



CHESTER & SOUTH CLWYD

CAMRA DIARY

For the latest events,
please visit the branch web site at
www.myweb.tiscali.co.uk/hardpeg

Sat 3 Dec;
Thu 15 Dec;
Fri 6 - Sat 7 Jan;
Wed 18 - Sat 21 Jan;

Fri 24 - Sat 25 Feb;
Sat 3 Mar;

Llangollen Railway: Real Ale Train
Branch Meeting / Xmas Social Bear & Billet, Chester
Winter Ales Festival Parish Hall, Church Street, Frodsham
National Winter Ales Festival Sheridan Suite,
Oldham Road, Manchester
Carlton Tavern Beer Festival, Handbridge, Chester
Flintshire & Denbighshire Pub Hop Bop Local pubs
co-ordinate a weekend of real ales and live music.
Buses laid on.



As well as Chester and its environs, this Branch covers an area stretching from Parkgate on the Wirral to Tushingham in the South.

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Bargain of the Century? Thornbridge Jaipur, with a 50p Wetherspoons discount voucher, was selling at £1.49 in the **Wheatsheaf**, Overpool during the splendid 'Spoons nationwide beer festival. It was spot on too!



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September Out Inn Cheshire Drops: Barrow to Hapsford

First port of call was a busy **Stamford Bridge** where lots of diners in the restaurant at the rear, could have been tempted by St Austell Proper Job, Weetwood Best, W&F Piffle (aka Brimstage Sandpiper), Greene King London Glory and Theakstons Best.

Less choice and less customers at the **White Horse** at Barrow where Banks bitter was the only offering from very young bar staff and seemingly even younger customers!!! No such concerns at the **Helsby Arms** near Hapsford which was pleasingly full of mostly ladies dining or watching widescreen TV(!) over a selection of seafood/oriental dishes and three ales from Greene King IPA, Courage Best-(with the new style pumpclip) and St Austell Tribute. Apparently Wychwood Hobgoblin had sold out in two days...

Can't speculate if the **Nags Head** at Bridge Trafford sold ale as quickly but the barmaids jewel encrusted I-phone amused us whilst choosing from Tim Taylor's Golden Best and Jennings Cumberland Ale. A short hop - no pun intended - to the busy **Shrewsbury Arms** where a cross section of diners were maybe trying the two courses for £10.95. On offer were Greene King IPA, and Reverend James at a wallet-busting £3.50 a pint!!!

Reeling from this, we solemnly slithered our way down narrow rain swept lanes to our last pub, the **Bird in Hand**, Guilden Sutton. A new licensee had not only kept this community local going but revitalised it and brought back the ever popular Weetwood Cheshire Cat, accompanied by Ringwood Boondoggle, Hook Norton Old Hooky plus Shep Neame Spitfire with Blakemere Navajo in bottles. Good to see the pub on the LocAle scheme.



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An Enjoyable Spot of Cottaging

There was a good turn out on the 21st at the cosy confines of the Old Cottage on Brook Street for the presentation to an extremely proud Trevor Summerhill of (coincidentally) our Summer Pub of the Season award. Seldom has someone been so chuffed to receive anything off the branch but, seriously, well done to a thoroughly deserving landlord and his team. Trevor's ethos on real ale and how a pub should be run ought to strike a chord with every CAMRA member. Needless to say the Taylors Golden Best flowed all evening.

Fears that the **Bull** in Shocklach might close after the sudden departure of the previous licensees have happily proved unfounded. The ale range might not be as exciting now (replaced by more familiar 'brands') but at least the hand pumps remain in active use. The **Market House** at Hampton Heath is another pub to fall victim to curry-fication. It's now called, and we must be careful not to make a typo here, *Forts of India*. Nearby the **Red Lion** in Malpas continues to sell excellent Three Tuns and Spitting Feathers ales while the splendid **Wheatsheaf** at Nomansheath also sells three or four local beers including Weetwood, Woodland and Stonehouse.

The Morris Dancer in Kelsall has now re-opened as the **Lord Binning** and remains pretty much as it was before (arguably with a greater emphasis on food). Constantly changing cask ales on the hand pumps have included Landlord, Copper Dragon, Weetwood Old Dog and Tatton Ale.

THE OLDE COTTAGE INN

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Autumn Pub of the Season: Bawn Lodge, Hoole

On a wet and windy Thursday night in October a fair gathering of CAMRA members attended the **Bawn Lodge**, Hoole in leafy Chester suburbia for the presentation of the Autumn 2011 Pub of the Season award. Despite its modern décor and appearance the Lodge Bar, with its competitive pricing policy and enlightened selection of changing guest beers, attracts plenty of cask ale drinkers thus ensuring a timely consumption of the goods on offer. It also shows a bar doesn't have to be of the traditional 'Olde Worlde' ilk in order to win awards or, more importantly, provide a good experience for the customers.

