



NORTH CHESHIRE

Covers Warrington and Vale Royal, including Frodsham, Lymm and Northwich. Halton has its own active Branch, covering Runcorn and Widnes Meetings are usually held in the Warrington/Northwich area, with regular surveys of outlying areas. Beer Festivals are held every year, at Northwich

New members and formerly inactive members are especially welcome.

Branch contacts: Gary Chester 07976 268353 or chairman@camranorthcheshire.org.uk
Ray Head secretary@camranorthcheshire.org.uk

Out Inn Cheshire articles or adverts: Nick Thomson thomson119@btinternet.com

If anything of remotest interest is happening in your local, let these guys know!

Visit our North Cheshire CAMRA web-site www.camranorthcheshire.org.uk



CAMRA DIARY

Feel free to call us for more information.

Events start at 8 pm unless specified otherwise.

Wed 2 June: Pub of the Year Presentation

Red Bull, Kingsley (pictured)

Tue 15 June: Branch meeting **Chat Moss**, Glazebury

Thu 24 June: Social crawl Northwich Kingsmead/Castle; meet **Kingfisher**

Tue 6 July: Branch meeting **Bears Paw**, Frodsham

Fri 9 July: Club of the Year Presentation

Barnton Cricket Club

Mon 19 July: North Warrington Crawl - meet **Memphis Belle**

Sat 24 July: (all day) trip to **Theakston and Black Sheep** breweries

Wed 12 Aug: Oakmere crawl - meet **Vale Royal Abbey Arms**

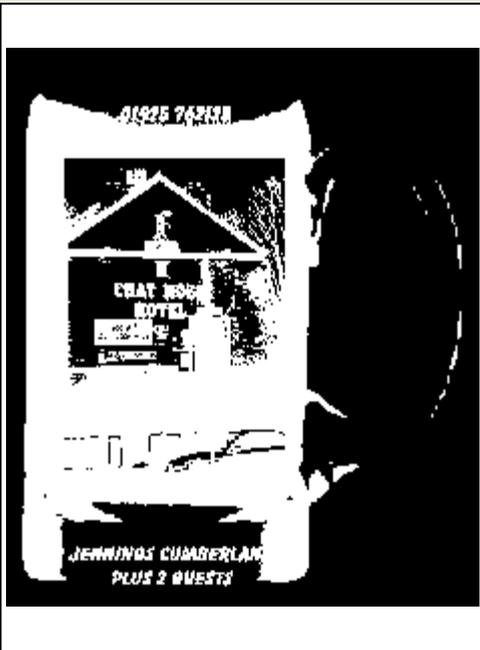
Tue 18 Aug: Branch meeting **Penny Black**, Northwich

Sat 19 Aug: (all day) Heritage crawl **York**

28-30 August: Drink Real Drink Local **Beer Festival**, Tabley Showground (see page 28)



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**Pub of the Season
Summer 2009**

Dining Out *Inn* CHESHIRE - Swan Hotel, Tarpорley

Following on from my stay and excellent breakfast at the **Swan** (see *Out Inn* CHESHIRE Issue 45), I just had to visit for an evening meal to see if it lived up to my now very high expectations.

I am pleased to say that it did. You can't make a booking here (unless you have a party of six or more), but the ever-helpful staff managed to intercept us as we started looking for a table, and quickly intervened to find us a location to dine with a minimum of fuss.

Beers on offer were Timothy Taylor Landlord, a Weetwood regular and a couple of guests. I opted for the Landlord as this is one of my "desert island beers". Very nice, scoring 3.5 out of 5 on the CAMRA national scale.

For starter, I opted for the classic crayfish and prawn cocktail at £6.95. More than I would usually pay for a starter, but this was very tasty. It would have benefited from the addition of some classic prawn cocktail-style dressing however.

Main course was a 10oz Pork Chop, pan roasted and served with apple and cider gravy, dauphinoise potatoes and roast vegetables for £11.95. This really was an excellent choice. The pork was cooked superbly, almost falling but remaining succulent and really enhanced by the apple and cider gravy. The potatoes and vegetables were also a delight – a filling yet perfectly balanced dish.

So, the Swan confirms its status as a great place to visit. Excellent accommodation, good beer, the perfect breakfast and now we know that the evening meals don't disappoint either. I guess the only thing left for me to try now is their afternoon tea, which includes champagne, scones, sandwiches and of course tea. Watch this space!

Gary Chester



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CHAT IN A GLASS

The **Lower Angel** beers festival to celebrate 20 years of guest beers was a great success.

