

The newsletter of the Solihull & District branch  
of CAMRA - the Campaign for Real Ale

www.solihullcamra.org.uk



# Solihull Drinker

Issue No: 42

Autumn 2007

## FESTIVAL TIME AGAIN, FOLKS!

Yes, hard to believe that the next and 9th Solihull & District Beer Festival is nearly here—only a month to wait! Yet again we will be holding the Festival at the Royal British Legion, Union Road, Solihull Town Centre (turn off the Warwick Road onto Union Road opposite Beatties and the Legion is opposite the hospital). Dates/times are as follows:

Friday 5th October 6.00pm—11.00pm

Saturday 6th October 12.00 noon—4.00pm; and 5.30pm—11.00pm

Costs: Fri. evening: £2.00; Sat. lunchtime: £1.00; Sat. evening: £2.00 (concessions for card-carrying CAMRA members) There is also a refundable £2.00 deposit on glasses, and this year a revised beer token system will enable you to buy a significant portion of your drinking vouchers as you enter. Unused tokens will be refundable on exit, or you can donate them to charity.

As usual, hot and cold food can be purchased from the Legion at all sessions, and Cairde, a traditional Irish music band, will be performing on Saturday evening.

We have some great beers lined up for you within our planned 30, including Windsor Castle Jack's Ale, Caledonian XPA, Oakham White Dwarf, Moorhouse Black Cat and Thornbridge Jaipur IPA; plus a festival beer from Church End Brewery which will feature members' hops, and another special; and a taster of the beer that Tunnel Brewery are brewing for our 25th Anniversary party, which some members recently assisted in brewing. Cider and perry will also be available. We will be asking you to vote for your beer of the Festival; the results will be announced on the Saturday evening and published in the Winter edition of The Drinker.

Everyone involved in creating this Festival looks forward to seeing you, so do try to come along and have a wonderful time with some wonderful ales!

Julia Hammonds, Festival Organiser



**Inside: Don't miss the Dates for your Diary**



# THE BULL'S HEAD

Barston Lane, Barston

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VISIT OUR 15<sup>th</sup> CENTURY VILLAGE INN  
WITH A SELECTION OF REAL ALES AND REGULAR GUEST BEERS

**Most recently listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2007**

View our new website: [www.TheBullsHeadBarston.co.uk](http://www.TheBullsHeadBarston.co.uk)

Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 2000 and 2002  
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HOME COOKED MEALS ARE AVAILABLE LUNCHTIMES AND  
EVENINGS MONDAY TO SATURDAY IN THE PLEASANT SURROUNDINGS  
OF THE PUB OR IN OUR SEPARATE NON-SMOKING RESTAURANT  
(Sundays 12 to 3pm for lunch - no evening meals)  
TELEPHONE RESERVATIONS WELCOME

***Autumn approaches! Catch the last of the summer sun's rays in the  
beer garden, or sit inside in supreme comfort with convivial company  
and conversation, and a carefully-crafted beer.***

## Pub and Brewery Watch

### **The Bartons Arms, Aston**

Their next beer festival runs from Thursday 20th—Sunday 23rd September. Expect to find 40+ real ales, plus cider and perry, and various entertainments over the long weekend. See their advert further on in the magazine for additional details, or contact the pub on 0121 333 5988.

### **Champion Beer of Scotland**

Highland Dark Munro, from the Highland Brewery, Birsay, Orkney, was named Champion Beer of Scotland at the Scottish Beer Festival 2007. At the festival, held at the Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh, second place went to Maverick, from Fyne Brewery, Cairndow, Argyll; and third place went to Piper's Gold, also from Fyne Brewery. Although the scores were very close, judges decided that the traditional-style Scottish dark ale just had the edge over the other seven contenders.

