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News From The Branch

You often find there's a common saying for certain things, like there are not enough hours in the day or not enough days in the week. Not enough months in a year. You get the idea. Well here at Newsletter HQ we feel the same way. That is why we have taken to adding a new month in order to compensate. Or at least that's what we'd like to do. Anyway, I would like to welcome you to our slightly delayed September Newsletter. But that's enough prattling on from me. Time to get on with things.

The Editor



CAMRA members: Your Vote Counts: Help Crown Britain's Best Beer

As a CAMRA member, your palate is one of the most powerful tools in protecting and promoting real ale. The Champion Beer of Britain award is a prestigious accolade that starts with a critical step: your nominations. By casting your vote, you not only help celebrate brewing excellence but also put our local favourites on the national map.

Winning the Champion Beer of Britain can be a game-changer for a small brewery, catapulting them into the media spotlight and introducing their craft to a wider audience. For discerning drinkers like us, this means shining a light on quality and

helping guide consumers towards independent, artisan producers, not corporate giants.

The voting process is straightforward and open only to CAMRA members. Visit the dedicated Champion Beer of Britain voting portal to begin. You can nominate up to five beers across various style categories, from session bitters and IPAs to milds and stouts. Whether you're nominating a well-known favourite or a hidden local gem, your vote is vital. You don't have to vote in all categories, just the ones you want to. These nominations, combined with recommendations from local CAMRA tasting panels, form the shortlist for a series of rigorous blind-tasting competitions.

This multi-stage process ensures that only the best and most consistent beers make it to the final. So, this autumn, take a few minutes to nominate the beers you've enjoyed most over the past year. Your voice can help crown the next Champion Beer of Britain and ensure our region's finest brews get the recognition they deserve.

Don't let this opportunity pass you by—make your voice heard and celebrate the best of real ale.

Why Bother!

Have you ever wondered what drives the typical CAMRA member?

Good question, as we don't know either.

But before you start making assumptions that we're trying to be too clever for our own good, allow me to explain.

Maybe at one point, back in the day you could spot a typical CAMRA member. I mean, let's be honest, there probably was a stereotype back in those days. Nowadays not so much. We'd all like to think of ourselves as a secret army of Real Ale/Cider Ninjas, but in reality there's a little bit more to it than that. So enjoy this little insight into one of our committee members. It's like an episode of Inside the Actors Studio only a little less dramatic.

Why get involved?

CAMRA is a nationwide organisation made up of local branches, all run entirely by volunteers. People often ask why members give their free time and why it's important. The truth is everyone has their own story. So, here's a glimpse into the experience of one of our members - why they choose to take part, and a little insight into what they enjoy most in the world of beer!

What's your name and what do you do for CAMRA?

I'm Ian and I volunteer as the Pubs Officer for the branch. My main role is to support pubs and clubs that sell and promote real ale, perry and cider. I am also responsible for encouraging members to score their beer whenever they drink it and helping compile the list of pubs in our branch that will appear in the Good Beer Guide.

How did you get involved?

I've been a CAMRA member since 2013 and on the committee since 2019. I can't remember exactly why I joined CAMRA in the first place, but I do remember how I got involved in the committee. I had only ever been to the odd social event, sporadically submitted beer scores in pubs, and occasionally read the minutes and newsletter. I remember reading the newsletter in late 2018 and seeing that the branch was appealing for someone to volunteer to be their pubs officer. I had seen a few appeals for volunteers in the past, but never really thought it was for me. Something about this role struck a chord though and I remember thinking, '*what if they don't get a volunteer?*' After a bit of digging I found out that ultimately if there are not enough people on a local CAMRA committee, the branch could be forced to close. I didn't want this to happen, and I was also looking for something to push me out of my comfort zone at the time, so I thought (with a more than small nudge from my wife) why not drop an email and see what's involved. After a nervous walk to my first meeting, I was made to feel very welcome and the rest as they say is history.

What's the best thing about being involved?

