewing process), I had wanted to try brewing my own beer.

Some would have gone down the route of homebrewing, but I lacked both the confidence and the equipment. Friends of mine have invested a lot of time and effort in homebrew - sometimes with quite disastrous results, which led me to think that it wasn't the best option for me.



**Conwy Brewery** offer a 'Brew your own beer day', but this is designed for around eight people. I had quite a specific idea for the beer I wanted to create, though finding seven interested others would have been hard enough - never mind ones willing to go along with my idea! However, going it alone would not only be expensive, but also leave me

with a huge amount of experimental beer.

Gwynne knew I was keen though and made me an offer. I could do my own brew for less than he would normally charge for the day, but I also had to sell a 9-gallon cask of it to a local pub for him. Enter **Dave Swift, Cellar Keeper of The Red Fox** and all-round cask ale enthusiast. Swifty was remarkably easily persuaded to take a cask of my experimental beer - and we were on!

Before the day of brewing, I outlined to Gwynne what I wanted to create. I wanted to attempt to combine two of my favourite beer styles. I love rich, ruby, malty beers, such as **Red Macgregor** from **Orkney Brewery** or **Rhode Island Red** from **Brimstage**. I am also very partial to honey beers, such as **Fullers Honeydew**, **Tatton Brewery's Lazy Haze** and **Conwy's Honey Fayre**. The challenge was to balance the flavours of the honey and the malt, without either one overpowering the other. I am not a fan of very hoppy beers, but I did want some hops to help balance the flavours.

When I arrived at the brewery, Gwynne and I sat down and discussed the beer I was trying to achieve. Meanwhile, Paul - one of Gwynne's team of brewers - had selected the malt to use and milled it. Conwy already brew a seasonal ruby



beer called Autumn Red, so they based the recipe on this to try and achieve the same colouration.

After this, I was involved at every stage of the process throughout the day, from sparging to adding the yeast to the wort. One of the most interesting parts of the process was choosing the hops for the beer. Gwynne made up several 'hop teas' (hops in a glass, with



Sparging

boiling water poured over them) and from these I selected a blend of **Brambling Cross** and **Challenger hops**.

As the day went on, I really started to appreciate the skill and experience of Gwynne and Paul, who between them have over 30 years of brewing experience. The calculation of how much honey to add was very complex for instance. I soon realised that without their skill and assistance, there was no way a novice like myself would manage to achieve the



Hop Teas



Complex Blend



complex blend of flavour I was looking for.

Once the brew-day was done, there followed an agonising four-week wait for the beer to be ready. This was broken up by a series of emails with Chris - Conwy's marketing guru - who wanted my input for designing the pump-clip and bottle label for the beer. I decided to name my creation 'Foxy Red', which seemed apt considering the pub in which it was to be served first!

When the bottles arrived from the brewery, they needed several weeks to condition, so the first chance I got to sample my beer was at The Red Fox. I was excited, but also slightly apprehensive. I was in the

company of several work colleagues and fellow CAMRA members who had come along to try it - and I didn't want to let down either them or the staff at The Red Fox.

I'm pleased to say it was a big success. The beer was in excellent condition and the blend of flavour was almost exactly as I intended. Firstly, you were hit by a slightly fruity aroma from the hops. Then, a burst of malt flavour, followed by the sweetness of the honey. However, before this became too sickly, there was a finish of mild fruity bitterness. My friends were impressed - and it wasn't just us coming back for more! When I returned to the pub the following evening, I had the last pint, with the cask selling out in a little over 24 hours. When the bottles were ready, they also proved popular.

The only things I would change about the beer are the ABV and the colour. I was looking for an ABV of around **4.5 to 4.8%**. It came out at **5%**, so was a touch



Strong at 5%

stronger than intended. It was also a touch too dark: a slightly paler beer would have allowed the ruby colour to be more discernible.

However, for a first effort, I think it had gone pretty well - even if I do say so myself!

I would wholeheartedly recommend doing a Brew Day. Not only do you get the opportunity to create a beer to



your own specifications, it also gives you a whole new appreciation of the brewing process and the skill that goes into creating a great beer.

There is talk of re-brewing a slightly tweaked version of Foxy Red as a seasonal brew in a larger quantity later this year, so keep an eye out for it on the pumps in pubs this Autumn / Winter.

**I should also say a huge 'Thank you' to Gwynne and his team at Conwy Brewery for a great experience - and also to Swifty and The Red Fox crew, without whom it wouldn't have been possible.**

*Cheers guys!  
By Rob Carter*

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Buses Running ALL DAY from 11am-11pm

# 10<sup>TH</sup> JUNE

SATURDAY • 11AM - 11PM

[www.realale-trails.co.uk/wirral](http://www.realale-trails.co.uk/wirral)



## Wirral Branch News



**The Magazine Hotel** (New Brighton) is **Wirral CAMRA Branch Pub of the Season for Spring 2017**.

A developer has begun to convert **The Hilbre** (West Kirby) into an Italian restaurant, despite an ACV being secured for the pub. Under current plans, cask ale would not be available and only 25% of the floor space would be accessible to those just wanting to come in and have a drink.