### **The Farm**

The Farm in Monkspath (formerly the Shelly Farm) was opened at the beginning of August by its new owners, following a refit. The owners are also responsible for The Boot at Lapworth, the Orange Tree at Chadwick End, Mortons at Dickens Heath, and the Crabmill at Preston Baggot. Real ale available was Wadsworth 6X and Tetley. The barn building, slogan "Food at the Farm", is predominantly more for food; while the farm building, slogan "Inn at the Farm", is more for drinking. There is a website: [innatthefarm.co.uk](http://innatthefarm.co.uk)

### **CAMRA fears "domino effect"**

CAMRA fears that the purchase by Marston's of Ringwood Brewery in Hampshire will encourage a "domino effect" of consolidation in pubs and brewing. Ringwood is based in the village of Ringwood in Hampshire. It began brewing in 1978, owns seven pubs and provides beer to some 650 outlets. Its beer portfolio includes Best Bitter, Fortyniner, and Old Thumper.

CAMRA Chief Executive, Mike Benner said: "The practice among larger breweries of acquiring smaller competitors is a race where the only loser is the consumer who is often denied a locally brewed beer. As one of the larger breweries buys a brewery and expands their estate their competitors start hunting for their next purchase to keep up. CAMRA's fear is that an increasing number of smaller breweries will be lost if this race continues and consumer choice will suffer as a result."

"In the last three years alone we have seen another Hampshire brewery, Gales, bought and closed by Fuller's and Greene King bought and closed Hardys and Hansons in Nottingham, as well as buying and closing Ridley's brewery in Essex. Marston's purchased Jennings in Cumbria and invested in the future of the brewery and we hope they will continue this model with Ringwood. But, it begs the question, who is next in line for acquisition?"

Following today's announcement CAMRA seeks assurances that Marston's will continue to make all Ringwood's beers available in its pubs around Hampshire - as well as in the free-trade - and not be substituted for Marston's own brands. The consumer group is also seeking assurances that the acquired pubs will keep their Ringwood identity.

John Buckley, CAMRA's Wessex Regional Director said, "Ringwood beers are widely available throughout Hampshire and are highly valued. It is essential that they are not replaced by other beers in the Marston's portfolio. Local drinkers in Hampshire are still reeling from the closure of Gales Brewery and we will fight to protect choice for consumers."

## No Smoke....but a lot of Water!

As the smoking ban came into force, the UK also found itself contending with the worst flooding for years. A selection of reports on the following two pages shows how pubs near and far were affected, in one way or another.

### Kelham Island Brewery

The Kelham Island Brewery near Sheffield had extensive flooding leaving 6 inches of sludge behind. They had to destroy 40,000 pints of beer even though it apparently tasted fine, because the containers had been contaminated and they couldn't take the risk of selling it. They are now back in action and the first new brew planned will be named after the Bruce Springsteen song "After the Flood". See their website [www.kelham.island.brewery.co.uk](http://www.kelham.island.brewery.co.uk) for further details.



### Springhead Fine Ales

Nottinghamshire based brewer Springhead Fine Ales had to abandon its premises and was looking for a sub-contract until they could return to the brewery. Based in the village of Sutton on Trent in North Nottinghamshire, the water was up to four feet deep in both the offices and the brewery and caused substantial damage to the plant equipment as well as computers and office systems. They aimed to be back up and running, however, by the end of August.

### Flooding Affects Pubs

The Licensed Trade Charity is asking pub workers who have been affected by the recent floods and are in difficulties as a result, to contact them for assistance. Director of Marketing and Charity Services Liz Gaffer said: " We are appealing to those who have been affected by the flooding to call us if they need assistance and we will endeavour to help them any way we can. We want those who have worked in the licensed trade or those who have retired from it to consider us and bear us in mind that when the flooding and water is gone, there is an organisation which is here to help."

A Worcestershire pub which sheltered 30 flood victims and was praised by local parish and district councillors as a result, will act as a refuge in future should there be another flooding problem. Landlord Roger Sizer of the Red Lion, Powick, opened his pub during the worst of the floods to people who couldn't get back to their homes when the Teme burst its banks.



### Severn Valley Railway

The flood-damaged Severn Valley Railway has launched a £1 million appeal to restore its 16 miles of track. Two weeks' worth of rain fell on the track in just 30 minutes, causing 45 landslides between Bewdley and Bridgnorth. Supporters of the line, which runs real ale trains selling Holdens and Bathams ales, are urging CAMRA members to get behind the appeal.

Go to [www.svr.co.uk](http://www.svr.co.uk) to make a donation.

