



Solihull Drinker

Issue No 90
Winter 2019



Free
Please take one

Knowle & Dorridge Cricket Club Wins Solihull CAMRA's Club Of The Year 2019



Branch Chair Martin Buck presents Sue Fitter, Dan Cornes, and Membership Chairman Jon Knibb with their 4th successive Club Of The Year award. (See page 18 for more details)

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Help Us To Select Our Good Beer Guide Pubs

One of the most important functions of a branch is to select pubs and clubs to appear in the annual CAMRA Good Beer Guide. Each year we look at the process used for Solihull & District, with the dual aim of encouraging as wide a participation by the branch membership as possible, and ensuring the end result is our most worthy pubs and clubs being chosen.

At the November, December, and January branch meetings we accept nominations from the floor. Any member can nominate a pub or club. As long as another member seconds the proposal, it goes into the selection process. We insist on nominations being in person, as **the nominator has to commit to completing a survey form of their nominated pub or club.**

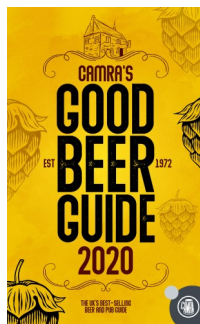
Judging is open to all branch members. Each nomination is scored out of ten on a number of categories; beer quality, service and welcome, overall impression, and so on. A member can score as many or as few pubs as they like. Obviously, we want people to get out and visit as many as they can, but our main request is for scores to be consistent

across the pubs being judged. Once all votes have been cast, nominations are ranked on average score. The five West Midlands and two Warwickshire premises with the highest averages are our selection.

We will again use an electronic voting form this year, which will be accessible after the January nominations. Branch members will be able to log in via a link to be sent out in an email, and enter their scores. We will still accept paper judging forms at the February branch meeting.

Look out for emails on the run up to the meetings for nominations and judging. You must have registered on the National CAMRA website, and given permission to be contacted, to receive emails from your branch.

Martin Buck



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Campaign
for
Real Ale

Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

(Branch meetings start at 8.30pm except where noted otherwise)

Monday 6th January	Saxon, Cheswick Green
Monday 3rd February	8.00pm + AGM Knowle And Dorridge Cricket Club
Monday 2nd March	The Fieldhouse, Solihull

Committee Meetings

(8.30pm start. Members may attend but only participate if invited to do so)

Monday 20th January	Grenville Club, Solihull
Monday 16th March	Crabmill, Preston Bagot

Socials

Saturday 14th December	Christmas Crawl around Warwick
Saturday 25th January	Trip around GBG nominated pubs

For more details and contacts for the above, please call Secretary Allan Duffy on 01564 200 431 or visit our website: www.solihull.camra.org.uk

Most, though not all, of our local pubs have disabled access. If you wish to come to a meeting and require assistance, contact us beforehand and we will do our best to help.

Upcoming Midlands Area Beer Festivals and Events

**FOR NATIONAL BEER FESTIVALS
PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING LINK**
<https://www.camra.org.uk/beer-festivals-events/>

December 6-8 (Fri-Sun)

**WEATHEROAK BREWERY & CANEY'S
CIDER - BEER AND CIDER FESTIVAL**

Weatheroak Tap House, 21a High Street, Studley B80 7HN. Selection of real ales, traditional ciders, and fruit ciders. Live music, raffle, meet the producers, vote for the best beer and best cider www.weatheroakbrewery.co.uk or www.caneyscider.co.uk.

January 9-12 (Thu-Sun):

INN ON THE GREEN BEER FESTIVAL

2 Westley Road, Acocks Green, B27 7UH. Music Friday and Saturday live and free. www.innonthegreen.pub

LOCAL BEER FESTIVALS 2020

Shirley Beer Festival will celebrate its 10th festival next year on the 15th and 16th of May, with the now traditional Comedy Night on Thursday 14th May. The festival at Camp Hill Rugby Club has grown enormously since the first festival in the clubhouse itself, and is now the biggest festival around Solihull.

Other festivals to look out for include the **Knowle and Dorridge Round Table Festival** in Knowle, normally in mid-March, at the Knowle Legion, and the **Kings Heath Beer Festival** on the 6th and 7th March. Both of these festivals normally have a big screen to watch the 6 nations.

All of these festivals are run by the respective Round Tables, so you can enjoy yourself in the knowledge that you're also helping good causes.

Notice of the 2019 AGM

Notice is hereby given of the Solihull & District CAMRA AGM, which will take place at the Knowle And Dorridge Cricket Club, on Monday 3rd February 2020, starting at **8.30pm**.

If any current Committee member wishes to stand down, or anyone wishes to apply to take up a Committee post (all Committee posts are open to any Solihull & District branch member), in both instances it would be appreciated if you could please email your intentions at least two weeks before the meeting to the Chairman Martin Buck at martin@durlston.com.

The AGM will be preceded by a short Branch Meeting starting at **8.00pm**.

Members are eligible to vote at the meeting on our branch's entries in the Good Beer Guide, and for Pub of the Year, if they have not already voted online.

The criteria for qualification for these awards are published on the Solihull CAMRA website.

There will be the usual beery raffle to go towards the cost of the AGM buffet, for which beer related prize donations would be gratefully received on the night.

Great British Beer Festival Winter to LoveBrum

Drinkers at next year's Great British Beer Festival Winter can play their part in shaping the future of Birmingham, after organisers announced LoveBrum as the official charity partner of the 2020 festival.

