Southport and West Lancs CAMRA’s first ever May Mild Trail (pullout inside)
THE BOILERHOUSE
NEW SMALL BATCH BEERS
2019
Hello everyone and welcome to the 77th edition of Ale and Hearty. I am Pam your editor (that’s me on the right just in case you wondered what I look like) and I am looking forward to receiving original articles and photographs from you for future editions, please don’t send copied articles as this infringes the copyright.

This May we are holding our first ever Mild Trail with 8 pubs taking part. You can read about it and find the map in the centerfold pages in this magazine as a pull out and keep for you to go around the pubs and collect stamps on the card to be entered into a draw. All the pubs have said they will keep a Mild on for the whole of May.

Also good news for those members that like a good breakfast before going to a beer festival or on a social. Pam’s Pantry at 13 Bold Street is now offering 10% discount for card carrying members (1 breakfast per card). Great for if you are planning on going on the Mild Trail.

We have a vacancy on the committee for a Cider Rep. Do you have a keen interest in Real Cider and Perry, access to a computer and good writing skills? As a Cider Rep amongst other things you will encourage pubs that don’t stock Real Cider or Perry to do so. Organise a Branch Cider Pub of the Year. Keep records on cider pubs, and cider makers, and make sure What pub is up to date. Do reports for the Regional Cider Coordinator, and also for the branch meetings. Organise cider related activities particularly in CAMRA’s October Perry Month. Generally, act as a Cider and Perry expert on related issues and campaigns. Anyone interested I this position let Doug know on MacadamDoug@gmail.com

In April a few of us are going to Dundee for a few days to the AGM. It is being held in Caird Hall 5th – 7th April and we will be getting a new National Chairman. They are running some trips as well which some of us are going on. We will be visiting St Andrew’s Brewing Co. and Redcastle Brewery so I shall be taking my camera and I am sure you will read about it in the next mag.

Finally can I thank the Fleetwood Hesketh, Bold Churchtown, Guest House, Zetland, Upsteps and Grasshopper for allowing us to hold our branch meetings there.

Cheers

Pam

17th Southport CAMRA Beer and Cider Festival

Southport and West Lancs CAMRA gratefully acknowledges the support of the following businesses which sponsored our festival in October 2018:


The Bold Arms, Bushy’s Brewery, Delta Taxis, Diana Celine Photography, The King’s Arms, Lancashire Heroes, Pam’s Pantry, The Slipway Pub, Southport Brewery, Tap & Bottles.

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Items for inclusion to Editor, please email: pamhad60@sky.com. **Cut off for editorials for the next Ale and Hearty is ?**

Name and contact details required: anonymous correspondence will not be considered, although your name can be left out of the magazine with the editor’s agreement.

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For more local news about CAMRA, pubs, beer and breweries go to: www.southportcamra.org.uk. You can also follow ‘Southport and West Lancs CAMRA’ on Facebook. ‘Like’ us for updates. Our Twitter address is @SPortWLancsCAMRA

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The opinions expressed in Ale & Hearty are not necessarily those of the Editor, the CAMRA Southport & West Lancs Branch or CAMRA Ltd.
Welcome to this the spring 2019 edition of Ale and Hearty and hopefully those warmer spring days although it has felt that spring is already hear with the weather we have had this February.

The branch is this year celebrating Mild in May in a lot bigger way than previous years with a Mild trail of 8 of our pubs on Merseyside, agreeing to have at least one Mild all month and when you visit each pub and have a Mild, you will get your card stamped and all the completed cards with stamps from all the 8 pubs will when sent in will be placed in a draw with various prizes from a free Brewery tour to free bottles of beer and other various brewery memorabilia.

At the branches AGM last month it was with big regret that Joanne Griffith stood down as our cider representative. Joanne was the first cider representative the branch has ever had and had made great strides in encouraging pubs selling cider in the branch area and organised a tasting and cider walk around the pubs last October as part of cider month. We will greatly miss Joanne, but if there is anybody in the branch who would like to carry on from Joanne's good work who has an interest in and likes drinking cider then please contact me through the usual channels, guidance will be given from myself or the various regional cider representatives.

At the AGM all the rest of the committee stayed the same and I would like to thank all the hard work put in by the committee over the last year. Also nationally the national chairman of CAMRA Jackie Parker resigned and has been replaced by Nik Antona.

On Sunday January 6th mine hosts John and Rebecca celebrated an outstanding twelve months at the Pines, Hillside with many of the regulars. The micro bar was packed to the rafters and the customers enjoyed a complimentary buffet and showed their appreciation with a toast of thanks followed by a round of applause for their hospitality in what was a memorable year. 

