



Solihull Drinker

Issue No 91
Spring 2020

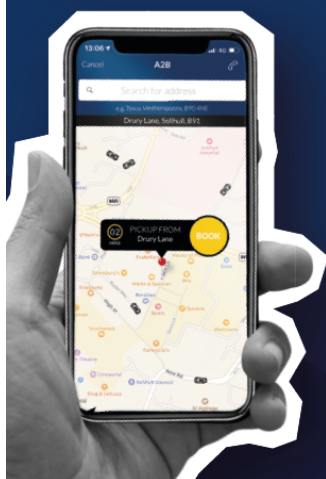


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Branch Pub of the Year 2020 Pup & Duckling, Olton



Branch Chair Martin Buck presents Sue and Jeff Berry with their Pub of the Year 2020 award, the second for the Pup & Duckling (See page 18 for more)



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Editorial: Keeping in Touch

As a branch, we hold a monthly meeting, open to all members; we aim to focus on the things that people want to talk about—beer, pubs and social events, with the boring stuff being discussed at committee meetings.

We also aim to have at least one social event per month; this could be a visit to a local beer festival, a pub crawl around a town or city, a 'campaigning' trip where we visit some of our own pubs, or occasionally a long weekend away.

On top of that, we get to hear news of goings on at pubs near us, plus beer festivals ranging from a pub getting in a few interesting beers to the Shirley Beer Festival—and now the Great British Beer Festival Winter, in Birmingham.

We've got four main ways to get in touch with our members, to keep them informed on all these things: branch meetings, email, the Solihull Drinker magazine you're reading right now, and social media. And we'd like to reach more of you! Our branch has almost 700 members, but when we send an email it goes to under 450 mailboxes. This could be because CAMRA doesn't have an email address on file, or a member could have opted out from branch emails. To check, simply go to

camra.org.uk and log on, then under My Membership choose Edit Membership Details. Under Preferences, there's the option to be contacted by your local branch; just ensure that's set to Yes for Electronic, and our emails will get through. We promise not to bombard you—we can only send out five emails a month at most!

If you haven't been to a branch meeting lately, take a look at the forthcoming meetings listed on the next page, and come along; our aim is to get the meeting done in 45 minutes, so we've then got time to socialise—and, of course, drink real ale.

On social media, simply go to Facebook and search for 'Solihull & District CAMRA'. We've got our own page where updates are posted, and we'd really like it if people start using it to tell us of local pub news.

We're a friendly bunch, so please do come along and say hello, either at a branch meeting or on one of our events. And remember, new members get a FREE PINT at their first meeting!

Martin Buck

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Campaign
for
Real Ale

**Due to coronavirus, all branch meetings and socials have been cancelled until further notice. Please visit our website for updates:
www.solihull.camra.org.uk**

Upcoming Midlands Area Beer Festivals and Events

**FOR NATIONAL BEER FESTIVALS
PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING LINK**

<https://www.camra.org.uk/beer-festivals-events/>

April 9-11 (Thu-Sat):

Inn on the Green Beer Festival

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

Great British Beer Festival Winter

Well, what a festival that was! In February one of CAMRA's national flagship events, the Great British Beer Festival Winter, came to the West Midlands. Held in the New Bingley Hall, a short walk from Jewellery Quarter train and Metro station, this was the first of a three-year deal bringing the festival to the region.

A festival on this scale is a massive undertaking; planning began more than a year in advance, with numerous meetings in the months leading up to the event. It took four lorries to bring all the equipment from CAMRA's central warehouse, plus countless deliveries of more than 400 cask ales, fifty ciders and perries, plus gin, wine and prosecco. Set-up took four days, covering Friday to Monday.

The festival opened on Tuesday 4th February, with a session for trade visitors and CAMRA members. This session also saw the judging of the Champion Winter Beer of Britain competition. Entries ranged from Adnams Old Ale, a 4.1% mild, to High as a Kite, from Heart of Wales—a 10.5% barley wine. We're sure there was no regional bias, but the overall champion was Blackheath Stout, from Fixed Wheel.

Solihull & District members were active at the festival, working over the set-up weekend (including the occasionally messy task of spiling more than 100 casks) and then volunteering on the bars during the festival. I think we drew the line at dressing up as penguins, the



costume chosen for those looking to recruit new members!

The main problem for attendees was simply the huge number of beers: all five bars had so many ales that you could only scratch the surface in a single visit, and that's without including the ciders and perries. On top of the festival bars, there were brewery

bars from Thornbridge, Froth Blowers and Highgate / Davenports. There were beers covering the length and breadth of the country from Cornwall to Orkney, as well as a wide variety of styles—Limencello IPA, anyone?