Running from 4th – 8th February 2020 at New Bingley Hall in Birmingham, the Great British Beer Festival Winter will be hosted in the UK's second city for the first time, with the festival celebrating the broad history and diversity of both the city and the West Midlands region. Visitors will be able to sample an exhaustive range of real ale, ciders and perries, as well as a plethora of world beers, wines and spirits.

Supporting small and medium-sized projects across the Birmingham area, LoveBrum generates funding from memberships, donations and events, which is invested in schemes across the city. Many of LoveBrum's highly deserved causes frequently miss out on traditional grants and financial backing. Often volunteer-led, these unsung heroes deliver real change to resident's lives and bring wider social, economic and environmental benefits to Birmingham.

Ambassadors from LoveBrum will be on site at the Great British Beer Festival Winter, raising awareness and collecting dona-

tions towards new projects throughout 2020. LoveBrum will also run the cloakroom facilities at the New Bingley Hall, with all fees going to the charity. Customers will also be invited to donate the value of any unredeemed beer tokens to the cause.

Mark Parkes, GBBFW Festival Organiser, said: "Birmingham sits at the heart of the West Midlands region and we were keen to give something back to our host city. Many of the organising committee live, work or socialise in and around Birmingham and we are delighted to partner with LoveBrum as our official festival charity. With the aim to support more than 36 projects every year, the money raised at the festival will contribute to delivering tangible benefits to hundreds of people from all backgrounds across Birmingham. We encourage anyone attending the Great British Beer Festival Winter to donate what they can and look forward to working alongside the charity in the run up to the festival."

With a fabulous selection of mouth-watering food stalls, top entertainment, exciting activities and an array of tastings and talks to accompany your drinks, there's plenty to learn, discover and enjoy at the Great British Beer Festival Winter. Tickets are now on sale at: winter.gbbf.org.uk.



The World's Strangest Beer Ingredients

At the recent Lion's beer festival in Shirley, a couple of teams from Solihull CAMRA took part (with distinction), however one of the rounds had us really guessing and amazed in equal measure. This was looking at ingredients of various beers, and this piqued my interest in which other strange ingredients brewers put in their beer.

You may be familiar with Oyster Stout, which is made using oysters. Bushy's brewery on the Isle of Man uses fresh oysters in the late stages of the boil and "gives this delicious chocolaty, creamy beer mysterious qualities which, although not scientifically proven, help a couples' amorousness if not their fertility!" This is the only beer, of those mentioned in this article, that I have actually tasted and it is rather good.

However, not all Oyster Stouts are created equal. The 21st Amendment Brewery in the US, crafts their beer with Hog Island Sweetwater oyster shells. According to the brewery, it gives their stout a "silky, salty finish."

I'm not sure what finish you get with the Rocky Mountain Oyster Stout, brewed by the Wynkoop Brewing company. "A meaty foreign-style stout, Rocky Mountain 7.5% Oyster Stout is made with Colorado base malts, roasted barley, seven specialty malts, Styrian Goldings hops, and 25 pounds of freshly sliced and



roasted bull testicles". It is described as "an assertive, viscous stout with a rich brown/black color, a luscious

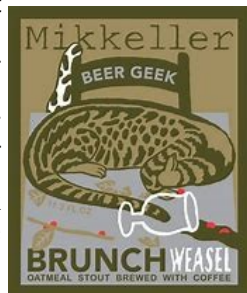
mouthfeel and deep flavors of chocolate, espresso and nuts. The beer sports a savory, umami-like note and a roasty dry finish". Probably makes you talk a lot of bull after a few!

The one that got us intrigued at the quiz was Rogue Beard Beer. This features a yeast strain cultivated in Head Brewer John Maier's beard, hence the name. Next time you see a brewer with a beard just watch out. The beer has just been announced as the official beer of "No Shave November", an American equivalent to our November.



While thankfully not bottled or served (yet), a news story recently reported that a 46 year old man in the USA started brewing beer in his gut after it "accidentally became home to high levels of brewer's yeast." This condition is actually known as auto brewery syndrome, and he only became aware when he experienced symptoms of being drunk, without actually drinking and showing an elevated blood alcohol level. Let's hope that the beer marketing men don't get any strange ideas.

One to treat with caution is Mikkeller Beer Geek Brunch Weasel, one of whose ingredients is coffee beans that have passed through a weasel-like civet that eats only the ripest and richest coffee beans, and are extracted from its poop by the brewer. Apparently enzymes in the civet's stomach break down the coffee beans resulting in "exceptionally rich



flavours". Mikkeller opened Bar London in Shoreditch last year in conjunction with Rick Astley, and are planning another brewpub opening in London. Whether you will be able to buy Brunch Weasel there is not clear.

Another American brewery, Oxbow produce a 4.5% Saison Dell'Aragosta, brewed in collaboration with Birrificio del Ducato that incorporates fresh, live Maine lobster and sea salt. Scoring 87% on Beer Advocate, one drinker described it as "light, dry, tart citrus, a touch of funk, finishes with some salinity and a hint of the lobster. Sounds obvious but this is the perfect summer beer to pair with seafood. Really well done".

While on the fishy theme the Icelandic Stedji Brewery produce a beer for the annual Thorri Festival that uses a giant whale testicle which has been smoked in sheep's dung. Hvalur2 is a porter with "hints of caramel and a smoky aftertaste". A "Sour Whale Beer" at 5.2% is a new addition. "The beer style is close to



a lambic but it isn't, so we call it "Icelandic lambic". It has a nice sour taste

from the kambucha (*kambucha is comprised of water, tea, sugar and a fermenting culture*) and a good filling.

Dock Street's "Walker", following the "Walking Dead" theme, is a 7.2% American Pale Stout, that has fresh goat brains added at the pre-sparge stage, providing this beer "with intriguing, subtle notes of smoke".