## Weather Hits Pubs Harder than the Smoking Ban

The wet start to July hit pubs harder than the smoking ban, according to recent figures. The effect of the ban across 1,500 pubs across England was tracked following 1st July. The survey showed stubbing-out-day in England had little effect in the first week, with bad weather accounting for the biggest factor for reduced sales. The North East was hardest hit with sales down 6.2%, followed by the North West at 3.4%, and the Midlands at 2.5% over the same period. It is suggested that this is directly as a result of the bad weather, as other regions less affect saw sales rise: for instance, 2.7% in the South East, and only a small drop of 0.5% in the South West.

## Poll Results

A poll taken by Greene King indicated that most people thought that pubs were better places for being smoke-free. 67% said they thought the pubs were better, while 48% said they would visit more often now. 82% of licensees polled thought the ban was a good thing, both for the working environment and for trade, with 75% happy that their workplace is now free of smoke.

## Smoke on Trent



**Except Stoke-on-Trent**

In Stoke on Trent a blunder led to the town being dubbed Smoke on Trent. Councillors failed to introduce legislation necessary to enforce the ban and many pubs allowed customers to continue puffing away. However the correct legislation was brought in with effect from 1st August. Westerham Brewery has brewed a beer marking the smoking ban. Holy Smoke, at 4.2%, has been infused with a puff of Weyermann smoked malt, giving just a hint of smokiness. A golden ale, it is spiced with Brambling Cross and Golding Hops from Kent.

## Results are Positive

A study showed that bar staff once passively smoking the equivalent of 12 cigarettes a day before the ban are now free of poisonous chemicals. Landlord Ross Nicol and his partner Karen Beesley, of the Cornubia pub in Bristol, were the first people studied by the charity Cancer Research. The non-smokers had their breath and saliva tested for smoking chemicals two days before and four days after the ban in enclosed places came in on July 1st. The amount of carbon monoxide in their bodies had dropped 80%. Also, levels of cotinine, a by-product of nicotine, had fallen from a level of a moderate smoker to that of a non-smoker. Mr Nicol said "I was shocked at the results. It's so nice not to stink of tobacco smoke at the end of the night". Similar tests will now be carried out at 100 other venues.



## But on the other hand.....

The smoking ban may have kicked in on 1st July but one Birmingham boozier is determined not to lose the traditional smoky smell. To keep customers happy, city centre pub The Craven Arms has found a spray called 'Fag Ash' to make sure the smell of cigarettes still lingers in the air. Landlady Sarah Thornton sprays the aerosol around the bar at regular intervals. This has delighted local drinkers who feel that since smoking went out the door, so too has the atmosphere. Sarah says: "People don't feel like they've had a proper night out unless they smell of smoke at the end of it! It's gone down so well that already I've run out of the spray and I've had to order more in."

Did you experience problems connected with the flooding and a pub; or do you have a view on the no-smoking ban? If so, contact the Editor via the details on the back page.

## Off our Patch

### White Hart, Foulton, Norfolk

Buffys Brewery has bought The White Hart at Foulton and it is at last open again after being closed for several months. They have so far kept things quite low key and are trying to ascertain what the needs are regarding the local customers. They refuse to stock John Smith's Smooth, choose Aspalls Cider over Woodpecker, and are not stocking Greene King, Adnams or Elgoods; instead promoting their choice of real ales to the extreme.

### Derby Real Ale Breaks

Derby is promoting itself as 'The Real Ale Capital of The Midlands', claiming that size for size, they are probably the best city for real ale in the country. They boast of over 120 real ales pubs, 3 breweries within the city, and 2 CAMRA festivals each year, giving visitors plenty of choice of what's on tap.

Now to celebrate this bounty, you can book a beer break in Derby easily through Triangle Sports and Events Ltd, who will co-ordinate all your booking requirements to suit your drinking capacity; with Real Ale breaks starting from £62 based on 2 people sharing, and accommodation within easy crawl distance.

