

WirrAle Drinker



Magazine of the Wirral branch of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA)

November 2025 - February 2026

Pub and Brewery news and more from across the Wirral for the discerning beer and cider drinker

In this issue...

- Community Pub Award
- Save Our Pubs
- Pub and Brewery News
- ...and lots more



PRICELESS

wirrale.camra.org.uk



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SATURDAY	2PM-11PM	'WHAT A SMASHING PLACE'
SUNDAY	2PM-9PM	'EXCELLENT BEER'

Editor's Column

A warm welcome to this issue of *WirrAle Drinker*, a magazine produced by the Wirral Branch of CAMRA. It's all about real ale, real cider and the pubs that serve it on Wirral. From micropubs to gastropubs, from chain-owned pubs to independents and everywhere in between and occasionally beyond.

In the editor's column for the last issue of *WirrAle Drinker* I presented an optimistic outlook. We had several new pubs opening, bucking a national trend of pubs closing. However, of the pubs that have opened in the last four months none of them are serving cask beer. Yes, there is more to pubs than just real ale. A closed pub isn't going to serve any beer, real or otherwise, whereas an open one can relatively easily start serving cask. It can also be argued that is better to serve no real ale than real ale in poor condition that might put people off drinking it.

CAMRA is sometimes accused of being tunnel-visioned when it comes to pubs, only wanting to protect those that serve real ale. Cask ale is still, in my opinion, when properly looked after, the best there is. The fewer pubs that serve it, the smaller the pool of staff experienced in looking after it becomes. The number of pubs on Wirral competing for the limited number of spaces we have in the Good Beer Guide is encouraging. There are a good number of pubs serving good quality cask beer that unfortunately haven't made it into the latest edition. It's important to stress that Wirral CAMRA will support all pubs as best we can.

In this issue, Paul Mossman introduces the winner of Wirral CAMRA Community Pub Award 2025 and also discusses bar etiquette. Dave Hutchinson previews our coach trips planned for the coming year. Gareth Owen shares his first, last and best pint of real ale. Neil Carver outlines the benefits of CAMRA membership. I look at a raft of pressures that are affecting pubs and what can be done to help them, and also characters and conversations in pubs. Plus, What's in a Pub Name for a pub that

has had six names at least, Hop It, Pub of the Season Award, Pub and Brewery News and a gyle of other good stuff. Hope you enjoy. Cheers.

Rob Carter

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LOcAle

Locale is CAMRA's scheme to encourage pubs to serve locally brewed beer.

For more information on Locale, go to camra.org.uk/what-we-do/locale





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Wirral CAMRA Branch Diary

Details are correct at the time of going to press. Please visit our website, wirral.camra.org.uk for up to date information. All welcome at any meeting.

Tuesday 9th December 2025 Meeting and Social at Rose & Crown, Bebington 8:30pm

Tuesday 13th January 2026 AGM followed by Meeting and Social at Gallaghers Traditional Pub, Birkenhead 8:00pm

Tuesday 10th February 2026 Meeting & Social at Rose & Crown, Bebington, 8:30pm

Tuesday 10th March 2026 Meeting & Social at Gallaghers Traditional Pub, Birkenhead, 8:30pm

Tuesday 14th March 2026 Meeting & Social at the Rose & Crown, Bebington, 8:30pm



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Website: wirrale.camra.org.uk For full contact details for Wirral CAMRA Branch wirral.camra.org.uk/Contacts.php

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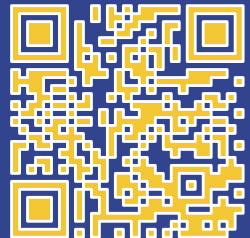
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Pub and Brewery News

Full details of all our pubs can be found at camra.org.uk/pubs We strive to keep the entries for Wirral pubs up to date but if you see that something has changed at a pub on Wirral and the Whatpub entry is not up to date please contact us using the link for the pub on the WhatPub site and we'll get it updated.

The James Atherton in Victoria Road, New Brighton has been renamed the **George Orwell**, a reference to the dystopian novel 1984 in protest at the announcement by Keir Starmer of the introduction of mandatory ID cards. The novel is warning about totalitarian states, the government, an all-controlling party, has brainwashed the population into unthinking obedience to its leader, Big Brother. The move was timed to coincide with the Labour party conference in Liverpool. Pub owner Daniel Davies said he wanted to encourage debate about civil liberties. "This is about waking people up." He explained "We don't want a future where every part of our lives is monitored and controlled. That's not freedom — that's Orwell." Mr Davies has also renamed other buildings in Victoria Road "The Ministry of Truth" and "The Ministry of Love" in direct references to Orwell's novel. He has put a lot of effort to underline his warning that digital IDs represent a dangerous move towards authoritarian control.

He also acknowledged the fact that he could name the pub in such a way without fear of reprisal was at least some endorsement of the right to free speech in the UK. "There are some countries where, if I'd done this, I might have mysteriously fallen out of a window by now." He also expressed concern that the IT infrastructure behind the ID cards could be susceptible to hacking and people at further risk of identity fraud.

Mr Davies has previously renamed the James Atherton the Three Bellends and the Two Helmets in protest of the government's handling of the Covid pandemic.



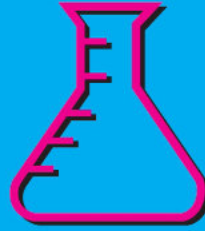
The James Atherton has been renamed The George Orwell

The **Twelve Sixty**, Hoylake opened on 8th of August serving up to five real ales. However, at time of writing the pub is serving no real ale. We reported in the last issue of *WirrAle Drinker* that the **Queens Royal**, New Brighton was due to re-open. It did on Friday 11th July but it was disappointing to find that no real ale is being served, a far cry from its previous incarnation.