There was, as promised, Wobbly Bob the first of the guest beers and Taylor Landlord, the second. The other beers were made up of an interesting range of new beers with about a 50:50 split of beers from breweries that existed 20 years ago against newer breweries. The definite beer of the festival, to me, was the Thornbridge Raven (a 6.6% black IPA) which was very moreish!

And the first casks to run out? Wobbly Bob and Taylor Landlord – some things never change!!



Following our last issue we have found another pub offering food takeaways. The **Harrow** in Culcheth now offers fish and chips takeaway for £4-00. Two cask beers available (Courage Best and Theakstons bitter on our last visit).

The **Peacock** at Birchwood was due to open on 24th May – reports please for next issue.

After being closed for a period of time, the **Stocks** in Padgate has re-opened with cask beer being promised. Initially only one pump will be used but if sales take off then there is the potential for up to six hand pumps to be used.



John Wilkinson at the **Tavern** in Warrington should have his new brewery kit by time you read this. We are not sure what the name will be but 4T's has been suggested.

Hopefully by the time we go to press some initial brews will have been seen in the Tavern, and we will report to you next time.

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Warrington - A Real Ale Valhalla

Maybe Valhalla is overstating things a little – after all this majestic Norse hall in Asgard ruled over by Odin had 540 doors, and we still have some way to go before we reach that many real ales in town. Still, you don't have to back too far to a land before the Beer Orders of the early 90's to find a town with plenty of public houses but little choice other than Greenalls or Tetley Walker beers. Who could have foretold back then that the mighty house of Greenall Whitley would be apartment and office blocks, with brewing long since having ceased, and Tetley Walker (once one of the largest cask ale breweries in the country) would be bulldozed into dust with a Tesco rising from the ashes.

I decided to try and see just how many real ales I could find in Warrington one Saturday, but had to quickly revisit my plans when I considered just how many there would be. I decided instead to look for a single instance of each beer, but again the task would be too daunting. Finally, I decided to embark on a mission to see how many real ale breweries were represented in Warrington town centre.

Starting at the **White Hart**, this pub is a recent convert to real ale, and had three different breweries represented. The **Barley Mow** was next port of call and something of a revelation. Much cleaned up since my last visit and with a renewed focus on real ale – four altogether but only three different breweries. On then to the first of the towns two Wetherspoons outlets – the **Friar Penketh**. Always a good range of beer here, and I found five different breweries before setting off for the one-time Good Beer Guide Pub, the **Blue Bell**. How the mighty can fall. A single real ale, the most expensive real ale in Warrington and the poorest quality. And hardly any customers. Quality, Choice and Value are as important as ever. Then on to the GBG stalwart the **Lower Angel**. An ever-changing list here meant that I was able to bag a further 7 breweries. The second Wetherspoons of the night came in the form on the newly opened **Looking Glass** where there were just two untried breweries available (including the local Coach House Brewery). Final stop was at the Cheshire Pub of the Year, the **Albion** where I managed 3 breweries.

At this point I could take no more. Twenty four breweries found so far. The rest would have to be done another day. The "other day" came the following weekend, where I started at the **Tavern**. For many years, a champion of real ale in the town and with their ever changing range of real ales, I soon found myself having sampled beers from no less than 10 different real ale breweries. A short stagger therefore to **Porters** found a further five breweries and at this point I admitted defeat. Thirty-nine breweries represented in Warrington town centre, without counting those at the **Ring o Bells**, **Marquis of Granby** and **Friars Court**. A bit of a change from Greenalls and Tetley Walker.

Northwich - A Real Ale Desert

Around the time of the Beer Orders, Northwich was celebrated as being a town in which every pub sold real ale (even if it was nearly all Greenalls or Wilsons). Just two years ago, you could do a crawl of pubs in the bottom half of town and visit seven establishments (not all real). Now there is just one, the keg *Amber Lounge*. The *Volunteer*, *Bridge/JWs/Garage*, *Beehive*, *Crown* and *Madisons* are all shut and the *Floatel* has been sunk / demolished. At the top of town, we still have the kegs *Green Dragon*, *Witton Chimes* and *Anderton*, but only two real ale establishments.

The **Roebuck** a music venue sells Greene King IPA and Courage Directors. **The Penny Black**, the towns Wetherspoons outlet sells up to 10 real ales. Thank goodness for Wetherspoons and the sensible folk at the Roebuck.

