



CHESTER & SOUTH CLWYD

CAMRA DIARY

For the latest events, please visit the branch web site www.camracasc.org.uk

Thu 21 Sep; Branch meeting; **Griffin**, Gresford

22 - 23 Sep; **Beer Festival; White Horse**, Overton

Sat 7 Oct; **CIDER social** to the **Blue Bell Inn**, Halkyn.
Contact Linda for details cider@camracasc.org.uk

Thu 19 Oct; Branch meeting; **Bear & Billet**

Sat 28 Oct; **Waterloo & Crosby Trip** by train & bus

10 - 11 Nov; **Cheshire Beer & Cider Festival**

Thu 16 Nov; Branch meeting, **Nag's Head**, Lavister (tbc)

Wed 18 Nov; **Liverpool Heritage pubs** visit; by train from Chester

Thu 14 Dec; Branch meeting, **Cross Keys** - to include Xmas Social



@CAMRACaSC



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

Branch Contacts: *(phone numbers, are 01244- unless otherwise noted)*

Chair: Brian Vardy **373298** chairman@camracasc.org.uk

Socials: Alan Roberts **01978-361982** socials@camracasc.org.uk

Contact: Craig Papworth **313182** contact@camracasc.org.uk

Membership: Gareth Roberts membership@camracasc.org.uk

Web editor: John Sillott webmaster@camracasc.org.uk



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Choice”



Chester News

Back in October 2016, when the all-powerful Chester Race Company bought its incongruous, ever-so-close neighbour the *Watergate Inn* from Enterprise, speculation soon followed that this was the death knell for the pub. Sure enough, new proposals have now been submitted to amend the racecourse entrance with the planning application ominously stating;

“The future of the Watergate Inn is uncertain but the Race Company is working up a long-term Masterplan for the area and the overall upgrade of Watergate Square is seen as an important priority.” It’s got no chance has it?!

In the hope that this edition of Out Inn Cheshire hits the bar tops of Cheshire pubs in time, **Telford’s Warehouse** will be hosting their annual **beer and cider festival** from October 6-8. Includes live music and dead pig. Hopefully skewered aubergine also an option.

Following on from the opening of Chester’s new bus exchange and the semi-pedestrianisation of Frodsham Street, Luton based Stonegate Pub Company have given the **Temple Bar** a £280,000 makeover and re-opened it as the **City Tavern**.



Without alienating its previous core clientele, the rear of the pub has been given particular attention with even more emphasis on food. Looks smart too. Not often we’ll praise wallpaper designs but we like this wildlife-themed one. The rear patio garden now boasts a colourful Chester Races mural while the front bar remains dedicated to sports events and music nights. As for the cask, three are available typically Greene King IPA backed up by local beers from Weetwood such as their new dark Maori Sidestep brewed with New Zealand hops).

One cider is also served. CAMRA members get 20% discount with their membership cards on the real ales.

After being closed for months **Amber Lounge**, located close to the Victoria on Watergate Row, has opened after a token refurb. It would have been nice to see a name change to reflect its previous names (the Moon, the Albion and Ye Deva), but no, it’s still the Amber Lounge and still seems to want to be a cocktail music bar - and an unprepossessing one at that. Surprisingly a hand pump has appeared though, at first selling Theakston’s Lightfoot and then Fuller’s London Pride. Will it survive or will it see about as much action as Kate Moss’s chip-pan? Incidentally, you can now play pool in the back room thus ruining a good parochial quiz question and the Saddle’s claim to have the only table within the city walls.

Another place where there’s been an unexpected cask ale appearance, again following a make-over, is the large entertainment and sports orientated **Off the Wall**. Two hand pumps here with Weetwood Cheshire Cat and Battlefield 1403 putting in appearances alongside some national beers. Let’s hope it survives. Tall order though.

Next door, as expected, there’s no cask at the newly opened *Alchemist*.

