



Cwrw Ceredigion



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Spring/Summer 2018

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Welcome to *Cwrw Ceredigion*, which is produced by the Bae Ceredigion branch of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA). Our aim is to promote local breweries, cider makers and the best places to drink real ale and cider in the area.

The last few months have been a very sad time for two of our pubs. Y Ffarmers in Llanfihangel y Creuddyn caught fire in January and, since then, the pub has been closed whilst it undergoes restoration. The Fronfelen Arms in Temple Bar faced an uncertain future as we went to press due to the retirement of landlord Geoff Thompson. We send our best wishes to Caitlin and team at Y Ffarmers and to Geoff and family.



Our tombola stall at Aberaeron Beer Festival

On a happier note, congratulations are due to the Rhos yr Hafod in Cross Inn (Llanon) which has won our pub of the year competition after coming runner-up last year and to the Druid Inn in Goginan which retained the title of our cider pub of the year. Competition for these awards gets tougher every year – why not visit all the finalists yourself to see if you agree with the judges' verdict?

Many thanks to our advertisers and the handful of CAMRA volunteers who produce and distribute *Cwrw Ceredigion* – it would not be possible without your support. Our next issue will be published in October but you can keep up to date with the local real ale scene by following us on Twitter or Facebook.

Mary Galliers, Editor

P.S. Look out for our tombola stall at Aberaeron Beer Festival in August – there'll be lots of beer-related prizes to be won and all proceeds support CAMRA.

Contact us

Email: publicity@baeceredigion.camra.org.uk
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Bae Ceredigion CAMRA branch

Bae Ceredigion CAMRA branch covers mid and north Ceredigion and a small part of Powys and Gwynedd. Main towns and villages in branch area are New Quay Aberaeron, Tregaron, Aberystwyth, Talybont and Machynlleth.

Chairman: Tristan Robinson
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Front cover: Lampeter Beer Festival.

We try to ensure that information is correct when we go to press. If we get something wrong, let us know and we'll print a correction. Please note that opinions are not necessarily those of CAMRA either locally or nationally, and publication of an advertisement is not an endorsement of quality by CAMRA. If you feel you have been treated unfairly in a pub, contact Trading Standards. See www.tradingstandards.wales.org.uk.





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Rhos yr Hafod is pub of the year

The Rhos yr Hafod in Cross Inn (Llanon) has been selected as Bae Ceredigion CAMRA pub of the year 2018, after coming runner-up last year.

Pubs are nominated for the award by CAMRA members who then visit and judge each one anonymously to evaluate them against set criteria. The quality of the real ale is the most important single factor for a CAMRA award. Other criteria are the role a pub plays in its local community, atmosphere, décor, offer and welcome.

The Rhos yr Hafod sells a constantly changing choice of real ale, mostly from Welsh breweries, and the range is promoted on the beer blackboard and Facebook. The pub scored highly in the atmosphere and décor category, and the tasteful refurbishment and choice of comfortable seating areas were noted by the judges.

Tristan Robinson, Chairman of Bae Ceredigion CAMRA, said, "This is the first time the Rhos yr Hafod has won our pub of the year award and it recognises the effort and enthusiasm demonstrated by landlady Elin Hywel and her family since they bought the pub several years ago. It is an excellent example of a small village local in a rural location which has flourished thanks to good management and great beer."

Three Horseshoe is runner-up

Judges praised the good standard of beer and the welcoming and friendly atmosphere in runner-up, the Three Horseshoe in Llangeitho.

"The Three Horseshoe hosts and supports a range of events all year round and offers a warm welcome to everyone from locals to visitors," said Tristan. "The constantly changing variety of real ale is promoted



Bae Ceredigion CAMRA Chairman Tristan Robinson presents the pub of the year award to Elin Hywel, landlady of the Rhos yr Hafod.

enthusiastically by landlord Jon Williams who reintroduced it to the pub a couple of years ago. Real ale is often sold from smaller barrels, known as pins, which means it turns over quickly and is therefore served to drinkers in excellent condition." The other two finalists were the Druid Inn in Goginan, which won the award last year, and the Slaters Arms in Corris.

The Rhos yr Hafod will go up against the winning pubs from Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire in the competition for CAMRA West Wales pub of the year.