Compare and contrast Northwich and Warrington! *Gary Chester*
[Stop press](#); The **Beehive** in Northwich has reopened selling locally brewed cask ale from Northern Brewery of Blakemere!



LocAle Accreditation

CAMRA North Cheshire recently awarded three pubs LocAle accreditation for the quality of their local beers.

They are;

Porters Ale House, Warrington – for their beers from Dunham Massey and Northern / Blakemere.

Hoop and Mallet, Callands - for quality of their Hydes beers

Swan, Tarporley – for quality of their Weetwood beer.

These three now join the other 7 accredited in 2008 or 2009 namely;

Albion – Warrington

Cherry Tree – Culcheth

Helter Skelter - Frodsham

Millhouse - Houghton Green

Plough – Houghton Green

Penny Black – Northwich

Barnton Cricket Club – Barnton



How many Cities are there in the Old County Of Cheshire?

I was enjoying a rather nice pint of Wells Bombardier in **Pickering Arms**, Thelwall the other day and admiring the armour and medieval weaponry adorning the walls of this very old and quaint pub when I was startled to read a piece about the history of Thelwall and discover that, according to the Saxon Chronicle, it had been awarded the status of "City" by King Edward the Elder in 923 AD.

I bet the thousands who zoom past on the Thelwall Viaduct every day didn't know that!

Jeff Bouch

Football Fever

With the World Cup looming it is good to see that the **Tavern** in Warrington will be holding a World Cup themed beer festival over the event with 44 (years of hurt) beers. Being pessimistic, I don't know if there are another 4 on stand-by for the later stages!!



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North Cheshire Branch Social - Chester Walls Pub Crawl

Once a year, we embark on a City Pub Crawl, and in recent years this has taken us to Sheffield, Liverpool, Manchester, Derby and York. For 2010, we opted to go somewhere closer to home inspired by a recently devised crawl by our sister branch - Chester & South Clwyd. This year, it was the turn of Chester, and we would be undertaking the City Walls pub crawl.

Start was at 12 noon on the walls under the Eastgate Clock (so no-one had an excuse of not knowing the time), and we set off on our crawl at the designated time only to immediately encounter a hurdle - the section of wall between the clock and our first pub was closed for repairs! So down we came and travelled to our first pub by road.

First pub was the **Marlborough Arms** (note the spelling - an historical mistake by a sign-writer that has been retained over time). Stonehouse beers were available here, unique to Chester.

Back onto the walls now for a short journey to our second pub and lunch stop, the **Albion**. Now this is something of a quirky establishment that declares itself as family unfriendly, doesn't serve chips and won't entertain pub crawls - so we entered in pairs to get round the last rule. The food here is called Trench Rations (the whole theme of the pub is something of a shrine to the Great War), which included a delicious ham, creamed potatoes and pease pudding.

Following lunch, we clambered back onto the wall before dropping down to the Okells-owned **Bear and Billet** (*pictured here*) with 365 individual panes of glass in the windows.



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From here we did a bit of deviation from the walls and visited the exquisite Spitting Feathers **Brewery Tap** in an old Jacobean hall (*pictured*), before crossing the river into Handbridge to pay a call to the Hyde's-owned **Carlton Tavern** and the newly refurbished **Ship**.

Back onto the walls following this detour, we were soon on our way to the basement pub called **Fat Cat** before calling at **Telford's Warehouse**. Both of these pubs have a younger feel to them, with Telfords having a focus on live music. Good beer in both though.

Another trek on the walls saw us at the much-improved **Pied Bull** before calling in to the very food-focused **Coach House**.

The final section of wall took us via the **Ship Victory** (a pub that looks as though it is situated in the middle of a car-park), and on to the Eastgate Clock where we started all those hours before.

Just two pubs remained now, the **Boot** in the famous Rows, and finally some J W Lees beers in **Duttons Wine Bar**.

Thirteen pubs altogether. If anyone doubted Chester's pedigree as a great city for cracking pubs and good beer, then they should look no further than this crawl.



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National Cask Ale Week

The last week of March saw CAMRA being active in support of National Cask Ale week. Monday started off the week with a pub crawl of Warrington featuring Ring o'Bells, Tavern, Porters and the Lower Angel.

Tuesday saw a social at the Penny Black in Northwich where as usual there was a good mix of local beers with others from around the country.

Wednesday was FemAle Day at the Ferry with the branch supporting one of our female licensees.

Thursday was LocAle day at the Plough, Houghton Green, where six of the seven Weetwood beers featured at the same time (unfortunately Ambush hadn't been brewed otherwise the full set would have been achieved).