However, one of the most bizarre beers, and another one not for vegetarians is Right Brain Brewery's Mangalitsa Pig Porter. The slogan on the bottle is "extracts are for sissies", and the

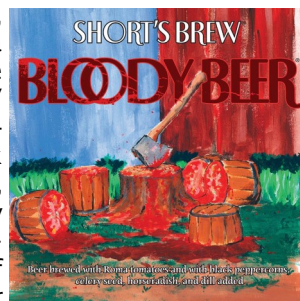


beer itself is "made with real pig parts, specifically, whole smoked pig heads, snouts, eyeballs and all. The heads are put in cheesecloth bags and dropped in the batch. Chocolate malts are added to the brew to offset the salty swine". It is described as "a soft pretzel covered with a slice of ham and Hershey's chocolate on top." This year's brew was being launched on the 2nd November with an all you can eat pig roast.



Some beers go with sweet ingredients over savoury, and one of those is brewed by Maryland based DuClaw Brewery. Brewed with Fruity Pebbles cereal, the 5.5% "Sour Me Unicorn Farts", a "glittered sour ale with fruity cereal mashed in, brings slightly tart sour, a bouquet of fruits & a hint of biscuit. A collaboration between DuClaw Brewing Co. and Diablo Doughnuts".

Finally on our trip around the weird and wonderful(?), we come to Short's Brewing Company "Bloody Beer". It is a beer brewed using a "California Lager strain commonly found in steam beer which is a lager fermented at warmer temperatures. Therefore, it's not quite ale and not quite lager but rather possessing characteristics of both. In the primary fermentation, we add Roma tomato puree (about 2 lbs./gallon!), horse-radish, black peppercorns, dill and celery seed. The combination of golden beer fermenting



with Roma tomato puree produces a uniquely balanced, bright orange beer that tastes like a bloody Mary."

I can't see many of these beers catching on here, but you never know!

David Cove

Visit to Halton Turner



Three weeks before our Solihull Beer Festival, a group of us paid a visit to one of the newest breweries local(ish) to Solihull.

Our host was head brewer, Dan, who gave us all a good sampling from their range of beers, comprising two cask beers and two key kegs, as well as some snacks.

The two beers arranged on the cask bar were Waitangi Dawn, a 4.2% NZ Session IPA; and Whiplash, a very tasty 5.4% Pale Ale. These were supplemented by two key keg beers; Glass Forest, a 4% German Style Lager; and Beverly Hills Hop, a 6% American IPA.

Conscious that we were later visiting the Shirley Lions beer festival for a quiz (which incidentally our team won), I started on the lower A.B.V beers first, building up to the Beverly Hills Hop.

Halton Turner only started brewing in February in Lakey Lane, Hall Green, exactly opposite the Thousand Trades Brewery (which we hope may be resurrected in the future). Frequent festival goers may have seen their beers at the Kings Heath festival earlier this year, as well as other local festivals, and on the bar at the Inn On The Green.

They produce a mixture of cask and key keg ales on site, five of which you were able to sample at our Beer Festival in October. On cask we had the Waitangi

Dawn, as well as Primo, a 4.5% English Bitter. On key keg, providing two firsts for the Solihull festival, we had initially had Glass Forest (the German Style Lager) and a 7.2% West Coast DIPA, Hall Green With Envy. This 7.2% beer was deceptively easy to drink so had to be treated with care (spoken with personal experience - but not directly myself I hasten to add!). It was actually the first beer to run out, replaced by the Beverly Hills Hop.



Checking Out The Beers At Halton Turner

Comments made on Untappd about their beers at our festival were also good.

Future plans include a tap room at their brewery, and a range of unusual beers to try. I am particularly interested in the 7.7% Cortado Coffee Double IPA that they have on their list of beers to do. The 4.8 % Cookies & Cream Chocolate Vanilla Stout would also be of interest.

Other beers in their normal range, not already mentioned are; Blindspot, a 5% Stout; Hornblower, a 4.7% Red Rye IPA, both on cask; and a Mango Milkshake 5.2% IPA on keg. I look forward to seeing some if not all of these in bars locally over the coming months.

Halton Turner can be contacted on hello@haltonturnerbrew.co or on Facebook.

David Cove (photo Ian Hunter)

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Midweek trip to Burton on Trent

Often cited as the brewing capital of the world, this may be true in volume but in terms of real ale breweries and choice it is now open to much debate. However, Burton is well worth a visit to sample some fine beers in a plethora of good pubs, including 3 micros.

I had to decide which way to do the tour to include as many of the micros as possible, as we would not be able to do all three. It was our intention to start off at The Weighbridge. However, when I did the recce I was saddened to see that it had closed permanently. Finding that the National Brewing Centre Tap Bar and Restaurant was open at 11am made the decision for me.

So a goodly party of Solihull CAMRA's aged, and not so wise (pictured here), rolled in to find plenty of seating and 6 beers on the bar. The pub is an adage to the museum and a visit to the museum includes a sample (and by the way is well worth a visit.). The bar is open plan

and comfortable and I have to say most welcoming. Next door is the museum shop with an array of bottled beers and brewery related merchandise. It was good that they serve in oversized glasses, ensuring a full measure. The beers comprised 4 from the museum's own brewery; Heritage Masterpiece IPA, St Modwen's Golden Ale, Offililer's Best Bitter and Charrington Oatmeal Stout; and independents Dow Bridge Dark and Tydd Steam Roadhouse Bitter. Nothing really stood out but all were in perfect condition.