Brian Vardy praised bar manager Adam Wallace and owner Rob Bawn for keeping consistently fine beer quality before handing over a thoroughly deserved, always to be treasured, framed certificate. And with formal ceremonies completed it was down to the serious business of supping Thwaites 1807 Xtra, a very hoppy Rudgate Marynka and Abbeydale Galaxy 55 whilst enjoying some complimentary celebratory pie and mash. Cheers!



Ellesmere Port Boat Museum

Unfortunately sneaking under the radar and ultimately clashing with a flurry of cask events elsewhere, the National Boat Museum in Ellesmere Port held a beer festival in October. Hope things went well. Cask ales, many of suitably nautical nomenclature, included:- Titanic Steerage, Plum Porter & White Star, Spitting Feathers False Economy & Thirst Quencher, Northern Navajo, Prospect Nutty Slack & Hopper, Wadworth Horizon, Allgates Caskablana, Salopian Icon, Black Country Ales BFG & Pig on the Wall, Shardlow Narrow Boat, ABC Dizzy Blonde & Rotunda Red, Beowulf Swordsman and Blackwater Celtic

Membership Perks

No need for discount vouchers at the two Wetherspoons bars in Chester. Both the **Square Bottle** on Foregate Street and, round the corner, the **Forest House** on Love Street, offer 50p deduction on every pint of real ale for card carrying members all day every day. Bargain! Although it's worth re-iterating that the **Cellar Bar** commendably has also signed up to the CAMRA Discount Scheme and offers 10% of all cask beer Sunday to Thursday.

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Catholic Tastes

As a branch we've always been a bit loathe to nominate a Club of the Year because we know we've nothing, as yet, to match the likes of Barnton Cricket Club or Appleton Thorn Village Hall when it comes to the amount and range of beers. Nevertheless, that shouldn't preclude us from highlighting those places serving up cask to their members.

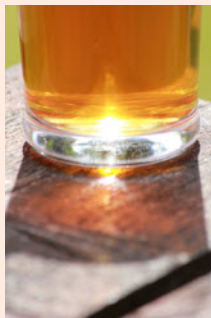
In the past we've mentioned the likes of **Kelsall Community Centre**, **Boughton Hall CC** and **Cheshire County Officers** but not the **Catholic Club** on Brook Street, Chester. Time to rectify that. Sources state that there are usually two beers available with the popular Spitting Feathers ales featuring prominently. However, as the decorative pump clips on the wall bear witness, so do other brewers. In October, for instance, Allgates Junga (a 4.2% seasonal brewed with the eponymous Polish hop) and Facers North Star Porter were up for grabs. The club has a lounge, busy function room plus separate areas for pool, snooker and bagatelle and also shows live football games especially, surprise surprise, Celtic FC. So, while it's probably best to avoid it on Old Firm days if you're a Rangers supporter, if you can get signed in, the place is well recommended for a visit.

News of any other clubs serving up the proper stuff is welcomed.

Telfords Warehouse

In October **Telford's Warehouse** joined the merry band of pubs staging their own beer festivals. The 20+ beers were smartly presented on the CAMRA-owned stillage in the intimate and atmospheric setting of the lower bar.

Attending on the Saturday meant I'd missed some of my target brews - the Brewdog had sold out the night before - but there will still a good choice for the increasing number of punters attending. My favourite had to be the superbly hoppy Hawkshead Lakeland Gold, with the rich Three Tuns Stout taking the runner-up spot. Perhaps having some Wobbly Bob before wobbling off home on the bicycle wasn't a good idea though! A lot of work was put in by Jez, Ian and the team to stage the festival so it was good to see it well supported by the supping public. Hopefully this will now be an annual event to add to the social calendar!



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**2011
GOOD
BEER
GUIDE**

A Chester Canal Pub Cruise

If you're coming to Chester looking for a drink and a walk, but have done to death the Roman Walls circumnavigation, consider a gentle 1.5 miles stroll from suburbia into the heart of the city along the well-surfaced Shropshire Union Canal towpath. Over the course of time, as new ventures have sprung up, a splendid alternative pub crawl has developed incorporating a mixture of the old and new. Here's how we see it.

To start with, get a bus or a short taxi ride out to the **Bridge Inn** on Tarvin Road in Boughton. This friendly and enthusiastically run free house attracts all ages and offers up to four changing guest ales as well as dishing out some tremendous pub grub – ideal stomach lining for the mission that lies ahead.

From the Bridge, head westwards along the towpath to the rear. Noting mallards, moorhens and sadly the odd fast food polystyrene en route, you'll pass Chemistry Lock and the imposing Water Tower before emerging on Spital Walk. Head off here down the road at 90 degrees to the canal to find the **Spital Vaults**. This Cask Marque listed traditional two-roomed local sells primarily Jennings beers at a £2.20 a pint and features include sports TV, pool, darts and bagatelle.