We also reported in the previous edition that the **Hoptimist**, New Brighton was due to open in the Summer but this has been delayed possibly until early 2026.

The **Phoenix** micropub is due to open on Rake Lane, New Brighton as this issue of *WirrAle Drinker* goes to print.

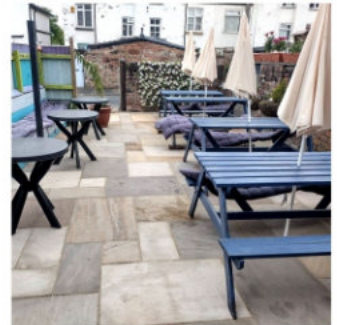
In the last edition we omitted that the **Black Lodge Tap**, West Kirby has live music on Saturday evenings. Apologies to them.



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Wirral CAMRA
Pub of the Year 2025

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Pub and Brewery News

In news from **Brimstage Brewery**, Birkenhop was brewed late September in partnership with local charities. It was well received in cask and sold out within two weeks! Frosty Ferret is being brewed in November and will be available in cask throughout the festive season. Oyster Catcher is available on cask throughout the winter months and also in a limited supply of mini kegs.

Rock the Boat Brewery have bought the recipes to the beers formerly produced by **Big Bog Brewery** and they are starting to be seen in Wirral pubs. Good news for anyone who was a fan of Big Bog beers.



Frosty Ferret and Birkenhop, from Brimstage Brewery

The **Railway**, Meols has reopened after a refurbishment.

The **Hawkwinds & Jokerman** micropub, 114 Wallasey Village is due to open on Monday 19th January.

Pub of the Season Award Autumn 2025

Stanley's Cask

On Rake Lane in New Brighton, **Stanley's Cask** is a living piece of Wirral's pub heritage. Dating back to 1877 as the Nags Head, this alehouse has evolved through the decades, but it has retained its soul. Today, under landlady Avril Roberts, Stanley's Cask stands as a beacon of real ale excellence and community spirit — making it a deserving winner of Wirral CAMRA's Autumn Pub of the Season Award 2025.

The pub serves five rotating cask ales. Regulars include Ossett White Rat, and there are seasonal selections from breweries like Robinsons and Salopian. However, Stanley's Cask is not just

about beer — it's also about people. The pub hosts weekly quiz nights, Scottish bingo, and open mic


sessions, fostering a welcoming environment for locals and visitors alike. Its live music scene is legendary, drawing crowds every weekend.

CAMRA celebrates pubs that champion cask ale, community engagement, and traditional pub values. Stanley's Cask excels in all three. Cask Ale Excellence: a diverse and ever-changing selection of well-kept cask ales. Community Spirit: a venue that brings people together through music, sport, charity, and camaraderie. Historic Significance: a pub that has survived licensing threats and name changes, yet continues to thrive. I'd just like to finish by congratulating Avril and all of her crew at Stanley's Cask, CAMRA Wirral Pub of the Season Autumn 2025.

Paul Mossman



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Wirral CAMRA Community Pub Award 2025

The Dee View Inn

Dating back to 1870, the **Dee View Inn** is perched on a picturesque bend of Dee View Road linking Upper and Lower Heswall. It has sweeping views of the Dee Estuary and is nestled beside the town's war memorial. It's more than just a pub, it's a living testament to community spirit, local heritage and the enduring value of a "proper boozier."

Since its reopening in March 2023, the Dee View has steadily grown into a true community hub. With a deep passion for hospitality and a heart for community, Charlie's vision was clear from the start: to create a



Landlady Charlie as the Easter Bunny for the kids Egg hunt

space that felt like home, where people could gather, connect and support one another. And that's exactly what she's achieved. The pub offers a lively and diverse calendar of events that reflects its commitment to community engagement. Weekly staples include Quiz Night Thursdays and Poker Night Wednesdays. Monthly highlights include Philosophy in Pubs (First Tuesday of the Month) and Live Music (Last Saturday of the Month). Special events like karaoke nights, Easter egg hunts in Dawstone Park, and Halloween parties for local children add to the pub's charm and ensure there's always something to look forward to.

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What truly sets the Dee View apart is its unwavering commitment to giving back. The pub has become a vital supporter of local charities and initiatives. One example is the annual Armed Forces Day Fundraiser, which in 2025 raised over £3,000 for the Heswall Veterans Group to help cover Remembrance Day expenses. The pub also collaborates with local



Irish Guard Singers presenting the Dee View with a cheque for their Armed Forces Fundraiser

schools, involving children in creating decorations and participating in remembrance services. Charlie and her team go above and beyond, whether it's donating bottles of port for veterans to enjoy on Remembrance Sunday, or attending school services alongside local heroes. The pub also serves as a venue for fundraisers, such as the 1980s-themed event for The British Heart Foundation.

The Inn's community ethos extends to everyday acts of kindness. When a small crash occurred nearby, the team responded swiftly spreading sand to absorb leaking fluids and ensuring that the road was safe. They've also provided first aid in Dawstone Park, helped extinguish a fire, and even accompanied customers to pick out their Christmas trees when mobility was an issue.

