



Solihull drinker



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOLIHULL AND DISTRICT
BRANCH OF CAMRA, THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

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Winter 2005

Solihull CAMRA's Most Improved Pub of the Year 2005 shared by two pubs...

A dead heat resulted in two pubs being voted Solihull CAMRA's Most Improved Pub of the Year for 2005.

The Drum and Monkey at Bentley Heath is under the managership of Samantha Goodwin and William Gill and though primarily a food orientated pub it is surprising beer wise in stocking Hobson's Bitter permanently. Owned by the Spirit Group William obtains beers from both Spirits' list and from The

Beer Cellar. There are three beers on at

present, however this is due to go up to five in the near future. A beer festival is held at August Bank Holiday and William hopes to introduce a Winter Beer Festival in 2006.

Over at the Golden Acres, Damsonwood, Simon and Kerry have really turned this pub around in the twelve months they have been there. The pub is owned by Punch, however Simon and Kerry's lease is Vanguard which allows them a free hand in beer selection. On the presentation night Tring Victory 1805, Wye Valley Forager's Finest and Draught Bass were on handpump. Food is available at the pub where Tin Feng Cantonese and Chinese restaurant operates in the pub. Sunday lunches are also available.



CAMRA Committee member Roger Dipple presents Samantha and William with their award



Kerry and Simon with CAMRA Chairman Ray Cooke with their award

Inside: Solihull Beer Festival Report

Old Solihull Pub Names [Part Four]

MAGPIE, High Street, Solihull [illustrated right]
Was on the corner of High Street & Mill Lane. Previously called the **GEORGE & DRAGON**, later it was renamed the **GREEN DRAGON**. It was demolished in the 1960's.

MALT SHOVEL, High Street, Solihull
Underneath the local Night Club on Solihull High Street. Currently called **LOAF**, it has previously been known as **SNOOTY FOX** (1991-93), and variously as **ROSIE O'BRIENS**, **ROSIE'S PUMP HOUSE** and the **PUMP HOUSE** (1993-2004).



Magpie, [George and Dragon] High Street, Solihull

MERMAID, Knowle

A former coaching inn dating back to the 18th Century. Became the **MERMAID & GRESWOLDE ARMS** by 1828 when it was owned by Henry Greswolde Lewis, joint Lord of the Manor with his cousin Jane Anne Eleanor WILSON. About 1868 it was shortened to just the **GRESWOLDE ARMS**, later becoming the **GRESWOLDE ARMS HOTEL** before being changed to the **GRESWOLDE HOTEL & BRASSERIE** following a major refurbishment in 2004.

MOONRAKER, Gospel Lane, Olton

Renamed **ALEXANDERS TAVERN** before closing in 2002 and being demolished to make way for more housing.

MORRISSEYS, Stratford Road, Monkspath

Irish theme pub, previously called the **PAVILION** when it opened in the early 1980's, it became the **REGENCY HOTEL BAR** in 2004.

MURPHYS, Henley in Arden

Irish style wine bar (!) which opened in the 1990's, renamed **HENLEYS** in 2002.

NAGS HEAD, New Road, Solihull

As known from 1693 to 1715. Renamed the **BELL** until 1738 when it's name was changed to the **GEORGE HOTEL**. Now referred to as the **JARVIS INTERNATIONAL HOTEL**, a sad state of affairs for what was once a prominent local coaching inn.

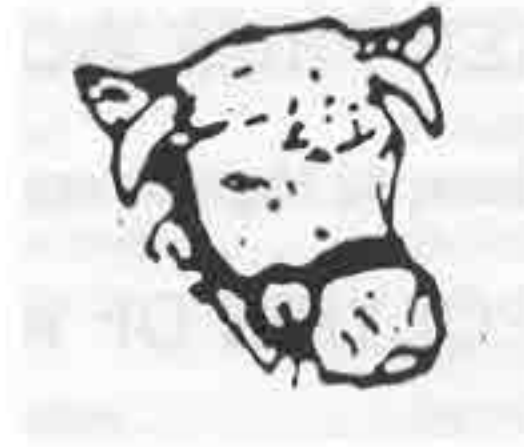
NEVADA BAR, High Street, Solihull

Originally on this site was the **GARDENERS ARMS**, which opened in the 1860's and was demolished in 1971. The site was then occupied by the **CAPTAIN LOCKER**, which became the **NEVADA BAR** in the 1990's, before closing during the Touchwood redevelopment in 2001. It is now a members-only club called the **OPAL LOUNGE**.