Druid retains cider crown

Last year's winner of our cider pub of the year competition, the Druid Inn, has retained the title. Judges noted the impressive range of eight draught ciders from a wide range of different suppliers, plus an interesting choice of bottled cider. Cider is promoted here with the same enthusiasm as beer and it is served by very friendly and knowledgeable staff.

The runner-up was Kane's Bar in Aberystwyth where judges were impressed by the range of six draught ciders from Welsh producers and a menu describing the ciders on offer. The other finalist was the Glengower Hotel on Aberystwyth seafront, where the dedicated cider bar was noted by judges.

Drinking real ale is good for the economy



A visit to the pub for a glass of real ale with its British ingredients is not only a pleasant pursuit, it also helps boost the local and national economy.

According to the recently published Cask Report, every pint ordered gives a lift to the nation's brewing industry and helps to create jobs and keep local pubs open.

Each job in brewing generates 18 jobs in pubs, one in agriculture, one in the supply chain and one in shops.

"Nearly all cask ale brewers use barley grown and malted in Britain," says the report's author Paul Nunny. "They create a fresh product with live yeast, no added gas and limited shelf life. A second fermentation in the pub cellar is needed to complete the brewing process. That's why cask (real) ale is unique to the pub and can't be bought at the supermarket."

The research also shows that real ale drinkers are the most frequent users of pubs and spend more there than anyone else. Two in five real ale drinkers visit the pub once a week or more. Their average spend of £1,030 a year on food and drink is 30% more than the average adult spends and is 6.5% up on two years ago.

The Cask Report was funded by Cask Matters group and was published at the end of last year.

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Druid gets CAMRA's top award in Wales



The Campaign for Real Ale's Wales pub of the year award was presented to Druid Inn landlord Lewis Johnston and his team in November by Regional Director for Wales Chris Charters (centre). The presentation was followed by a party and beer festival at the pub. A full report about the Druid's victory appeared in our last issue (available for download from our website).

Hello and goodbye

There have been a lot of changes on the local pub scene over the last few months. Here's a round-up of those we know about.

Stuart and Ann Raeburn are the new owners of the **Halfway Inn** in Pisgah after moving with their family from Scotland to Ceredigion. Ann (nee Hopkins) was brought up in Capel Seion and Pisgah, and her

The Halfway Inn, Pisgah



family has strong ties to the area and the Halfway. Many of them have worked in the pub in the past including Ann and her father Alun who famously captained the darts team for over 35 years.

"We are committed to our vision for the Halfway, much of which is based on my own fond memories of the place," said Ann. "This country pub was one of the first in the area to offer a huge selection of real ales and ciders and we are aiming to bring that popular service back. We also want to re-establish the pub as the strong community focal point it once was, as well as to provide a warm welcome to the many tourists who pass through the area."

The pub has been undergoing refurbishment and is due to open in May – keep an eye on their Facebook page for the latest information.

The **Hungry Ram** has opened in Penwch in the former village school. The building has undergone a thorough refurbishment and has been transformed into a contemporary restaurant and bar. We'll include more information in our next issue but, in the meantime, please support this new business if you are in the area.

The former landlady of the Tynllidiart Arms in Capel Bangor, Margaret Greenhouse, is now running **Tafarn y Maes** in the same village. The bar and lounge have been pleasantly and sympathetically refurbished and there is one real ale on offer usually Mantle's MOHO. Check their Facebook page for opening times.

The **Tynllidiart Arms** in Capel Bangor is closed.

The **Fronfelen Arms** in Temple Bar is closed after the recent retirement of landlord Geoff Thompson.

Just over our branch border, the former Kings Head in Lampeter has reopened as the **Nag's Head**. The interior has been modernised and two Sharp's beers were on offer on our recent visit.

Swift halves

A beer from Purple Moose brewery is always on offer in **Yr Hen Orsaf**, the Aberystwyth Wetherspoons next to the railway station. Look out for the special purple pump on the bar.

The cellar in the **Castle Hotel** in Aberystwyth has been refurbished and a draught ale is now on the bar along with draught cider from Westons. The pub offers live music every Sunday afternoon and free pool all day Monday.

The **Ship and Castle** in Aberystwyth continues to sell an ever-changing range of cask ale from all over the UK, as well as four keg beers often from Tiny Rebel and Beavertown. Landlord Ian Blair is planning a tap takeover during the spring when all real ales will be from Tiny Rebel.

The **Pier Hotel** in Aberystwyth no longer sells real ale (as reported in our last issue) but it does offer a range of bottled beer.