The festival was also a great place to meet up with fellow CAMRA members, from across the West Midlands and further afield. Alternatively, you could just take a seat at one of the many tables in the main hall and pass the time people-watching.

As the first of (at least) three GBBFW editions to be held in the West Midlands, this was a learning experience for all involved, and the organisers are already planning on how to make it even better next year. We'll keep you informed on plans so you can be sure to put it in your diary. Why not consider helping at the festival? If we get enough willing volunteers, we could arrange a Solihull CAMRA take-over of one of the bars, for a session.

For an alternative view, see Ian Hunter's article on page 26.

Wonders of the North East

For this three-day extravaganza, eight of us stayed in the Rivers Hotel, Felling in Gateshead. Overlooking the river, combining reasonable rates for a twin room and inexpensive large breakfasts, and just a ten minute walk to the excellent and cheap Metro, it made an ideal base for our exploration of the pubs in the area.

Thursday evening saw us head into the centre of Newcastle to the Bridge Hotel, nestled under Tyne High Level bridge and conveniently close to the Metro. A traditional pub in every sense with a nice tiled porch, etched glass, spacious and comfortable with a selection of 8 beers and 1 cider. Decisions, decisions, so I went for Longmoor Pale Ale, clean and hoppy and Anarchy Blonde Star with a less clean taste on the palate but both in excellent condition. Indeed, general agreement was this was definitely a good start to the evening.



Beautiful tiling in the Bridge Hotel

Next, to an institution in Newcastle, the Crown Posada; surprisingly not in the 2020 Good Beer Guide but nevertheless, one pub not to miss. Situated down a steep path from the Bridge it's another traditional pub with a long bar stretching back and there is still a record player in use, unusual but welcome. Furthermore it is on CAMRA's National Invento-

ry of Historic Pubs. Tyneside Blonde, Allendale Pennine Pale and Wolf; Three Brothers Little NEPA, Stewart Penny Post and Hadrian Black Gate brewed exclusively for the pub. I went for the Three Brothers, a New England Pale Ale at 4.1% nice but not as citrusy as I expected. We met my friend Dennis here who oversaw our tour for the rest of the day. Den is a Tyneside man who worked in Birmingham for a number of years in the same organisation as me. He moved back to Tyneside about 5 years ago and takes a keen interest in pubs and beer, particularly drinking it!

Bacchus, a favourite with the local CAMRA branch having been voted its Pub of the Year four times, was our next port of call. It is part of the Sir John Fitzgerald group who also own the Bridge Hotel and the Crown Posada. With 9 handpulls on the bar including a cider there was enough choice for us all in a comfortable but busy pub. On now to our last pub of the night, Lady Greys, a comfortable pub, busy again but with 8 handpulls a good variety of beers. Tumbling out of the pub and straight in to Haymarket Metro we were soon home and tucked up in bed thinking of the all-day mega crawl next day.

Up, bright(ish) and early(ish) and following a substantial hearty English breakfast we were all soon gathered for our tour of the locality. The Metro system is, as I have said earlier really good and cheap but do take care that you get on the right train as it is easy to board the wrong. Study the system website well before using it. Our train was going to Newcastle St James via Whitley Bay, Tynemouth and North Shields, each to provide us with an excellent pub crawl.

Arriving at Monkseaton Station we alighted into the Left Luggage Rooms on the station platform. At first we thought it was closed but a shove at the door and we were in. As its name implies it

used to be the Left Luggage office for the station, now converted into a large pub with a wide range of drinks and a bank of five handpumps. Two By Two Brewery was represented by their Citra Simcoe Ekunot IPA and Citra Oat Pale both unfiltered and unfiltered hence a little hazy and Arbor Breweries, The Devil Made Me Brew It, a strong stout, Big Boy DDH'D It And Ran Away, and Shangri-La, both session IPAs.



Seven go mad in the Crown Posada

A short walk brought us to the Dog and Rabbit, a new micropub/brewery for Whitley Bay and well worth seeking out. North Tyneside's Pub of the Year and as usual in an old shop, it boasted five handpumps. Two By Twos Moutere IPA; Allendale Pale Ale; Errant Games Without Frontiers a cherry porter and my choice North Ridings Pale Ale [v22] which was superb apart from the hops used were not quite to my liking. It appears that North Riding has a regime where different versions of the same core beer are produced.

Slightly retracing our steps now a little we popped into Mr Petit [ex Okapi Lounge]. Housed in an ex Poundstretchers supermarket it's a large comfortable eating/drinking establishment. Black Sheep Bitter; Sonnet 43 Abolition Amber Ale; Daleside Vermont Black IPA and Titanic's Chocolate and Vanilla Stout. Thatcher's Stan's Cheddar Valley cider satisfied the cider fraternity. I tried the Abolition, a little ordinary and the Daleside, much tastier. A little sip of the Vanilla Stout proved it to be very tasty too.