### PUB NEWS

**The Lazy Landlord (Wallasey) is Wirral CAMRA Branch Pub of the Year 2017.**

**The Harp Inn** (Little Neston) is **runner-up Wirral CAMRA Branch Pub of the Year 2017**. The Harp Inn is also **Wirral CAMRA Branch Pub of the Season for Winter 2017**.

Representatives from Wirral CAMRA Branch have met with concerned locals and the area manager of Punch Taverns in order to try and reach a compromise. Wirral Borough Council have also been contacted and Wirral

CAMRA will push them to uphold the terms of the ACV if the response from Punch and the new licensee is not satisfactory.

**The Lion** (Birkenhead), **Jug and Bottle** (Heswall), **Magazine Hotel** (New Brighton), **Red Fox** (Thornton Hough) and **Harp Inn** (Little Neston) have all recently signed up to CAMRA's LocAle scheme. A locally-brewed beer will be on sale in these pubs at all times. For more information and a full list of LocAle accredited pubs in Wirral, go to [wirral.camra.org.uk/LocAle.php](http://wirral.camra.org.uk/LocAle.php)

**Red Fox (Thornton Hough) Beer Festival, 4th – 7th May: 40 Real Ales and 10 Real Ciders. Free Entry.**

## A visit to Britman Brewery and the Harp Inn

**BRITMAN**  
Craft Beers

On a cold Saturday afternoon in the middle of January, several Wirral CAMRA members ventured into the Cheshire part of our branch area. Ahead lay a very interesting and rewarding day, firstly visiting the newest Wirral brewery and then presenting the latest Wirral Pub of the Season award to one of our most iconic pubs.

For many years, an active Wirral brewery was a long distant memory and then there were three; firstly Brimstage, then Peerless and now Britman. 



Les Ward and Julie Perkins

# THE LAZY LANDLORD MICRO PUB

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WIRRAL CH44 5UG




**Opened in December 2014, we are proud to be Wirral's first micro pub.**  
Serving fine cask ales from local breweries with guests from further afield.

We have no lager, spirits or alcopops. No television, juke box or gaming machines.

**PUB OF THE SEASON SPRING 2015**

- Up to five cask ales ■ Small range of bar snacks (with delicious locally sourced pork pies coming soon) ■ Warm friendly atmosphere in traditional pub setting punctuated with pub memorabilia to encourage good conversation
- Selection of good wines ■ Boxed cider

*Buses from Liverpool 432 and 433; from Birkenhead 410; From New Brighton 118 and 119; from Moreton 413 and 414*

**5 cask ales**  
Selection of Bottled Conditioned Beers to drink in or take out

**Opening hours Mon Wed Thurs 4pm-10:30pm Fri 2pm-10:30pm Sat Sun 12pm-10:30pm Closed Tuesday**

# HARP INN

19 Quayside, Little Neston, CH64 0TB

0151 336 6980

Opening hours:  
12pm -12am Monday - Saturday  
12pm - 11pm Sunday

Food Served 12pm - 3pm daily

Monday night - Fun quiz in aid of Cancer Research UK and Clatterbridge Cancer Charity  
Tuesday night - Quiz night

A traditional pub overlooking the Dee Marshes with a warm friendly atmosphere and a strong sense of community. Five cask ales.  
No TV, no games machines, dogs welcome.



**WIRRAL CAMRA BRANCH RUNNER UP PUB OF THE YEAR 2017**

**CAMRA CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE**

**LOCAP**

Britman Brewery is a very small microbrewery, based in the former stable block of Burton Manor - a small stately home in the village of Burton, run by Les Ward and Julie Perkins. The ethos of Britman Brewery has its roots in Germany; all their beers follow the German Purity Law (the Reinheitsgebot), where only malted



barley, hops, yeast and water are allowed.

Les gave a fascinating insight into his journey from being a homebrewer to a self-taught commercial brewer. His time spent working in Germany inspired him to follow their purity laws.

He was proud of the fact that all Britman's beers are suitable for vegans; the beers are allowed to clear naturally, instead of using isinglass finings.

We were able to sample their **Best Bitter, IPA and Kolsch**. The Kolsch was especially interesting, as this is a beer style not often seen in the UK. Kolsch can tend to be a bit on the sweet side. However, Britman's version had been maturing away for six months, allowing the beer to become drier and tastier. We tasted 'younger' and 'older' versions of both the Best Bitter and IPA. It was notable to taste how much an extra month's maturation brought to the flavour of the beers. All in all, a very interesting visit.

## Harp Inn

Upon leaving Britman, we headed for the Harp Inn, which sits right beside the Dee Marshes on the outskirts of Little Neston. The Harp is an unspoilt picture-postcard pub. Its whitewashed walls enclose a cosy bar and lounge, with low ceilings and wooden beams for the taller amongst us to navigate. Views from the pub are extensive, looking across the marshes to North Wales - and to the north - with an uninterrupted view right up the Wirral peninsula. Lovely to sit outside in the summer, though too cold however on the day!