The **Skidders Arms** in Machynlleth now offers food all day from Tuesday to Saturday – the pasties on a Wednesday are popular with the locals – and Sunday lunch for which booking is advisable.

The **Red Lion** in Machynlleth, which was refurbished last year, now offers food lunch-times and evenings.

The **Slaters Arms** in Corris offers a 20p discount to card-carrying CAMRA members off a pint of real ale or real cider.

The **Black Lion** in New Quay is now selling Mantle's MOHO all year round, alongside Sharp's Doom Bar.

The **Monachty** in Aberaeron and the **Penwig** in New Quay are amongst the Brains pubs that sell cask ale at a reduced rate every Monday from 5pm. Check Facebook for details.

The bar in the **Sea Horse Inn** in New Quay has been refurbished.

Cider scene

The cider shop at **Toloja Orchards**, near Dihewyd is open 10am to 2pm on Thursdays and Fridays June to mid September.

The **Three Horseshoe** in Llangeitho now stocks a bag in box cider from Gethins Cyder of Pembrokeshire.

It's like a year round cider festival in **Kane's Bar** in Aberystwyth as the range is constantly changing. Try a selection in one of the third pint tasting platters or buy a four pint flagon to take your favourite home.

Dates for your diary

Thursday 26 April, 8pm: Bae Ceredigion CAMRA Quiz, Kanes Bar, Aberystwyth.

June: Bae Ceredigion CAMRA branch AGM. All members welcome to attend.

See www.baeceredigion.camra.org.uk for our calendar of social events.



Penlon goes from strength to strength

Penlon Cottage brewery had a busy 2017, releasing three new beers (RSA a 6% dry hopped full flavoured New World ale; Hidden Howler, a 4.2% Pale Ale; and a Coffee Porter at 4.8%).

The new beers were available in cask exclusively at the brewery's tasting room, the Granary. Perched above New Quay, the Granary has spectacular views over Cardigan Bay and plenty of indoor and outdoor seating. It will be open from Easter this year, and every Saturday through the summer months. There will be one or two Penlon ales on cask alongside the full range in bottles and tasty wood-fired pizzas. Improvements to the farm track and a new parking area will make it easier to get to the brewery.

And if that isn't enough to wet your whistle, Penlon is taking over the former Traeth restaurant on the promenade at New Quay. Alongside a pint or two of Penlon beer on tap, Penlon at the Beach will offer stone



baked pizzas, craft gin, cider and wine. It will be open through the summer, six days a week, with its indoor and large outdoor balcony space overlooking the beach and harbour.

"Last year we were blown away by the popularity of our events up here at the farm," said Penlon Cottage's John and Lisa. "We are so excited to be offering a similar Penlon experience down in New Quay, and practically on the beach."

Keep an eye open for news and opening offers on www.penlonbrewery.co.uk and Facebook.

Bluestone gets bottling

In late 2017, Bluestone Brewing in Cilgwyn, near Newport in Pembrokeshire was awarded a grant from the Coastal Communities Fund to develop an on site bottling plant. The new plant is being installed in the old wood shed across the way from the brewery shop and should be operational by April.

The plant will bottle up to 500 bottles per hour and will considerably increase the brewery's capacity. It will also give them more freedom to play around with limited edition recipes as they will be able to bottle smaller quantities.

The brewery is planning to release a series of one-off beers throughout 2018 to sell alongside their core range. The first of

these special editions was Tiger's EYE India Pale Ale which popped up on draught in various pubs and was very well received. For details of the August beer festival at the brewery, see the festivals feature on pages 16-17.



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FOUR OF THE BEST: LIVE MUSIC PUBS



Rummers Wine Bar, Aberystwyth

Rummers may be called a wine bar but it also sells real ales from the likes of Fullers and St Austell breweries. This well established venue, situated in a 19th century corn warehouse, offers live music at least once a week. The varied programme sees local bands and others from further afield play to an eclectic and enthusiastic crowd. The large riverside seating area with heating and brollies is a great spot to enjoy a drink and the Storehouse restaurant serves food.

Three Horseshoe, Llangetho

This friendly village local holds a range of events all year round but the annual highlight is Ceithofest, a free music and beer festival in the spring. There is also an open mic night on the first Monday of every month and one-off themed music nights – the jazz extravaganza proved popular. This *Good Beer Guide* listed pub stocks a variety of well-kept ales plus a bag in box cider. Good value evening meals include special offers on Wednesdays and the pub is family and dog friendly.