At a time when many pubs are becoming restaurants in disguise, the Dee View proudly remains a non-food, traditional pub. But that doesn't mean you are limited to crisps or just go hungry. Instead, Charlie has partnered with local takeaways and restaurants, encouraging patrons to bring in their own food. The pub provides plates and cutlery, cutting out delivery app commissions and supporting nearby businesses. As Charlie puts it,

this gives the pub "the best menu in Heswall" without compromising its proper boozery identity. The pub also opens its doors to a wide range of community groups. Local scout meetings are occasionally held there, and it recently served as a safe pick-up point for the Squirrel Group, complete with refreshments. The team also supports the Friends

of Dawstone Park, hosting a stall at their annual Paws in the Park event and advocating for improvements like renewing the park's slide. Inclusivity is at the heart of everything the Dee View does. Whether you're a sports fan catching the match, a philosopher, a local musician, or just someone looking for a friendly face, you'll find a warm welcome here. Even four-legged friends are treated like royalty, with water bowls and treat jars always at the ready. The pub's dog-friendly policy has made it a favourite among pet owners,

and it's not uncommon to see a tail wagging happily at the bar. It's these small touches that make the pub feel like home.

Charlie and her team are always looking for new ways to support the community. Plans are underway to install a defibrillator on the outside of the pub. In an age where many traditional pubs are disappearing, the Dee View Inn stands as a beacon of what a local pub can and should be. It's a place where history is honoured, neighbours become friends and where community is a way of life. I am delighted to congratulate Charlie, her team and her

community upon winning the Wirral CAMRA Community Pub Award 2025.

Paul Mossman



Flyer for a kids Halloween event

Benefits of CAMRA Membership

Why you should join CAMRA

As you are reading this magazine, one would hope that you enjoy drinking cask beer. CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale), founded by four real ale enthusiasts back in 1971, is considered one of the most successful consumer organisations across Europe. Today it represents beer drinkers and pub-goers across the UK. CAMRA's ongoing campaigns include lobbying the government over changes to beer and pub legislation, fighting against pub closures, and promotion and education about cask beer.

The benefits of being a member:

- £30 worth (£40 for joint members) of vouchers giving you 50 pence a pint off real ale and real cider and perry at participating pubs. Please see below list of participating pubs on Wirral.
- Discounts on production of a valid CAMRA membership card at participating pubs. Please see below list of participating pubs on Wirral.
- A 54-page quarterly 'BEER' Magazine with news and topical articles
- A monthly digital Newsletter
- Discounts on the many CAMRA-published books
- Discounted entrance to CAMRA-run beer festivals
- Other exclusive CAMRA offers

For more information visit camra.org.uk/membership or scan the QR Code.

Neil Carver

Pubs accepting 50p-off-a-pint vouchers:

Brass Balance, Birkenhead
Hoylake Lights, Hoylake
Preense Well, Heswall
Clairville, Liscard
Dee Hotel, West Kirby
Halfway House, Prenton
Sportsmans Arms, Tranmere
White Lion, West Kirby

Pubs offering discounts on production of a valid CAMRA membership card

King's Arms, Bebington
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Harvest Mouse, Heswall
Railway Inn, Meols
Farmers Arms, Moreton
Sea Horse, New Brighton
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Bridge Inn, Port Sunlight
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Three Stags, Spital
Basset Hound, Thingwall
Cottage Loaf, Thurstaston
The Lighthouse, Wallasey Village
The Nelson, Wallasey Village
Black Lodge Tap, West Kirby





CAMRA WIRRAL PUB OF THE YEAR 2024
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Built in 1759 it was originally called the Black Horse and was popular with smugglers.

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- Happy hour on selected drinks Mon - Fri 5-7pm
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Pub Characters and Conversation

In one corner, a couple on their first date, in another corner, a couple who have been married for over forty years. At one table eight blokes bemoan the tactics of Liverpool FC in the current season. At the next table two men discuss England's bowling attack in the current test match series, while on the next a group of women discuss everything from philosophy to Coronation Street. Young bar staff buzzing with excitement as they talk about which university they are about to go to. A pensioner tries his best jokes on a pair of women in their thirties. The jokes are falling flat, and their faces show that they aren't understanding the punchlines. All the while his mates heckle him like they are in a comedy club. Another night you can hear debates on UK economic and immigration policy on one table while at the next they try and remember all the hit singles of The Cure.

Where else are you going to meet a pensioner who does prison visiting and mentors young people starting up in business? Where else are you going to meet a multi-millionaire former business owner talking about his latest electronics project and the best places to eat locally?

A good pub, in my opinion, is full of characters, a collection of misfits you would never normally find together. There is a rich tapestry of conversations lubricated by alcohol. A visit to the pub presents great opportunities for meeting new people, random conversations and over-hearing bits of conversation. I agree with my friend Mr Mossman that the best and most random conversations tend to take place while sat at the bar. That is where I tend to position myself and it's also where I am writing this piece. I find going to a pub alone where I am a regular, or even to one I have never been before, and sitting on a stool at the bar is rarely a lonely experience. I've met some of my best friends and some amazing people in pubs. I've also met some right weirdos and idiots too! This piece is a collection of some of the characters I've met, and conversations I've had or

overheard, in pubs. All of these examples are genuine. I'll start with a few more characters.

A tee-total female mechanic who drives her partner to the pub so he can have a drink, and she can have a chat.

Then there is "Mr I've missed the bus" so nicknamed as he is known for missing several buses due to being inebriated, and each time declaring "Oh no, I've missed the bus. Oh well, can I have another pint please?"

An owner of a microbrewery who collects the empty spirit bottles from pubs to use as sample bottles for his beers. The spirit bottles are ideal as they are sterile.

A member of staff who was studying medical physics. She had the ability to be able to go downstairs at high-speed carrying a tray loaded with drinks without spilling any. I don't know if it was her knowledge of physics that allowed her to do this, or if she had spring-loaded arms!

A pensioner who comes to the same pub nearly every night. She sits on the same stool and nearly always has a pint of pale ale from Purple Moose Brewery. She misses nothing and treats the bar staff to her baking.

A member of bar staff who dances and sings as she serves, and is so full of energy I dubbed her "The Duracell bunny on acid".

