CAMRA St Helens & Districts Newsletter

Covering St Helens & surrounding districts including Billinge, Earlestown, Garswood, Haydock, Knowsley, Newton-le-Willows, Prescot, Rainford, Rainhill & Whiston

October 2026

Visit our website	**https://www.sthelens.camra.org.uk/**
Submit articles	**newsletter@sthelens.camra.org.uk**
Contact the branch	**contact@sthelens.camra.org.uk**

News From The Branch

Welcome to the penultimate newsletter of the year. Apologies for it being a touch on the late side, but there has been an awful lot happening and just as much to get through. And sometimes you just can't get the staff. Not to worry though as we still soldier on.
Speaking of which, a HUGE congratulations must go to Daryl (briefly rumoured to be Claire), and all the staff at Turks Head for reaching the final four.
There will be a presentation at the pub, details of which will be detailed in the appropriate section.
And rest assured good people, the genius behind our Christmas Social has most definitely been working on a plan. I just wish they would tell the rest of us. But that just adds to the excitement of it all.
Keep an eye on our social channels and email for more details.

But before the Christmas merriment can begin, we have to marvel at the weird and wonderful variety of pumpkin carving that goes on. Who knew they lit up at night after said carving?
We also need to be kind to spooks, spectres, ghosts and indeed monsters of various types. The one day of the year we are not allowed to call the Ghostbusters.
Then we set things on fire. Not at the same time though.
Fun fact:



Our annual trip to York is actually where a certain Guy Fawkes was born and educated. So we get to celebrate with him while we are up there. And then promptly set him on fire a few days later.

The picture you see on the left is allegedly of the man himself, by an unknown/unnamed artist and freely available in the public domain.

Technology Corner

Old School



Our very own sign.
We can now be spotted or avoided when hosting an event. Just look for this sign outside a participating pub/venue.

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Website Update

We are now improving our event pages with interactive Google Maps and local public transport information, including scheduled times of services to get you to events on time. Links to live information pages are available from our new Public Transport page.

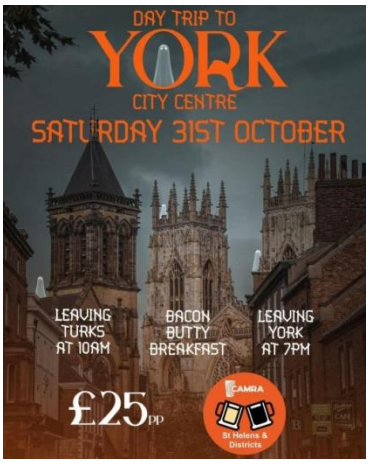
Upcoming events have an improved side bar on the website and a new grid display page.

Clicking on the Venue links will also provide other information, including social media links, other planned events at that venue, link to the venue's CAMRA website page, giving an easy option for anyone to report changes or for members to Beer Score.

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

Halloween Trip to York – 31st October



Expect all the usual shenanigans on this fantastic day out. If you have never been on this trip before, you may have to wait until next year as I suspect is has sold out.

Rainford Junction Halloween Cider & Beer Festival – 31st October



Paul and his staff know how to put on an event, so you won't be disappointed. Entry will cost you £3 which also includes a sausage dinner.

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Turks Head Awards Afternoon – 14th November

In recognition of the pub reaching the Super Regional stage of the National Pub of the Year competition, they will be presented with a certificate from 2:30pm onwards. More detail are likely to follow, so we'll do our best to keep you informed.

Articles

From a small stall in the centre of town



Just a quick note on a very successful (but also tiring), PR offensive at the St Helens Artisan Markets back in July.
Our very own Pubs Officer grabbed the microphone and talked about CAMRA, who we are, what we do and why real ale and real cider are so great. We had a good group of people stop to listen who seemed genuinely interested in the difference between generic 'dead' beer like lager, Guinness, bitter etc on the kegs and the real live stuff we tend to promote.
It may have even helped us gain a few extra members.

Eight pints of real ale and real cider were kindly donated so we could do a tasting session with people to get them to taste the difference in quality from the fizzy stuff they class as beer and cider and the 'real' stuff we involve ourselves with. This went down really well and generated a lot of conversation.

Massive thanks goes to those helping to run the stall. It was really great to interact and engage with people who were really interested in learning about real ale and cider and being enthusiastic about it in the process. Sam's interactive Cider Quiz was a highlight, particularly for luring the adults in by getting the kids to roll the dice (and earn sweets and stickers in the process!)