Breaks can include: free admission to the Derby CAMRA Beer Festivals (3-5 January and 9-13 July 2008 - Summer Festival includes free souvenir glass and 1/2 pint of real ale); DIY pub crawl at your leisure day or night; micro-brewery visit to the Derby Brewing Company; and micro-brewery visit to the Brunswick Inn, a fully restored Victorian Railwayman's hostelry. For further details, ring 01332 341351, or visit the website [www.VisitDerby.co.uk/ShortBreaks](http://www.VisitDerby.co.uk/ShortBreaks)



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BEER FESTIVAL**

**THURS 20TH - SUNDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER**  
**40 + REAL ALES, CIDER AND PERRY**

**FRIDAY 21st - COMEDY NIGHT, £4 entry (doors open 7pm)**

**SUNDAY 23rd - AFTERNOON BLUES, 3pm**

**PLUS MUCH MORE OVER THE WEEKEND including**  
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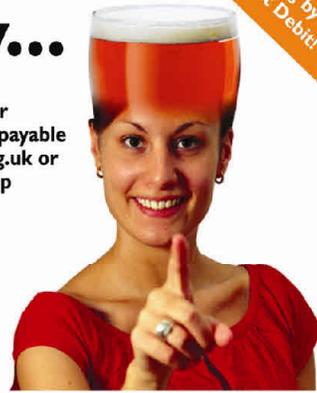
144 High St, Aston, Birmingham, B6 4UP  
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It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale

Save money by paying by Direct Debit!

# Join CAMRA today...

Complete the Direct Debit form below and you will receive three months membership free and a fantastic discount on your membership subscription. Alternatively you can send a cheque payable to CAMRA Ltd with your completed form, visit [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk) or call 01727 867201. All forms should be addressed to Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW.



### Your Details

Title ..... Surname .....

Forename(s) .....

Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy) .....

Address .....

Postcode .....

Email address .....

Tel No (s) .....

Please state which CAMRA newsletter you found this form in? .....

	Direct Debit	Non DD
Single Membership (UK & EU)	£20 <input type="checkbox"/>	£22 <input type="checkbox"/>
Joint Membership (Partner at the same address)	£25 <input type="checkbox"/>	£27 <input type="checkbox"/>

For concessionary rates please visit [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk) or call 01727 867201.

### Partner's Details (if Joint Membership)

Title ..... Surname .....

Forename(s) .....

Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy) .....

I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

I enclose a cheque for .....

Signed ..... Date .....

Applications will be processed within 21 days



## Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit



Please fill in the form and send to: Campaign for Real Ale Ltd, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 4LW



This Guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer.

### Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To the Manager Bank or Building Society  
 Address  
 Postcode

### Originator's Identification Number

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### FOR CAMRA OFFICIAL USE ONLY

This is not part of the instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Membership Number  
 Name  
 Postcode

### Name(s) of Account Holder (s)

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### Bank or Building Society Account Number

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### Branch Sort Code

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### Reference Number

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- This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.
- If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change CAMRA will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
- If an error is made by CAMRA or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of your letter to us.

detached and retained this section

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.



# Dates For Your Diary

## Socials

Thurs. 6th—Sun. 9th September Exeter: long weekend away  
Friday 16th November Pub & Grub, Golden Acres

## Branch Meetings

Monday 1st October Drawbridge, Haslucks Green (TBC)  
Monday 5th November AGM & B. Meeting: Drum & Monkey (TBC) (8pm start)

(NB. All Branch meetings start at 8.30pm except where noted otherwise—check our website for up to date information)

## Special Events

Saturday 13th October Branch Silver Jubilee Party, Red Lion, Knowle

*For meetings/socials yet to be confirmed or if more details are needed, visit our website: [www.SolihullCamra.org.uk](http://www.SolihullCamra.org.uk), or contact Branch Secretary Steve Wood on 0121 704 5258.*

## Forthcoming Beer Festivals

20th-23rd September Bartons Arms, Aston

5th-6th October Solihull & District Branch  
(see front page for further details including opening times)

## Membership Matters

CAMRA would absolutely love every member to be a bit more pro-active! It appreciates that this may not be possible for all, but it is a case of 'use it or lose it!' - your local branch is only as good as the members who put the time in to appear, and if we don't have enough of those, the branch may fold—it has occurred elsewhere before, and a very sad event that is if it happens.