They say that laughter is the best medicine, and I have had, and overheard, some hilarious conversations in pubs, and I have witnessed many funny things. In fact, I could probably write a half decent sitcom based on the characters I have met and conversations I have had in pubs. A few examples follow.

A slightly inebriated primary school teacher taking a pub survey form that that had just been completed and marking it.

“When I first heard of Screwfix, I thought it was a dating agency.”

There was a particularly loud group of customers at the bar, and as their volume managed to reach a new height the head of the disgruntled-looking glass collector came up over the level of the bar and she rolled her eyes spectacularly. This caused me to nearly choke as I tried to avoid laughing and jettisoning the beer in my mouth across the pub! We still laugh about that years later.

“How old is your dad?”

“He’s eighty.”

“Bloody hell, that’s older than me...I didn’t think that was possible!”

A regular, known for spending most of the day in the pub, declared “I don’t like pubs that don’t open at 12 noon.” This was met with the very quick response from one of the bar staff “Oh, we noticed.”

The very best bar staff provide a social service as well as serving drinks, having banter with regulars and making newcomers feel welcome. Having conversation with bar staff outside of when you’re ordering is a bit of an art. It doesn’t follow the standard social norms. For instance, if you are telling a story and the person you are talking to walks off and talks to someone else without warning then that would normally be considered rude. However, if they are a member of bar staff and need to go and serve another customer who has just walked to the bar, they would be neglecting their duties if they stayed put to listen to you. Generally, the patter of conversation with bar staff needs to be short and punchy sentences. Leave your long stories and monologues for others. The staff, if they are doing their job properly, probably won’t have time to listen. The amount of chat you get from bar staff will depend

a lot on how busy the pub is. How experienced the member of bar staff is will come into play as well. One exceptional member of bar staff I had the pleasure of being served by could take the next order while she poured, while also simultaneously having conversations with the regulars, usually insulting us in a playful way.

It’s an experience you simply don’t get drinking at home. Pubs are brilliant for combating loneliness and research has shown that pub going can improve mental health (see study conducted by Oxford University in 2017). For characters and conversation there’s nowhere quite like it. There is nowhere like it for bringing people together. Meeting places for friends, old and new, starting places for relationships and young meeting the old. Cheers to the pub!

Rob Carter



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Hop It! - Boadicea



Hops are the flowers (also called seed cones) of the hop plant, *Humulus lupulus*. Hops are a vital ingredient in the brewing process, used for bittering, to impart floral, fruity, or citrus flavours and aromas and as a stability agent. There are many different varieties of hop and this is part of a series of short articles, each about a hop variety and its characteristics.

The Boadicea hope variety was released in 2004 by Horticulture Research International at Wye College in the UK. It is a dwarf variety derived from open pollination (where seeds are produced through natural pollination methods like wind, insects, or self-pollination, rather than through human intervention) of a second-generation wild, Japanese female hop. It is naturally resistant to aphids and has good resistance to wilt and downy mildew therefore requiring fewer pesticides than any other hop. This has caused it to be known as

the worlds most environmentally friendly hop. It is a dual purpose hop used for aroma and light bittering. The flavours imparted are described as light floral and spicy, with a grassy scented aroma.

Some beers brewed using Boadicea hops

Potbelly Brewery's Boadicea Pale Ale
Crouch Vale Brewery's Essex Boys Best Bitter
Sambrook's Brewery's Wandle
Utopian Brewing's Vienna Keller Lager

Coach Trips for 2026

Trips on Luxury coach with toilet. Booking in advance is essential. For all trips, we aim to be back on Merseyside between 8.30 and 9pm and the return price is £20 per person with payment on the day. For more details please contact Dave Hutchinson davehutchinson@wirral.camra.org.uk

It's that time of year again when we look forward to our planned trips for next year.

Stafford - Saturday 11th April

We start our 2026 trips with a trip to Stafford, the ancient county town of Staffordshire. Amongst its architectural attractions are the Elizabethan Ancient High House, the largest timber-framed town house in England, and Stafford Castle. Oh, and it has a lot of excellent pubs!

Skipton - Saturday 13th June

The pretty town of Skipton in North Yorkshire, has frequently been listed as one of the best and happiest places to live in the UK. It is an ancient market town crossed by the Leeds & Liverpool canal. Skipton Castle is a major landmark, dating from 1090. It also has many micro and traditional pubs.

Stourbridge - Saturday 8th August

Stourbridge in the West Midlands is a market town of medieval origins, lying 10 miles west of

Birmingham, in the Black Country, famous for glass making. We will have lots of excellent pubs for you to visit.

Huddersfield - Saturday 24th October

And on, to round off the year, we are returning to one of our favourite towns, Huddersfield in West Yorkshire. A famous mill town, it has much neoclassical Victorian architecture, including the railway station. Birthplace of Harold Wilson, the town's excellent pubs offer a selection of ales to rival any beer festival.



Save Our Pubs

The rising cost of a pint and a growing list of closed pubs

I recently overheard a conversation where a guy was claiming that there was a government conspiracy to close all pubs and make alcohol illegal in the next ten years. The guy he was talking to replied “They don’t need to. Pubs are closing themselves with the stupid prices they are charging these days.” Now, I don’t think that either statement is true, however recent budget choices by the government have heaped more pressure on an already struggling sector. Estimates from various bodies in the industry put the rate of pub closures in the UK in 2025 at higher than one per day, with many unlikely to reopen. With the price of a pint increasing at a rate higher than general inflation, and with prices creeping above £5.00 in some pubs, you can see why some might think it’s due to greedy landlords. People often assume a busy pub is a profitable pub but it’s not that simple. Many landlords aren’t raking it in; they’re actually struggling to survive.