Just on the edge of town, close to the hospital and Bache station, the former *Egerton Arms* is now called the **Mill at Upton** after becoming a recent edition to the Joseph Holt pub estate. Nicely done up and logically aimed the family food market, it obviously sells ales from the Holts range including those from their Bootleg brand.



Ellesmere Port et Environs

The popular, but evidently not popular enough for Wetherspoons, *Thomas Telford* closed in mid-August after being sold to Amber Taverns. It should re-open in late November. A quote from the Amber Taverns website goes "we offer leading brands such as *John Smiths, Fosters*" with no obvious mention of cask ale! At least it remains as a pub but surely with a downgraded selection of ales. I can honestly say one of my best beer and food matching experiences happened here. Chicken balti with Hawkshead Cumbrian Five Hop. Sublime. It will be shut for 16 weeks after the closing date.

Nothing but positives to report from Childer Thornton where both traditional pubs seem to be doing very well thank you. Tucked away off the main drag, the intimate, cosy **White Lion** manages that rare feat of accommodating a merry mix of both drinkers and diners. With patio and gardens front and back, it sells the Thwaites beer range plus guest ales like Brakspear. The imposing red-brick **Halfway House** fronts onto the busy A41 and gets its name from being an old coaching stop mid-distance between Birkenhead and Chester. By contrast it's a single, high-ceilinged, comfortable room but is equally friendly and well supported by the locals. Hand pumps serve Marston's beers plus guests with Titanic Plum Port and Ossett Silver King both being excellent on a recent sortie.



Good feedback on the CAMRA forum about the **White Swan** in Great Sutton where one customer recently wrote in glowing terms about the food, the local banter and, of course, the cask ales. These were Robinson's Wizard and Socks & Sandals - a 5.3% Blonde Rye I.P.A brewed in partnership with CAMRA. Always been one of the best real ale pubs in Ellesmere Port stretching back to its Burtonwood days. Handy for the bus stop too.

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Elsewhere, the planning application to convert the *Sutton* estate pub - long time closed - into self-contained flats has been withdrawn after 65 objections and submission of a local petition. A community consultation may be in the offing.

Finally, a recent visit to the **Cat** on Wolverham Road found that cask ale continues to survive in the guise of Theakstons Best and Sharps Doom Bar. It's good to see one of what were several estate pubs in the area, looking spick and span and doing well.

the cellar

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Monthly home brewers event
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Live music every Friday and Saturday 10pm
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CAMRA Chester Pub of the Year
2014 & Good Beer Guide
2013, 14, 15

19-21 City Road Chester

Mon - Thurs 4pm - late
Fri 4pm - 2.30am
Sat 12pm - 2.30am
Sun 12pm - late

adam@thecellarchester.co.uk
www.thecellarchester.co.uk

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More Pub Adventures with the Chester Pedaleurs

A quick précis of more rural pub recces from the non-lycra wearing Chester fans filling in the summer void before the commencement of another season's crushing anti-climax ...

Friday evening early June.

Off south parallel with the Dee to the **Grosvenor Arms** in Aldford. Bustling Brunning & Price pub with a throng of alfresco drinkers and indoor diners. Big Hand Oren chosen from a pick of local selection of ales.

Short ride via back lanes to a neat and cheerful **White Horse** in Churton. More first-rate Big Hand - this time, Super Tidy IPA. So nice one half became two in the super tidy side garden.

Farndon next. Alas very ropey Big Hand at a deserted **Farndon** pub followed by a half of faultless but bland Thwaites Wainwright at the **Greyhound**.

Crossing the Dee into Wales, passing the *Ring o' Bells* [now closed], it was onto the lively, revitalised **White Lion** at Holt. Took an age to pour but Weetwood Cheshire Cat, alongside Doom Bar, was impeccable.