Steve Wood

Morton's Kitchen Bar and Deli, Dickens Heath

The ever-growing Dickens Heath now has a pub (well a restaurant-bar), and perhaps surprisingly it has a choice of Real Ales. Initially they seem to have settled on the safe choice of Marstons Pedigree and Tetley Bitter. To be fair, the Pedigree was actually in good form. The place is geared for food, though there is a comfortable area for drinking. I can't speak for the food, but Vegetarians may be put off by the animal skulls on the wall & animal skins on the furnishings. It does seem to have a City Slickers style Wild West theme. Obviously the beer is not cheap, they have a bit of a monopoly in Dickens Heath at the moment. Still, the Blue Bell at Warings Green is only a couple of miles away.



THE BULL'S HEAD

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Listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2004

Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 2000 and 2002

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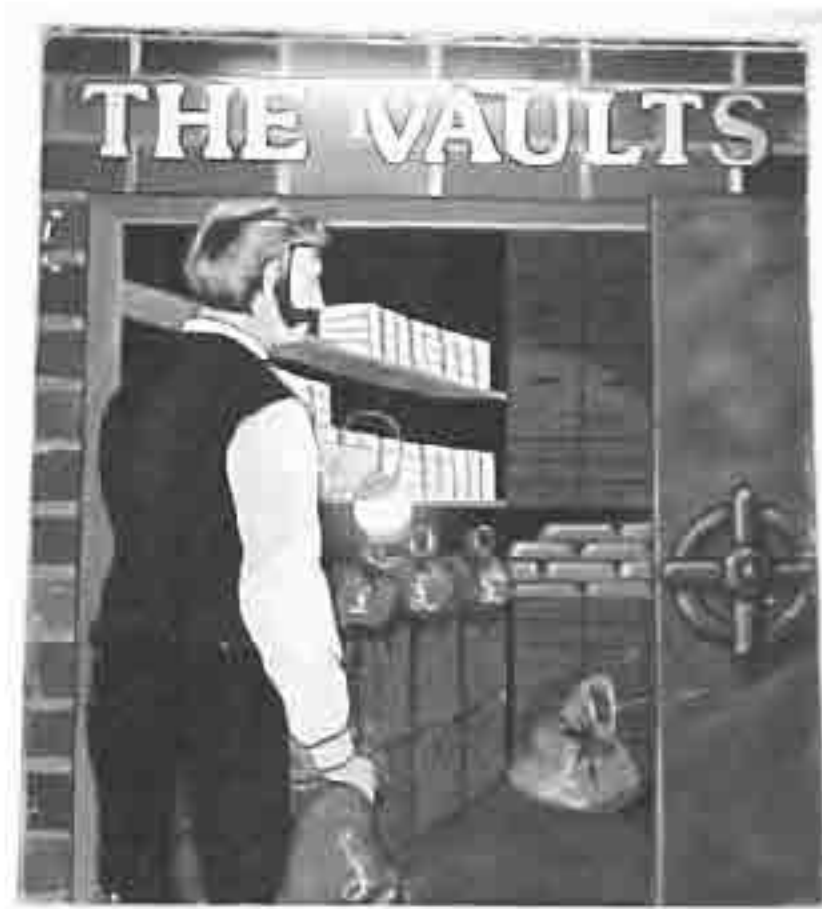
COOL EVENINGS BECKON WINTER. BANISH IT AROUND OUR ROARING
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BEER!

Nick and Gwen welcome you to The Vaults, Knowle...