Angela Mulraney

Regarding the visit to Grimsby by your roving reporters Dave & Doug, the Barge in the Town now serves Axholme Beers, and referring to The Spiders Web, yes, the pub is in Grimsby, the border with Cleethorpes being close by. The Landlord is restricted by two entities on the range of ales on sale, firstly the dreaded ‘limited’ beer list, secondly and most importantly, the local customers will generally only drink pale and golden ales, the Landlord has had great difficulty selling darker or Xmas ales in the past. I hope this clears things up, and see you all in Cleethorpes by the sea...... P.S. new brewery opening soon in Grimsby. ‘Docks Beers’, a subsidiary of Axholme Brewery.... Grimsby’s last major brewery Hewitt Brothers Ltd, ceased brewing in 1968.

Graham Larn
Vice Chair,
Grimsby & North East Lincolnshire CAMRA

Doug Macadam
On a recent visit to Dorset I came across an article from brewers who, correctly, claim to have been brewing in that county since 1794. Not only that but they correctly state that they have been brewing cask conditioned real ales over this period. They maintain that they have never felt the need to describe their ales as craft because they have never been anything else.

Thousands of visitors look round the historic brewhouse and follow the traditional process from the raw ingredients to sampling a few halves of the finished product. It is a process that in many ways has changed very little in the past 25 years. Where it has been updated it has they claim, always been in the pursuit of quality. This quality manifests itself, they claim in ensuring that their beer reaches customers in perfect condition by investing in storage, transport, cellars and importantly in training the staff in their 54 pubs.

Palmers based in Bridport, are the brewery in question and whilst everybody is entitled to their own opinion on their beers I do agree that the word craft has been hijacked in some cases to expect customers to stump up more money.

Dave Wright
SOUTHPORT BREWERY

The main beers now being brewed on a regular basis are Southport IPA, Golden Sands, Sandgrounder and Dark Night with occasional specials.

Doug Macadam BLO

THE PARKER BREWERY

Following the success from the last seasonal ale, Commando Session IPA, The Parker Brewery will be producing a NEW seasonal ale - Marauders Mild, which will be available for months April & May.

The brewery tours continue to be a success and are held once a month - a tour of the brewery, lunch and unlimited ale in the brewery bar, only £15.00 per person.

Email theparkerbrewery@gmail.com to find out dates.

The brewery will be hosting its 3rd Drink, Food and Music festival on 22nd June at the brewery. Live music throughout the day, food stalls and the bar open from 11am-10pm, serving cask ales, wines & spirits.

The brewery opened its own micro pub, The Beer Den in mid October and has a been a huge success. The Beer Den sells an ever changing range of cask ales and keg lagers, along with a wine list and a spirit selection. Open Tuesday to Sunday, 65 Duke St, Southport, PR8 5BT.

Julie Squires
Brewery Liaison Officer, CAMRA

RED STAR BREWERY

The brewery had its “catcher in the rye” beer featured on the local brewery stand at the Liverpool Beer Festival at the Crypt in February. It proved so popular it was one of the first beers to sell out.

Brewery tours are available on Saturdays, booking is essential in advance in order that the staff can gauge numbers. Glen and Dave take visitors through the brewing process, how the beers are made with over view of the malt and hops and the stages that make up the brewing.

As part of the visit customers can partake in draught samples of the beer range and collect a souvenir glass.

Julie Squires
Brewery Liaison Officer, CAMRA

HOPVINE BREWERY

No really big changes still brewing the main core range and the beers have been seen occasionally at the Beer Den in Southport by way of swapping with the Parker Brewery.

Doug Macadam BLO

TYTON BREWERY

After wrestling with issues with first two brews, Morepork (4.3% ABV NZ hopped pale ale) will be ready for commercial release in cask by March 15th and onwards.

I’m planning on releasing more recipes by June and July. Tawny (3.8% UK hopped dark bitter) And Western Screech (5.3% US hopped IPA)

Tom Anderson
Brewer/Proprietor

Colin Hadfield
On 31st December last I had somewhat recovered from my overlong involuntary immobilisation, and decided to organise a Hogmanay Pub Crawl around the southern area of Lord Street, presumably the “Southern Quarter”. A little earlier than Hogmanay itself, but traditional for us due to the lack of New Year’s Eve late public Transport.

We met at the Cheshire Lines at noon, and a few members joined there, later more would arrive, and about 9 in all attended this social event. The “Ches” had four beers on offer, Theakston’s Best Bitter, Robinson Trooper, Bowland Pheasant Plucker and Fox Hat from Wily Fox brewery. I tried the latter two and found them both very good.

Next we trekked across Lord Street to Wetherspoon’s Sir Henry Segrave and they were very busy with diners and drinkers. A long list of beers comprised the regulars Abbot, Ruddles, Wainwright and Wobbly Bob, others were Lymestone Stone Cold, Coach House Gunpowder, Moorhouse Black Cat and Pendle Witches Brew, Naylor’s Velvet, Sharp Doom Bar, Big Bog Swampy and Beartown Black Bear. I had the Swampy, very nice at £2.15 a pint.