Saturday saw a social at the award winning Albion with the week completed at Appleton Thorn Village Hall, a National Club of the Year 2010 runner-up.

All in all a good week and thanks to all the CAMRA members that attended.



Please Tell Us the Time

The other day a friend and I took the inspiration of a mention in a recent *Out Inn Cheshire* to visit the Morris Dancer in Kelsall, using it as a base for a pleasant country walk in the area. We were surprised to return to the inn after a bracing walk, full of thirst and anticipation of a nice pint or two to accompany a healthy lunch, and find no sign of life. We examined all the entrances and notices but could find no clue as to if, and when, it would open. To say we were disappointed would be an understatement.

This has happened on a couple of occasions at different pubs. It is becoming the norm to contact a prospective pub before setting out to ensure that it will be open. I can well understand the commercial pressures that persuade a licensee to restrict opening hours to when he, or she, can expect enough customers to make it worth while. However, it would be very beneficial if the opening hours were listed on a prominent notice so that drinkers (and diners) knew when to return. It seems to me basic common sense and good practice to give prospective customers an incentive to go out of their way to visit a pub. Finding premises closed with no indication of when it might be open creates disillusionment and hardly encourages one to try another visit. With the national average of 39 pubs a week closing their doors on a permanent basis, my friends and I want to encourage those that are left and this often means travelling out of our normal range of watering holes to show our support as we enjoy the special ambience and experience that only a British pub can bring. Please landlords, ensure that it is clear when your premises are open for business – you need customers even more than we need a beer!

Jeff Bouch

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Editor's Note

I must stress that this piece is not meant to disparage the Morris Dancer itself in any way. Indeed, you can feel Jeff's disappointment at not being able to get in! However it does serve to illustrate an important point. Customer service is more than what happens inside. We urge all licensees to publish their hours of opening outside, and indeed on a web-site if they have one. We want to visit your pubs; please help us to do do!

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Dining Out *Inn* CHESHIRE: Cock o' Budworth, Great Budworth

Don't get the two Budworths in mid-Cheshire mixed up. Great Budworth is the one between Northwich and Warrington, not the one near Oulton Park and Tarporley (that's Little Budworth). Once you've selected the right Budworth, you'll find the Cock as a large imposing pub just off the A559. It has recently undergone a major refurbishment, so I thought it was due a visit to see how things shaped up.

Certainly very comfortable, the refurb has been thoughtfully done, and the staff are helpful and attentive. This being a pub owned by Manchester brewer Joseph Holt, the choice of beer is always from their range. I opted for the Holts Bitter which was good.

For starter I opted for the Chicken and Bury Black Pudding in a crispy beer batter served on a bed of dressed endive with mustard cream at £5.20. An intriguing starter, combining chicken and black-pudding in batter – I have to say it was delicious. The batter just melted away in your mouth. Surprisingly, the taste of the chicken was somewhat overpowering for the black pudding, but full marks for trying something a little different.



Main course was back on the tried and tested – 10 oz Gammon Steak served with roasted cherry tomatoes, field mushroom, a free range egg and chunky chips at £10.95. I supplemented this with some battered onion rings at £2.50, and it is to these I shall turn to first. You certainly get plenty of them, enough for two people. Large, made with real onion and the same delicious batter that I had on the starter – probably the best onion rings I have ever had. The gammon was nice and thick and not too salty, an excellent example. The mushroom and egg also lived up to expectations. I was, however, disappointed with the chunky chips – they were a little dry for my liking.

Overall a good meal. Maybe a little on the pricey side, but more than compensated by their fantastic batter. Yet another for the list for re-visits!

Gary Chester

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Living Heritage **Beer Festival** Drink Real Drink Local and a Cheshire Breweries Real Ale Competition will take place on the August Bank Holiday weekend (August 28 - 30) at the Cheshire County Showground at Tabley. This will be run in conjunction with many other events under the umbrella of the Cheshire Game & Country Fair. A full day out for the family is in prospect, with the attractions including falconry, ferret racing, chainsaw carving, dog shows, riding demonstrations, archery, a craft village and a major emphasis on local food.



No fewer than nine Cheshire real ale micro-brewers will be represented and not only will you be able to buy cask ale (by the pint or third of a pint) at the Real Ale Festival Bar and Real Ale in a Bottle to take home, but anyone over 18 will be able to take part in the judging itself. Marks are given for appearance, aroma and taste. Judging will take place three times a day on each day of the show, with the award being made at 4 pm on the Monday.