Sea Horse, New Quay

Live music is on offer every other weekend at this traditional and welcoming pub and an open mic night is also held during the summer. The pub plays its part in New Quay's music festival and holds other events including poker nights and a regular quiz.

Unlike most other pubs in New Quay, the Sea Horse welcomes dogs into the cosy bar where there's a choice of Evan Evans beers, Westons draught cider and a selection of crusty rolls.

Slaters Arms, Corris

Slaters hosts a folk session every first and third Tuesday of the month to which people bring their own instruments and there's a live band once a month. This friendly freehouse serves three regularly changing real ales, two ciders and good value meals.

There's a 20p per pint discount for card-carrying CAMRA members and you can try all the ales with a platter of three one third pints. Other events at the pub include a quiz and themed food nights.

Tristan Robinson set off on a ramble north from Aberystwyth. This took in a wider area than can be covered solely by foot but all pubs can be reached easily by bus from Aberystwyth and the first two can also be reached by train.

Seven miles north of Aberystwyth is the seaside village of Borth (512 service to Ynyslas from Stand 2, Aberystwyth bus station), popular with holidaymakers who travel there for its sandy beach, coast and country walks and nearby National Nature Reserve. Both locals and visitors are served by a number of cafes, restaurants and pubs, two of which I visited on my ramble.



Friendship Inn, Borth

My first stop was the **Friendship Inn**, which stands roughly in the centre of the village and is identified by its traditional pub sign and pastel blue painted stone frontage. The pub itself is full of character and it is sometimes full of characters engaging in piano playing or quirky community events. CAMRA has listed the pub as having an interior of historic and regional importance.

The bar is on the right in the main front room, which is decorated with an entertaining mix of pub memorabilia, maritime paintings, curious ornaments and pump clips of past ales enjoyed on the premises.

The pub serves one real ale and on my visit it was Evan Evans' WPA (4% pale ale

brewed in Carmarthenshire), which was in good condition and was enjoyed whilst perusing the collection of pub-themed books on the shelves. To the rear of the pub there is a beer garden and a family/games room and upstairs you can explore the antique and vintage clothing shops. I had no time for shopping alas as there were more pubs to visit!



Victoria Inn, Borth

Diagonally across the main road from the Friendship is the **Victoria Inn**, fronted in bare stone and neatly decorated. This is a friendly pub with two downstairs bars, an upstairs restaurant bar and decking to the upstairs rear that leads directly onto the sandy beach and stunning views out across Cardigan Bay. It is popular with families, holidaymakers and students.

Food is also served and I chose to have lunch here to accompany my pint of MOHO (4.3% pale ale from Cardigan's Mantle brewery). Wye Valley's HPA and Sharp's Doom Bar were also on the bar. My MOHO was in great form as always and the generously portioned meal set me up for further exploration of the area's taverns.

Leaving Borth by its southern side toward Bow Street (512 bus Ynyslas - Aberystwyth) I turned left onto the A487 (alight at Bow Street Post Office and wait for X28 or T2 service toward Machynlleth) and headed north to Talybont. The village has two pubs, both located next to the village green at the heart of the community.

My first stop was **Y Llew Gwyn (the White Lion)**, a two-bar traditional pub frequented by locals and visitors in equal measure. The walls of the pub are adorned with brewery and beer memorabilia and framed posters of historic local events and animal market sales held in the area. The reception area has a lot of information of interest to walkers and visitors looking for local attractions.



Owned by Marston's, it is run by a friendly landlord dedicated to providing good quality beers, good value food and a warm welcome to all. I felt quite at home sitting in the main slate-floored bar supping a pint of Banks' Sunbeam (4.2% golden ale), which was bright and zesty with a dry and bitter aftertaste. Also on handpump were Marston's Wainwright and Banks' Amber.

I stayed at the White Lion until 6pm, when its neighbour, the **Black Lion Hotel**, opened its doors. Stylishly decorated throughout, "Y Blac" is a very comfortable place for a drink or a meal. The bar area to the left of the entrance is floored with traditional slate slabs and has a beautifully crafted wooden bar, on which two handpulls offered Purple Moose Glaslyn (4.2% bitter) and Cader brewery's Aur Cader (Cader Gold, 3.8% golden ale). I opted for a half of each and was satisfied with both choices.