Next stop, just around the corner to the Phoenix with Fyne Ales Jarl, Wily Fox Blonde Vixen, Tiny Rebel Stay Puft (a Marshmallow Porter) and Moorhouse’s Blonde Witch. The beers were on sale at £2.30 per pint, but I was charged £1.35 for my half pint of Jarl, which was in fine order.

Continuing north along the now very busy Lord Street we entered the Potting Shed with its very unusual interior décor. The only cask beer here was from our local Southport Brewery, its popular Golden Sands, but the beer was very good.

Further along and into our long established venue the Baron’s Bar in the Scarisbrick Hotel. A good selection of beers here were some from Moorhouse’s, some with seasonal names: Blue Witches, Ice Witch, Winter Spell and the regular Pride of Pendle. Other beers were Tetley’s Original Cask (the new name for Bitter?), Lancaster Glacier and Happy Daze, also
the beer I tried, a George Wright Christmassy beer, Partridge in a Pear Tree, which was very distinctive.

Finally (for me anyway) over to the very busy Tap & Bottles across Lord Street in the Cambridge Arcade. A good beer menu here, with some strange names - Box Social Sticky Beak, Gibberish Hazy Pale, Black Jack Poker, Facer Moor Sticks & Bones and Neptune Medium Gaze, Cross Bay Forest Vibes and Windsor & Eton Roast Chestnut Ale. I tried the Sticky Beak with an unusual sweet flavour, but quite nice.

Sadly for cider drinkers, I think only the Baron’s Bar and the Tap & Bottles were serving this, as I did not notice any elsewhere. From the last venue I now headed home where I spent a pleasant New Year’s Eve alone watching seasonal TV and enjoying a nice single malt whisky at midnight (just one!) – a Happy New Year!

Mike Perkins
To celebrate CAMRA’s Cider & Perry month of October, it was decided that we’d utilise the train service to visit some of the pubs that serve cider and perry, which are conveniently close to local rail stations. After much debate, we settled on Saturday the 20th.

Initially we convened in the Beer Station, a lovely micro pub located just over the road from Freshfield rail station. On this occasion, they had three different ciders on (Black Dragon, Welsh Warrior, and Happy Daze; all made by Gwynt y Ddraig), and between us we sampled them all. A nice little group of us sat in there waiting to see who else would turn up, including a couple of members all the way from St Helens. But eventually it was time to move on, so off we went.

Walking down some of the nicely tree-lined roads, we spotted a squirrel, and someone tried to get a picture of it. When we arrived at the Freshfield, we were disappointed to discover that they didn’t have any cider or perry at all, and after enquiring we learnt that they only stock it for festivals. A couple of the beer-drinkers in the group were very interested in a rare ale on the bar, but as it was a cider walk and there was no cider, it was time to move on. It was still early, and the sun was shining, so we didn’t mind the walk back to the rail station to catch the train to Hillside for our next pub.

When we arrived at the Grasshopper, a lovely pub which is actually more spacious than it at first appears, we had our work cut out, as there was a fantastic selection of ciders and perries, covering the full range from sweet through to dry, as well as one with added fruit. My favourite of these, which happens to be a personal favourite in any case, was Gwatkin’s Stoke Red. There was even one available that was not yet listed on the board which was a favourite of one or two in the group, called Abrahall’s Dry. The pub owner very kindly presented us with a freshly prepared platter of food, which was appreciated and enjoyed by all, and he ended up having a very long and enthusiastic conversation with the cider coordinator from St Helens branch, who was enjoying the cider so much he didn’t want to leave. With such a range on offer that many wanted to try, and with us being ahead of schedule due to not staying at the previous place, we spent longer than usual here. We may have engaged in a bit of silliness too... But when it was coming up on time to meet up with a few extras who couldn’t join at the start, we finally had to get back on the train and head for Southport.

Our first stop in the town centre was the Guest House, which had only recently started selling real cider. Westons Flat Tyre is rhubarb flavoured and very sweet, so wasn’t to everybody’s taste. For this reason some of the group went straight to the next pub, while the rest of us stayed and were joined by a few more. It’s a good roomy pub with a friendly atmosphere, and I bumped into an old friend too. Not wanting to let the group get too split up, we decided we’d have to get going, so we made our way over to the Bottle Room.
Those who had gone ahead found that the two ciders on offer here (Haymaker, and Scrumpy, both from Gwynt y Ddraig) were also a little sweet for their palate, so asked us where we were going after, so we could meet up again later. The rest of us went into the Bottle Room, which is set up like a long narrow corridor. Between us we tried both of the ciders, which were very similar and were served at room temperature (which unfortunately, on a warm sunny October afternoon, was rather too warm and not remotely refreshing).

Our next stop was the Willow Grove. Being part of the Wetherspoon chain, they were on one of the last days of their cider festival, so had a couple more on offer than usual. In addition to Old Rosie, which is a regular there, they also had Mr Whitehead’s Toffee Apple cider and Knights Malvern Gold. Unfortunately one of their bag-in-box ciders had been taken out of the box and so wasn’t labelled, and this caused a bit of confusion and dissatisfaction for one of our group. But the rest of us managed to find something to drink, and about half the group decided this would be a good opportunity to have some food. This was also when yet more people caught up with us. So once everyone had finished, we continued our journey.