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale is supporting this new initiative and will have a stall at the event. We will have books and other products for sale and will be delighted to talk to you about your (and our) concerns and to answer your questions. We expect to introduce a major incentive to join the Campaign at the event, in the form of a substantial prize to be won by one lucky recruit. This is in addition to the current membership incentives which include £20 worth of Wetherspoon vouchers, 6% discount on Thomas Cook holidays, 5% off canal boat holidays and 10% discount from Cottages4you.

Cheshire County Showground (sat-nav WA16 0HJ) is at Tabley on the A556 just west of Knutsford and close to M6 junction 19.
The event is open from 10 am to 6 pm.

More details from the event web-site at:

www.livingheritagecountryshows.co.uk/show/cheshire-game-country-fair



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Dining Out *Inn* CHESHIRE - Plough, Houghton Green

One of the final things for me to do at our **2009 Pub of the Year** was a food review before they hand over the crown to their successor, and as I had registered with them to be kept updated on offers what better time for me to visit than to celebrate my birthday when an offer of a free bottle of wine during my birthday month came through on e-mail.

Food here is available all day, every day and a standard fantastic value offer is two meals for £10!

For those who have registered, they also do occasional 2 meals for a fiver offers too!!

Staff were very attentive on a very busy Monday night, although all ordering is done at the bar.

For starters we have the Combo. Unusually, they actually do a combo for one here at £3.95, £6.45 for two or £10.45 for four.

Whichever you order, each person

gets a range of sticky chicken wings, southern fried chicken breast chunks in breadcrumbs

(delicious), potato wedges, onion rings, breaded mushrooms and garlic bread served with a salad garnish and a choice of barbeque, garlic mayonnaise or sour cream dips. Delicious. Were I to have a starter again here though, I would opt for just the southern fried chicken dippers at £3.79 as they really were good.

For main course I opted for the 10 oz gammon (at £7.89 if purchased individually but don't forget that the two meals for £10 means that the individual prices are not really relevant if two people are dining). This was advertised as Danish cut and served with a choice of either egg or pineapple (I chose the egg). It came with some deliciously sweet peas, onion rings, half a grilled tomato and chips. Whilst the tomato was overcooked to the point of almost dried out and the chips a little ordinary, the gammon and egg was fantastic – I have paid a lot more for a lot lower quality than the gammon served here.

To drink, as well as a glass of free wine (we took the rest of the bottle home), I had a very good pint of Weetwood Cheshire Cat – a LocAle beer. A great establishment for really good value, good quality food – it's easy to see why it was so full on a Monday night.

Gary Chester



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HALTON

CAMRA DIARY

Wednesday 23 June; at 8.30pm
 Branch meeting. **Tunnel Top** at Dutton.
 28-30 August; Drink Real Drink Local
Beer Festival, Tabley Showground (see page 28)

Trips; Andy Jameson, 01928 575175
andrewjameson@btinternet.com
 Branch info; Dave Gray 01925 727787
david.grey11@btinternet.com

A COUNTRY TREK (part one)

I completed a country trek in May with my sister and her family, covering about 17 miles from Frodsham rail station to Chester rail station via parts of the Eddisbury and Baker way-marked footpaths. For a group of four adults, the Arriva Trains Wales day return ticket between Runcorn East and Chester was £18.

After nearly three hours' ambling on foot over the hills south of Frodsham and through Delamere Forest, we made it to Kelsall. The aim was to call at the Morris Dancer for a meal, but sadly we found it forlorn and resolutely closed. A local said it awaited a new landlord and recommended we try the **Boot Inn** up the road. The Boot served Weetwood's Mad Hatter, Old Dog, and Eastgate. Three of us enjoyed the Old Dog (4.5%), a slightly dark bitter with a gentle malty aftertaste, and my sister tried a half of the lighter, sweeter Eastgate (4.2%). The home-cooked food was well-presented and delicious: rich steak and ale pie with chunky, hand-cut chips; curried Moroccan chicken with spiced cous-cous, and battered haddock, mushy peas and chips. Moreover, the affable locals and the old world interior - low ceilings, wooden beams, antiquated artefacts and all - made it a pleasurable experience. The only minor drawback is that the food prices tended to be a couple quid above those asked for at some other Cheshire pub-restaurants of similar culinary standard. However, the Boot is a fantastic pub in a panoramic location and I intend to return.

See page 40 >>>



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