Finally, to the cosy **Griffin** at the Trelvalyn for what we agreed was the pint of the night

- a tasty Big Hand Appaloosa. Being a small pub in a small village with no public transport, we always fear for this place so great to see it buzzing with life (including a lugubrious Bearded Dragon called Phil).

Saturday mid-June.



A glorious afternoon. A *peloton* of four, bolstered by super keen Scottish exile Krankie who roared along Graham Obree style (until he hit anything like an incline). Down the canal tow-path, bells dingling, to Waverton before reaching Tattenhall for our first beer break at the **Letters Inn** where the guest beer, Tatton Best, was in fine form. 3 pm chimes meant perfect timing for bar opening at the gorgeously scenic **Tattenhall CC**.

Weetwood Best proved a perfect accompaniment for a lap of the ground whilst explaining the nuances of the LBW rule to Krankie.

Next, having successfully evaded South Cheshire CAMRA border guards, it was on to sleepy Bunbury.

First a quiet **Nag's Head** for an enjoyable Coach House Paxford Pride before moving on to the high-brow Brunning & Price **Dysart Arms** opposite a picturesque church. Ale of the Day: Rudgate Beer Moth. Bloody lovely as was the beer garden.

Trespassing into North Cheshire CAMRA's fiefdom, it was on to the **Little Tap** in Tarporley where folk were spilling out onto the street such is its deserved popularity. Brimstage Elderflower wheat beer for me. Very moreish but it was time to head home with one final stop at a bustling **Ring o' Bells** in Christleton. Cracking pint of Peerless Triple Blond. Menu proved irresistible. Stone baked pizzas left us feeling like Monty Python's Mr Creosote just before his fatal wafer thin mint. Eventually recovered for cycle back, retracing tyre tracks along canal. Top ride!

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>>> Saturday early July.

Escape Chester's suburban sprawl via quiet hedge-lined lanes through pub less Saughton and Coddington to the **Cock o'Barton**. Wedding party in! Might be just me but bridesmaids looked eager to abandon their flutes of Bucks Fizz and join us for a drop of Conwy Clogwyn Gold and Big Hand Savanna. Alas the Maid of Honour didn't fancy a crossy (*careful! - it's slang for a ride on the crossbar*) for the short pedal to the **Carden Arms** in Tilston. Said it before and will say it again, what a wonderful, tasteful and traditional restoration has been made of this pub. Love it. Ale choice today was Weetwood Eastgate, Big Hand Pit Head Porter, Mobberley Brewhouse Whirlybird, Coach House Gunpowder Mild and Salopian Shropshire Gold. Porter was spot on.



Skirting Malpas it was across to the **Wheatshaf** at Nomansheath which happily re-opened back in May. Two ales on. Salopian Shropshire Gold and a new trial brew from Plassey called Magic Dragon Brew I. It was 3-1 to the former.



And finally, after a blissful traffic free ride round the back of Bickerton Hill, *bidons* were unceremoniously discarded as we fought our own personal battles weaving up the vicious *hors catégorie* climb to the **Pheasant** in Higher Burwardsley.

Three Weetwood plus Beartown guest. The Weetwood Best tasted as magnificent as the view which, most pleasingly, was all downhill (-ish) to Chester!

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Centurion, Vicar's Cross; the latest

We are pleased to hear that the Centurion Community Action Group had a very productive meeting with Admiral Taverns and secured a **two year lease** on the pub. Details are being finalised at the time of going to press and a public meeting is to be held once final details are known.

This is good news for both the "**Cenny Community**" and the committee. We wish them both good luck for the continuing success in this popular community pub.



ADVANCE NOTICE! Cheshire Beer Festival

10 - 11 November, Cheshire Racecourse Concourse
110 cask beers, 20+ ciders & perries.



Where does your money go when you buy a pint?

The feeling of being overcharged when buying a pint is quite familiar. One can pay less than £2 in some places, and all too often now, approaching or even above £4. **So let's have a look at where the money goes.** We'll take an example of a beer which is priced at £3.20 per pint, and is a 4% bitter with an average hop level, produced by a typical micro-brewery. More on this later.