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What you may not know about Cider

Most people think cider is made from apples.
Legally, it only has to contain 35% apple juice which amounts to just over a third. The rest can be water, sugar and concentrate and there is currently no legal requirement to tell you what is in the glass.
It wasn't always this way though. Traditionally, cider was made by pressing whole apples, fermenting the juice and letting nature do the rest. Over time, many of the biggest producers switched to imported apple concentrate which sadly turns out to be cheaper, easier to transport and simpler to produce at scale.
When the Government introduced a legal minimum juice content in 2010, it was designed to clean up cheap, high-strength white ciders that were claiming cider's lower duty rate while containing almost no fruit. The largest mainstream producers argued for 35% because that was already how many of their products were made. A rule designed to push out the worst of the market became the ceiling for much of it.
More water than juice, sold as cider was now benefiting from reduced cider duty.

As the biggest producers moved to imported concentrate, they needed fewer British cider apples. Around 2,000 acres of traditional cider orchards have disappeared in under a decade. Heineken alone cut down 300 acres of orchard in Monmouthshire, the equivalent of 140 football pitches.
These are not just fields of fruit. Traditional orchards are Government-designated priority habitats, home to thousands of species of plants, insects, birds and mammals that struggle to survive anywhere else.
Thankfully independent makers are taking a different approach. Around three quarters of today's estimated 480 active cider producers have started since 2000. Many working with local orchards, planting new trees and producing from freshly pressed fruit rather than imported concentrate.

Every pint of real cider and perry is a small vote for that future

Cider tasting at Turks Head

On 29th August myself (Cider Sam), led a wonderful cider tasting event at the Turks Head. Six ciders were carefully picked out and balanced across the taste palate, which ranged from sweet to dry, stopping at medium along the way.
The six ciders for the sessions tasting were as follows:

- SeaCider Blood Orange 4.0% : Medium-Sweet
- Farmer Jims Rooting Tooting Ginger Raspberry 4.0%: Medium-Sweet
- Celtic Marches Slack Alice 4.6% : Medium- Dry
- Snails Bank Apple Hog 4.5% : Traditional- Medium
- SeaCider Hardcore 6.8%: Traditional-Dry
- Hunts Bull Walloper 7.2% Traditional Medium-Sweet



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The venue was almost at maximum capacity ranging from walk-ins, to Turks regulars and CAMRA members.
The evening kicked off with a fun game of 'Where do you think your cider flavour profile fits'. Participants were asked to write at the very least their name on a post-it-note and stick it on a giant board, showing the different ways cider can go (sweet to dry and fruity to traditional). At the end of the session they were then asked if they still had the same view as their initial prediction. All done in the name of fun.
Spectacularly I was able to tell everyone about the Name, ABV, description, appearance, aroma, taste, mouth feel and finish of each cider. Although I may have been reading from a script which made it easier to do so. This being my first event as host it was kind of nerve wracking.
During each round I'd often wander round the room and chat to different tables, asking their opinions, points of view about and how they all felt about each cider. The results that came back were interesting to say the least, with some tables agreeing and some choosing to disagree. This obviously led to a lot of friendly pub banter and competition, of which cider was the overall winner of the evening.
The results that came back for the sessions favourite was Seacider's Hardcore cider, followed closely by Hunts Bull Walloper. Both ciders I'm fairly sure sold out during the evening. It's safe to say, the Turks was very pleased with the successful outcome of the whole evening.
Also huge thanks must go to the Turks Head for letting us host this event.






Drinking With Trains

A day out at Crewe Beer Festival

On the 5th September a handful of St Helens branch members (Gill, Ian, Pam, Phil and Sam), attended South Cheshire's Rail Ale Festival which was Held at Crewe Rail Heritage centre. Along the way our branch members also managed to bump into Andy, a branch member from North Cheshire who joined them for the day's adventures.
The location was stunning and upon entry to the festival you were able to also enjoy the wonderful delights from the rail heritage centre which included a free mini locomotive train ride and lots of information on the history of trains within the area.

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A huge train museum piece was the backdrop to an incredibly impressive purpose built bar that housed forty five beers, seven tap keg bar beers, twelve ciders and two perries. The choice did not disappoint our branch members. Sam, our cider rep did some networking and met South Cheshire's Cider Paul, Cider Chris and their Webmaster Gemma. A potential joint branch pub trail was discussed for the future, possibly at the next AGM in Chester. Sam also, with the help of the other branch members created a pictorial notebook as a great reminder to the rail ale event itself. Overall a great day out that celebrated the collective love of real ale and real cider.

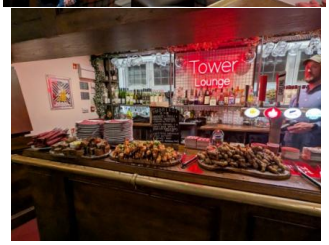
Beer Tasting at Turks Head

A very successful event involving Ossett and Thornbridge breweries.
Here's what happened.















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

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Next Committee Meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 11th November at The Junction (Rainford) 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 25nd November at Nelson 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



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Real Ale Pubs in the St Helens & Districts Area

Please Note, the list below is currently under construction/review due to some exciting new updates.
We hope to start bringing you a much more updated list in our next edition.

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

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

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