Back on our planned route, we headed for Black Storm's Brewery Tap Storm Cellar in York Street. Black Storm provided quite a few beers to our last Beer Festival so an invitation to visit we felt should be taken up. In an old amusement arcade, the micropub opened in 2018. Only four handpumps in use, but what a choice! Black Storm's Porter, IPA

and Blonde were supplemented by the independent Frisky Bear Breweries Grizzly Bear West Coast IPA. A sampling of the beers proved very satisfying, but time to move on.

On the approach to Storm Cellar we had noticed a pub called Whitley Bay Brewing Company a new one on me. We popped in to find a traditional comfortable pub with 4 Whitley Bay beers on. Ghost Ships Session IPA, Slow Joe Pilsner, Spanish City Blonde and my choice Warrior Pale Ale, wonderfully hoppy and deserving a score of 4 out of 5! Eating time now so into Wetherspoon's Fire Station.

It was dark when we left here heading down to Spanish City. Opened in 1910 as the Whitley Pleasure Gardens on the seafront it had at the time the second largest dome in the country after St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Its recent history was one of disuse and neglect until 2018, when major investment has brought it back to life as an event venue with the attendant bars and restaurants within a unit of the complex. Opened in early 2019, the Split Chimp is typical of all micros, small and busy. 4 of the 5 handpumps were operating but with Cullercoats Polly Donkin; Big Hand Pili Pala; Twisted Oak Crack Hops and Errant Clever Chimp brewed for the micro we could not complain at the beer choice. I went for the Twisted Oak, described as

a well hopped session ale and it certainly was.

Next we called in on the Front Street Tap House. With a good selection of both cask and keg beers on tap we immediately found ourselves imbibing Three Kings Billy Mill; Errant Can I Kick It; Almasty Nelson X Centennial Pale Ale and my choice local brewer's Cullercoats Shuggy Boat Blonde, cracking for a 3.8% beer.

On Tynemouth station, the Platform 2 Craft Ale Bar was packed - always a good sign. Battling to the bar we found four beers on handpump. Two beers from Two By Two a brewery based in Wallsend namely East Coast Red and Citra Oat Pale; S43's Impressment American Pale described as big and bold whilst I decided on something gentler: Ilkely Mary Jane in superb condition and at 3.5% both clean and quite hoppy.

One more pub was on our list for Tynemouth, but we decided to pop into the Head of Steam where a cider and four-beers were available. The pub lacked atmosphere, so a quick Cameron's Hopper—a golden ale and pretty ordinary - then onto the Salutation. Four beers on tap: Doom Bar, Wylam Gold Tankard, Hadrian Grainger Ale and Cullercoats Shuggy Boat Blonde. The Wylam was OK but not at £5.20 a pint!

Onward to North Shields and two pubs, Enigma an ex shop micropub typical of its type, great atmosphere and very friendly with four beers on. Brewsmith Galaxy Ultra Pale Ale. which I had to go for as the pump clip described as "Ultra Pale"; Lindisfarne Holy Island Bitter; Two By Two East Coast Red and First and Last Damson Porter.

Time was getting on now but we managed to squeeze in the more traditional Oddfellows. It was very quiet inside and with only three handpulls there was not much choice. Three Kings Hale Ale and Dark Side of the Toon, the latter not in the best of condition and S43s Can't

Catch Me Gingerbread Ale. For the cider drinker there is quite a good range. So that ends our Friday sojourn....

Next morning we tried a couple of the local pubs in Felling. The Wheat Sheaf is a Victorian pub restyled in 1907 serving Big Lamp beers. It is in need of some TLC by the brewery and feels a little run down. However, it is comfortable and friendly, both the publican and his part-



Dog & Rabbit microbrewery

ner chatting to us during the length of our stay. Architecturally it is in the style of the Arts and Crafts movement. It has a green faience facing, and painted timber casement windows. On the front gable its name is shown in wheat-coloured lettering and the pub has both engraved and etched glass. Like other pubs of that era it has a corner doorway with the upper floor supported by a column. The Big Lamp beers were Bitter, Prince Bishop Ale and Sunny Daze which I found to be dry and hoppy if a little thin, it was only 3.6% though.

Moving just up the road we came to the Old Fox. Less run down than the Wheat Sheaf it is very much a traditional pub with a leaning to live music at the weekends. Beer range was interesting with Castle Rock Session; Anarchy Flat Out IPA and Fyne Ales Jarl a very nice citrus beer. Next stop: Newcastle!