THE BREWER

Material costs (malt, hops, water, yeast and ancillary chemicals for cleaning, finings, etc) will add up to the equivalent of about **13p** per pint. Production costs and overheads, including premises rent, rates, insurance, delivery will add a further **64p** per pint. Some of this, particularly wages, is contentious as small brewers sometimes do not pay themselves anything, and the overhead cost per pint or firkin or brew will depend on the number of brews in a given time. *[This is an example of where apportionment of fixed costs depends on volume.]* In this exercise, let us assume total labour costs are £20,000 per year. Market competition dictates that the firkin needs to be sold for around £80 plus VAT, so after the inclusion of excise duty (see below) the brewer will be looking at a profit of around **13p** per pint.

EXCISE DUTY

The current rate of duty for beer up to 7.5% ABV is £19.08 per % ABV per hectolitre (100 litres) If the brewer produces less than 5,000 Hl per year, this is cut by 50%.

40 Above this level of production, there is a progressive reduction of duty and relief from the maximum. For our example beer, excise duty works out as **22p** per pint. This 50% relief has been a source of discontent among the larger regional brewers, who do not enjoy this relief, and whose costs are therefore 22p greater. Some of them have reduced annual volumes to bring them below duty thresholds. The brewer must pay this duty and in most circumstances does so as his beer leaves his brewery.

VAT

Most small brewers choose to charge VAT on their sales though if their turnover is less than £83,000 they are not compelled to do so. Thus in our example, a 9-gallon firkin selling for £80 will sell at a VAT inclusive price of £96. The buyer (the pub or pub company or wholesaler) will have to pay this VAT inclusive price but will pass on further VAT as he sells the product onwards. The brewer will be able to reclaim some VAT on his costs but the major ingredients are zero rated. The pub selling the beer at £3.20 per pint will have to pay the VAT element to HMRC

The complex calculation of VAT and who pays what is difficult to understand, but careful analysis will reveal that in a pint selling at £3.20, the total VAT is around 54p.

Adding this to the excise duty, it can be seen that the government tax take is $54 + 22 = 76p$ per pint. For a larger brewer, who does not enjoy any duty relief, the total tax take is **98p**, hence the often-quoted £1 per pint goes in tax statement. UK taxation on alcohol sold in bars is the second highest in Europe.

THE PUB

So here we have the pub buying a 9-gallon firkin of beer for £96 inclusive of VAT and selling it at £3.20 per pint, also including VAT. A competent publican should be able to get 68 - 70 pints from a firkin, which gives revenue of $£3.20 \times 70 = £224$. This would represent a Gross Profit of 57% which would be satisfactory, though 60% in wet-led pubs other than PubCo houses, see below, is more typical.

It is now necessary to distinguish between different types of pub; ignoring the brewery tied pubs, we are left with about 60% of pubs which can be split between free-of-tie (the so-called **free houses**) and the tied houses. In the latter sector we have the PubCo owned houses.

In the former sector, the pub owner now has **154p** per pint out of which he must pay **>>>**

>>> employee costs and all overheads, such as business rates, insurance, utilities, energy, insurance, entertainment costs, possibly tenancy charges if he does not own the freehold, and employee costs. Employee costs can vary considerably between pubs ranging from those where the licensee (and partner?) do all of the work themselves to those where several staff are taken on to serve, clean, run administration, prepare and cook food, etc. Generally speaking, the higher turnover pubs will employ more staff, so it is possible to derive a range of employee costs which would be broadly **80p to 90p** out of our pint of £3.20.

Similarly, overhead would account for between 35 and 45p out of our pint at £3.20; this leaves profit of between **20 and 40p** per pint.