Checking my watch, I noticed I had enough time for one more trip to a neighbouring pub in the village of Tre'r-Ddôl, the **Wildfowler** (X28 / T2 service toward Machynlleth). This pub is primarily food-oriented, but patrons are welcome to sit and have a beer as well.



The Wildfowler

On the bar for my visit was Timothy Taylor's Landlord (4.3% pale ale) which was well served and tasted just as I remembered. The pub usually serves a second ale, too.

Worth visiting nearby is **Cletwr**, a community-run shop and cafe, which sells a good selection of bottled beer and cider from surrounding Welsh counties. It was well past opening time on my ramble, unfortunately, so I made my way home after an enjoyable adventure north of Aberystwyth (T2 service to Aberystwyth bus station).



Black Lion Hotel

Please note that bus services are limited in this area on Sundays and late evenings.

See www.traveline.cymru.

Check www.whatpub.com and pub websites for opening times and other facilities when planning your own ramble.



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***Cwrw Ceredigion* met Martin Holland who runs the Cadwgan in Aberaeron.**

How long have you run the Cadwgan?

Since 2004.

What did you do before taking on this pub?

I have been in the pub trade for over thirty years and the Cadwgan is the ninth pub that I have run. I started off as a manager for the now defunct Welsh Brewers and, before that, I was a haematologist.

What do you enjoy most about being a publican?

I love chatting to people and so the social side of running a pub really appeals to me. I also enjoy being part of the local community and I sponsor the local rugby and cricket clubs.

Who are your locals?

Aberaeron is a very seasonal town and our trade reflects that. We welcome a lot of holidaymakers in the summer, especially those staying in caravans who enjoy coming in with their dog and others who are walking the Wales Coast Path. We also have a year-round trade from local people and it's fair to say that we attract a more mature clientele who enjoy a visit to an old-style pub.

Why do you think people enjoy a visit to the Cadwgan?

The pub has a really homely atmosphere – it's like having a beer in your front room. It's a small pub and so no-one is left out of the conversation but there are also several nooks and crannies where you can sit quietly with your drink and read the newspaper if you wish.

Do you hold any regular events at the pub?

We hold a monthly quiz from October to March which raises funds for a different



charity each month. Then we have regular live music during the summer months. We play our part in Aberaeron's many events and we sponsor the Beer and Cider Festival held at the Yacht Club in August. We've also started to do hog roasts in our rear courtyard.

Has there been a growth in demand for real ale?

Definitely. When I took on the pub, there was only one hand pump. I decided to add an extra pump for a guest ale and put the first one on for Hallowe'en weekend. I thought that the pump would not be needed again until Christmas but, in fact, the demand for real ale meant that it remained in use.

A few years ago, I added a third hand pump and we now have two guest ales on offer most of the time alongside our regular Handcocks HB.

What's your favourite tipples?

I used to be a Bass man but my tastes have changed over the years and I now enjoy the blonde beers flavoured with New World hops which have become increasingly popular on the bar here.

Which famous person would you like to have as a regular?

Well, my great passion is rugby so I would enjoy discussing the game with Warren Gatland, the New Zealand born coach of the Wales rugby squad, preferably over a pint flavoured with New Zealand hops!

FESTIVAL FOCUS

There are lots of festivals in local pubs and other events at which you can enjoy good beer and real cider throughout the year.

Beer festivals in Ceredigion

Thursday 31 May, Friday 1 June and Saturday 2 June: Llanfair Clydogau Beer Festival. Small and friendly event in the village hall with a handful of real ales, cider and wine, plus basic refreshments and a BBQ on Saturday evening. Camping is available. See the article by the festival organiser on page 19.

Friday 10 to Saturday 11 August: Aberaeron Beer and Cider Festival. Held in the Yacht Club right on the seafront, this festival has a lovely relaxed atmosphere. Real cider and perry lovers are in for a treat with as many on offer as there are cask ales. Live music and a range of food stalls including wood-fired pizza. The festival runs from 5pm Friday and from noon on Saturday.

Saturday 16 February 2019 (provisional date): Lampeter Beer Festival. This one day event is held at Lampeter University and is organised by the Lampeter Round Table. It offers over twenty cask beers, lagers and ciders from across Wales plus two pint beer hoppers to take your favourite home. There's live music from local bands and hot and cold food at this festival which raises funds for charity.