In the early 2000's, the Harp Inn was runner-up one year in the Regional Pub of the Year competition. At that time, our region encompassed Merseyside, Cheshire and



North Wales, so to come second in such a large area was testament to its appeal. We were delighted to find that the appeal of this lovely pub has not diminished! We were happy to receive a very warm welcome from landlady Sue and her lovely staff.

An interesting range of different beer styles awaited us; these included **Titanic Plum Porter, Ossett Big Red, Taylor's Landlord and Holt's Bitter**. This was good to see, as too many pubs now seem to concentrate largely on golden, hoppy beers.

After we all had sampled some very well-kept ales, Wirral Branch chairman, Dave Goodwin, then presented Sue with the Winter 2017 Wirral Pub of the Season award, praising the pub for the quality of its beer and its warm, friendly atmosphere.

For anyone who has never been to the Harp Inn, it is well worth making the journey to see it.

By Dave Hutchinson

Dave Goodwin presents Pub of the Season Award to Sue

# BRIMSTAGE BREWERY

Brimstage Brewery was established in 2006 by founder Neil Young in a converted cowshed dairy at Home Farm, in the small village of Brimstage, in the heart of the Wirral countryside.

Neil aimed to create a beer that he'd want to drink himself. This gave rise to the hugely successful **Trapper's Hat** bitter, that was a Champion Beer of Britain finalist in 2009 and 2010: the first brew of which went into the local Fox and Hounds pub in Barnston and has been sold there ever since.

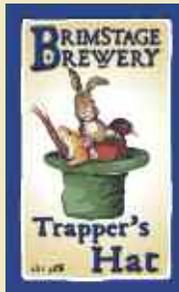
The brewery has grown more successful year on year. In addition to Trapper's Hat, the core range expanded to six beers; **Scarecrow, Sandpiper, Rhode Island Red Rye, IPA and Oyster Catcher Stout**. It supplies many pubs and bottle



shops - mainly locally, but also in North Wales, Merseyside and Greater Manchester. All of the beer produced is sold within a 40-mile radius of the brewery. To help meet the rising demand, the workforce has also expanded and there



are now six employees, including three brewers. There isn't room for a lab on site, so yeast checks are conducted by an independent brewery consultant. I caught up with Head Brewer, Adam Williams and Brewery Manager, Allan Machin, about recent developments at Brimstage...



The brewery is currently working at full capacity and they brew four times a week. Trapper's Hat is still their most popular product and accounts for about 70% of the beer

brewed. Adam attributes their success to the quality ingredients they use, which they refuse to compromise on. He says this means they aren't as cheap as some other breweries as a result - and this makes it difficult to sell their beer to some pubs.

2016 saw some changes to recipes of the regular beers. The brewery had some problems with getting the hop varieties they use, even though they have a hop contract that stretches two years into the future. To combat this,



they have been using blends of hops. However, they still managed to stick to using all whole hops, as Adam believes they give the best flavour.

Rye was also added to the recipe of the Rhode Island Red, which I think gives it a smoother texture. Also, the Oyster Catcher Stout was modified to include oatmeal, which again seems to have added more smoothness and body to an already great beer.

There have also been some recent additions to the line-up. The new 6% **Brimstage IPA** - bursting with hops - has been hugely popular. Also, **Dunkel Weiss** was brewed for the brewery's 10th anniversary and was showcased at the Wirral CAMRA 2016 Birkenhead Beer Festival. However, at the time of writing, there are no plans to brew it

again. A variant of Rhode Island Red, aged in American oak casks, also went on sale shortly before Christmas. Bottle-conditioning their ale is another recent development - and the impressive bottling equipment was designed and built by brewer, Tom Menaul. Bottles are now available at a number of outlets, including **Homebrew in Oxton Village and Claremont Farm Shop**.

Thanks to Adam and Allan for taking the time to speak to me. Keep an eye



out for Brimstage Beer when you're out, as I definitely recommend it. I wish the guys the best of luck for the next 10 years.

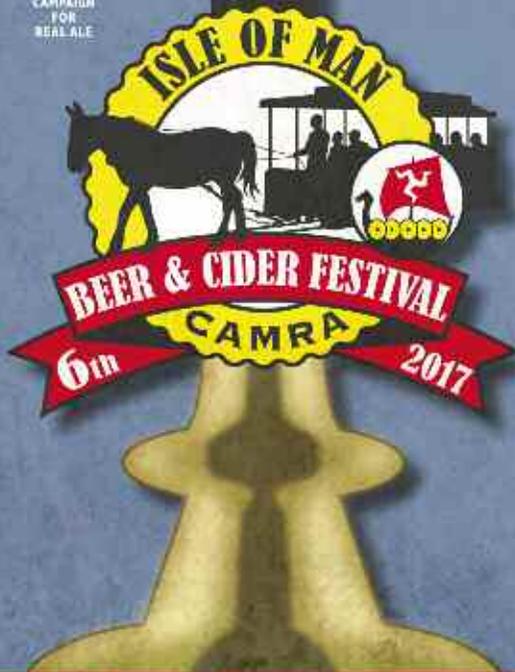
Cheers!