Steve Dyson

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2021 Good Beer Guide Campaigning Crawl

Each year our branch nominates a number of pubs to feature in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide (GBG). As a branch we've changed how we do so to try and get more of our branch members involved. You do not need to attend branch meetings to be actively involved, nominate pubs or vote.

A local branch member can nominate any pub selling good quality real ale on our patch for entry; that needs to be seconded by another branch member, and a survey form completed with up-to-date information. Don't worry as nearly all our pubs already have information recorded for them so it's usually a case of ensuring the details are up to date. I nominated the Railway in Dorridge and it took me under 5 minutes to update. All you then need to do is submit the completed form and that pub is ready to be included.

If you'd like to see what you consider to be your best pub getting into the GBG,

do please get involved in this process. To help members have an opportunity to visit as many nominated pubs as possible, we laid on a minibus in January. And to be extra helpful, we undertook pick-ups from various locations (don't worry as we drop you back there later in the day!) in Knowle, Solihull and Shirley.

The opening venue on our trip was the Winged Spur at Ullenhall, where they had Davenports Gold Ale, Sharp's Doom Bar and Sadler's Mellow Yellow Pale Honey Ale. As I was on antibiotics for a gum infection, I couldn't drink so had to rely on my trusted drinking buddies Paul and Martin to give me an indication on beer quality.

It's not just beer quality we score on, though; we also assess beer range. This is not simply the number of different ales (plus ciders and perries) on offer, but the range on offer, and how interesting/unusual the beers are. So, if pub A has 5 ales, but they are all golden

hoppy ales, while pub B has 3 ales, one a golden hoppy, one a porter and one a classic bitter, then pub B may score more highly. We also score on alignment with CAMRA aims, style and décor etc, service and welcome, community focus and atmosphere, and overall impression. You can find further information on the Solihull CAMRA website.

We drank up and trooped out to the minibus—which then, due to an entirely avoidable technical issue, wouldn't start. Sorting that out was likely to take at least half an hour, so we decided to have lunch (and another drink) at the Winged Spur; the food was good quality and decent value. Finally, we were off to the Crabmill at Preston Bagot, now owned by Brunning and Price. They often have more unusual beers available and didn't disappoint with Wantsum Dynamo, Goffs' Jester Brew 1, Timothy Taylor Boltmaker and Brunning & Price Traditional Bitter. All were in decent condition.

While in the area we visited both the Three Tuns and White Swan in Henley in Arden, though we did somewhat rush these visits in an attempt to catch up on time. Both are nice pubs with the White Swan having Doom Bar, Tribute, Purity Bunny Hop (now without isinglass finings, a hazy pale ale that is both vegan friendly and gluten free) and Wadworth Horizon. The Three Tuns had Doom Bar and Sharp's Atlantic, Church End Goats' Milk, London Pride and Wye Valley Butty Bach. Neither had any real ciders.

We then drove back towards the Knowle and Dorridge area, to the Railway: the pub has been run by the same family for more than 100 years. It's also one of the few pubs in our branch that regularly serves a mild, in this case North Cotswolds Moreton Mild. Its other regular beers are Timothy Taylor Landlord and Sharp's Sea Fury. Guests on this visit were Draught Bass and Courage Best.

Then on to the Knowle & Dorridge Cricket Club, where CAMRA members are

welcome, as long as they have their CAMRA membership card with them. One of our members, Jon Knibb, has a major role in what ales are ordered and does a sterling job. Old Specked Hen, Salopian Kalon, Thornbridge Brother Rabbit, and Biddendens Bushels Cider. It's nice to see real cider being served.

I have to say by this stage, when you are watching your mates enjoying themselves trying various different real ales, including ones I've never tried before, and only being able to drink soft drinks....well, it starts to get a little wearing. There really is only so many soft drinks you can take, though I did have a bottle of Brew Dog Nanny State (0.5%), which is widely available in supermarkets these days. Considering it's a very low alcohol beer it really is very tasty and does not come across as a no/low alcohol beer at all. It's just a shame you don't see it widely in pubs. I did try another low alcohol beer but that was typical of so many in that it tasted disgusting.

When we got to the next venue, the Ale Rooms in Knowle, I decided it was time to bail out. I don't know what beers they had on, but I am a regular visitor to the Ale Rooms and know they have a good selection on a regular basis; It's certainly one of my favourite pubs. The other pubs visited that day were the White Lion in Hampton, Pup & Duckling, Solihull British Legion, and the Shaking Hand.

It was a disappointingly alcohol-free day for me but I was pleased to see the range of beers and experience the pubs that day. The main thing is that we will do it all again next year and I shall look forward to that. Why don't you get involved yourself next time round. Either come along to branch meetings or simply keep an eye on the website—www.solihull.camra.org.uk - for details. That's the way to help your favourite pub.