Beer and cider festivals in local pubs

TBC May, Three Horseshoe, Llangeitho: Held at this friendly village local, Ceithofest offers live music, a mini beer festival and BBQ. There's also an autumn beer festival.

Friday 20 to Saturday 21 April: Ship and Castle, Aberystwyth. A corner of the bar in this real ale flagship is transformed into a beer festival every spring with around eight beers served from the barrel along with a real cider and perry. There is also an autumn beer festival every year.



Aberaeron Beer and Cider Festival

Sunday 22 to Sunday 29 April, Kane's Bar, Aberystwyth: Twenty real ciders, including some real fruit ciders, promoted in a menu with handy tasting notes. One real ale served direct from the barrel and range of unusual canned and bottled beer. Take your favourite cider home in a flagon. Bae Ceredigion CAMRA quiz takes place at 8pm on Thursday 26 April during the festival.

Friday 25 to Monday 28 May, Glengower Hotel, Aberystwyth: Excellent range of beers, many from Welsh breweries, and several ciders at this CAMRA award-winning pub. Traditional charity raft race on Sunday afternoon on the beach (proceeds go to the RNLI).

Saturday 26 to Sunday 27 May, White Lion Hotel, Machynlleth: Range of cask ale and cider in the marquee and live music. Small admission charge, and normal food service from the hotel.

Saturday 18 August, Pentre Arms, Llangrannog: Enjoy beer from West Wales breweries including Mantle, Bluestone and Gower in the third beer festival at this seafront pub. Live music in the evening from a Welsh folk band.

Friday 19 to Sunday 21 October, Oktoberfest, Machynlleth: As *Cwrw Ceredigion* went to press, we heard about plans for a new beer and food festival to be held at a number of venues in and around Machynlleth. Oktoberfest is the idea of Charles and Sheila Dark, owners of the

Wynnstay Hotel who ran a beer, cider and food festival at their hotel last year. The new event will offer British real ales and draught beers from small high quality breweries in Germany and Belgium, imported for the event, along with food to match the beer.

Yr Hen Orsaf in Aberystwyth holds various Wetherspoons beer festivals throughout the year.



Lampeter Beer Festival

Other beer and cider festivals in Wales

The nearest official CAMRA beer festival to our branch area is held in Carmarthen. It runs from Thursday 4 to Saturday 6 October at St Peter's Civic Hall in the town centre.

There is also a beer festival in Swansea organised by the local CAMRA branch from Thursday 23 to Saturday 25 August.

The Great Welsh Beer and Cider Festival takes place in Cardiff. Organised by the Cardiff CAMRA branch, it includes judging for the Champion Beer of Wales competition. The date of the 2018 event had not been confirmed when we went to press - see www.gwbcf.info for more details.

Now in its 16th year, the Welsh Perry and Cider Festival takes place at Caldicot Castle from Friday 25 to Monday 28 May. It is the flagship event of the Welsh Perry & Cider Society and there is live music and camping on site.

Bluestone Brewing is hosting a beer festival at the brewery in Cilgwyn, near Newport in



Ship and Castle, Aberystwyth

Pembrokeshire on Friday 17 and Saturday 18 August. Beer from across the UK will be on offer along with Bluestone's own ales (including some specials), live music and stone baked pizzas.

Look out for brewery and cider producers' stalls at food festivals – two of the best local ones are held in Lampeter (28 July) and Cardigan (18 August).

Great British Beer Festival

And finally, as its name implies, the Great British Beer Festival is Britain's biggest such event with hundreds of beers and ciders served from 30 different bars. It runs from 7 to 11 August at Olympia in London and also offers tutored tasting sessions, street food vendors and live music. It is CAMRA's most high profile activity and it is a must-visit event for every real ale or cider fan at least once.



Lampeter Beer Festival

For more information on the pubs in this feature, go to www.whatpub.com, CAMRA's online pub directory.

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How does a beer festival get off the ground? Lesley Stevens, local CAMRA member and one of the organisers of the annual event in Llanfair Clydogau, tells us her story.



Lesley Stevens behind the bar

Shortly after moving to Llanfair Clydogau near Lampeter 12 years ago, we decided to get some barrels of beer for the first ever village fete. The following year, buoyed by the success of the beer at the fete, we held our first beer festival.

We knew little about beer except knowing what we liked to drink, and so it was quite a steep learning curve. What to buy? Where to buy? How to tap? With the help of friends who were a little more knowledgeable than us, we bought some Welsh beers and ciders and some from over the border.