By Rob Carter



Brimstage Awards Wall

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FESTIVAL**



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# ManxAle

From Dave Halliwell MerseyAle Isle of Man Correspondent

This quarter, we focus heavily on the often-contentious issue of beer-pricing and consider value for money, comparing both the UK and the Isle of Man. There are also

updates on the forthcoming Isle of Man Beer Festival, Hooded Ram brewery developments, a new Pubs Walk and news roundup.



## Isle of Man Beer Festival

The sixth Isle of Man CAMRA Beer and Cider Festival is almost upon us, once again to



be held at the prestigious **Douglas Villa Marina**, the weekend before Easter, from Thursday 6th to Saturday 8th April 2017. **The Grand National (also on Saturday 8th)** will once again be screened live during the festival, repeating the lively atmosphere of the previous year's Saturday afternoon session.

This Isle of Man CAMRA flagship event will feature over 150 ales, along with ciders, perries and fruit wines. With **Okell's** returning in 2017 as a main sponsor, there are unique plans to transport the Isle of Man Lieutenant Governor, **Sir Richard Gozney**, to open the festival - via the double decker Douglas horse tram - in Okell's livery. As in previous years, there will be food and

entertainment on offer, this year using predominantly the main Royal Hall.

**Please note that the event relies heavily on volunteers for its success. As such, any help - however large or small - would be gratefully received and appreciated. (See separate festival advert for staffing officer details).**

## Beer landmark upon us

Inevitably, once every ten to fifteen years, pricing landmarks are reached. In late December 2016, following small inflationary increases, a tipping point signalling the broad arrival of the £3 pint mark manifested itself in over half of the island pubs, for a staple on island real ale.

For a variety of reasons, guest ales imported onto the island are usually slightly more expensive - particularly high strength ales which are subject to a much higher tax and duty regime. A super high strength ale at 11.1% ABV was observed at a cost of £11 a pint in a competitive London real ale house recently, though this is very rare. A large portion of this cost will be tax duty.

## Island prices remain competitive

There is still a perception that real ale prices on island are

high, but there appears to be considerable evidence that this is not necessarily the case, some of which will be considered in this article. Along with actual price, we must consider value for money - and that can be dependent on a pub's décor, service and beer quality, which are highly significant.

Looking at some specifics on island: in the South East, current Pub of The Year winner,



**The Albert (Port St Mary)**, was serving local Bushy's bitters at **£2.80 a pint** - and importantly for UK comparative purposes (as will be touched upon later), in an immaculately well-maintained pub.



In the West, what appears to be the cheapest ale regularly found on the Isle of Man - **Bushy's Ruby Mild (3.5% ABV)** - was being served at **£2.40** a pint in several outlets, notably the award-winning **Whitehouse Hotel** in Peel.

# MARINE HOTEL

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Opening hours are Monday to Saturday noon until 9pm for food and noon until 5pm on a Sunday. We open noon until midnight for drinks Monday to Sunday inclusive

Expansive views of Peel bay, harbour and Castle



Over in the North East of the island, **Old Laxey Brewing Company** was found to be supplying **Bosun's**

**Bitter at £2.90** a pint at **The Shore**, Old Laxey, home of the



brewery. Further north in Ramsey, **Hooded Ram £2.80**, **Okell's bitter £2.60** and **Bushy's beers £2.60**, were all available simultaneously - comfortably **under the £3 mark** at **The Commercial Hotel** on Ramsey Quay.



Here, while the outside of the pub is perhaps due for repainting, the inside was very well presented - furnishing wise - at the time of visiting. It was also spotlessly clean and tidy, with excellent heating supplied via a wood-burning stove. Finally, moving to the capital Douglas, Heron and Brearley's world famous **Quarterbridge pub** on the T.T course was maintaining prices at **under £3**.

While much of the H&B estate has only just reached the £3 mark, the pubs are generally well-maintained with modern amenities, such as a high proportion of disabled access



outlets and provision in some pubs for outdoor child areas or heated facilities etc.

In addition, the very high-end **Mannin Hotel** - an independent rebuild - was found to be stocking **Bushy's and Okell's beer at £2.90** in very impressive surroundings. But perhaps the best value beer was to be found at **The Rovers Return**, Douglas, where in January 2017, one of Bushy's strongest ales - **Bushy's Humbug (5% ABV)** - was priced at only **£2.50** and **£2.70** in the nearby **Old Market Inn** free house. A 5% ABV ale will typically attract a higher levy of duty than the weaker session beers - and with tax contributing heavily to the price of a beer, the **£2.50** price tag appeared remarkably inexpensive.

Comparing briefly with the UK, there are now great swathes of the country - both North and South, affluent and not - where ales have exceeded the £3 a pint marker some time ago (often years, rather than months). That said, there are certain pockets and pub chains that buck the trend, with Liverpool being one such area -

a first port of call for many Isle of Man drinkers when off island, which may itself lead to false general perceptions on island regarding pricing.

Pub chain wise, **Wetherspoon's** (most famously) as a national pub group offer very low-priced real ale, but the lesser known **Sam Smith's** brewery (Tadcaster) also does. Sam Smith's have a unique business model, focusing on all own-brand drinks and snacks. At their superb original art deco Bispham outlet, **The Bispham Hotel** (north of Blackpool), Sam Smith's **Old Brewery Bitter (4% ABV)** is for sale at a mere **£1.90** per pint, in an immaculately presented pub internally, if a little austere looking from the outside.