Ray Cooke

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CAMRA's Members' Weekend April 2020

Assuming you picked up your copy of Solihull Drinker in early March, there's still time to arrange a trip to York, to attend the CAMRA Members' Weekend and AGM.

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 normally.

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



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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 Wetherspoon, 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.

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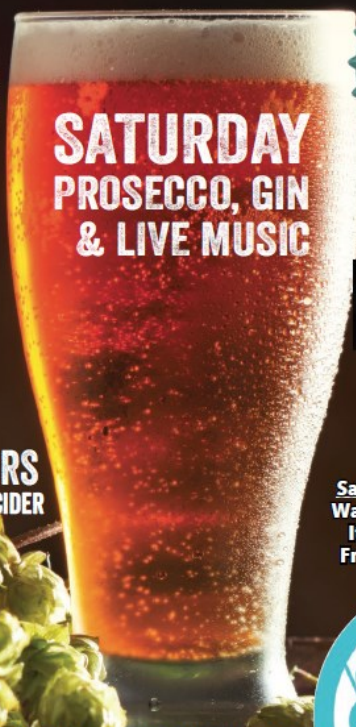
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What's in a Name?

There are around a hundred pubs in the Solihull & District branch area; some of them are linked to a local feature, such as the Reservoir at Earlswood and the Wharf in Hockley Heath, while the Greswolde Arms in Knowle was owned by the Greswolde family back in the 18th century.

But what lies behind the more 'traditional' pub names? After all, we have no fewer than four Red Lions on our patch, plus two Bull's Heads and a White Lion. If you've been wondering, then it's worth checking out *The Old Dog and Duck*, a book by Albert Jack. Subtitled *The Secret Meanings of Pub Names*, Albert has researched the stories behind how pubs got their names; the book is a series of short pieces (no more than two to three pages), each looking at a particular name.

A theme running through the book is the link between pub names and the rich and famous, most prominently royalty. The perfect illustration is the White Lion—after all, there aren't too many white lions in nature, or heraldry. But when it was chosen as his personal emblem by Edward IV, the first Yorkist king of England, it soon became a popular name for taverns and pubs.

What could be more straightforward than the Bull's Head, surely a popular name in rural communities? Well, according to the book pubs named the Bull, and variations, date back to the Reformation when Henry VIII included a bull's head on his coat of arms as a sign of defiance to the Catholic church. So calling your pub the Bull's Head demonstrated loyalty to the

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king—while, conversely, the Bull might mean the exact opposite!

As well as the background to pub names, the book is also sprinkled with trivia connected to the names. For example, the expression 'a cock and bull story' is linked to two pubs, the Cock and the Bull, in Stoney Stratford, on the coaching route from London. News would arrive at one, but by the time it was being related at the next it often bore little relation to how it began—so 'cock and bull story' came to mean unreliable stories. And then, the remains of lions found in the moat of the Tower of London have been carbon-dated to around Edward IV's reign, so it's likely that, while they wouldn't have been white, there really were lions in Edward IV's menagerie.

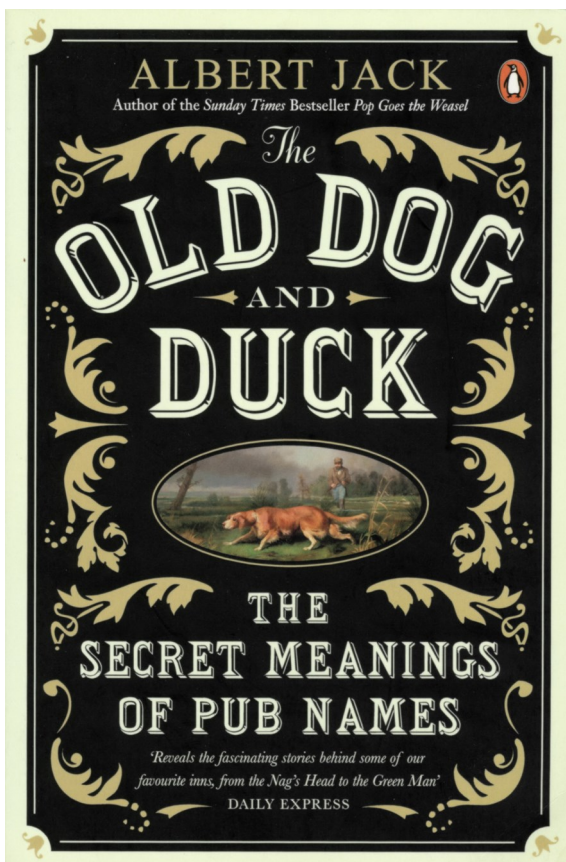
One of the most popular pub names is the Red Lion; while this might be linked to the personal crest of King James VI of Scotland, who became James I of England and Ireland, the history goes right back to the 14th century. John of Gaunt was the most powerful man in England when his ten-year-old nephew became King Richard II. When England appeared on the brink of civil war many pubs demonstrated their loyalty to John, who had married a Spanish noblewoman whose coat of arms included a red lion. Richard II responded by ordering that every pub near London should display his own crest, the white hart—hence White Hart Lane, the home of Spurs.