For a **PubCo** owned house, about 1/3 of the 154p theoretical gross profit is removed by the pub company through higher beer charges and tenancy charges. The pub will have to pay between £30 and £40 more for a 9-gallon firkin. This equates to between 43p and 57p per pint. Averaging out the tenancy charges of anything up to £15,000 per annum over a pint of beer is difficult, but it is going to add around 5p per pint. This leaves the pub licensee with the need to charge more for his beer and work to a smaller gross profit margin, typically less than 50%, and to cut all other costs wherever possible.

This of course helps to explain the dire situation many PubCo tenants find themselves in, and why so many pubs are closing. As the well of interested would-be publicans dries up, the PubCos are forced to take to trying to dispose of struggling houses, often for development into something other than a pub.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- A larger brewer enjoys economies of scale, such as improved material buying through larger volumes, longer production runs and economies of distribution. This will normally more than balance out the excise duty “penalty” referred to above. Even so, readers will know that beer from a certain Tadcaster brewery can be bought for under £2 per pint, so if they can do it, why can’t the others?
- Most pubs now offer food; the wet-sales-only pub is becoming a rarity. Food profit margins can vary wildly, and it is often difficult to separate costs between food and wet sales. Food sales almost always go together with a disproportionate increase in staffing costs. One area of trading cross-subsidises the other, all of which makes analysis more difficult.

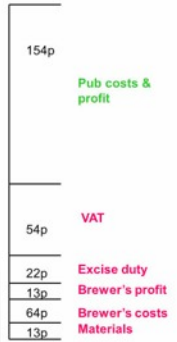
FOOTNOTE

This article is compiled with brewery costs from personal knowledge and experience as the author has owned and operated a micro-brewery; knowledge from the cost profile of a pub came from when the author was Finance Director for a community-run pub. It is acknowledged that all numbers are subject to debate.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO FROM YOUR PINT?

FREE HOUSE

4.0% ABV Bitter
£3.20 per pint



Seems fair? But remember that out of the 154p "margin" the pub must pay all overhead and operating costs....

WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO FROM YOUR PINT?

PUBCO TIED HOUSE

4.0% ABV Bitter
£3.20 per pint



Out of the top segment, the pub still has to pay rent, rates, wages, utilities....and rent to the pubco.

Rural News



In an earlier edition of OiC it was reported that *Admiral Taverns* had appealed against the ACV listing of the **Farndon**, taken out by the Farndon Parish Council.

Admiral Taverns took their appeal to Cheshire West & Chester planning, and following a refusal to remove the listing, appealed to the First Tier Tribunal court.

The basis of both appeals shows the PubCo's tactics as a clumsy distortion of the facts; they had attempted to persuade the judge that the pub was actually a restaurant with letting rooms coupled to a small bar. This was in spite of all the Farndon's literature, website, even the actual lease document all of which describe it as a pub, which of course it has been for over 100 years. Further evidence comes from Admiral's banner looking to attract a new leaseholder which read "do you want to run this pub?"

The judge stated in his findings that the misrepresentation by the appellant of the Farndon as a pub was "*opportunistic*" and that the lease "clearly is that of a public house". He also cited a legal precedent in which a pub in Northumberland was found not to be a hotel just because it had four letting rooms attached. The appeal was dismissed.

Very significantly Judge Hughes pointed out that the applicant for an ACV listing did not have to prove an intention to acquire the asset, nor did the legislation limit the number of assets (pubs) which could be listed in the locality.

- 42 Admiral Taverns image as the UK's number one community pub company (directly from their website) is further damaged by this attempt to dispose of a struggling pub. **Everyone should see them and their ilk for what they really are; an opportunistic property company, certainly no friend of the pub goer, and most definitely no champion of community values.**

And, by way of a footnote, the pub closed in late July with the familiar sign outside saying "*Admiral Taverns have closed the pub until further notice*" However, latest news is that it looks like new tenants will be taking over shortly!.