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Back to the canal and after you've gone under Hoole Lane bridge, passing lots of fancy dan new build apartment blocks, you'll come to **Artichoke** on the ground floor of the imposing Steam Mill. This café bar bistro is a welcome new addition on the Chester ale scene and features French windows, York stone paving, retro Pantone S chairs and Meccano bar stools. It's joined the LocAle scheme and serves ales from Weetwood, Northern, Tatton and Offbeat.

We're well into what's becoming known as the Canal Quarter and the pubs start to come thick and fast. Just after the massive Barton Rouge curry house is a one-time derelict warehouse converted back in the 1980's with visionary brilliance by the Brunning & Price pub group into **Old Harkers Arms**. Inside this fully deserving multi-award winner you'll discover enthusiastic staff attending a battery of hand pumps ready to serve up a diverse range of superbly kept (albeit expensive) ales.



Quick detour next if you wish. Up the outside steps, and across City Road to your left is the **Cellar Bar** (sibling to the Bridge Inn). Dimly lit with high tables and stools, this live music venue serves three ales from micros. It's also joined the CAMRA discount scheme offering 10% off cask ales Sunday to Thursday! Wish more pubs would do this.

Re-trace your steps to Harkers, and literally a few yards away, immediately after City Road bridge, is the **Canalside Inn**, part of the Eaton Hotel. Two or more guest ales here and even more exciting is the news that a new micro-brewery has been recently installed on the premises.

More to follow. Toddle along the towpath and cross Sellar Street bridge to see the **Union Vaults** on the corner. This three tiered boozer with bagatelle table usually sells Everards Tiger and London Pride. It can be an entertaining place where hardcore drinkers with strong Chester accents are partial to indulge in the local vernacular.

Round the corner is the **Mill** – no need for directions, you'll find it. Another converted warehouse, this hotel was a true pioneer in experimenting with real ales beyond the national bland and thus deserves its place in the Chester pub pantheon of greats. Many a pub has since followed its example but it wholeheartedly remains worth a visit thanks to up to ten changing ales with Weetwood Bitter on permanently.

>>> Back to the canal by whatever means, and walk under the inner ring road until you arrive at the former **Frog & Nightingale**. This was smartly refurbished in the autumn and is now called the Lock Keeper. It has the likes of Greene King and Adnams on the pumps. To reach our final destination follow the canal under Cow Lane bridge, behind the Slowboat restaurant, through a long deep and dank vertical sandstone cutting that takes you alongside the Roman walls and under Northgate Street. After encountering a three chamber lock staircase beneath the railway line you'll finally emerge at a canal basin where lies **Telford's Warehouse**. This popular spacious and airy freehouse / music venue is well established in the Good Beer Guide selling Weetwood Cheshire Cat alongside three other guest ales. It held a beer festival in October and makes a splendid place to toast the end of this canalside odyssey.

Other Chester Pub Fezzas

Besides Telfords, since the last OIC two more Chester pubs have staged their own beer fests. **Kash Bar** on Brook Street held an Autumn Fest which featured 20 different local beers plus (not so local) ciders. During the event Wigan CAMRA turned up to present Kash's owners, Blue Ball brewery, with a Light Beer of the Festival Award from the Wigan Beer Fest for Blue Ball American IPA. Kash incidentally, besides quiz and curry nights, regularly has discounted beer nights including £2 a pint Tuesdays.

The **Pied Bull** meanwhile held another of their successful fezza / Meet the Brewer nights in November. A total of 17 hand-pumps for the festival over two bars included amongst others Marble beers, Summer Wine, Red Willow, Thornbridge, Titanic and Pied Bull beers.

The guys from Marble were there on the opening night to talk through their range as well as unveiling some tasty bottled ales, while two days later, as an extra special treat, Toby and Caroline from Red Willow showcased their hoptastic beers including champion beer of Cheshire, Wreckless.

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Victory is Ours

Bravo to the **Ship Victory** in Chester for being the only pub in our CAMRA branch area to make it into the Sunday Telegraph's Famous Grouse Famous Pubs of 2011. Covering the whole of the UK, and comprising of entries nominated by readers, it claims to be a collection of pubs that stand out from the ordinary and deserve to be celebrated.

The write-up singles out the SV for its extraordinary dedication to charitable causes mentioning quizzes and Turkey Trots to help raise thousands for the local breast cancer unit. *"If you're in town, make sure you pop into the little pub with the big heart and raise a glass to them."* Indeed so. Well done Joe.



In Brief

Not only has the **Golden Eagle** on Castle Street re-opened but cask ale has made an appearance. It's being run by Martin Ellis who has helped make the Commercial such a successful venture.