On the fringes of our area, the Case is Altered certainly has an unusual name—yet there are at least four other pubs with the same name. Jack explains that there are several possible explanations, including a corruption of 'casa de saltar', meaning 'house of dancing' in Spanish. Albert throws his weight behind the expression being linked to the reign

of Elizabeth I and a lawyer, Edmund Plowden. He refused to renounce his Catholic faith; apparently, his defence was so eloquent that the queen spared him the more usual outcome of beheading and appointed him as one of her legal advisors. Representing a prominent Catholic, he spotted a loophole that would save his client, and announced 'The case is altered'.

About the only criticism I've got of the book, is that there are too many entries for unique pub names (e.g. Cat and Cabbage, Prospect of Whitby, Bombay Crab) at the expense of covering pubs you might actually encounter, such as the White Swan.

Martin Buck



Branch Pub of the Year 2020: Pup & Duckling

Back in 2016, Solihull & District gained its first micropub when the Pup & Duckling opened, on Hatchford Brook Road. Only a year later it was named branch Pub of the Year 2017—and now it has repeated that achievement, reclaiming the title for 2020.

The award recognises the ever-changing selection of real ales offered across six handpulls, as well as six ciders and perries being offered. In addition the pub has been extended, with an extra room being added at the rear.

Branch chairman Martin Buck said: “With the rise of the micropub, competition for our branch Pub of the Year award has become even more intense. The hard work put in by Jeff Berry and his family means the Pup has consistently been one of our top pubs, and now

they’ve been rewarded by once again winning Pub of the Year.

“Over the past four years the pub has offered several thousand different beers, but beyond that this award recognises the fact that this is a great place to visit—where people can drink good beers and have conversations without the distraction of music or fruit machines. Long may it continue!”

Jeff said: “We’re delighted to have won this award for the second time. We really appreciate the support that CAMRA has offered us; we’re determined to continue working hard to keep the Pup & Duckling as one of the best pubs in the area.”

Hail To The Ale

After a lengthy closure for refurbishment, the **Red House** has reopened as the **Flying Elephant**. Three beers from Thwaites are on the bar, and the refreshed interior is already attracting positive comments. Indian food (with Kenyan influence) is on offer each day from 2:30 to 9:30.

Sadler’s brewery in Lye, and the Brewhouse & Bar, have been closed down, with brewing transferred to Hawkshead Brewery in the Lake District. Halewood International, which took a majority stake in Sadler’s in 2017, took the decision to move production out of the West Midlands for the first time in over 150 years.

After initially being refused, the application to turn **Tidbury Green Farm** into a pub has finally been approved. The pub will be developed by Brunning & Price,

who already run the Crabmill in our branch.

After many years at the **Bull’s Head** in Barston, Brad has finally retired. During his tenure the pub was in the Good Beer Guide more than 25 times and was named branch Pub of the Year six times. We wish Brad and Joy all the best.

The pub has been taken on by a group of investors; plans are under way to refit all beer lines and equipment and increase to six handpulls. There will also be a boutique hotel and restaurant, targeting visitors to the nearby NEC. The pub remains open during refurbishment; the restaurant offers 10% off food for CAMRA members.

The White Swan



Opening Hours
Sunday to Thursday 07.30 - midnight
Friday & Saturday 07.30 - 01.30
Food served until 11pm each day



8 cask Handpulls on at all times including 5 guest ales from a range of local & national breweries
Wide range of craft beers
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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	Brenda Duffy	01564 200431
Membership		Solihull Drinker Editor	
Dave Mckowen	01564 778955	Vacant—contact Chair	
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)

Bull's Head, Barston 10% discount on food for card carrying members

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.

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

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Economies of Ale—Small pubs and bars bounce back

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) has recently published its latest figures on the UK pubs and bars sector, covering the period 2001-2019. It reveals some startling facts:

The number of small pubs and bars has increased for the first time in more than 15 years. The net closure of pubs has been well documented by several organisations, including CAMRA and the British Beer & Pubs Association. The latest figures show that both turnover and employment in the sector were holding up, despite previously consistent pub and bar closures. The data show that the number of small pubs and bars (with fewer than 10 employees) increased by 85 (0.4%) in 2019. This follows more than 15 years of closures. The overall number of pubs and bars in the UK increased by 315 (0.8%) between 2018-2019 to 39,130, the first increase for a decade.