However, these are the pricing exceptions, and it is now found that many of the well-known other operators, even in less affluent areas, price their in-house ales at £3 or above. At Fleetwood for example, at the recently built Marston's pub, **The Three Lights**, all their in-house beers are sold at **£3**. On a recent visit to the Mill Hill area of Blackburn, a range of the predominantly **Thwaites** houses were pricing Thwaites session ales (as in under 4% ABV in strength) at **£2.90 (Lord Raglan)**, often in some of their more dated pub stock.

These pubs are by no means comparable - facility and décor wise - to some of the Isle of Man aforementioned pub stock. Finally, to **Lytham St. Annes**, where the new **No. 10 Alehouse micropub** was found to be selling **Wily Fox Prohibition Ale (3.9% ABV)** at **£3**.

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NEWEST REAL ALE PUB & ENJOY  
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**Hooded Ram, Clinch's, North Quay, Douglas, Isle of Man.**

To summarise: with inflation in the pipeline, as the £3 barrier is breached, it could be argued that the Isle of Man is still competitive in pricing, as prices also increase across the water. Of course, real ale is generally highly-competitively priced in comparison to other long drinks, such as lagers and typically craft keg ales. (Note: articles on price date rapidly. All prices discussed were observed between 15th December 2016 and 10th February 2017).

**Hooded Ram brewery expansion**

Hooded Ram is intending to move to a new site, retaining for the time being the Hills Meadow facility, where they have recently installed a 0.5 barrel plant experimental brewery, with conical



fermenters. Their bottled beers are now stocked in 48 Oddbins stores in the UK - and much experimental brewing was in evidence at a recent visit to the brewery, including the production of a marmalade



beer. Key kegs are also regularly being used and there remains a medium-term plan for a canning facility on island.

**Pubs walk along Douglas North Quay**

For the 2017 summer months, John Cojeen is continuing his successful Pub Walks tours, incorporating real ale and local history, but this year has developed a new walk - predominantly along the historic Douglas North Quay. John has a wealth of local knowledge, both on pubs and former uses for many of the historic buildings on route. The tour price also includes the beers supplied on route.



**The Sulby Glen,** Sulby (on the North West side of the T.T course), now features a bespoke house ale by **Hooded Ram - namely, Tante Rosie.** At 4% ABV and a dark ruby colour, the beer is principally to celebrate **Landlady Rosie's forty years at the T.T.**



The beer is permanently available at The Sulby, in conjunction with brews from Okell's and Bushy's. As usual, on display at the time of



visit was an innovative list of upcoming events to be held at The Sulby, from themed nights to under-sixteen pool tournaments - minus the beer obviously! With regards an earlier passage in the text: all three brewery's beers were priced at £2.80 per pint, representing good value for money in this hotel of immense reputation over many years.

**News in brief**

**Bar George,** Douglas, has recently started stocking real ale again, after a brief absence.

**Bosun's Bitter,** from **Old Laxey Brewery,** made a rare appearance outside the brewpub in Old Laxey,



featuring at the award-winning **Trafalgar pub** on Ramsey quay in February.



Bosun's has always been available to those requesting it, but is not generally marketed outside the brewery.

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THE ONLY BEERS TO CONTAIN MANX GROWN BARLEY

**Heron and Brearley** (in two pubs now) feature a 'beer wall' - similar to those becoming increasingly common in the UK. The pubs are **The Railway on Douglas Quay** and **The Royal George** in Ramsey. A combination of lagers and craft keg beers feature regularly.



Royal George

**And finally, more proof if needed that MerseyAle really does reach the places others do not get to. Copies were supplied last year to the island of Hirta, part of the St. Kilda group out in the Atlantic - some forty miles west of Harris.**

In the foreground: **Angela Aspin, CAMRA West Pennines Regional Director**, with obligatory MerseyAle and bottle of Bushy's beer. In the background can be seen Ministry of Defence units on the island, one of which supports the most remote bar in the British Isles, formerly the **Puff**

**Inn** - sadly no longer open to island visitors!



Angela

MERSEYALE NEEDS YOU

**Did you know that every time an edition of MerseyAle is produced, thousands of copies are printed?**

As the Distribution Manager, it is up to me to ensure that copies are spread widely, fairly and frequently to pubs and other sites within our branch area. Whilst copies are sent to **Wirral, St Helens and Isle of Man**, the remainder are distributed in a number of ways. Firstly, certain city centre pubs act as Distribution Points (DP) and make copies available to anyone who wishes to take MerseyAle to other pubs whilst on their travels. Current DP pubs include **The Vernon Arms, The Caledonia, The Crown and Ship & Mitre**. Although there are others, we'd like to have more. So, if there are any more

pubs who could store a few boxes for us, but make copies accessible, please get in touch via the email address given below.