Getting close to the end now, we reached the Baron’s Bar. A friendly place, located in the Scarisbrick Hotel, with very interesting décor. Owing to the fact they’d recently had a successful festival, they had a couple of extra ciders on in addition to the Old Rosie they always have. The Westons Rhubarb was ok, but my favourite was the Rose and Pomegranate cider from Loubi Lou, which was quite unusual and very drinkable. With a nice quiet-ish atmosphere, we found it a good place to have a sit down and a chat while we sipped our drinks. By this time it was getting a little late, so a couple of the group decided they’d have to call it a night, while the remainder carried on to the final pub from our list, the Sir Henry Segrave.

We found they had Devil’s Leaf cider from Purbeck and the same Toffee Apple cider that we’d encountered earlier, left over from their festival. Some of those who hadn’t ordered food in the Willow Grove, decided to get something in here instead. We all sat down and discussed how the day had gone, sampling the final ciders of the evening, until finally, one by one, we decided to call it a night, particularly as some had a fair way to go to get home.

A couple of the people who’d joined us decided not to try any cider and just have ale, but some others who usually drink ale did try the ciders and found they really enjoyed it. All in all, I think it was a very nice and successful day out. I’d definitely recommend similar walks to people in the future, whether ale or cider drinkers, but on a hot sunny day I personally think a cellar-cool cider or perry would be more refreshing.

Wassail!

Joanne Griffith
It was Thursday 11th October 2018, my wife Yvonne’s birthday. She had been at me for some time about taking her to Harrogate for a holiday, but I decided to take her for the day by train. By the way, I said, do you mind if Doug comes along, and she didn’t object. The fact that it was only costing £10.00 each was just a coincidence, so off we went for the day, leaving Southport on the first available train after 8.30.

We started by travelling to Selby in North Yorkshire, where we had something to eat and a pint in the Giant Bellflower, a Wetherspoon pub on Gowthorpe in the town centre. We then got the train to Harrogate and tried a couple of pubs there – two new ones for me, the North Bar and Starlings Independent Beer & Coffee House, a place that Yvonne seemed to like as it was not just all about the beer.

We then got a train to Leeds, alighting at one of the provincial stations at Burley, not the city’s main station. Having visited just about every Good Beer Guide pub in Leeds by now, this one was harder to get to, and, as it involved a walk down a steep hill which meant a walk back up the steep hill, Mrs. Williams, not one for walking up anywhere involving a climb, decided to stay and wait for us at the station, so this was going to be a quick visit.

On arriving at Kirkstall Road at the bottom of the hill, we were confronted by an architectural gem, so impressive that I had to get a few photographs whilst it was still light. Now this is not my usual priority, which is normally to see whose round it is and head straight for the bar.

Recently taken over by Kirkstall Brewery, this pub has a long and illustrious history. Built at the end of the Victorian era, its name harks back still further, to the Cardigan family who owned much of the land west of the city centre. Their most famous – or notorious – son was the Seventh Earl of Cardigan who led the ill-fated Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava in 1854. The ducal name and the family surname of Brudenell
survive in street names nearby. In fact, on 20/11/17, Doug and I had visited the Brudenell Social Club, listed in the GBG, on a previous visit to Leeds by train.

Following a sensitive refurbishment inside it was reopened in 2017. There are eight handpulls on the beautiful, curving central bar, giving drinkers the chance to try some of Kirkstall Brewery’s own beers. The one we both went for was Kirkstall Black Band Porter, a superb 5.5% porter described in the Good Beer Guide as “dark-coloured, smooth and complex with sumptuous fruit cake flavours, hints of malted chocolate, coffee and liquorice plus occasional smokiness”. Dangerously drinkable, it went down a treat. Food is also served here, in what will undoubtedly end up being another flagship public house in the Kirkstall Brewery empire, the other one being The Bridge, Kirkstall. It’s a pub at the heart of its community which has now been given a new lease of life and proved to be my favourite pub in Leeds.

It was actually built in 1896 and is a classic Grade II-listed Victorian pub with four separate rooms off the L-shaped bar. It has fine woodwork, etched glass and ornamental ceilings and looks absolutely magnificent. It will be even better if plans to restore the derelict Cardigan Arms brewery come to fruition, which still exists in the back yard of the pub.

My colleague Mike Perkins will be extremely pleased to see a pub from his home town featured in one of my articles at last, a pub he no doubt knows well. Next time he is going back to Yorkshire to visit relatives, ask him for a lift as this pub really is unmissable.