On next to one of Burton's longstanding independents, Burton Bridge Brewery. The Burton Bridge Inn has a traditional interior and adjoins the brewery. Set up in 1982, the brewery has won accolades at CAMRA's Champion Beers of Britain Awards, achieving Gold in the Bitter class in 1983. However, Burton Bridge beers have never been a strong favourite with me so I sat it out whilst the others downed a pint of Golden Delicious, Sovereign Gold, Bridge Bitter, Burton Porter, DBA, Stairway to Heaven and Festive Ale. Conveniently the pub offers paddles so we could have a good go at the range on offer.

Feeling hungry now we headed for the Wetherspoons. We had to pass the Fuggle and Nugget micropub as it did not open until 4pm. A bite to eat at the Lord Burton, washed down with a pint of Purity Bunny Hop went down well, then a short walk down the High Street brought us to the Crossings.

Its recent history has been a little up and down, but since its renaming in 2015 it has gained a reputation for stocking some interesting beers; Derby Business As Usual; Black Sheep Monty Python's Holy Grail; a beautiful Rat White Rat; Purity UBU; Dancing Duck's Dark Drake; and my other choice Draught Bass... thought I'd try it, it was OK. As to the pub itself? It has a modern interior with some rather silly additions. A false fire on a television screen and in the gent's loo, pre-recorded jokes. Well, I suppose it takes all types.

The Dog Inn, just a short walk away has been a Black Country Ales pub since 2015. Built in the late 19th century, they have kept its traditional look and are true to form with a range of guest beers supplementing their own. 11 hand-pumps and traditional ciders were available. BCA's Fireside, Pig on the Wall and BFG completed their own range. Guests were Northern Monk's Eternal, Salted Caramel Star, Bloody Marty Porter and New World IPA. A bit heavy on the Northern Monk! Mallinson's Olicano Mel-

on, Thornbridge Twin Peaks, and Draught Bass were the other guests, the Thornbridge being particularly nice.



Serving Direct From The Barrel at Coopers

Ever onward to a pub that needs very little introduction to CAMRA members, the Coopers Tavern. I remember it many moons ago when it only served Draught Bass direct from the barrel. Now under the ownership of Joules, Bass is still served direct from the cask with, on our visit, Bristol Beer Factories Talisman, Beowulf's Dark Raven, and Wily Fox's Karma Citra served in the same way. Joules beers consisted of Shropshire Hop, Pale Ale, and Slumbering Monk. It's a lovely multi roomed pub with basic bar snacks and a good range of ciders and perries... well worth a visit, if a little out of town towards the station, which brings us to our last pub on the crawl.

The Last Heretic micropub opened in 2016 and for anyone on the way to the station is a must to stop off at. We did and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, so much so I forgot to make any notes! Remember, however it does not open until 4pm so time your visit accordingly. From what I remember it had 4 hand-pumps, and like the Coopers served light snacks.

So, that was our tour of Burton. There are plenty more pubs but if you want to stay close to the town centre you can't go far wrong in following our tour

Steve Dyson

Caney's Cider Interview

A couple of weeks before our beer festival Paul Wigley and I visited the Caney's Cider shop at 4 High Street, Studley (www.caneyscider.co.uk). For those of you who know where the Weatheroak Tap House is in Studley, Caney's shop is opposite.

We visited to interview Victoria Caney about Caney's Cider, to sample the draft ciders (obviously), and to place an additional order for our festival. For those sharp eyed amongst you at the festival you will have seen a box of the Raspberry Tickler and a box of the Witches Tit, a dry but rather drinkable (in my opinion) cider.

I'd hoped to be able to try 'The Officer', a cider they age in Bourbon casks, but a limited amount is produced each year and there was none left. John has promised to let us know as soon as this year's supply is ready in 2020. They are also set to produce a champagne cider for next year and have not ruled out producing a perry either.

John and Victoria Caney set up their business in 2016, having struggled for years to buy decent real cider in the Midlands. Victoria explained: 'We bit the bullet and sank our savings into doing something we knew we loved. Our ciders are made from 100% freshly pressed juice, using a variety of cider apples'. It is a true family run business, with their children helping out during the pressing and production season.

They use only cider apples and will travel some distance to collect specific varieties, including some of the more modern varieties such as Angela, a 21st century bitter sweet. By selecting specific apples they are able to give a distinct natural flavour you just can't get in the run of the mill ciders in pubs. They do have a small private orchard of their own, but those apples are used for cider they make only for themselves (and why not).

Apple picking and pressing can start in September and carry on for months until all the apples have been sorted. Where possible they recycle the pulp and feed it to local pigs. They are keen to be environmentally friendly and use 'I am not plastic' cups at festivals and 100% biodegradable bags in the shop.

In the shop they usually stock up to 4 boxed ciders that you can buy on draft in recyclable containers, or from a selection of bottled options. Though they prefer to produce traditional still ciders, they recognise there is demand for sparkling too. They have bottled ciders pasteurised and carbonated at Pershore College, and although John would prefer not to, he does produce some fruit flavoured ciders, Victoria having convinced him that there is a demand for these. Personally I prefer unadulterated cider too, but I also recognise there is demand for fruit flavours.



They also stock ciders from other regional producers, as well as bottled ales, many from local or regional micro-breweries such as Boat Lane, Punchline, Pershore, Twisted Barrel, Green Duck, Purity, Woodcote Manor, and Lab Culture. The shop is well worth visiting whether you like cider or interesting ales. It also has local books, apple juice, beer and cider gift packs, local chutneys and pickles, and lots more, so why not pay them a visit?

Ray Cooke

Ember Inns Pub Of The Year 2018



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Branch Beer Quality Scoring - Points Win Beer!