Food for thought: The latest ONS data show that pub and bar enterprises now employ more people serving food than those working behind the bar. In 2003, bar staff made up roughly 4/10 employees, with those serving and preparing food making up 3/10 employees. Since 2016, the opposite has been true, with those serving food outnumbering those working behind the bar, by 44% to 30%. The tendency in pub and bar enterprises to employ more people serving food may be a reaction to changing consumer habits. There seems to be a long-term trend towards people spending more of their household income on eating out and less on drinking out.

As well as an increase in the number of pubs and bars in the UK, turnover in the sector increased by £847m (3.8%) in 2017, after taking account of inflation. Real turnover in the latest year of data is at its highest level since the financial crisis of 2007-2008 ended. Since 2007,

staff levels increased from 426,000 to 457,000 in 2019, despite the decrease in the number of pubs, from 51,120 to 39,130. Moreover, in 2019, there were almost 460,000 employees in pubs and bars, an increase of 7,000 jobs (1.6%) since 2018.

The UK pubs and bars sector may be bouncing back after years of net closures by diversifying its offer, mainly in the areas of food and craft beer. Some of this is due to small micro-pubs and new craft beer bars opening, such as the Ale Rooms and Oktogon (Knowle), the Pup & Duckling, Craft Inn and Shaking Hands (Shirley), and Indian Brewery (Solihull). However, the overall number of pubs and bars in most parts of the UK has fallen between 2001-2019. In this period, Solihull has seen a 6% decline in the overall number of pubs, which is much lower than the rest of the West Midlands conurbation, where losses range from 39-47%.

Tom Stainer, CAMRA's Chief Executive said "Although one year does not make a trend, this hopefully shows that people are returning to their locals, drawn by an ever wider choice of craft beers, many locally brewed, as well as food and conversation". However, Hugh Stickland from the ONS said that growth in the sector has been "driven by food rather than drink. Smaller pubs had struggled to survive in recent years, while bigger ones had grown in number". Nevertheless, the latest data shows a welcome upturn in the number of pubs and bars, and more choice for the consumer.

Steve James

Broomfields Hall

Solihull British Legion Club

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





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for
Real Ale

Cider and Perry Matters

Last year the Cider (and perry) Pub of the Year competition started at the regional level, with local branches submitting their nominated pub to our West Midlands cider co-ordinator. In the first round of judging any West Midlands branch member could vote, which whittled the original 18 pubs down to ten. Those ten pubs were then revisited and a regional winner announced. That regional winner then went forward to the national competition. Our regional winner was the King's Ditch in Tamworth, with more than 20 ciders and perries on offer. It also serves 6 changing, interesting real ales, so is well worth a visit.

Since then both the Regional Cider Co-ordinator and the selection process have changed. There was an article in February's What's Brewing about the competition, but it wasn't particularly clear how it was going to operate.

Fortunately our new regional cider co-ordinator Jules will be handling things at a regional level. However, this year all that is required of us at branch level is to submit our nominated pub into the regional judging process. It's very easy for us to nominate as, unfortunately, there's only one pub that stocks a number of real ciders or perries on a regular

basis; so we have submitted the Pup & Duckling, in Hatchford Brook Road, as our 2020 nomination.

The main change from last year is that we are no longer required to visit and judge the pubs nominated in the West Midlands region, which is a bit of a shame as Martin, Paul and I rather enjoyed this last year. It got us out to pubs we'd never been to, over a wide area (Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and West Midlands) and gave us the opportunity to drink ciders and perries we'd never had before - definitely an educational experience. However, this year Jules will be the sole judge at regional level. I'm a little wary of this as it's then entirely down to the opinion of one person; that said, I do appreciate it will streamline the whole process.

I am looking forward to finding out who tops the regional table this year. It will take an exceptional pub to wrest the West Midlands title from the King's Ditch.

Ray Cooke

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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Campaign
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Real Ale

The Editor reserves the right to amend or shorten any items in the newsletter, but will always strive to 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.

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GBBFW: An Ale for All Seasons

I joined the ‘fringe’ team for the Bingley Hall, Birmingham Great British Beer Festival Winter. The festival was held from 4th to 8th February 2020 and will be held in the West Midlands for the next 2 years at least. The Great British Beer Festival Winter was advertised as the “Festival of a Thousand Trades”, celebrating the West Midlands’ industry, diversity, and creativity throughout time.