David Williams
ROBINSONS BREWERY
VISITORS CENTRE

EAT, DRINK, TOUR & SHOP

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0161 612 4100
www.robinsonsvisitorscentre.com
Cask conditioned Mild has become a rarity in recent years, which is a real shame, because Mild is a distinctive and tasty beer. Mild is one of, if not the, oldest beer style in the country.

Mild is a beer which has tastes and textures all its own. Basically it is a beer that is less hopped than bitter, etc. The darkness of Dark Milds comes from the use of darker malts and/or roasted barley which are used to compensate for the loss of Hop character. “Chocolate”, “fruity”, “nutty” and “burnt” are all tastes to be found in the complexity of Milds. However, not all Milds are dark. Yorkshire brewed Timothy Taylors Golden Best is one of the best examples of a light coloured mild, the name changed from Mild to try to give it a more modern image.

Milds today tend to have an ABV around 3.5%, with some notable exceptions. Mild wasn’t always weaker though. In the 19th Century, milds were brewed to about the same strength as bitters in response to the demand for a sweeter beer and in those days most beers were around 6 or 7% ABV.

In the early 20th century, malt rationing and pressure from the temperance movement led brewers to reduce the strength. Later in the 20th century mild’s popularity as a cheap ale began to fade as the Big Brewers began to heavily promote their keg lager brands.

In May we are running the Southport Mild Trail. This will give drinkers a chance to sample a range of different cask conditioned Milds at eight of our best real ale pubs. The pubs shown over-page have agreed to offer customers a cask conditioned Mild option for the whole month of May.

The Beer Den in Duke Street will be featuring Parker’s Marauders Mild which is being brewed especially for the Mild Trail. The Southport and Birkdale Sports Club always offers Timothy Taylors Golden Best (mentioned above) and drinkers showing the Mild Trail card will be given a member’s discount. The Grasshopper in Hillside is serving 16 different cask Milds throughout the month including the magnificent Dunham Massey Cherry Dark. Full details of the Milds available at all of the pubs can be found on the branch website.

You can participate in the Mild Trail either by using the card printed here in Ale and Hearty or by picking up a card at one of the participating pubs. Simply order a pint (or a half) of cask mild at each participating pub to receive a stamp on the card. Completed trail cards will be included in a prize draw to win some fabulous beery prizes. Details of the prizes can be found on the Southport and West Lancs CAMRA website at www.southport.camra.org.uk
Corridor
573 Lord St
Southport PR9 0BB

Guest House
16 Union Street
Southport
PR9 0QE

Windmill Inn
12-16 Seabank Road
Southport
PR9 0EL

Cheshire Lines
81 King Street
Southport
PR8 1LQ

Southport & Birkdale Sports Club
Trafalgar Road
Birkdale
Southport
PR8 2HF
Southport Mild Trail 2019 Rules

1) The Southport Mild Trail runs from 1st May 2019 to 31st May 2019 inclusive. When you buy a pint (or a half-pint) of cask conditioned mild in a participating pub ask the bar staff for a stamp on this card.
2) Collect a stamp from each participating pub. NB Check opening times via Whatpub.com before visiting a pub. If the Pub does not have cask mild available on your visit please write ‘NO MILD’ and record the date in the relevant box. This is considered equivalent to a stamp.
3) To complete the Mild Trail, collect stamps from all 8 participating pubs. All completed entries will be included in the Grand Draw.

Complete the section below and leave the completed cards at one of the participating pubs no later than 8th June 2019. Alternatively, send the completed cards to Doug MacAdam, c/o Southport and West Lancs CAMRA, 18 Victoria Street Southport PR8 0PU.
4) Completed cards will be drawn at random to win fabulous prizes. Full details of prizes may be found on the Southport and West Lancs. CAMRA website.
5) There is no restriction on the number of completed cards that you may submit.
6) Please vote for the pub which you thought had the best mild on offer. Include an email address so we can invite you to the presentation event.
7) The Organisers’ decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.

Complete details below for the Grand Draw.

Name........................................................................................................................................
Address......................................................................................................................................
Email..........................................................................................................................................
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Signature.................................................................................................................................

The best mild was available at ...
I am interested in joining the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA)  YES / NO

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TRUST THE COACHMAN
Deliciously Dignified Ales.
Over the past few years, Doug and I have been on a number of excursions by train and bus, and often both. Our days out usually revolve around visiting the very best pubs that Great Britain has to offer, and we have covered the length and breadth of the country. And occasionally we even get to see a bit of the country’s culture too.

Although we have been doing a lot of trips by train, one of my favourite days out last year was done mainly by bus. As regular readers of Ale and Hearty will know, Doug and I have been saving vouchers published in various local newspapers who have been promoting Northern trains. The latest local paper to publish these vouchers has been the Liverpool Echo, and in fact there is an offer on as I type this article, Friday 25th January. When I buy the Echo later, there will be a voucher in it. Save two of these and download an application form on the Reach Plc web site (the company which produces the Echo, formerly the Trinity Mirror group), affix two vouchers onto the form and take it to a station from which Northern trains run. In our case this has to be Southport station. You can then apply for up four tickets at just £10.00 each, which is an absolute bargain. It was using these tickets that we got to go to Selby, Harrogate and Leeds, which you can read about in my other article about the Cardigan Arms in Leeds (Classic Pubs of the UK).