CAMRA has long promoted the National Beer Scoring System (NBSS), and encouraged branches to make it a key part of selecting pubs for the Good Beer Guide (GBG). Solihull & District has always looked at the scores, but the issue we've had is that our pubs don't get enough scores to make it reliable.

We are looking at the number of scores submitted by each branch member, with the top three scorers (*excluding committee members*) each quarter awarded bottles of beer as an incentive to enter scores. If you want to be in with a chance of free beer, all you have to do is make use of NBSS. Please note: only scores in pubs from our branch area count as we cannot see scores for

other branches' areas.

For the period July to September the top scorers were the usual suspects John Tilley (49), Iain Wells (45), and Jon Knibb (39). They all received prizes at the November branch meeting.

To score beers you can use the What-Pub.com website. When viewing a pub's details, choose 'Beer Scoring', then simply choose your score (from 0 to 5), the brewery and the beer. That can be done on a smartphone at the time, or using a computer back at home. Now NBSS has also been incorporated into CAMRA's GBG smartphone app.



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CAMRA's Members' Weekend April 2020

After visiting Coventry in 2018 and Dundee in 2019, the Members' Weekend moves to the city of York in April 2020. York itself is a beer drinker's delight so expect an eventful weekend.

The venue for the AGM itself is the Central Hall, West Campus, University of York, Heslington, York YO10 5DD, which is just over a mile outside the city centre itself.

Online registration closes mid-March 2020. All members wishing to attend are encouraged to register as this helps CAMRA plan activities and get an idea of how many members to expect. It's free to attend and you can go to as few or as many sessions as you like. By registering online you'll also receive vital information in advance - including details of trips, and activities.

The Members' Bar will be located in the Exhibition Centre and is where you can

meet old friends, make new ones and enjoy a range of great beers, ciders and perries from the area. As the name suggests this bar is open to CAMRA members only and has a great beer festival feel to it.

Organised trips are also sociable occasions - and offer members the chance to visit local breweries. Tickets go on sale early February so please pre-register to make sure you get the advance email!

As well as the organised trips you can also check out the many excellent pubs in York itself, and meet up with other members from all over the country. For those interested in trains the York train museum is actually free to visit, and the York Minster is magnificent.

For further details as they become available check out the CAMRA website.

A wealth of history, great pubs
and beer await you

CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE



MEMBERS' WEEKEND,
AGM & CONFERENCE

3-5 April 2020

YORK

Register to attend
and/or to volunteer at
agm.camra.org.uk



Campaign
for
Real Ale

Editorial

Sadly I have to announce that this issue of the Solihull Drinker will be my last as Editor. I took over in Summer 2016 and this will be my 14th and final issue.

Over the last three years I have enjoyed meeting many wonderful people, entrepreneurs of the micro bar world (like Jeff at the Pup and Duckling, Mark at the Ale Rooms and Jav at the Shaking Hand), and drinkers like you and me.

During my time the Solihull Drinker, I am proud to say, was a runner up in the West Midlands Magazine Of The Year 2016, and was highly commended in 2018. I hope that you have enjoyed reading it as much as I have enjoyed receiving each issue off the presses.

It doesn't just arrive there however. There is a lot of hard work that goes on behind the scenes and we would not be able to produce such a magazine without our advertisers, who effectively pay for the magazine, and our contributors.

I would like to thank two ever-presents; Steve Dyson for his varied and wonderful articles (I still wonder how he manages to recall so much from some really epic pub crawls!), and Dave Mckowen, our membership secretary who supplies me with his Membership Matters each issue. Of course all our contributors are valued, and I would like to thank each and every one of you for your contribution to making this magazine a success. You know who you are!

With work and other pressures, I have taken the difficult decision to resign as Editor following this issue.

If you are interested in taking on this fascinating, but challenging, role please contact our Chair, Martin Buck - contact details are on page 20.

I will be on hand for help and guidance, especially during the first couple of issues. I was greatly helped in my early days by our previous editor, Julia Wright, for which I remain truly grateful.

Next year will be an exciting time for the Midlands with the Great British Beer Festival Winter taking place at the New Bingley Hall in Birmingham in February. I will certainly be visiting once or twice.

Our own Solihull beer festival was held in early October, and from a lot of the feedback was a great success, with a wonderful range of beers, chosen by Paul Wigley, on sale. We also had two firsts for the Solihull festival with key keg beers from Halton Turner, including a lager! You can find out more about Halton Turner on page 8. The beer of the festival was Hop & Stagger Brewery Bridgnorth Porter, although it was a difficult to choose between a large number of excellent beers. Well done Paul.

If you are looking for a good weekend you can't do much better than York, and CAMRA are visiting there for their AGM in April. In addition to the AGM itself, the Members' bar, and the planned brewery trips, there is also a wonderful world of beer and cider in the city itself.

I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

Cheers for now.

David Cove



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 The Lyndon Pub Solihull



Opening Hours:

Sun – Wed: 12.00pm – 11:30pm

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CAMRA Real Ale, Cider and Perry Vouchers

The CAMRA Voucher scheme is a member benefit that entitles members to £30, sixty vouchers of fifty pence, off a pint of Real Ale, Cider or Perry. It complements the existing Real Ale Discount Scheme and is a bigger and better voucher scheme for members

As of 1 July 2019, the Wetherspoon vouchers are being replaced with a new CAMRA owned and operated voucher scheme. All existing Wetherspoon vouchers are still valid during the next 12 months.

All new and renewing CAMRA members will now receive £30 (60 x 50p) worth of CAMRA Real Ale, Cider and Perry Vouchers. All vouchers will be valid for the length of membership for added flexibility.