Pub operating costs have increased hugely:

- The government increased the minimum wage in April, with the 16-17-year-old rate rising to £7.55 per hour (18.0% increase), the 18-20-year-old rate to £10.00 per hour (16.3% increase) and the 21-and-over rate to £12.21 per hour (6.7% increase). This hits pubs particularly hard as they tend to employ more young people.
- National Insurance Contributions for employers rose by 1.2% in April, and there was a double whammy with the threshold at which employers start paying the tax on each employee’s salary reduced from £9,100 per year to £5,000.
- Energy costs have gone through the roof, with some pubs paying up to five times what they were pre-covid.



- Business rates for hospitality have risen sharply, with the government cutting business rate relief for pubs, resulting in increases of up to 55%.
- The cost of beer itself has gone up, not because breweries are being greedy either; many of them are struggling. They are suffering from the same rises in staffing costs and high energy prices.
- Insurance costs have also risen.

Then there is the competition from supermarkets. It’s not easy to get exact figures but it’s estimated that in recent years, approximately 65-70% of all alcohol sales in the UK occurred in supermarkets, off-licences, and other retail outlets.

Supermarkets now sell alcohol cheaper than most pubs can even buy it.

The problem with this is that drinking at home isn’t social. It doesn’t create jobs or support local community life. It doesn’t bring people together or help tackle loneliness. Pubs do all of these things and more.

At the end of August, UK hospitality, which represents pubs and restaurants, announced that more than half of the job losses in the country since the previous year were in the hospitality sector. That’s a staggering 89,000 jobs gone.

In the budget, beer duty was dropped to 1.7% on draught products under 8.5% ABV in an effort to help pubs. However, this is a nominal reduction and a drop in the ocean, with pubs facing a tidal wave of other rising costs. Some publicans have described it as “insulting”.

The Treasury said it was helping pubs, cafes and restaurants by cutting the cost of licensing, so more establishments could offer al fresco dining. I’m sorry, but how is that meant to help pubs that don’t serve food or, for that matter, those that don’t have space to offer al fresco dining? Even those that do probably couldn’t afford to pay the extra staff needed to look after the tables! As we are going to print the government has announced they are going to relax licensing, allowing pubs to open longer hours. How are they meant to pay their staff the extra for working longer hours? It’s not going to help at all.

These measures are the equivalent of putting a sticking plaster on a patient on life support and show how out of touch the government is with the sector. Some proper effective action is needed.

How you can help:

- Use pubs and don’t buy your beer from supermarkets.
- Contact your MP – Ask them to take action and tell them what needs to happen:
- Cut VAT for pubs and hospitality – to 10% or lower.
- Scrap the increases to National Insurance, which disproportionately affect the hospitality industry and replace them with an increase on income tax.
- Reform business rates for the hospitality sector.
- Introduce a pub energy cap or rebate scheme.

- Tackle the unfair wholesale pricing structure that lets supermarkets sell cheaper than pubs can even buy.
- Tell your MP they don’t want to be remembered as being part of the government that killed the UK’s pubs.

The Wirral MPs are:

Birkenhead – Alison McGovern alison.mcgovern.mp@parliament.uk

Chester North and Neston – Samantha Dixon samantha.dixon.mp@parliament.uk

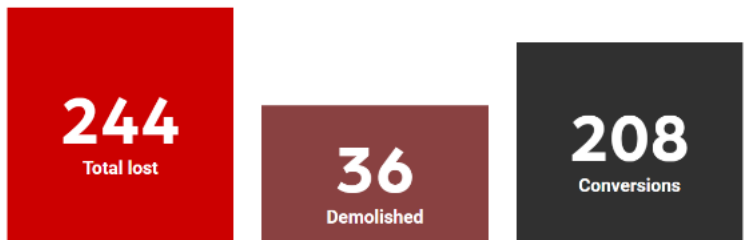
Ellesmere Port and Bromborough – Justin Madders justin.madders.mp@parliament.uk

Wallasey – Angela Eagle eaglea@parliament.uk

Wirral West - Mathew Patrick matthew.patrick.mp@parliament.uk

Pubs are treasured national institutions and are an important part of the social fabric of British communities; they’re vanishing at an alarming rate. They are workplaces, meeting places, safe spaces, and the backbone of towns and villages across the country. If something doesn’t change soon, we’re not just going to lose a few struggling venues — we’re going to lose thousands of treasured locals. Without them, the character and culture of our communities will be far poorer. Once they’re gone, they won’t come back and that will cost us far more than even the most expensive pint.

Rob Carter



Pubs lost in the last 12 months

Bar Etiquette

I have become aware of a shocking trend... Some people don't know how to use a pub! They seem completely unaware of the gospel unwritten rules of pub going. They come across as rank amateurs, irritating bar staff and fellow customers through their ignorance.

For example, I recently found myself in a bit of a "foody pub" and I was stood at the bar... It's where I like to stand... it's where the random conversation happens. I sense a presence; someone is stood behind me... He thinks I am the front of a queue! I move away from the bar to observe this peculiar phenomenon; some customers are queuing while others are stood at the bar waiting to be served in the normal, time-honoured way. The bar staff are asking who's next. They should know who is next but everyone is being terribly polite. I have a theory that it's the food ordering and card payment that causes the queuing. You need to be near the till to place an order for food and to pay for it. However, I have seen the queueing phenomenon in pubs without food. Good bar staff should be able to see people as they come to the bar, acknowledge them and know who is next. Please don't queue!