But I digress. On 14th April 2018, we were going to go out for the day by train. However, unfortunately 2018 saw a year when there was an ongoing dispute about the introduction of guardless trains, and this has continued into 2019 and shows no sign of ending. From our point of view, this has cocked up our plans to go further afield, because you can only use these Northern Dayranger tickets on off-peak trains, which means waiting until after 8.30 during the week. You can, however, travel on any trains at the weekend. That is if they are running!

So instead, on this particular day, we decided to get a train from Southport to Chester and have a day out in North Wales. Alighting at Chester, we caught a bus which departed from opposite the station which was going to Wrexham. I forget the number, but Doug will know if you fancy following our route. And anyhow, I do not want to bore you with bus times and numbers.

On arriving in Wrexham, we decided to have some breakfast, so we headed for the North & South Wales Bank. Why go to the bank for breakfast I hear you say? Well, the answer is that this particular establishment used to be a bank, but is now owned by J D Wetherspoon who have converted the former bank into a public house. Now this was our first bit of culture of the day. Believe it or not, the Bank of North & South Wales was founded in 1836, not in Wrexham but in my home town of Liverpool! Quite amazing really, but apparently more than 10% of Liverpool’s population was Welsh in the 1830s, so there were more Welsh people living in Liverpool than there were in Wrexham or in fact most towns in Wales, and this is a fact I often quote on my City Explorer tours in Liverpool.

Our hearty Wetherspoons breakfast was complimented with a lovely pint of Stonehenge Danish Dynamite, which went down a treat!
We left the pub to make our way to Wrexham bus station, where Doug got involved in a bit of an argument with Arriva buses. I kept out of the way, because I did not want to get involved, but the gist of the disagreement was down to where we could go on our Arriva North West & Wales bus ticket, which has cost us just £5.50. So far, this had been great value for money, because of course being of a certain age I now get free travel on Merseyrail trains, so my train journey to Chester had cost me nothing, whereas Doug had to buy a ticket (until he reaches a milestone birthday next month).

Anyhow, we got a bus which took us as close as we could get to the Froncysyllte Aqueduct, which had been closed for repairs the last time I had been there whilst out walking with Southport Fell Walking Club (in fact we also went there last Sunday, 20/1/19, and believe it or not it was closed again).

This time though we were in luck. Getting off the bus on the main A539 road, it was a walk of perhaps half a mile to the famous World Heritage aqueduct, designed and built of course by the famous engineer Thomas Telford.

The Pontcysyllte Aqueduct is a navigable aqueduct that carries the Llangollen Canal across the River Dee in the Vale of Llangollen in north east Wales. The 18-arched stone and cast iron structure is for use by narrow boats and was completed in 1805 having taken ten years to design and build. It is the longest aqueduct in Great Britain and the highest canal aqueduct in the world. This was the first time I had ever been able to walk across the aqueduct, and it is an incredible sight, with a fabulous view from up above the local area.

Once we had got over the incredulity of the aqueduct, we needed a rest. Once we got to the other side of the aqueduct, it was a walk of another half a mile to the Aqueduct Inn, situated right on the A5, the main road from London to Holyhead. There I had a pint of Big Hand Spectre at £3.30, a lovely locally-brewed dark beer.

We then walked back to the A539 and caught a bus back towards Wrexham, but this time we alighted at a little village called Ponciau, where we stopped for a pint at the Colliers Arms, a quiet little pub which was obviously an old miners’ pub. More Welsh beer was on offer; this time I tried the Purple Moose Glaslyn Ale which was just £2.90 a pint.

A short walk back to the main road meant we could jump on another bus (you can see it’s important to make sure you keep your tickets safe when you are with Doug), this time alighting at a village called Gresford. Now I’d been to Gresford previously, when I drove to Wrexham to see Southport play Wrexham in a National League game at the Racecourse Ground, but this next pub had been shut that day, as I think it was Boxing Day. The pub in question was the Pant-yr-Ochain, a rather grand manor house which was very busy with diners. This was reflected in the prices too, with a pint of Brimstage Scarecrow coming in at a hefty £3.90. I think this pub was owned by Brunning & Price, who also of course own the Sparrowhawk between Ainsdale and Formby.

We then got another bus from Gresford back to the outskirts of Wrexham, where we alighted close to the Acton Park, a busy pub in which most customers seemed to be watching the Grand National, which was being run that day at Aintree near Liverpool, won by a horse name Tiger Roll (a good one for fellow players in the Merseyside Quiz League). Another Welsh beer was supped, but this time Brains SA from Cardiff, South Wales.