Many of the locals at the first festival asked for lager, their usual tipple, so we introduced them to some light ales. One of the best outcomes of the beer festival is that people have become quite discerning in their taste for real ale and are willing to taste any and all of the beers that we offer – no-one asks for lager anymore!

With so many fantastic Welsh breweries to choose from, we have always sold Welsh ale. Not just to showcase it but also to encourage beer drinkers to ask for it in their local hostelrys. We have found that it is often easier to sample Welsh beer in the rest of the UK – last year we found a new beer in a pub in Edinburgh from a Welsh brewery I wanted to try having read good reports about it.

Since we started the beer festival, many new micro breweries have opened and this

has meant that we rarely repeat a beer. Having said that, some ales are so nice that we have to order them again just to confirm our initial view! We also serve cider including some made from apples grown in the village.

Most of the beers are acquired 'blind', that's to say we have not tasted them prior to the festival. We do our research online and read reviews from national beer festivals. Of course, there is also the self-sacrifice of doing lots of beer tasting and sampling to keep the taste buds in tip top condition! I have made beer runs up and down Wales picking up barrels of ale from breweries for the festival. This has also given me the opportunity to meet the brewers and learn more about beer and their brewing techniques.

Nowadays, the festival is a three day event, starting on Thursday evening and finishing at midnight on Saturday. It has become the highlight of the village calendar and includes a popular BBQ on Saturday evening. We have a hardworking crew of bar staff who travel from England to be part of the event. They also write the tasting notes and share their expertise over the bar.

This year's festival runs from Thursday 31 May to Saturday 2 June in Llanfair Clydogau village hall. Please come along and enjoy our friendly festival!



Llanfair Clydogau village hall

Looking for a decent local pint whilst on holiday here? Read on to find out more about breweries and cider makers in Cardigan Bay and where you can enjoy the fruits of their labours.

Local breweries on the up

Although known as Bae Ceredigion CAMRA, the branch only covers the mid and north of the county of Ceredigion along with a small part of Powys and an even smaller part of Gwynedd. It takes in a long and thin stretch of West Wales from Tresaith on Ceredigion's coast all the way up Cardigan Bay to Corris in Snowdonia National Park.

"The main towns within our branch boundaries are New Quay, Aberaeron, Tregaron, Aberystwyth, Talybont and Machynlleth," says Bae Ceredigion Chairman Tristan Robinson. "Despite this huge geographical area, there is only a handful of breweries that are, strictly speaking, within our remit. These include Penlon Cottage in New Quay and Oast House, which has recently moved to new premises in Clarach, near Aberystwyth.

"However, the number is steadily increasing - work is underway on a new nano-brewery in Lledrod and, every so often, I hear a rumour that another brewery could be in the pipeline."

Luckily for local drinkers and visitors, there are over 100 breweries in Wales and plenty of breweries just over the branch's official CAMRA border. Breweries whose beer is regularly on sale in local pubs include Mantle from Cardigan, Bluestone Brewing from Pembrokeshire, Cwrw Cader from Dolgellau and Monty's from Powys.

Beers from all four breweries are highly rated by branch members when they submit data about the beer they drink in pubs as part of the selection process for CAMRA's annual *Good Beer Guide*.

The Glengower Hotel, Aberystwyth



Freehouses offer best choice

Many pubs in the Bae Ceredigion area are freehouses. This means that they are not controlled by a brewery and are therefore not restricted to selling particular brands of beer.

"Walking into a freehouse is a great pleasure for a real ale fan," says Tristan. "You never know what you are going to drink until you check out the pump clips on the bar – it's a fantastic feeling of anticipation!"

Some freehouses stick to selling beer from well-established regional breweries which have proved popular with their locals. For example, the Sea Horse in New Quay only offers Evan Evans draught beer while Aberystwyth's real ale flagship the Ship and Castle always sells Wye Valley's Butty Bach alongside an ever-changing array of ales from all over Britain.

Other pubs source their beer in all sorts of ways - the landlady of the Rhos yr Hafod in Cross Inn started selling ale from Cwrw Llyn when her father came across the brewery whilst distributing milk in North Wales, and the former landlord of the Fronfelen Arms was well-known for his forays into England to buy beer rarely found in Welsh pubs.