Right, while I am having a rant, let's look at your order and how you place it. Know your order, don't keep calling back to the table, "What's such and such having?" Don't drip feed your order: "3 vodka and cokes... Yeah, and two generic English lagers... Yeah, and can I have a taster of the Old Jockstrap?... No, what about the Satan's Enema... Oh yeah, a pint of that... Yeah, thanks and a pint of Guinness." By the time you have done this the people who were served immediately before you will be back at the bar for their next round! Also, the member of bar staff serving you will be cursing your existence inwardly. Put the drinks in order: Guinness first, real ale next; both of these require time to settle and the staff can be preparing your other drinks while they do. Shorts are quick and should be left to the end. I should probably refrain from comment regarding "generic English lager"

as my legal team is non-existent, but what the hell! Just don't! Meanwhile, if you want a cocktail that will take five minutes to prepare... well that's my own soft fault for coming here! Don't get me started on ordering coffee at the bar in a pub! As you can tell I am old and cantankerous, but I am still right!

Time has passed; I am in a non-foody pub... It has food but beer is the focus. The bar staff weren't sure who to serve next and attempted to serve the gentleman next to me who instantly responded that this gentleman (that's me) was ahead of him. A few issues of this magazine ago, my editor wrote an article "Be nice or leave" suggesting you should be considerate to bar staff and those waiting on; well, this extends to the other customers. Be polite, wait your turn and if you know someone is ahead of you, highlight it, you will get a warm feeling, and they will think you are really great. Also, if you are drinking at the bar and it is busy, be prepared to let others get to the bar, so they don't have to shout to the bar staff over you.

In conclusion, some golden rules to remember: Don't queue, stand at the bar making full use of its length and wait your turn. Sort your order out before you come to the bar and don't drip feed it to the bar staff who are quite capable of remembering more than one thing. Be polite, considerate and courteous to the bar staff and other customers. Oh, and one final thing, have your cash, card or phone ready to pay. With some people this part of the transaction seems to take them by surprise and then they go fishing around in their pockets... Meanwhile the bar staff stand looking awkwardly, and those waiting to be served roll their eyes and check their watches. Remember these golden rules and act on them; it will make the lives of bar staff easier and endear you to them and your fellow drinkers. Ignore them and you'll be "That knob who doesn't know how to use a pub."

Paul Mossman

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First, Last and Best

Gareth Owen talks us through his first, last and best pints of real ale

I suppose my drinking career, if you could call it such, began when I started work in the late 70's aged 16. I got taken to the **Letters** pub in Birkenhead by older colleagues. It was December 1978. I bought a pint of Toby Light. It cost 28p. It was weak and awful. If I hadn't gone to Chester the following year, I may never have bothered with beer, as the intervening months had yielded nothing more exciting than rotten 2.8% lager and Whitbread dark mild (referred to by an erstwhile friend of mine as "foaming hogwash").

Chester, a few months later, revealed a trip to the **Bear and Billet** and an introduction to real ale by the medium of Thwaites Best Bitter. It was a revelation... a malty brew that actually tasted of something. From there I discovered Border Light Exhibition Mild, Marston's Pedigree and their caramel Merrie Monk, Boddingtons Bitter at the **Cross Keys**, when Boddie's was a relatively obscure regional brew before Whitbread got their claws into it. As a young man living in Heswall my beer choices were not very exciting until I went to the **Black Horse**, drank Draught Bass and was persuaded to take home a couple of bottles of Worthington White Shield. I was hooked!

So, what was my last beer? It's this little wonder: a full throated 6% mild called Flower Moon from Tatton Brewery served in excellent nick by the Bromborough **Bow-Legged Beagle**. Alarmingly drinkable!



And the best? Well, that is a difficult one. Using CAMRA beer scoring as a guide I suppose it should be the only ale I have ever given ten out of ten full marks to in 25 years. It was Jennings Sneck Lifter, circa 2005, and provided by the late, great Micky Creswell of Heswall's **Johnny Pye**. Mick's Sneck Lifter was like God's own gravy. He turned Bank's beers into an art form. Sadly, neither Mick nor Sneck Lifter (due to the actions of Carlsberg Marstons) are available now.



What's In a Pub Name

The Boat House, Parkgate

The pub was originally known as the Beer House or the Ferry House Inn and originally stood on this site dating back to at least 1609. It was listed in Pigot's Directory of 1828-29 (a commercial directory published by Pigot and Son – essentially the Yellow Pages of its day!) as the Flint & Bagillt Ferry House. A ferry service operated from the inn to Bagillt and Flint from around 1740. In 1817 a steamer called the “Ancient Britain” was introduced and operated until 1864. During this time the owner of the inn also ran a stagecoach service to Rock Ferry pier, so passengers could travel from Wales to Liverpool, using the two ferries and the stagecoach.

An advert from 1843 has the inn called The North Wales Royal Ferry House; the advert also mentions a bowling green. Then in the mid-1840s the inn changed name to the Pengwern Arms. Although there are other properties in Parkgate that bear the name Pengwern, thought to be named after Pengwern, Llangollen, I've been unable to find out what the association with



An aerial photo of the Boat House that shows the boat-shaped design.

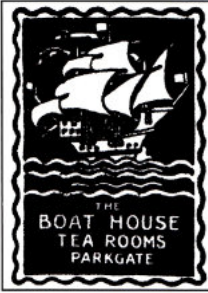
Parkgate was and why the pub was called that. If you know, please get in touch! There is a record that in 1859 public auctions were held at the Pengwern Arms with listings ranging from Swedish turnips to property.

The pub was rebuilt and listed as the **Boat House** in Samuel Bagshaw's Directory of 1850. By this time a stagecoach service was running to Hooton station via the Golden Lion Inn in Neston. In 1864 tragedy struck when the landlord Thomas Johnson and his brother Joseph were drowned whilst trying to disembark the ferry in a storm. His widow Ann took over running of the pub and then she passed it on to her son.