They are redeemable at over 1,550 pubs nationwide, including J D Weth-



erspoon, Stonegate, Brains, Castle Rock and Amber Taverns managed pubs.

To get an up-to-date listing for pubs participating near you, enter your post-code at www.camra.org.uk/join/membership-benefits/camra-voucher-scheme. For the Solihull & District pubs please refer to page 20.

CAMRA promotes responsible drinking and thus encourages all vouchers to be used responsibly at all times.

Knowle & Dorridge Cricket Club Score 4 in A Row

Knowle and Dorridge Cricket Club (K&DCC) has been voted Solihull and District Club of the Year for the fourth year in succession. The award, voted for by branch members, recognises both the friendliness of the club and the constantly changing range of real ale on offer.

As an example, when the award was presented on 26th September, on the bar were Jennings Cumberland Ale, Blanco Blonde from Sheffield Brewery Co, and Slovenian Rhapsody from Hop Back. The scores submitted to CAMRA over the past year cover more than thirty different breweries; in addition, the club now offers a real cider alongside the ales.

Branch chair Martin Buck said: "The KDCC winning this award four years running is a remarkable achievement. With its ever changing selection of real ales, served in excellent condition, the club really is a champion of the real ale cause, which has led to its recent string of appearances in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide; both committee and bar staff are

to be praised for the effort they put in. The award also recognises the friendly nature of the club, and we thoroughly enjoy our visits to the club."

Membership Secretary and CAMRA member, Jon Knibb replied; "Over the course of the year, Dan Cornes has taken over as Bar Manager. Dan is very proud that the Club has been awarded Solihull CAMRA Club of the Year, demonstrating that he has kept up the standards of his predecessor. The Club are delighted with the award. We have had a new glass washing machine installed and are undergoing a refurbishment of the cellar to ensure that ales and ciders are served in good condition. We will also be seeking Cask Marque accreditation.

We have three cask ales and one hand-pumped cider that vary each week. We like to let members and guests experience a wide range of beers and ciders. The club welcome visitors from CAMRA, who are encouraged to show their membership cards at the bar".

Hail To The Ale *Local Beer, Pub, Club and Brewery News*

At the time of writing the **Red House** was still closed for refurbishment. It has been closed for nearly two months now, so we will keep an eye on what is happening for future issues.

We have heard that after a review of its viability, Mark and Lynn have decided to cease brewing at the **Blue Bell** and to concentrate their efforts at their other brewery (**Rock and Roll**). Given the threat to their brewery from the developers this is understandable.

The **Bluebell** in Henley-in-Arden has closed. We don't know why, or if it is to open again. Check Whatpub for the latest information

The **Good Intent** has now opened in

Birmingham close to Snow Hill station in the Great Western Arcade. Set up by Craddocks Brewery, it is a unique venture, pledging its profits to Birmingham charities. Selling real ales and craft beers over two floors, it should become a good stopping off point before the train back to Solihull. Reports so far have been good.

It looks like work is now under way at the new **Thornbridge** pub in Birmingham centre, and is reported as due to open in November. This seems to be a touch of deja-vu as we were reporting the same news last year! Situated on Colmore Row, close to the Christmas Market, it will be worth keeping an eye on its progress.

The White Swan



FOOD HYGIENE RATING

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Sun - Wed:

7.00am - midnight

Thurs - Sat:

7.00am - 1.00am

Alcohol served from

10.00 am

Food available from

7.00am to 11.00pm
daily



Best choice of real ales on 10 hand pumps

Up to 5 guest cask ales from premium
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Useful Contact Numbers

Chair/ Beer Festival		Pubs Campaigning/Socials	
Martin Buck	01564 770708	Paul Wigley	07402 312457
Secretary		Treasurer	
Allan Duffy	01564 200431	Lawrence Loy	email on website
Membership		Solihull Drinker Editor	
Dave Mckowen	01564 778955	Vacant	
Cider and Perry/ Vice Chair		Press & Publicity	
Ray Cooke	01564 777890	Vacant	

Trading Standards contacts:

For local consumer advice in our area please contact the following

Solihull - www.solihull.gov.uk/tradingstandards

Warwickshire - www.warwickshire.gov.uk/contactustradingstandards

Citizens Advice Consumer Service phone 03454 040506

Solihull Pubs & Clubs CAMRA Member Discounts

Flute and Flagon, Yates, The White Swan (Solihull Centre) and **The Pump House** are taking the new CAMRA Real Ale Discount Scheme vouchers.

Ember Inns (**Fieldhouse, Colebrook, Woodmans Rest, Olton Tavern, Red Lion Knowle**) - 20p/ pint except Mondays where all cask ales are £2.49.

Fieldhouse additionally gives 20% off food with a discount card available from the bar. For other offers see the advert on page 13.

The Lyndon give 20p/pint except Thursdays when a pint is £2.70. Also 5% off food for card carrying members.

Drum and Monkey, Wharf Tavern, Drawbridge Inn, Boat Inn, Greswolde Arms, give 10% off real ales.

Vintage Inns (**Red Lion Earlswood**) 20p/ pint

The **Ale Rooms, Knowle** 40p/pint or 20p/ half pint

Tap and Tandoor, Solihull 10% off a pint of selected Craft Beers.

The Forest, Dorridge From Sunday 11a.m to Wednesday 11p.m £3/pint for card carrying members (around 80p-90p discount)

Please note that discounts given to CAMRA members are at the discretion of the licensee, and these may be withdrawn or amended at any time. They are a privilege given to **card carrying CAMRA members** as a gesture of goodwill.