Secondly, some branch members have boxes delivered directly to their home/workplace, whilst others collect directly from the printer for onward distribution. This network is successful in the main, but relies on only a handful of dedicated people to help maintain it. Sometimes it can be a struggle, as we don't always get to all the pubs as often as we would like - and consequently copies do go to waste, which is not what we want of course.

I have had offers of help since the previous edition to cover **Crosby /Waterloo, Walton/Fazakerley and Woolton**, but maybe YOU feel you could help, by offering to drop off a few copies elsewhere to pubs that we struggle to visit regularly due to where they are. Some are in and around the city centre, but the vast majority are in the suburbs, such as **Gateacre, Old Swan and Huyton**.

So, if you could offer to take some copies to pubs where you know they would be appreciated, please contact me on the email address below with the details. Of course, if you visit somewhere regularly where you never see MerseyAle, speak to staff first to make sure they are willing to take them - and also have somewhere the magazine can be displayed prominently. We can then provide you with an initial allocation and a CAMRA branded magazine holder, which should hold up to 10 copies at a time. Any offers of help will be much appreciated.

**Andre Fu**  
MerseyAle Distribution Manager  
andre.fu@liverpoolcamra.org.uk



# LIVERPOOL BEER FESTIVAL

15TH - 18TH February 2017

to make this one of the most successful festivals in the country. A special mention must go to **Doug Macadam**, our beer festival organiser, who this year did not only have to organise the festival, but also the **North West Regional final of the Champion Beer of Britain Competition (CBOB)**. To read more about the competition and the winners of all the categories see page 43 of this magazine.



Doug

**Sonia James-Henry**  
Liverpool Beer Festival Staffing Manager  
and Branch Chair



The most anticipated event in the Liverpool and Districts CAMRA calendar - the 37th Liverpool Beer Festival - was yet again hugely popular.

The addition of a Wednesday session, which was free to CAMRA members, was a great success - something I am sure we will repeat in future years. This year's entertainment came from first-time visitors to the festival, the **Brasswurst Bavarian Band**, who went down a storm with their mix of German drinking songs and modern songs played in an oompah style. Audience participation was a feature that certainly got the crowd singing and dancing along!

With a wide range of beers on offer, the Beer of the Festival is always hotly contested, with over 200 votes cast over the six festival sessions. Local beers are always popular - and this year, as with last - there were two local breweries in the top three. Despite the concept amongst some licensees that dark beers don't sell, two of them were stouts.

The overall winner was **Tarn Hows Blueberry Vanilla Oatmeal Stout** - the second time in three years the Cumbrian brewery has taken the top spot. Congratulations on a well-deserved win. The runner-up was a local pale ale, **Cloud 9**, from **Formby-based Red Star**. A winner last year with Lakota, the brewery is going from strength to strength and this year sponsored a brewery bar which proved extremely popular.

Third was another stout, from a brewery that also featured in the top three last year with the popular Abyss. Neptune is again a local brewery that is proving extremely popular both locally and further afield. This year it was their new beer, Undercurrent, that impressed festival goers. Look out for both Neptune and Red Star beers in pubs in Liverpool City Centre and the suburbs.

Finally, a big thank you to all our volunteers. The Liverpool Beer Festival is run entirely by members of CAMRA, who give up their time free of charge



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The membership rates are increasing by £1 on 1st April.

# Champion Beer of Britain North West final



This year, the Liverpool Beer Festival had the privilege of hosting the Champion Beer of the North West Competition.

This is the first time the event has been held in Liverpool. The competition itself took place on Wednesday afternoon. We had three tasting panels made up of brewers, CAMRA members, journalists and beer bloggers. The judges were given one beer at a time and only told its style. Eleven different beers were tasted and judged on appearance, aroma, taste and aftertaste.

**The beers judged were:**  
**Bitter: Barnegates Cracker**

**Best Bitter: Barnegates Tag lag**

**Strong Bitter: Barnegates Red Bull Terrier**

**Golden Ale: Hawkshead Windermere Pale**  
**Speciality: Blackedge Black Port Porter**  
**Mild: Foxfield Dark Winter Mild**  
**Old Ale and Strong Mild: Watermill Shih Tzu Faced**  
**Barley wines and Strong Old Ale: Robinsons Old Tom**  
**Stout: Barnegates Goodhew's Dry Stout**

**Porter: Dunham Massey Dunham Massey Porter**  
**Real Ale in a Bottle (RAIB): Stringers Mutiny Double Stout**

Mel James-Henry  
 Deputy Beer Festival Organiser

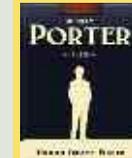
## Presentation for the North West Regional Category RAIB (Real Ale in a Bottle)

### Porters and the Barley Wines and Strong Old Ales

The first of the 2017 rounds were held at Manchester in January. The Gold winners of the RAIB category will be going to the Good Food Show in Birmingham later on this year to be judged as a contender for the **Champion Bottled Beer of Britain**.

The Gold winners of the 'Porters

After a lot of tasting and much deliberation, the winners were:



**Bronze: Dunham Massey Dunham Massey Porter**



**Silver: Stringers Mutiny Double Stout**

**Gold: Hawkshead Windermere Pale**



Congratulations to all the winners.