The Boat House around 1926

In 1881 the pub was seriously damaged by a storm and had to close. The building was demolished four years later after complaints by the public, and the site was left unoccupied for forty years. The present Boat House building was built in the shape of a boat, with a terrace at the front forming the prow. It opened as a tearoom in 1926. In the early 1960s the proprietor, a J. Buckley, asked Birkenhead Brewery to install bars and the Boat House



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So, there you have it, the pub has been known by six different names, possibly more. The name the Boat House comes from the site's rich history as a ferry terminus combined with the original boat shape of the building. It is still operated by Hydes and serves up to three real ales and good food.

An advert for the Boat House Tea Rooms

became a pub once more. In 1977 the building was enlarged to accommodate dining, but this made the boat shape less distinct. The Boat House was bought by Woodward and Falconer in 2015. Then in 2016 Woodward and Falconer were acquired by Hydes Brewery. The pub was closed for refurbishment and reopened in 2017.



The Boat House as it is today

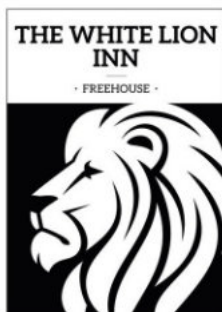
Known for her striking vocals and intricate, percussive fingerstyle guitar, expect heart, craft, and serious talent. A must for fans of raw, emotive guitar music.

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Why Big Breweries Do Not Work in the UK

Part Two: The Lack of Imagination

Tim Webb is an international beer judge who lives in Mid-Devon. He writes The World Atlas of Beer and several other books and heads up beer on CAMRA's national drinks committee.

At the end of 2024, in a move that was leaked ahead of time, the UK's third largest brewer, Carlsberg, announced that it was stopping the production of eight cask ale brands and three other draught beers. Instead, it would focus on "fewer and bigger brands", citing Tetley's and Wainwright as its flagbearers for the future. For many in the industry, this made good business sense. If something is not selling, get rid of it and consider putting something in its place. For me, in contrast, this approach epitomised the soggy thinking that passes for imaginative leadership in the world the big brewers inhabit. Because they are incapable of creating stylish and flavoursome beers, they find instead new ways of living in the past.

Even the quality brands they acquire from others in takeovers are not safe in their hands – whether it be a hop-forward IPA like Lagunitas, a beer from one of the five pioneering UK craft breweries that have failed so far after takeover, or a classic cask ale like Banks's Mild, one of the Carlsberg victims.

Bye-bye British brewers

One of the reasons underlying this collective failure is likely the fact that little of the UK brewing industry is still UK-owned – certainly no more than 20% and perhaps only 15%. After the four huge foreign conglomerates (AB-InBev, Heineken, Carlsberg and Molson Coors) come Asahi from Japan, and Greene King, which is owned by a Chinese firm. We can expect to see a lot more of the Chinese in the future.

In Germany, the Czech Republic and Belgium, the three other countries to retain heritage brewing cultures that survived the 20th century descent into commoditised beer, the excise duty and VAT imposed on beer is between 5% and 30% of that applied in the UK. Those countries want to support their brewing industries. In the UK we

seem content to make Budweiser for pennies a pint and then sell it at luxury prices.

Lost opportunities

When considering the future of an iconic beer like Banks's Mild, the corporate mind sees its sales steadily reducing and thinks "Will anyone notice if we ditch this?" Would a more intelligent question not be "What is being done wrong and how to we revive this?"

Heineken has spent a small fortune creating a strikingly lacklustre beer called Heineken Silver, apparently to attract younger drinkers seeking a lower-strength alternative to mainstream brands. When Carlsberg took Marstons, it was gifted a genuinely different, tasty, low-alcohol ale alternative called Banks's Mild, but put no effort into promoting it to a generation seeking something "other", by upping the maltiness, exploiting the low strength and associating it with a new design of flat cap.

Another victim was Ringwood Old Thumper, which pioneered higher strength ales in the 1980s, its creator Peter Austin going on to populate the world with exported UK-made small breweries. A third was the relative newbie, Marston's Old Empire, which had the potential to lead the market in newer pale ales. Not any more.

Time to move over

Internally, Carlsberg uses the slogan "Fewer – Bigger – Better", to describe the future of its cask ales. They surely cannot mean Wainwright, the beer that brought cask a new level of mundanity. Beer drinkers like beer, not malted wet air. Drink less, drink better makes sense to us, but better means tastier. The bigger brewers' self-serving ways need to be exposed for what they are, so independent brewers can get the breaks they deserve. It is time for CAMRA to get to work.

THE BOW-LEGGED BEAGLE



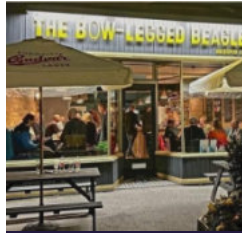
Good Beer 🍺 Good Atmosphere 🍷 Good People



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Heswall: 190 Telegraph Road CH60 0AJ

Score your Beer

We use beer scores to determine which pubs go in the Good Beer Guide and also in judging various awards such as Pub of the Year and Cellarmanship.