Other freehouses like Y Talbot in Tregaron have a local beer buying strategy. "We offer almost exclusively ales from Wales and the Marches and I mostly buy beers that have been brewed within 75 miles of Tregaron," says owner Mick Taylor. "I try to maintain a balance between having regular favourites on the bar, like Mantle's Cwrw Teifi and Purple Moose's Glaslyn, and keeping an element of surprise by stocking one-off seasonal ales or beers from new breweries."

Many local pubs order beer from Ystwyth Ales which is run by landlord of the Druid Inn in Goginan, Lewis Johnston. The Druid was awarded the title of CAMRA's Welsh Pub of the Year in 2017, so it's fair to say that Lewis knows a thing or two about good Welsh ale!

The Black Lion, New Quay



Real cider in Bae Ceredigion

There are several cider producers in the area but, due to the small batches they produce, you are more likely to see their products at a food festival or in bottles in a delicatessen than on the bar of a local pub.

"Fortunately, the range of real cider on sale in local pubs from across Wales is growing," says Gail Robinson, Bae Ceredigion CAMRA Cider Officer. "In Aberystwyth, head for Kane's Bar and the Glengower Hotel which both have dedicated cider bars. Elsewhere, several pubs sell the well-known Welsh cider brand Gwynt y Ddraig but, if you fancy trying something different, the Druid Inn in Goginan offers a range of draught and bottled ciders and Y Talbot in

Tregaron often sells cider from smaller producers. If you are not sure if a pub sells real cider, look out for the "Real Cider Sold Here" window sticker or ask the bar staff as it may not always be clearly on display."

Beer and cider festivals

Local festivals are a great place to try a new beer or cider. There is an increasing number of them held every year and they all offer ale and cider produced in Wales - see our feature on page 16 for dates and details of this year's events.

Taking a taste of Wales home

You can buy bottled beer and mini kegs directly from most breweries - check their websites for opening times. Some pubs sell bottles, cans or brewery gift packs to take away - the Wynnstay Arms Hotel in Machynlleth has a small shop selling local beer and other goods. Several independent shops sell a great range of bottled Welsh beer. These include Cletwr, a community-run shop in Tre'r Ddôl, Watson & Pratt's in Lampeter, which offers a bulk-buying deal on Welsh beer, and Treehouse, a health food shop and restaurant in Aberystwyth. The best supermarket ranges of Welsh beer can be found in Morrisons in Aberystwyth, Spar in Tregaron and Co-op in Lampeter and Machynlleth.

Find out what real ale or real cider a pub offers on www.whatpub.com or search online for "Y Blog Cwrw" to read more about the growing number of Welsh breweries.



Bae Ceredigion member Toby Hodgkinson tells us why he loves the Dovey Valley Hotel in Cemmaes Road

What's the pub's history?

It was built in the 1860's as a hotel to serve the trade of the new railway line. Customers would disembark at the old Cemmaes Road station where a porter would take their bags across the road to the hotel. This would be the staging point for their Grand Tour of Snowdonia and the Cambrian coast.

The building is Grade II listed which acknowledges its status as a well preserved railway hotel. The Dovey's interior is of national importance and is listed in CAMRA's Britain's *Best Real Heritage Pubs*.

The pub has been sensitively restored to its former glory and you'll discover memorabilia throughout the building as you wander round its many rooms.

Tell us about the landlord.

The Dovey is a family run pub, with licensee Michael at the helm.

Which real ales have been on the bar recently?

There is a constantly changing offer from local breweries including Cader Ales, Cwrw Llyn, Montys, Evan Evans and others. It must be said that Michael keeps an excellent pint!

Does the pub serve food?

It hasn't done recently, but that's all going to change this summer when it will be providing both food and accommodation – ideal if you're walking the Glyndŵr's Way National Trail which runs right past the pub.



Toby Hodgkinson in the Dovey Valley Hotel

Does the pub hold any regular events or activities?

The Dovey is actively involved in the local community. Amongst other activities, it hosts Welsh classes, a monthly book club and dominoes.

It also stages regular quiz nights and acoustic music nights that raise money for both the Wales Air Ambulance and for a defibrillator for the village – both these events are very popular and are held on selected Sundays.

Where's your favourite place in the pub to enjoy a drink?

At an arm's length from a pint of crisp cask ale! You can catch the sun setting over the valley in summer on one of the many benches in the beer garden, or warm yourself by the blazing fire in the depths of winter.

Sum up in one sentence why our readers should visit your local.

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