The Real Ale venue in Knowle with:

- ◆ Six handpumped beers including regulars, Ansell's Mild, Greene King IPA, Burton Ale, Tetley Bitter and two guest beers
- ◆ Real cider from Weston's
- ◆ Food available lunchtimes Monday - Saturday
- ◆ Occasional Beer Festivals

Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 2003, 2004 and 2005



CAMRA Good Beer Guide listed since 1993



*The Vaults, St John's Close, Knowle.
Tel: 01564 773656*

2005 Solihull Pub Price Survey

Every year CAMRA branches throughout the country undertake a survey of beer prices in a representative proportion of their pubs. Tenanted, Managed and Free Houses are represented together with those pubs owned by breweries, pub companies or chains such as Wetherspoon's. It must be stressed that the prices shown below do not necessarily indicate either the cheapest or most expensive pints in Solihull. Treat the figures as more of an indication as to the price range of beers in the Solihull area. Bear in mind also that this survey was undertaken earlier this year so prices may have risen.



The cheapest real ale in the area was to be found at the White Swan, Solihull where Marston's Burton Bitter was £1.45 (3.8%), Greene King Abbot was £1.65 (5%) and Marston's Pedigree £1.65 (4.5%). The dearest real ale was at the Orange Tree, Chadwick End where Greene King IPA cost £2.50 (3.6%). At the Saddler's Arms Solihull, St. Austell Tribute was £2.50 (4.2%). Back at the Orange Tree, Chadwick End Greene King Abbot was £2.50 (5%). At the Bird In Hand, Henley in Arden Everard's Original was £2.50 (5.2%).

The cheapest lager was at the Saddler's Arms, Solihull where Carling was £2.10. At the Wilson's Arm's, Knowle the Carling was £2.10. The dearest lager was at the Bird In Hand, Henley where Carling was £2.45.



The White Swan, Solihull. The cheapest place to drink in the area

Moving on to nitro keg the cheapest was at the White Swan, Solihull where John Smith's Extra Smooth was £1.69. The dearest was at the Durham Ox, Shrewley where Old Speckled Hen Smoothflow was £2.60.

For cider lovers the cheapest cider was found at the White Swan, Solihull with Blackthorn Dry (keg) was priced at £1.95. The dearest was at the Cock Horse, Rowington where Strongbow was £2.70.

The cheapest keg stout was at the White Swan, Solihull with Guinness at £2.00. Meanwhile the dearest was at the Orange Tree, Chadwick End where Guinness was a £2.80.

What conclusions can be drawn in comparison to last years figures? Well it's been a good year for drinkers in Solihull town centre. Regulars of the White Swan will have seen prices actually come down in real terms. The more rural Warwickshire pubs on our patch seem to be struggling to prevent rampant inflation. The £3 pint of Guinness will soon be with us!

Steve Wood



A Drink or Two in Hull...

Kingston upon Hull lies alongside the Humber and has the Humber Bridge as a tourist attraction. Maybe not the place you may wish to spend a few days but surprisingly it is a very pleasant town with some great pubs and not too far away quite a few independent

breweries. So this September a party from Solihull CAMRA went there for our weekend away, which for most of us started on the Thursday!

First.... about beer ratings. I've rated the beers on a 1- 5 basis for the general quality throughout the pub using CAMRA's National Beer Scoring Scheme. 1 = Poor, 2 = Average, 3 = Good, 4 = Very Good, 5 = Excellent. To be fair, I consulted with colleagues drinking with me at that time... now down to it!

It takes a couple of hours to get to Hull so we decided to visit a few hostelrys on the way up there. We took the M42, M1 route setting off from Solihull at about 10.45am. Our first port of call was the Black Horse at Caythorpe just off the A46 past Nottingham. Home of the Caythorpe Brewery we were disappointed to find no brewery beers available as the brewery was in the process of being sold. We contented ourselves with Brewster's Bitter, Oldershaw OSB and Exmoor Gold all served in good condition. We ate here... a little expensive as the pub was very much food orientated. Beer rating, 3.