That's a hard one! Being pubs officer has been more rewarding and interesting than I could ever have imagined. I've done things I never thought I would – or could – do, but the more I got involved with local pubs and clubs, helping them to promote real ale and cider, the more I saw the work that CAMRA does really makes a difference. A lot of what I do as a CAMRA volunteer is behind the scenes and out of sight for most people. I work directly with pub managers, owners, staff, breweries, other organisations, neighbouring branches, local politicians, and a lot of this work is done virtually. One of the best things though is definitely the friends and contacts I've made along the way.

What's one piece of advice you would give to others who are thinking about getting more involved?

Just go for it, what's the worst that could happen?! Volunteering for anything is like a piece of string, be clear what you can commit to and don't worry about saying no to something if you can't do it. A little bit of help from lots of people can be far more effective than one person doing everything. A lot of what CAMRA is about is working together and committing as much or as little time as you feel you can and it's so rewarding. I work full time and have a wife and 9-year-old daughter so my priority is making sure I balance my CAMRA work with my paid job and my family commitments so I can enjoy them all.

What's your favourite thing about pubs or clubs?

For someone that likes peace, quiet and solace, I do sometimes love the busy, social aspect of pubs. You often end up talking to people you've never met before or meeting a friend you've not seen in ages. Just the way pubs and clubs bring people and communities together is like nothing else and that's part of what we try to preserve with the work I do with CAMRA.

Now the most important question – what's your favourite type of real ale or real cider?

That's an easy one for me, I've always loved a proper real stout, ideally with coffee and chocolate flavours, not too sweet and around 5% Abv. Slightly tongue in cheek but, I hate it when people say, *'Ooh I love winter as it's dark ale season!'* I can't imagine pubs only selling pale ales in the summer, so why save the delights of dark ales just for winter? In terms of real cider, I don't drink it often and I'm not a traditionalist in the flavours I like – my favourite one is probably a raspberry ripple from either Snailsbank or Seacider.

Want to know more about getting involved email contact@sthelens.camra.org.uk or grab one of us for a chat next time you see us in the pub.

Pub News



If you attended one of the **St Helens Festival of Pubs**, sponsored by SSO Logistics, events then you will already know what a great success it was. Held from **20 to 25 August 2025** in partnership with the town's brilliant real ale pubs, it was a celebration of community, cask ale, and pub culture across St Helens.

Participating pubs included:



Buzzby's
Cricketers Arms
Glass House
Little George Quarter
The Sefton
Tipsy Tap

Cowley Vaults
George
The Lamb
Royal Alfred
Tank Bar
Turks Head

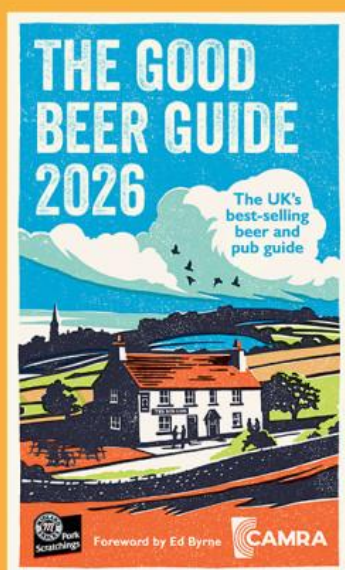
Real ale was flowing across the town with some pubs increasing the number of beers they had available and some stocking it for the first time in a while. It's great to see some of the bars are able to keep up the commitment with the Little George Quarter now regularly serving 2 real ales and Tank Bar stocking real ale in cans from local Clay Brow Nano Brewery amongst others.

A massive thank you must go out to everyone who supported the pubs over the festival with many reporting an increase in sales and seeing customers they hadn't seen before who will hopefully become regulars.

The festival also managed to raise £640 for Willowbrook Hospice, which is a fantastic achievement.



We're hoping that 2026 will see the return of the Festival of Pubs, but that will only be possible if you - our branch members – support us and the pubs in a more active way. Without active members coming along to events, helping to organize them and putting forward their ideas, the branch will potentially close, and the pubs, breweries and clubs will not have the support they deserve.



The UK's Number One Beer and Pub Guide.

Order your copy today.