Doug had brilliantly worked out all the bus times during the day, but I seem to recall on this occasion that we did not have long here if we wanted to avoid a long wait, so we knocked our beers back quickly in order to catch the next bus. However, instead of going back to Wrexham...
bus station we caught a bus to Mold, where we discovered a new micropub called the Mold Alehouse. My Hafod Little Donkey was poor, so I tried another beer which was Hophurst Evolve and was excellent.

It was a bit of a walk from there to a large out-of-town pub called the Glasfryn where I tried the Salopian Oracle. Not a Welsh beer this time, but one from nearby Shropshire, one of just four English counties which have borders with Wales (name the others for your homework). At £3.30 a pint in here I would say that was the average price for beer these days.

We then walked back towards the bus station, where we finished at another Wetherspoons pub, this time the Gold Cape. Here we tried a beer that until a year or two ago was brewed in Wales, but surprisingly Big Bog brewery made the decision to move to a bigger brewery in the slightly-less picturesque Speke in Liverpool. I finished the day with a pint of Big Bog Stog, an excellent beer which was just £2.19 a pint – a bargain.

At that point we thought it would be a doddle to get back to Chester, but there were major problems with the Arriva bus arriving very late back to Mold because of an earlier accident. by this time we were panicking, but the bus got us back to Chester just in time for the very last train we could get which would get us back in Liverpool in time for the last train to Southport. But all’s well that ends well, and we got back to Chester with about five or six minutes to spare, ran from the bus, up the stairs to the platform for the Liverpool train and just made it with a couple of minutes to spare.

This had been a memorable day though, a cultural pub crawl with quite a few beers but plenty of fresh air, plenty of exercise and plenty of excellent beer!

Dave Williams & Doug Macadam
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Did you know that we British pay nearly 40% of all beer duty in the European Union but only consume about 12% of the beer? It’s no wonder that 18 pubs are being lost each week in the UK, according to fresh data. CAMRA has responded to these new findings by calling for a new deal for pubs, which urgently need action to cut the tax burden imposed by successive Governments.

Pubs are being hit hard by a triple whammy of one of the highest rates of beer duty across Europe, rapidly rising business rates, and VAT. A third of the cost of a pub pint is now made up of various taxes.

While temporary business rate relief and a beer duty freeze have been welcome, CAMRA is calling on the Government to implement a fundamental review of the tax system. Britain’s departure from the EU provides new opportunities to support pubs, such as the potential for lower rates of tax for draught beer sold in pubs.

Colin Valentine, CAMRA’s previous National Chair says: “Pubs are now facing a crippling tax burden, exacerbated by the perfect storm of the last business rates revaluation and a high level of beer duty. From these new pub closure figures, it is clear that a fundamental change is needed if the British pub is to survive for future generations.

“As Britain prepares to leave the European Union, the Government has a unique opportunity to update the tax system to give better support to pubs, which are a bastion of British culture and at the heart of communities across the country.

“We can now look further afield for a new tax deal for the sector. This could include implementing the Australian model of having a lower rate of duty for beer sold in pubs, radically changing the business rates system, or charging a lower rate of VAT for pubs or, even better, all three.

“Millions of dedicated pub-goers are looking to the Government to act now to secure the future of the great British pub. We’re now challenging the Government to be the most pro-pub in history by seizing this opportunity.”

Neville Grundy

Leaving the EU gives new opportunities to support pubs

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Neville Grundy
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**Phoenix** 10% off Real Ale

**Park Birkdale** 10% off pints and halves

**Cross House Formby** 10% off pints

**Grasshopper Hillside** offer a discount scheme

**Cheshire Lines** 20% discount

**Tap Room 12 Ormskirk** CAMRA members have a choice of 10% discount or a stamp on a loyalty card buy 10 pints get one free

**Railway Ormskirk** loyalty card also 20p CAMRA discount and Monday less 50p on cask ales

**Waterfront Promenade** 10% off real ales

**Windmill Pub** 30p off a pint of real ale

**Pam’s Pantry 13 Bold St Southport** 10% Off Full English Before 12pm (one breakfast per CAMRA card)

I am sure this list is not exhausted and if I have missed anyone out of Southport and West Lancs area or you decide to start offering discount please let me know at pamhad60@sky.com

This list will be a permanent feature of Ale and Hearty hoping to try and encourage pubs to be included.
As the long hot summer came to an end I began my annual Leeds/Liverpool canal walk, here is a short section ideal for visiting a few great pubs in and around Burscough.

Leaving Burscough Bridge railway station, head into the village to the canal and turn right onto the towpath, a gentle three mile walk to the furthest, The Heatons Bridge, a good traditional former Tetleys pub, note the stained glass leaded windows and enter into a cosy multi roomed gem. Four handpumps offer a selection of cask ales.

Moorhouses – Black Cat mild is a regular along with the house beer, Heatons Bridge Inn – Cask Ale (Tetley/Marstons?)