Our next pub was at Morton a little north of Gainsborough. Having been the local CAMRA branches Pub of the Season we hoped not to be disappointed. However, true to form so far this proved to be the case. A large Victorian pub with an uninspiring interior it only served Black Sheep Special, which we gave a 2. Pondering on what to do next we consulted the Good Beer Guide [hereafter GBG] and honed in on the Horn Inn at Messingham on the A159 just before the M180. Listed in the GBG as stocking John Smith's Bitter which we were happy to miss out on we were looking forward to the two beers that the GBG said were provided by members of SIBA [Society of Independent Brewers]. Expectation grew as we approached this roadside pub. The pub has been modernised and has little character. John Smith's Bitter was on offer together with two guests. Sadly they were from the same brewery Oldershaw from Grantham, Cascade and Isaac's Gold which we scored at slightly less than 2. Throwing the towel in we decided to head for our B&B in Hull with the hope that things could only get better which I shall tell you now so as not to put you off reading on, more than exceeded our expectations both pub and beer wise.

Our B&B was to the west of the city, about thirty minutes walk from the city centre and as we were to find to our pleasure near some of the best pubs in Hull. So dropping our kit off we were off to sample Hull's delights close to our digs.

Some of our party were peckish so popped into the GBG Pave a café bar with Theakston's beers. We passed by though and headed up to the Gardener's Arms on

the Cottingham Road, quite a walk. We found it to be a busy pub with a traditional bar and ultra modern lounge, however the music was rather loud. Here we found Bateman's Summer Swallow, Jennings Golden Host, Everard's Tiger and Tetley Bitter. We declined the latter two and could only summon up a score of 2 between the others. We ate here and hoped for greater success beer wise later on. Again a long walk brought us to the Editorial on Spring Bank which presumably was a shop conversion. A basic interior the beers were Bateman's Summer Swallow and Tetley Bitter. They were also putting on Garton Woldsman's Bitter for us as they knew we were coming and that we were unable to arrange a visit to Garton Brewery. We promised to revisit on Saturday evening. The beer score here was 2 but I only tried the Summer Swallow to compare it to that of the Gardener's. We also found some of our party next door at the café enjoying a meal accompanied with beer bought in from next door... what a considerate arrangement!



The Wellington... the best pub in Hull

Our next call some ten minutes down the road was the Wellington in Russell Street and what a pub it is. No doubt about it, the best in Hull for beer, it reminded me a little of the Fat Cat in Norwich, yes that good! It has two rooms one of which is used for live bands. There were four bands on during our visit, all apparently students from the University. Perry's, Ciders and a walk in cooler room contained bottled beers from all over Europe and the beer I here you ask? Fernandes Indian Summer, Copper Dragon Scotts 1816, Wold Top Wold Gold, Copper Dragon Golden Pippin, Anglo Deutch Jasper's Ale, Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild and Tetley Bitter. I could not do the place justice only trying the Fernandes, one of my favourite beers where a score of 3 was given. This was a pub we decided to give more time to on Saturday night, a real gem and so friendly.



The Hole in the Wall... a must visit.

We decided to finish the night off at the Hole in the Wall on Spring Bank not too far from the B&B. A former amusement arcade and a bit garish on the outside being bright orange! it has two long rooms and is quite basic inside but do not be put off. Inside it had handpumped Old Mill beers Autumn Breeze, Mild and Bitter, Archers Gamekeepers Folly and Roosters Yankee it was of particular interest to us and the quality was excellent. 4 for the roasted malt 3.4% mild which we could still taste after a full day and 4 for the magnificent Rooster's Yankee.

And so off to bed, again promising to revisit the Hole in the Wall. More next issue when we take on three brewery visits and a pub crawl of Beverley in one day!

Steve Dyson

It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale



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Bank and Building Societies may now accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of accounts

Wine Tasting - Why not Beer Tasting?