Elsewhere three more pubs have officially joined the CAMRA LocAle scheme. They are the **Commercial** on St Peter's Square (Weetwood, Stonehouse beers), the **Artichoke Bar** under the Steam Mill (various Cheshire ales) and **Alexanders** in Rufus Court (Weetwood).



Fields of Opportunity

The former Barn restaurant in Bridge Trafford is set to re-open on 21st November. Part new-build, part 400 year old converted dairy farm, this latest venture will be called Chester Fields and, as you'd expect, will be majoring once more on a dining experience. Cask ale is promised especially as an erstwhile Brewery Tap employee is in charge of the beer ordering!

Bird In Hand Fezza

Tony Jones, new owner of the Bird in Hand in Guilden Sutton, decided what better way to showcase his dedication to real ale than to have the pub hold a beer festival. And so it came to pass. On the last weekend in September, a marquee was erected on the newly developed beer garden where a 26 foot long bar supported a dizzying array of 28 hand pumps! Over the course of the festival thirty real ales, all sourced from within thirty miles of the pub – “possibly the largest collection of LocAles in one area” - were served up as over 800 people attended the function which is set to become an annual event.

Tatton Brewery's Ruck and Maul Porter won the festival beer followed by Weetwood's Cheshire Cat while third spot went to Odd Ball Red from Offbeat Brewery in Crewe. Tremendous effort, Tony. Meanwhile, the Bird in Hand is now LocAle accredited as Cheshire Cat remains a permanent feature inside the pub alongside the likes of Sharps Doombar.

Bad News From the Sticks

The death knell tolls for another country pub. On this occasion it's the Farmers Arms - more recently known as Stuart's Table - in Huxley which called time permanently in August. The official reason for the closure, as disclosed on the Chester@Large website, is *"a constant struggle with our landlords about the maintenance of our lovely, old rickety pub" which has "culminated in the sale of the Farmer's Arms to a private investor, and, unfortunately, our imminent eviction"*.

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Whilst the Farmers in its present guise, despite the decorative hop-bines and Adnam's ale, might have proved too food-led for those who are only in it for the beer, it is nevertheless sad to lose this low-beamed, rambling and intimate pub. Favourite personal memories of the place will be back in the day when it was run by jovial husband and wife team Gordon & Leslie (later at the Plough, Christleton), supping Greenalls Original (when it WAS good) while battling away at the competitive pub quiz. (Sighs for days of yore.) There is a rumour that the Farmers may re-open in the New Year while Stuart's Table has decamped to the Gunnery in Tarvin.

the cellar
↓

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CAMRA DIARY

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All members, old and new are warmly welcomed. See www.thcamra.org.uk

Thurs 8 Dec: **Branch Christmas Party** at Hyde's Brewery. Limited numbers.

chair@thcamra.org for bookings

Mon 12 Dec: **Meet The Brewer** - Brew Dog. 7.30 pm

Meet Josie Ludford from Brew Dog at the Brewhouse, Altrincham. Limited number of tickets £8. Trashy Blonde on cask! Full details on brewhousebar.com

Tues 13 Dec: **Branch Social**; Sale. 8 pm Bulls Head, 8.45 Ryan's Bar, 9.15 Bank, 9.45 Railway, finish King's Ransom

Tues 27 Dec: **Winter Pub Of The Season Presentation** & Christmas Social.

Fed up with turkey and canned beer round at the folks? Come celebrate the Beech on Chorlton Green receiving a long awaited Pub of the Season award. From 7 pm

Thurs 5 Jan: **Branch Meeting**. 8 pm Sir Ralph Abercrombie, Bootle St, Manchester

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Branch Contact – John Ison 0161 962 7976. Or E-mail Jon Gobbett at membership@thcamra.org.uk

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Poynton	Royal British Legion	01625 873120
Sandbach	The Fox at Elworth	01270 760219
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Styal	Ship Inn	01625 523818
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Irish/folk every Saturday evening
Live music most Wednesdays
Live music Saturdays, Jam last Fri of the month.
Last Saturday of each month
Acoustic folk every last Friday in the month

Surely there must be more live music than this? Bands, fans and licensees are encouraged to tell us about new entries for this listing. It is replicated on the web-site too, at www.outinncheshire.co.uk

The quiz listing will be back in the next issue; the quiz and live music lists are so long that we are obliged to alternate them for space reasons!

Advertising in Out Inn CHESHIRE

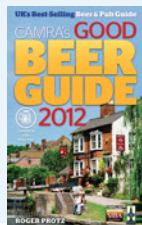
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At the end of 2010, we were obliged to increase our advertising rates, for the first time in two and a half years. This was forced on us by the inexorable rise in printing costs. We kept the increase to a minimum and the new rates are in the blue box on the right.

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FOR
REAL ALE**

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Next Issue;

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Out Inn Cheshire

12/10

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