Also my choice Beer Monkey – Bitter Revival which was served in top condition. The pub is popular for food and friendly welcoming staff made a good start to the day. Time now to return toward Burscough, at bridge 31 cross the canal again to the Farmers Arms, food led, stone flagged floors and candles on the tables, six handpumps on the bar but only two were in use offering the uninspiring Doom Bar and Wainwrights, which, to be fair was served in good condition and I enjoyed sitting outside beside the canal.

Back on the towpath to bridge 32 and the Slipway pub, this former Thwaites house has recently been given a makeover and is now a thriving free house.

Four handpumps offer a changing range of guest beers, Robinsons Bitter is apparently very popular and served as a regular, the other three are normally sourced locally, Windmill – Knockout and Liverpool stout available this time along with a seasonal offering, also from Robinsons, again beer quality was good and the pub clean and comfortable.

Not far now and back into Burscough, up the steps and cross the canal to the the Old Packet House, large and spacious with a seating gallery beside the canal, four handpumps offered a selection of guest ales, on this occasion all from Coachhouse. I opted for the 4% Cromwell bitter, an excellent pint served well.

Back on the canal and a 10 minute walk to the junction for the Rufford branch of the canal and sitting beside the locks, the Ship at Lathom. Made up of three former cottages the Ship is divided into numerous rooms, focusing on dining with a small seating area around the bar, six handpumps with a range of guest ales,
A house beer and Pendle Witch from Moorhouses, alongside beers from Cross Bay, Windmill, Beer Brothers and Pitchfork, made a good selection, I chose the Windmill – Deckhand which did not disappoint.

Less than a mile away along the canal is the Ring o Bells but running out of time (and capacity) I returned to Burscough to finish in the jewel in the crown The Hop Vine. With its own micro brewery adjoining the cobbled garden at the rear, what better place to end a great day out, and only two minutes from the station.

Six Handpumps, four with Hop Vine beers, and two guests – Arbor – Megs Bomb and Taylors – Landlord offer a great choice.

That pint of Hoppy Blonde was absolutely delicious Cheers....

Roy Glass
Long-established, Lancashire brewer, Daniels Thwaites, have commenced brewing at their new site at Mellor Brook in the Ribble Valley, some five miles from their home since 1807 in the centre of Blackburn. The new brewery uses the same 20 brewers’ barrel, brewhouse equipment from Blackburn. However, extra fermentation vessels have been added to enable production to rise at times of increased demand. The maximum capacity is 100 brewers’ barrels a week or 1.5 million pints per year. As well as the brewery, the site houses the firm’s offices, the stables for the four black shire horses and a heritage centre.

Head brewer, Brian Yorston, and his team of highly-experienced brewers are currently brewing TBC (Thwaites Best Cask) 3.8% abv and Nutty Black 3.3% abv on a regular basis plus a range of seasonal real ales (usually four a month are brewed). The regular cask beer range is set to include Thwaites Original and will be developed over the next 12 months.

Brewing is exclusively for the company’s own estate which is made up of some 240 tenanted pubs, 11 “Inns of Character”, 2 lodges and 8 Shire Hotels.

Mike Kershaw
Not a lot seems to have changed since the last edition of Ale & Hearty. From a personal point of view the highlight was the decision by the Tap & Bottles to increase the number of cask ale pumps from 4 to 10. Sadly this was only for a 10 day period around Christmas. As usual an eclectic mix of beers was sold and my acquaintances from Lancashire were very pleased with the beers served.

The Sir John Falstaff in King Street closed suddenly and to see the building shuttered was bad indeed. However it did reopen on 2nd February and claims to be selling cask ales. A visit is called for but why do two notices outside refer to The Falstaff and the new Falstaff. Perhaps they will make their minds up as to the name of the pub as the Sir John Falstaff sign is still in place.

Until this year I have never had a local within 300 yards of my residence. I now have one as The Beer Den opened in October and is well worth a visit. Established by Rick Parker of the Parker Brewery it has 4 hand pumps of which 2 are dedicated to his own brewery and retail at £2.50 per pint including the 5.5% ABV Boadicea IPA when it is on and 2 guest pumps. These have ranged from Heritage, Melwood, Southport and Red Star. These two sell at £3.00 per pint irrespective of ABV. Opening times are Tuesday – Thursday inclusive 4.00pm and Friday-Sunday inclusive 2.00pm. There is already a quiz night, book club and distillery evening in existence. Finally the intention is to feature a Mild beer in May.

Dave Wright

Editors Note. Since Dave wrote this The Falstaff has now closed again.
Join up, join in, join the campaign

Protect the traditions of great British pubs and everything that goes with them by joining today at www.camra.org.uk/joinup

Alternatively you can send a cheque payable to CAMRA Ltd with your completed form, visit www.camra.org.uk/joinus, or call 01727 798440.* All forms should be addressed to Membership Department, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW.

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I'm nearly ready Batman, mine's a large one, I'm feeling foolish!

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