**Porters**  
**Bronze: Hawkshead Brodie's Prime**  
**Silver: Watermill Dog'th Vader**  
**Gold: Dunham Massey Dunham Porter**

**Barley Wines and Strong Old Ales**  
**Bronze: Watermill Shih Tzu Faced**  
**Silver: Hawkshead Brodie's Prime Export**  
**Gold: Coniston No. 9**

By Mel James-Henry

and the Barley Wines and Strong Old Ales' will be judged next year in the **Champion Beer of the North West 2018** and will also be going to the **National Winter Ales Festival 2018** (in Norwich) to be judged as contenders for the **Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2018**.

**Real Ale in a Bottle**  
**Bronze: Merlin Merlin's Gold**  
**Silver: Stringers Mutiny Double Stout**  
**Gold: Coniston Coniston No 9**

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## Liverpool and Districts AGM Ship & Mitre 18th January 2017

Our annual AGM was held upstairs at the Ship & Mitre on 18th January. Thank you to everyone who came along. We are grateful for your support, at what is the most important meeting of the year.

There was a brief recap of events that had taken place over the past 12 months, including the closing and subsequent re-opening of The Lion and The Cross Keys, the fire at The Scotch Piper (which remains closed) and our revamp of MerseyAle. Our hosting of the 2016 Members Weekend was also raised and special thanks were given to Geoff Edwards, who was the Chairman of the Members Weekend organising committee.

Following this, each Branch Officer gave a brief report of their activities over the past year. This included our Pubs Officer, Steve Downing, discussing concerns around the Late Night Levy and our Social Secretary, Sue Daniels, talking about recent trips to the Christmas Markets in Manchester and Chester, as well as our new Sunday Lunch meet-ups.

Our new Regional Director, Nick Bosley, then gave a short speech

in which he congratulated the branch for the way in which we mix campaigning with social events - something of which we are very proud.

We then came to the election of the Committee: all members of the 2016 Committee expressed a desire to stand again. We also had a new branch member, Halee Rani, who wished to become our Young Person's Officer. The meeting ratified all candidates and the 2017 committee was formed.

### Committee Members are:

- Sonia James-Henry**
- Andre Fu**
- Carol Cherpeau**
- Halee Rani**
- Howard Perry**
- Ian Rayner**
- Mel James-Henry**
- Mike Chandler**
- Tony Morgan**
- Tony Williams**
- Steve Downing**
- Sue Daniels**

As there was no further business, the meeting was then concluded. There was then time for members to socialise and discuss issues with members of the committee. This is a taste of the structure of our AGM's. We encourage as many members as possible to attend these meetings, as we value your opinions and would like branch members to be actively involved in the future of Liverpool and Districts CAMRA.

**Sonia James-Henry  
Liverpool Branch Chair**



Sonia James-Henry



Mel James-Henry



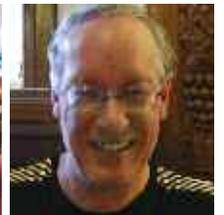
Andre Fu



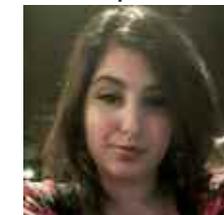
Mike Chandler



Carol Cherpeau



Tony Morgan



Halee Rani



Tony Williams



Howard Perry



Steve Downing



Ian Rayner



Sue Daniels

# 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](mailto:social@liverpoolcamra.org.uk) or phone Ian Macadam 07521 741 586

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.

Mar 11th: Leicester (for beer festival).

Mar 25th: Blackpool - for details see diary below

Apr 8th: York.

May 6th: Stonehouse Brewery, Oswestry

Jun 10th: Hinckley and Rugby.

Jul 15th: Skipton, Barnoldswick, and Colne.

Aug 12th: Hull.

Sep 9th: Harrogate and Otley.

Oct 14th: Nottingham (for beer festival. Date to be finalised).

Nov 11th: Shrewsbury area (possibly another brewery visit).



**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



## CAMRA Branch Diaries

### Liverpool CAMRA Branch Diary

**Thurs 16th March: Day out to Preston by train.** Meet in Court Leet Wetherspoon pub, Ormskirk, for breakfast at 10.55am - or at Ormskirk station in time for the 11.54am train.

**Wed 22nd March: Get Together at The Crown,** Lime Street, 8pm. **Pub of the Year** result will be announced.

**Sat 25th March: Extra Coach to Blackpool** 10.45am from Ship and Mitre for people to attend the **Beer Festival at the Winter Gardens** and/or tour the local pubs. The bus will stop at Lytham on the way home.

**Sun 2nd April: First Sunday meet-up.** 1pm, Rigby's, Dale Street.

**Tues 4th April: Committee meeting** at Ship & Mitre, Dale Street, 7.30pm, followed by social.

**Thurs 13th April:** Meet up at the Ship & Mitre **Wirral Beer Festival**, Hulme Hall, Port Sunlight.

**Thurs 20th April: Train trip to St Helens.** Meet at Lime Street in time for 11.28am train.

**Wed 3rd May:** Committee meeting at

Caledonia, Catherine Street, 7.30pm, followed by social.