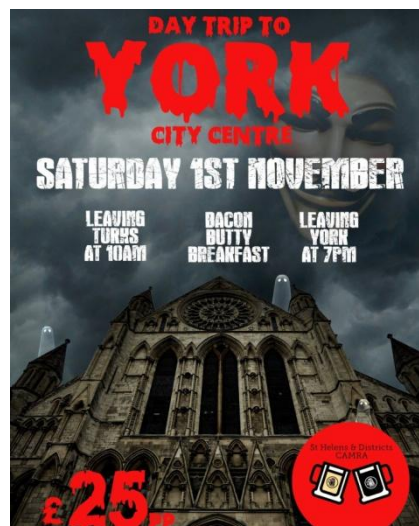
Join Our WhatsApp Community!

Want to chat all things pubs, beers, and breweries and get information straight to your phone? Join our WhatsApp community!

- Scan the QR code or follow this link:
<https://chat.whatsapp.com/FhJdQ8xGEn1D0ulksquILT>
- Dive into "The Local" chat

For all your CAMRA related news outside of our branch, keep an eye out for the latest issue of *What's Brewing*, which is available online at <https://wb.camra.org.uk/>

Forthcoming Events



Short, sweet and to the point.

But where are we going once we get there I hear you ask?

Don't worry as the Map Mage has that all under control. Once you're sat comfortably on the coach, you'll know everything you need to. If you're still interested, there might be some tickets left. So get yourself down to the Turks Head and book yourself a seat. You won't regret it.

Articles

Time Travelling Back to Lancaster & Chester

It seems a while ago now, but we must mention the fun we had on a couple of our social trips over the summer.

Firstly, we headed out with our friends at the Turks Head to Lancaster in late June for a wander round some of their great real ale pubs in the city. As usual we were armed with a map (expertly devised by our Pubs Officer, Ian) and off we went. It took about an hour to get there after the usual offering of a bacon butty breakfast!

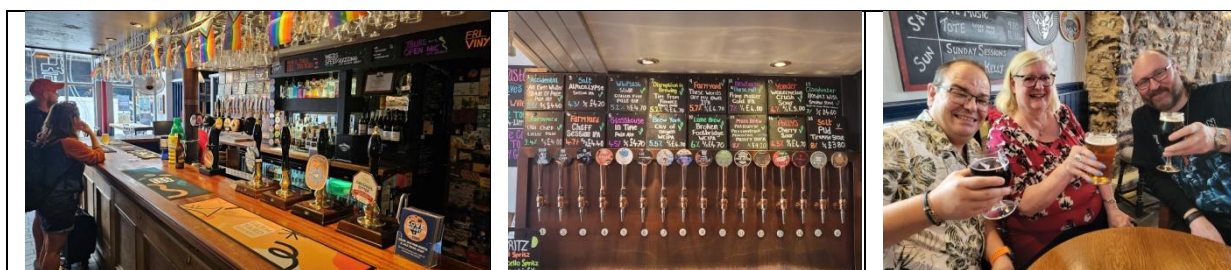


The number of pubs on the map far outweighed the time we had in Lancaster to visit, but there was something for everyone on there. We were dropped off at the Three Mariners – commonly claimed to be the oldest pub in Lancaster (and one with the lowest ceilings as our Newsletter Editor can contest to!) Everyone quickly got down to business ordering pints and planning their route across the city.

There were plenty of pubs on the list, some serving food – all serving real ale or craft beer – and a good mix of new and old, traditional and micro pubs. You had the likes of The Bobbin – not far from the Three Mariners – with 4 hand pulls on and a variety of boxed cider (mainly Lillies so not real cider, but tasty nonetheless) The highlight of this place is the tabletops made out of bottle caps! Very cool.



The Stonewall Tap was a favourite with the drinkers. It's an old pub with large modern windows and serves 4 cask ales on hand pull and 16 craft keg beers. The atmosphere in here is very chilled and the variety of beers is interesting!



Ye Olde John O Gaunt is an old traditional pub offering 6 changing beers on hand pulls and an olde world feel in a busy city centre. The little beer garden out back is a sun trap in the summer!



Tite & Locke was the place everyone met up to finish the day as this was the coach pick up point. It is the 'Station Tap' for want of a better phrase. It opened in 2022 and has four rooms, one with the bar, the others called first-, second- and third-class lounges. It serves up to 24 beers on tap including 6 cask and many craft ales.