I became old enough to drink legally in the Singing 60's, and experimented my way through whatever was on offer at the time. From Watney's Party Cans to the Double Diamonds that were supposed to work wonders. From Flowers Keg (the bitter with the bite) to Whitbread Final Selection, not to mention the concoctions known as 'shorts' such as Rum and Blackcurrants, Vodka & Limes. I even tried lime in my bitter in those days, though I avoided Lagers as I found them too cold and fizzy!

The thought of all that makes me feel somewhat queasy. I'm glad to say that my palate has become a little more discerning over the years. Whilst the aim of early drinking, particularly at those wild 60's parties, was almost certainly to get drunk, I soon learned to drink for enjoyment rather than to get wrecked with the inevitable consequences.

From a fairly early age I therefore developed a preference for real ales and red wine, and that's pretty much all I have drunk ever since. I have learned to savour the subtle differences derived from different grape varieties, climates, oak aging and the like, so I can probably tell my Pinotage from my Pinot Noir by now. I was more surprised to find that the same kind of subtle differences exist in the vast number of real ales that are brewed around the country.

I suppose that I was lucky to have a career that took me all around the country, so I was able to sample a vast range on my travels. I became so captivated by the superior quality and variety of beers from local micro-breweries that I made a point of seeking out local beers whenever I stayed away, and eventually joined CAMRA.

I feel very sorry for those drinkers who stick rigidly to a favourite tipple, often from one of the national breweries. Like wine drinkers who pick up a bottle of the same plonk every time, they miss so much. Bernies, Solihull's own Real Ale Off-Licence, has done a great job in bringing some of the best beers from around the country to our doorstep, so we don't have to travel the country any more to bring variety to our taste buds!

Whereas wines from the best Chateaux cost a fortune, brilliant real ales from the best micro-breweries cost no more than the mass produced national brands. Variety is said to be the spice of life. I have certainly found it so with real ales. You need to experiment a little - go on, give your taste buds a treat.

Roger Dipple

Dave and Wendy leave the Cock Horse, Rowington

It was with a definite tinge of sadness that we took a minibus of us along to the Cock Horse in Rowington in early October to wish farewell to David Preston and Wendy Owen. They felt they had no choice but to leave because of intolerable pressures placed on them by the beancounters at the Pubco that own the pub. It seems to be a ludicrous situation where the manager is successful the beancounters put the rent up to the extent that people feel they have no choice but to leave. How short sighted. And there is no denying that David and Wendy have certainly made the Cock Horse a resounding success. David has a fine nose for real ale and kept his beers in excellent condition and Wendy's choice of food and her cooking never failed to satisfy. There was regular live music on a Friday evening and folk club every month. The August bank holiday beer festivals, and the recent late May one, were a great blend of music, food and real ale. What was equally important was how David and Wendy had integrated this pub into the local village life, a real case of the pub is the hub, with the recent beer festivals raising money for Rowington church.

David and Wendy had sorted out a fantastic final weekend with food and live music laid on in the marquee outside. On the Saturday night we were treated to William and friends, a group of professional musicians. The buffet Wendy had arranged was wonderful and David had put extra barrels on in the marquee. The Deuchars IPA in the marquee was the best I have ever tasted so I stuck to that all evening. I was told the other beers (Hooky Bitter, Adnams Broadside, and London Pride) in the marquee were also in excellent condition. It was also clear how well regarded David and Wendy are by the local community as the marquee was full and the regulars had organised a lovely leaving gift, with the sentiments on the card saying it all. Fortunately we will not be losing contact as they have only moved to Henley and David has volunteered and been elected as our new Branch Social Secretary. So what now for the Cock Horse? The new licensee is Tony Day, who is also responsible for the Cross at Kenilworth and the Red Lion in Claverdon. I understand that Roger Day is the new manager at the Cock Horse but he wasn't around to talk to when I visited the other night, so I cannot comment on what plans there are. However, the bar staff were friendly and confirmed that the live music on Fridays is set to continue, as is the folk club on the third Wednesday of each month. The menu was very limited but I was told it is intended to be improved and the range increased. Though I don't know the Cross but I do know the Red Lion, so I am not surprised that the menu will be improved. And, most importantly there were five real ales on, Deuchars IPA, Hooky Bitter, Adnams Broadside, London Pride and Black Sheep, and they are also keeping the Old Rosie on. We tried the Deuchars, Hooky and Broadside and all were in fine condition, so my advice is to give the place and new management a chance, visit and have a drink or two.