X-X-X

Sadly the **Sandstone** on the A534 Nantwich Road near Broxton is shut for business.

Owners Bolesworth Estates are apparently seeking a new tenant. In view of the closure as a matter of urgency the local CAMRA Pub Protection Group decided to apply for an **Asset of Community Value** rather than follow the preferred route of persuading the parish council to do so. At a specially convened Broxton & District Parish Council meeting, at which almost every resident of the local community of Brown Knowl was present, Bolesworth objected to the ACV but the parish council voted unanimously to endorse the application. The ACV should prevent Bolesworth from developing the site for alternative use for at least five years.

Changes at the Thwaites-owned **Sportsmans Arms** in Tattenhall (*pictured, right*). Lance Warburton, familiar to Chester drinkers as the main man at the popular **Ship Inn** in Handbridge, has taken over the tenancy. Lance will primarily remain at the helm of the Ship while trusted right-hand man Leo Jackson moves in at Tattenhall.

Hopefully some stability will now be restored to this attractive cobble-fronted inn. Food will appear in due course. A guest ale alongside the Thwaites range is permitted. If the Ship is anything to go by, expect offerings from likes of Brimstage, Deva Craft and maybe Salopian.



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>>> To Malpas, where the **Red Lion** closed in July. Lots of rumours abound here about the pub's future with the most positive being that it's been sold to Middleton-based brewer J.W.Lees. We'd settle for that - an established family firm with a good record for running pubs across the North West and North Wales. Could food be a feature? Surely Malpas needs some pub dining. Former Red Lion regulars are now decamping to the **Crown** and the **Vaults** with the cask drinkers going to whichever will offer them a guest beer. They could always join the **Malpas & District Sports Club** which was recently selling Salopian Shropshire Gold at £2.90 a pint for members and £3.20 for non-members.

Let's indulge in a bit of wishful thinking for a moment. Wouldn't it be nice if pub group **Brunning & Price** added the **Lord Binning** in Kelsall to their prestigious portfolio. Shut since April, it seems a perfect fit for them. Big building with plenty of scope for development. Large car park. Acres of land for their gardeners to get stuck into.



Not too near any of their other set-ups. Folk festival hosted there each year - ££££s!!! Frankly, it's hard to see anyone else taking up such a large site. Ideally it would also be nice to see it revert to one of its more traditional former names viz the Morris Dancer or the Globe.

Two deserving charity events to get scheduled into your packed e-diaries ...

Tattenhall Beer Festival, held at the Barbour Institute in the village, is taking place on the 13 & 14 October. The organisers operate a tried and tested 'Purely Local' theme when sourcing their ales and food over the two day event. Last year £3000 was raised, split equally between 'The Children's Society' and the 'NW Air Ambulance Charity'.

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The **Kelsall Beer Festival** will be held on 10 & 11 November at the Community Centre. The organisers, having attended the recent Scottish Real Ale Festival in Edinburgh, are promising a few brews from north of the border. Loch Lomond Silkie Stout perchance? (*Had some of that in Edinburgh; superb! -Ed.*) Last year nearly £8,500 was raised with proceeds going to Kelsall Community Primary School, Kelsall Pre-School and Klub, St. Philip's Church, the Kelsall Branch of Clatterbridge Cancer Research and Kelsall Methodist Church.



“Purely Local”



Tattenhall Charity Beer Festival 2017

at

The Barbour Institute, High Street, Tattenhall

Friday 13th & Saturday 14th October 6:00pm - 11:30pm

Tickets just £6 each to include a souvenir glass,
programme and your first glass of beer free

Pay on the door or buy tickets from pubs & shops in Tattenhall

*Featuring: 16 Barrels, 3 Ciders, Wine & Cheshire Gin, Malpas & Nantwich Cheese
Coward's Pork Pies from Frodsham, Faces Quiz, Live Music*

This year we are supporting:



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OPAL Older People
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Save the Family
Keeping Families Together