Other pubs on the route included The Borough, The White Cross, The Water Witch, Sir Richard Owens (Wetherspoons), The Sun, Jailor's Barrell, and The Merchants 1668.

Just a couple of weeks after that was a trip to Chester to That Beer Place for a tutored cider tasting as part of Cider Month (which has moved to July now instead of October!) Our hosts were amazing and made us feel really welcome. And they weren't stingy on the offerings either. There was about 10 of us who took on the challenge to taste some of the best real ciders on offer in the country at the time.

That Beer Place has won Cider Pub of the Year on a few occasions, so they guys there really know what they are talking about. There were dry ciders from local cider producers Brennan's Cider just down the road in Liverpool (who knew?), a Limited-Edition sweeter cider from Find & Foster in Devon and even a sparkling cider from France from Herout cider distillery. The star of the show though was the Brannland cider. It was meant to be drunk like a dessert wine, and it truly was delicious.

It's fair to say that we all tasted something we'd never had before so it really was a journey of discovery, and we hope to do it again next year!

We think the pictures speak for themselves as to how much fun we all had on these outings – so keep an eye out for the next ones and why not join us? Everyone who has been on our social events said how much fun they had and would definitely return for the next one.



If anyone would like to write a short article or news story for the newsletter please send it to us via email newsletter@sthelens.camra.org.uk

Next Committee Meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Thursday 9th October at Simms Road Inn at 8pm.
The following Committee meeting will be held on Thursday 13th November at Red Cat at 8pm.

Committee meetings usually take place on the 2nd Wednesday of the month. All CAMRA members are welcome to attend these meetings. Committee meetings are always held at local pubs that serve real ale. All are welcome to attend our Committee meetings, but only Committee members can vote.

Next Branch Meeting

The next Branch meeting will be held on Wednesday 22nd October at Sefton at 8pm.
The following Branch meeting will be held on Thursday 27th November at Tank at 8pm.

Branch meetings usually take place on the 4th Wednesday of the month. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss current issues and have a general catch up with local brewery, pub, and beer festival news. These meetings are quite informal and fairly short (on average between an hour and an hour and a half). Our CAMRA Branch meetings are always held at local pubs that serve real ale.



CAMRA is more than just promoting great beer:-

- It's very sociable - you'll meet others who share your interest in all things beer (or cider/perry)
- CAMRA offers a range of training for volunteers - including Emergency First Aid, Food Hygiene, Stewarding and Health & Safety
- You'll gain skills to enhance your CV
- CAMRA volunteers are a wonderful mix of people, of all ages, from all walks of life

If you are interested in joining CAMRA, all the relevant details can be found at <http://www.camra.org.uk>



Real Ale Pubs in the St Helens & Districts Area

If you notice a missing venue, then please get in touch so we can add it!

For more information about the pubs listed below, check out <https://camra.org.uk>

Abbey Hotel	Golden Lion	Seven Stars Inn
Beer EnGin	Grapes	Ship Inn
Bottle & Glass	Griffin (Bold Heath)	Simms Road Inn
Brasserie Chalon	Griffin Inn (Eccleston)	Skew Bridge Alehouse
Carr Mill Hotel	Hare & Hounds	Stanley Arms
Clock Face - Prescott	Haydock Reading Room	Star Inn
Coach & Horses	Junction	Stocks Tavern
Colliers Arms	Kirkfield Hotel	Sun Inn
Commercial Hotel	Lamb Inn	Tipsy Tap
Cowley Vaults	Little George	Turks Head
Cricketers Arms	Lymewood Farm	Village Hotel
Dam	Manor Farm	Watch Maker
Deane's House	Masons Arms	Wellington
Derby Arms - Knowsley	Nine Arches	West Park RFC
Derby Arms - Rainford	Oak Tree Inn	Woodlands
Eagle & Child	Pied Bull Hotel	
Eccleston Arms	Railway Hotel	
Firkin	Rainford Labour Club	
Game Bird	Rainhill Recreation Club	
George	Red Cat	
Gerard Arms	Red Lion	
Glass Horse	Reform Club	
Glass House	Sefton	