CAMRA believes that no CAMRA member or Branch should ask for, or expect, a discount from any pub or brewery.

THE BLUE BELL CIDER HOUSE

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Opening hours:

Monday—Saturday: 11.30am—11.00pm
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Home cooked food with a wide variety of daily specials served

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Keep up to date with what's on and what's new at our website:

<http://www.bluebellciderhouse.org/>

Monday - Jam Session (Live Music)

Tuesday, Thursday & Sunday - Poker

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Children & pets welcome
Large beer garden with canal views



Bratislava - 4 Days of Beer Drinking and a Little Bit of Culture

A mediaeval cityscape and a great pub scene proved a strong draw to Bratislava for our annual European city outing.

Having noted that Oxford branch had been there last year we read the article in their October-November 2018 magazine, Oxford Drinker. Further research on RateBeer found even more pubs to visit, taking our list to 30 potential venues. We covered 13 of them and were only thwarted by opening hours, mainly 4pm, advertised opening hours not being adhered to, and having to travel a distance out of town for some of the pubs.



Stupover, Bratislava - our first pub

Of the 30 pubs, 10 were brewpubs, and 3 breweries with a tap. However, the tap to Castle Brewery looked permanently closed. Bear in mind that smoking is allowed in pubs which do not serve food, and some food venues have smoking areas which can be a little intrusive when compared to our British non-smoking pubs. Furthermore many of the pubs were not easy to find being cellar bars or up alleys off the main street address.

To go through every pub we went to would be laborious, so let me give you some indication of the range of beers and pubs.

One of our favourites was Fabrika, a brew pub attached to the Loft Hotel, not far from the railway station. Another was Stupovar pub, right in the town centre. Possibly the most unusual pub was Steinplatz in the middle of a traffic island. Did it used to be a public toilet?



Brickmakers, Vienna

The usual lagers, both light and dark, wheat beers, IPAs and American APAs were common in most of the pubs, however there were the occasional weird fruit beers and other specialities. Differing ranges of food were usually available, ranging from snacks to a full 3 course meal.

Basing ourselves at the Hotel Perugia at Zelena 5 found us in an easy walking distance of some 10 to 11 pubs. We also took a day out to Vienna, a 14 Euro return train trip, where we did a little sightseeing and took in 4 pubs. Price-wise, Bratislava is half the price of Vienna, beers being about 2 Euros for 0.4 litres. Likewise food is quite cheap. Getting around on public transport is both efficient and cheap.

Check out Solihull CAMRA's website where the pubs on our lists can be seen. I certainly recommend a visit; I guarantee you will enjoy it.

Steve Dyson

Broomfields Hall

Solihull British Legion Club

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**Further details from the
Club Secretary Ben Brannigan**



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Real Ale



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The New Bingley Hall

Midlands Brewery Bible Launched

The Midlands edition of The Brewery Bible was launched at the Attic Brewery in Bournville, Birmingham, on Thursday 26 September 2019.

This claims to be the “Essential Guide to Local Beer in the Midlands” and follows on from the First Edition which covered the South-West of England. It covers the whole of the Midlands region, including the East and West Midlands, Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire & Shropshire.

A list of over 200 breweries in the region is included, along with detailed entries for many breweries, taprooms and craft beer bars. It also details two beer trails, including the Stirchley Beer Mile and the Black Country taphouses. It also links with a mobile phone app to “connect you directly with the best places and spaces serving the freshest local beer up and down the country”.

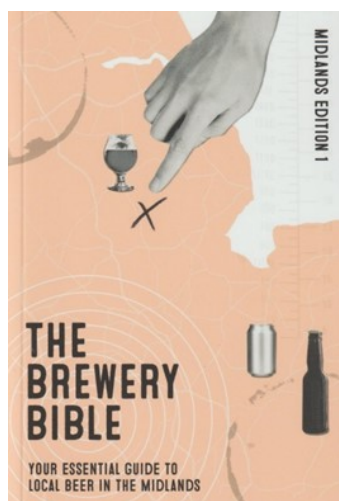
Although most of the breweries in the West Midlands are listed, there are some surprising omissions, including Froth Blowers (Erdington, Birmingham), Halton Turner (Hall Green, Birmingham), Olde Swan (Netherton - one of the oldest remaining home-brew pubs in the country), Ostlers (Harborne, Birmingham), Pig Iron (Rowley Regis) and

Rock & Roll (Hockley, Birmingham).

While the guide is a useful addition to the beer library, apart from the detailed descriptions of some breweries, tap-houses, and craft beer bars, it is not as extensive as the CAMRA Good Beer Guide and no replacement for it.

The guide is edited by well-known beer writer, Adrian Tierney-Jones, and retails at £6.99 (also available at Amazon).

Steve James



The Solihull Drinker is the quarterly newsletter of the Solihull & District Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Views expressed in the Drinker are not necessarily those of the Branch or CAMRA.

Contributions, comments and advertising enquiries should be sent to

committee@solihull.camra.org.uk

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The Editor has the right to amend or shorten any items in the newsletter, but will always honour the spirit & intention of the contribution.

Advertise Your Business Here With Us

We distribute nearly 3,000 copies of the well read Drinker out to pubs, around Solihull, Warwickshire, and parts of Birmingham.

This gives you the opportunity to put your business in front of people who are in the habit of visiting pubs and restaurants.

You don't have to be a pub or restaurant to advertise.

For details on rates, and help in producing your advert, please contact the Editor.