Ray Cooke

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Solihull CAMRA's 7th Beer Festival Success...

The Branch's seventh beer festival at the British Legion, Solihull sponsored by the Solihull Times was as ever a thoroughly enjoyable event and was the most successful yet for the branch.

650 drinkers downed over 2000 pints during the two day festival.

The festival was drunk dry by 9.30 with only some Cain's Lager left over, which, it was generally felt was not "as it should be".

Drinkers came from all over the world, one having come from the Netherlands. He was delighted with the quality of the beers at the festival. A coach party from the Redditch and Bromsgrove CAMRA branch visited on Saturday lunchtime and stayed for the whole session before doing a pub crawl of the best pubs in the Solihull area!

A good few new member were signed up to CAMRA at the festival. From the Solihull area five single and eight joint memberships and from elsewhere three single and two joint were added to the total CAMRA membership figures.

Beer of the Festival was Rooster Eagle Eye followed by Hadrian and Border Gladiator. Third was Church End Pulpit.

The festival supported Macmillan Cancer Relief with drinkers donating their unused Beer Tokens which came to a grand total of £110.37.

Julia Hammonds organiser of the festival was more than happy with how the festival went, "We had a few problems with one or two beers but we managed to get replacements in and everyone, both drinkers and staff had a great time".





Solihull times

Socials

Monday 12th December	Solihull Branch Christmas Pub Crawl of Solihull. Saddlers Arms 7.30pm; Metro Bar and Grill 8.15; Town House 8.35; Masons Arms 9.10; Hogs Head 9.30 and the White Swan at 10
Friday 27th January	Survey crawl of Knowle. Meet at Wilson's Arms at 8pm
March 2006	Mini bus trip to the Cotswolds. Phone Steve Wood for details

Pub & Grub

Friday 30th December	Saddler's Arms, Solihull	7.30pm for 8pm
Friday 24th February	Barton's Arms, Aston	7.30pm for 8pm

Branch Meetings

Monday 9th January	Reservoir, Earlswood	8.30pm
Monday 6th February	Harvester, Olton	8.30pm
Monday 6th March	Heron's Nest, Heronfield, Knowle	8.30pm

For those meetings/socials as yet unconfirmed or where more details are needed please contact the Secretary Steve Wood on 0121 704 5258

The Solihull Drinker is the newsletter of the Solihull & District Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign of Real Ale.

All contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to:

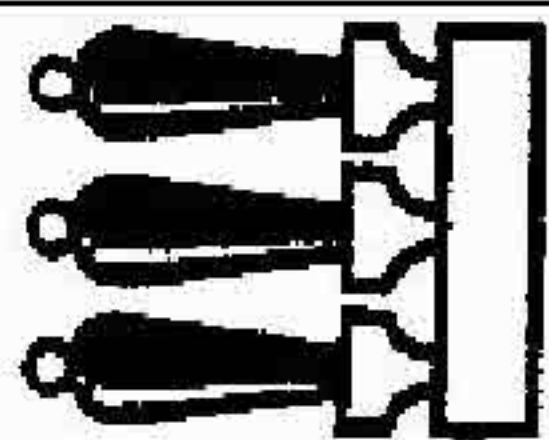
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The Editor reserves the right to amend or shorten any contributions in the Solihull Drinker, but will always honour the spirit of the contribution.

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The 36th edition of *Solihull Drinker* will be published on Monday 6th March, 2006. Copy deadline for advertising and contributions will be Sunday 19th February, 2006



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