**Wed 10th May: Mild Month Pub Crawl,** starting at Blackburne Arms, Catherine St, 7pm.

**Wed 17th May:** Provisional date for **presentation at the Pub of the Year.**

**Wed 7th June: Committee meeting** at Que Pasa Cantina, Lark Lane, 7.30pm, followed by social.

For further details email [contact@liverpoolcamra.org.uk](mailto:contact@liverpoolcamra.org.uk)

### Wirral CAMRA Branch Diary

**Thu 9 Mar: Branch Meeting.** Meet in Gallaghers, Chester Street, Birkenhead at 8.30pm for 9pm start.

**Sat 25 Mar: Coach trip to Leeds.** Coach will pick up from The Brass Balance, Argyle Street, Birkenhead at 10am and then at the Ship & Mitre, Dale Street Liverpool at 10.15am. For further details, see [www.wirral.camra.org.uk](http://www.wirral.camra.org.uk)

**Wed 5 Apr: Committee Meeting.** Meet at The Lion, Market Street, Birkenhead at 8pm. All welcome.

**Thu 13 Apr: Branch Meeting.** Meet in Gallaghers, Chester Street, Birkenhead at 8.30pm for 9pm start.

**Thu 20 April: Presentation of Pub of the Season for Spring 2017** to Magazine Hotel, Magazine Brow, New Brighton at 8.30pm.

**Wed 3 May: Committee Meeting.** Meet at Rose & Crown, Bebington at 8pm. All welcome.

**Wed 10 May: Branch Meeting.** Meet in Gallaghers, Chester Street, Birkenhead at 8.30pm for 9pm start.

**Sat 13 May: Coach trip to Ludlow Food & Drink festival.** Coach will pick up from the Ship & Mitre, Dale Street, Liverpool at 9.45am, followed by The Brass Balance, Argyle Street, Birkenhead at 10am. For further details, see [www.wirral.camra.org.uk](http://www.wirral.camra.org.uk)

**Sat 20 May: Presentation of Runner-up Wirral CAMRA Branch Pub of the Year 2017** award to the Harp Inn, Quayside, Little Neston at 2pm.

**Thu 25 May: Presentation of Wirral CAMRA Branch Pub of the Year 2017** award to The Lazy Landlord, Mill Lane, Wallasey at 8pm.

**Wed 7 Jun: Committee Meeting.** Meet at The Lion, Market Street, Birkenhead at 8pm. All welcome.

**Thu 15 Jun: Branch Meeting.** Meet in Gallaghers, Chester Street, Birkenhead at 8.30pm for 9pm start.

**Sat 1 Jul: Coach trip to Leek and Congleton.** Coach will pick up from the Ship & Mitre, Dale Street, Liverpool at 10am, followed by The Brass Balance, Argyle Street, Birkenhead at 10.15am. For further details, see [www.wirral.camra.org.uk](http://www.wirral.camra.org.uk)

**Wed 5 Jul: Committee Meeting.** Meet at Rose & Crown, Bebington at 8pm. All welcome.

**Thu 13 Jul: Branch Meeting.** Meet in Gallaghers, Chester Street, Birkenhead at 8.30pm for 9pm start.

**Sat 23 Sep: Coach trip to Bishops Castle, Michaelmas festival.** Coach will pick up from the Ship & Mitre, Dale Street Liverpool at 10am, followed by The Brass Balance, Argyle Street, Birkenhead at 10.15am. For further details, see [www.wirral.camra.org.uk](http://www.wirral.camra.org.uk)

## Isle of Man CAMRA Branch Meeting Schedule

**Wed 15 March:** 7.30pm, Douglas - The Rosemount Hotel.

**Thu/Fri/Sat 6,7,8 April: Branch beer festival** - The Villa Marina, Promenade, Douglas.

**Sat 15 April:** 2pm Laxey - Start at The Bridge Inn, then a stroll around the village.

**Mon 15 May:** 7.30pm Peel - Start at The White House, then a stroll around the town (Mild Month).

**Thu 8 June:** 7.30pm Douglas - Bushy's Beer Tent - Social evening.

**Thu 15 June:** 7.30pm Port Erin - Start at The Haven, then a stroll to visit the Falcon's Nest.

### MerseyAle Article and Photo Contributors

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Liverpool CAMRA



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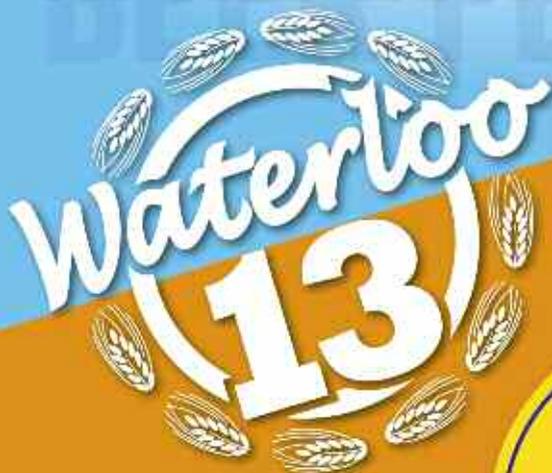
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