Twickenham Beer Festival October 2019

This was the 19th Festival and, having attended last year, my son and I were keen to pay a return visit. The venue, York House (Richmond Town Hall) is served by 8 local buses and a short walk from Twickenham station. This year there were 73 beers available from as far afield as Strathaven in Scotland, but with the majority from the London area, including the local brewery and festival sponsor, Twickenham Fine Ales. It also benefits from a room reserved for families with children, complete with a wide selection of toys.



I started off with Twickenham's Liquid Gold, a golden ale as the name suggests, hopped with Cascade and Simcoe hops, which tasted stronger than 3.8%. Next was Surrey Hills Shere Drop (4.2%), this year's Champion Beer of Britain, a well-balanced amber ale with a touch of sweetness on the palate. Another golden ale next in the form of Weird Beard's (Hanwell) Little Things that Kill an IPA, brewed with Willamette, Cascade and Olicana hops, autumnal aromas as befits the season. Staying with the golden ales Reunion Ales (3.7%) Engage! (appropriately named on the weekend England beat New Zealand at the Rugby World Cup!) was next and whilst described with a massive citrus hop hit, I mainly detected a grassy taste. With Rugby still on the taste buds the next beer was another golden, the appropriately named Pride of England (4.0) from Daleside Brewery; not outstanding but a well-balanced quaffable ale. Moving

onto another CAMRA award winner, a traditional ale from Green Jack of Lowestoft, Trawler Boys Best Bitter (4.6%), a complex bitter with a cloying finish. Then for our favourite beer of the festival Big Smoke Brew Co. of Esher and its Cosmic Dawn (4.1%), a West Coast style pale packed with fruit flavours and a strong citrusy nose. Next were two amber ales from Beerblefish Brewing of Edmonton, Hoppy Pale #1 (4.5%) and Pan Galactic Pale (4.6%) both of which were slightly hazy and neither noteworthy.

In an effort to forget the previous two ales the reliable Dancing Duck brewery's Amberillo (4.8%) was next, a wonderful blend of aromatic American hops balanced with a biscuity malt. An IPA next in the shape of Bond Brews Wild Tiger, interestingly hopped with local wild hedgerow hops and Goldings, although the malt flavours dominated.



Moving onto ales appropriate to Guy Fawkes, the next was Titanic's Iceberg, which was strong on hops with a smoky finish. Fisher's of High Wycombe Smoked Porter (surprisingly only 4.4%) was like drinking a bonfire in a glass. To clear the palate for the journey home, another Fisher's this time A.P.A. (4.5%), a classic American pale, dry hopped with Citra. Finally Redemption's (Tottenham) Rock the Kazbek with its namesake hops combined with Bobek to produce an almost sherbety taste and citrusy finish, which did the job of refreshing the palate.

Iain Wells

Membership Matters

In early October, the original Solihull Beer Festival, organised and run by local CAMRA volunteers, celebrated its 20th running. This year we showcased 40 real ales and 6 ciders from a cross section of the brewing industry to the general public. The beers and ciders came from breweries as far afield as Durham to Gloucestershire.

As a local CAMRA member you could join like minded volunteers and help us run the festival, where you would get half price beer for every session you volunteered for, and if that wasn't enough incentive you would get your transport costs paid for on the festival workers' trip. Or you could have come along and just enjoyed the great beers and ciders with extra beer vouchers for CAMRA members. Don't forget you will also get free or reduced entry to many other beer festivals organised by local CAMRA branches all over the country.

CAMRA membership won't break the bank as single person membership starts from as little as £26.50 per annum, which equates to about 50p per week, which I think is good value.

If you become a member of CAMRA you will also receive a monthly newsletter called "What's Brewing" with articles on what's happening within CAMRA and the real ale scene nationally, a very nice quarterly informative magazine titled "Beer" which has many interesting articles in colour including a wide range of topics such as breweries, bottled beers & heritage pubs. Both of these are available to download so you can read them at a time and place to suit yourself.

You also get £30 pounds worth of CAM-

RA Real Ale/Cider vouchers (see page 17 for more details). There are many other great money saving deals offered to CAMRA members so visit www.camra.org.uk for full details.

Joining CAMRA is not just about drinking real ale and cider. Even though the interest in real ale continues to grow, reflected by an ever increasing choice of real ale in pubs, we also support the brewing industry, publicans, consumers rights and community groups nationwide who are either trying to prevent their pub from being sold to developers, or being closed for good. Your membership fee helps to provide funds for this campaigning activity.

We hold monthly meetings at a local pub with real ale, but if you don't fancy that come along to one of our social events. We are a friendly bunch and will make you more than welcome. We currently have over 685 members so by the law of averages you are sure to find a like minded individual to enjoy a pint with. Please see the Dates For Your Diary on page 4, or visit our website.

It's the time of year again, when you may struggle to find a Christmas present for somebody who is also a real ale or cider fan. Forget the hassle of traipsing up and down the High Street, just turn to the back page of this magazine, or visit www.camra.org.uk for details of the different gift memberships available.

Finally I would like to wish all of you reading this publication a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and enjoy whatever you try or buy over the festive season and beyond.

Dave Mckowen, Membership Secretary

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The 91st edition of the Solihull Drinker should be published on Monday 2nd March 2020. Please note that the deadline for copy, advertising and any other contributions for this issue will be Sunday 9th February. Thank you in advance to all contributors.

It's the most wonderful time for a beer...



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Membership includes: £30 Real Ale vouchers • Discounts on pints at over 3,500 pubs nationwide • Exclusive monthly *What's Brewing* newspaper and quarterly *BEER* magazine • Special offers on over 180 beer festivals • Beer and brewing learning resources • Discounts in the CAMRA Shop

*For full T&Cs please visit the website for more details.



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