Entering your scores is quick and simple:

- Using your phone on the pub's Wi-Fi or your phone's network, open camra.org.uk/pubs
- Find the entry for the pub – there is a button labelled 'Nearby' or 'Nearby pubs' to save you doing a full search
- Click on 'Submit Beer Scores'
- Press the Member Login bar (if you have forgotten your password, you can request a link to reset it from an email)
- You may be able to set your phone to save your password for later pub visits
- You can then follow the screen, first setting the beer score (as above) followed by details of the beer
- Please always give the brewery and beer name (ignore the note that says optional)
- Press the button which says Submit Beer Score
- If you make a mistake, you can correct it later (it's easiest to do this on a laptop/desktop)
- If you do not have a smart phone to enter scores while in the pub, you can use a laptop/desktop computer at home.
- You can review and amend your own scores at a later date



A brief guide to scoring

- 0.** No cask ale available
- 1.** Poor - Beer is anything from barely drinkable to drinkable with considerable resentment
- 2.** Average - Competently kept, drinkable pint but doesn't inspire in any way, not worth moving to another pub but you drink the beer without really noticing.
- 3.** Good - Good beer in good form. You may cancel plans to move to the next pub. You want to stay for another pint and may seek out the beer again.
- 4.** Very Good - Excellent beer in excellent condition. You stay put!
- 5.** Perfect - Probably the best you are ever likely to find. A seasoned drinker will award this score very rarely.

A few rules things to note:

- Only CAMRA members can submit beer scores.
- Submit scores only for real ales. We do not accept scores for cider or keg beers.
- We do not accept scores where there may be a potential conflict of interest such as pub licensees, managers, bar staff or anyone else closely associated with any Wirral pub.
- Any unrealistic scores will be disregarded – for instance where an individual always scores a very high mark for every beer on every visit to their favourite local.

Helen Mossman

We are sad to announce that Helen Mossman, a long-term member of Wirral CAMRA branch died on Saturday 1st November 2025. Helen served on the branch committee for many years acting as Minutes Secretary and Cider Officer and worked at many beer festivals. Our deepest condolences go to her husband Paul, the rest of her family and many friends. All who knew her will have their own memories, here are some of mine – the printable ones at least!

If you thought Helen was quiet, shy and retiring then you clearly never met her! If you did meet her, I think you'll agree that she was not a character who was easily forgotten. She had no airs and graces. You weren't often left wondering on her opinion on something and her language was often colourful. At times she could be a pain in the arse. I think she would probably admit that herself, albeit whilst sticking a finger up at me!

I met Helen first at the **Rose and Crown** and then a couple of weeks later when I attended my first CAMRA meeting at **Gallaghers**. I didn't know where I was going. A bystander looked at me and commented "Oh my god, CAMRA have got a young one!" "Shurrrup and leave him alone." shouted Helen out of nowhere. She then looked at me and said "Follow me lad." and led me up to the meeting room. Over the next few years, I got to know Helen well.

Helen was a passionate campaigner for pubs, real ale and real cider. She could make branch meetings difficult for the chair at times particularly if she had a bee in her bonnet about something, but her heart was in the right place. She loved stouts and dark beers, Neptune on the Bounty and Purple Moose, Darkside of the Moose were among her favourites. She hated hoppy IPAs! She insisted beer should be served with a sparkler and detested pint glasses with a stem. Once when doing pub judging together, we went to the bar, and I ordered two pints of bitter. Mine came in a normal pint glass; Helen's was in a stem glass. A



stem glass and sexism – two things Helen despised! Her response was masterful; holding up her pint to the member of bar staff and saying, "Excuse me, could I have my pint in something that doesn't resemble a vase please?"

Helen loved rugby and hated football. She loved Status Quo and couldn't stand the Beatles. She was a huge fan of the Gamblers and was a regular at their gigs at Gallaghers. She also used to follow the band Engine round going to many of their gigs. She also loved motorbikes and folk festivals. She had many stories about working in the **Commodore** and at various beer festivals. She was well known in several pubs; good friends with Ann who runs the **Cleveland** in New Ferry, a regular at Gallaghers where she worked for a time and part of our quiz team at the Rose and Crown and she was great on the music of the 1970's and 1980's. The first time we won, narrowly beating the team that win more often than not, she stood up and shouted, "Have it!" in their direction, people just laughed because it was classic Helen.

Her laugh was something else, it was unmistakable. Loud doesn't even begin to describe it, and when she started, she had difficulty stopping. She also had a wicked sense of humour. I can remember during lockdown a few of us were enjoying a beer on a video call on a Saturday evening as it was as close as we got to going to the pub. I was telling a story and the others on the call started laughing, I didn't know why as what I was saying wasn't funny, then I looked at Helen. Clearly bored with what I was saying she was applying silly filters to her video feed making herself look ridiculous. After the quiz at the Rose and Crown there is a game of Card Bingo. When the card the Eight of Spades is called, some people shout back "The Eight of Spades" as a parody of the Motorhead song "the Ace of Spades".

I think I am right in saying that it was Helen who started this. It is the exact sort of anarchic mischief she loved.

Helen also had a very big heart which I think was shown best when she had her head shaved at the Rose and Crown to raise money for MacMillan following her cancer treatment. In her words: "I haven't had to have chemotherapy, so my hair hasn't fallen out like the other ladies who were having treatment, and I don't think that's fair. So, I'm going to have my hair shaved off and raise some money for a bloody brilliant cause."

Helen, I hope wherever you are, you're enjoying a nice dark cask beer, served with a sparkler in a proper pint glass. Otherwise, the barman will be getting a right earful!

Rob Carter

Fresh Ale Isn't Real Ale

Don't get duped!

Fresh Ale isn't real ale. It doesn't have the same secondary fermentation in the cask or the same mouthfeel and taste.

Carlsberg are producing "Fresh Ale" currently in three brands although cask versions of these are also available:

- Wainwright Amber
- Wainwright Gold
- Hobgoblin IPA



They are served on hand pumps which may fool customers. Look out for labels that say "Brewery conditioned" as that will tell you it's "Fresh Ale" not real ale. If in doubt ask at the bar. If you think you have found fresh ale in a pub please report it to CAMRA. Scan the QR code to do so.

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