The drinks on offer included a range of spirits and non-alcoholic options; these accompanied over 400 beers, plus 50 ciders and perries, that represented the United Kingdom’s finest ales. Alongside the drinks, there were games and activities, musical entertainment, a range of food stalls, curries, hot dogs, burgers and Brazilian.

The festival hosted the judging for various categories in the Champion Winter Beer of Britain competition, so the competition bar was the best destination for strong ales. Across the other four bars, pretty much every style and strength of beer was on offer, not just the heavier/darker/stronger winter ales. Additionally there were a selection of tastings and talks for those looking to expand their beer knowledge and horizons.

I volunteered on Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday opening until 5pm. On Tuesday there was an excellent turnout of local brewery staff, pub owners and CAMRA members who really enjoyed the event and brought enthusiasm and thirst. An excellent mix of young and

old enjoying a unique ‘trade’ experience. The session was open to the public from 5pm.

My favourite day was Tuesday; a very friendly crowd. I found my beer of the festival **Five Dollar Shake** from **Tiny Rebel**. [If you don’t recognise the name it’s a nod to the Quentin Tarantino film, *Pulp Fiction*. Ed.] I met and helped a blind gentleman find his beers, a seat and a meal. Then the boys from Top Beer arrived. They have a swig not a stig. Putting a star in a reasonably priced bar. The Saturday afternoon session was more hectic, though still hugely enjoyable. Roughly 100 ales had already sold out, but with 300 still remaining, there was still a great choice.

So why volunteer to help at a festival? Most importantly, it allows the festival to run—without volunteers, a festival on the scale of GBBFW simply couldn’t be held. It demonstrates excellence in ales and choice. On a personal note, as a volunteer I received a meal voucher and reasonable amount of free quaffing. It also gives the chance to meet some friendly fun folk who have an interest in ales among other things.

All in all I thoroughly recommend it—but if you’re working on one of the bars, do be sure to wear comfortable shoes! And if you get the chance, getting fit beforehand is also a good idea—especially if you’re working on set-up or take-down, where there can be quite a lot of fetching and carrying required.

Ian Hunter



Membership Matters

Our current branch membership stands at 680, this has grown by just over 5% in the last 12 months, the national membership total has also increased by about the same rate and there are now 193,375 CAMRA members in this country all with an appreciation of real ale and cider. This means that CAMRA is now one of the largest not for profit consumer groups in the country.

As Spring approaches, CAMRA members' thoughts turn to beer festivals, some run by local pubs others by charity and many others run by CAMRA branches situated all over the country, at the overwhelming majority of the CAMRA beer festivals, members will get some type of benefit either in the form of reduced entry fee or free beer tokens etc, surely another reason to join CAMRA. One of the other benefits you get as a CAMRA member is £30 worth of real ale/cider vouchers valid at numerous pubs including JD Wetherspoons etc. There are many other money saving benefits to becoming a member of CAMRA which can all be found if you visit www.camra.org.uk.

You also get an online monthly colour newspaper called "Whats Brewing" informing you of all the latest beer and pub news as well as detailing events/beer festivals from around the country. In conjunction you will also receive an online quarterly magazine titled "Beer" which is packed with great articles by award winning writers all about real ale pubs, beer & breweries.

With prices of membership starting from £26.50 per annum (50p per week) and including all of the above, I think

you will agree this represents good value for money; how about giving a year's membership as a gift for Father's Day on the 21st June? An even greater advantage of joining CAMRA is the opportunity to become involved in your local branch, this includes social events, meeting new friends, helping out at our beer festival as well as campaigning.

As a branch, our social outings vary from pubs crawls, brewery visits to beer & curry nights so there is something for everyone. Our branch meetings where a variety of topics are discussed in relation to the local real ale scene are held on the first Monday of each month at a local pub, they do contain a certain amount of CAMRA business, but we endeavour to make them short and friendly only lasting on average of an hour to allow more time for socialising etc, it may come as a surprise but we also enjoy a pint or two of real ale at the same time.

And as a bonus, within their branch welcome pack all new members will get a voucher for a FREE PINT which is redeemable in conjunction with a valid membership card upon attendance at their first Branch meeting, courtesy of Solihull & District CAMRA Branch. For a full list of forthcoming events see the Dates for the Diary section in this magazine or visit www.solihull.camra.org.uk.

So come on what are you waiting for?, Join up, Join in, Join the Campaign.

Dave Mckowen, Membership Secretary

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The 92nd edition of the Solihull Drinker will be published on Monday 1st June 2020. Please note that the deadline for copy, advertising and any other contributions for this issue is **Sunday 3rd May**. Thank you in advance to all contributors.

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