Our branch meetings are all at relatively local pubs on the first Monday of each month, and although there is a certain amount of 'business' to get through, meetings are friendly, unfussy, and a very sociable occasion each time: so do try to get to meet up with the rest of us every now and again. If you are not able to attend a meeting, then there are monthly socials which are listed in this magazine and on our website, and we are always genuinely pleased to see new faces!!

Talking of which, if you have aspirations to help at our forthcoming Beer Festival in October, then please make yourself known to me ,email: [membership@SolihullCAMRA.org.uk](mailto:membership@SolihullCAMRA.org.uk) or tel. 0121 603 1621 , and we'll try to slot you in. It's more fun than you might think, and you get discounted beer and a post festival thank you trip to boot!!

Carl Wright

## News

### Don't forget...

To check out our new, easy to navigate website, [www.SolihullCamra.org.uk](http://www.SolihullCamra.org.uk), for an instant update on events, meetings, articles, campaign information, local pubs, and much more. You can also download copies of this magazine from there, including past issues.

Forthcoming main events include the 9th Solihull & District Beer Festival on 5th & 6th October, and the Branch's Silver Anniversary, also in October, which members are invited to celebrate at The Red Lion pub, Knowle (where it all started!) on Saturday 13th October.

Call Branch Secretary Steve Wood on 0121 704 5258 for further information including cost of tickets.

### CIDER & PERRY MONTH 2007

This October is designated Cider and Perry month by CAMRA and the consumer organisation is striving to ensure more people will have the opportunity to try these deliciously fruity drinks.

CAMRA hopes that as the overall popularity of cider and perry increases we will see increased examples of the traditional styles in pubs across the UK.

Owen Morris, CAMRA Press Officer and member of the Cider and Perry campaigning committee said: "Preconceptions of cider and the people who drink it have been shattered. It is now regarded as a 'drink to be seen with'. CAMRA believes people are ready to be seen drinking the real thing and show that cider and perry are not the only things with great taste."

"Once drinkers enjoy a real cider or perry - where the fruit has simply been pressed and allowed to ferment without any need for additives - then we are certain the cider renaissance will continue. Why not ask in your local if they are planning to stock a real cider and perry in October?"

Real cider is a long-established traditional drink which is produced naturally from apples and is neither carbonated nor pasteurised. As cider is made from apples, perry is made from perry pears, which tend to be smaller and harder than dessert pears.

Look on CAMRA HQ's web site [www.camra.org.uk/cidermonth](http://www.camra.org.uk/cidermonth) to find cider events put on by local branches in your area. Real cider and perry are stocked at many of the CAMRA beer festival going on throughout the country.

## The History of Solihull CAMRA - Part Two

In Part One of this piece in the last Drinker we looked at the history of Solihull CAMRA from 1971 to May 1982 when a couple of trial meetings were held to test support.

Although initial support was a bit thin, the local activists of the time were not deterred. Local member Clive Deacon had now been joined by Malcolm Glass and Andy Lyndon, and their first action was to arrange a social evening for local Branches at the Three Tuns in Henley-in-Arden in June 1982. As only 7 local members attended, a key decision was made to be more proactive. They hoped to gain enough support to form an independent CAMRA Branch, rather than continuing as a sub-Branch of Coventry CAMRA. Armed with an address list of 57 local members, Clive, Malcolm and Andy decided to go door-to-door canvassing. They were met with a range of reactions, but the objective of gathering together a group of active members was successful.

This was demonstrated by the next event, an informal social at the Saddlers Arms, Solihull in July 1982. This was attended by 16 local members, most of whom had been contacted via the door-knocking campaign. Attendees included Brian & Dave Queenborough who were to prove valuable additions to the cause. Another notable feature of the evening was the simple newsheet produced by Clive Deacon for the event, called The Boro Banter (the fore-runner of The Solihull Drinker).

Edition 2 of The Banter was produced for the next event, a social at the Red Lion, Knowle in August. This was attended by 18 people, including future Chairman Steve Dyson and wife Jean. Confidence was growing, so it was decided to hold a final test meeting at the Golden Lion, Solihull (now the Town House). Area Organiser Andy Beaton was invited to judge if there was enough support to form a Branch. The answer was a resounding yes. 18 people attended, with enough volunteers for an initial Committee.

So a historic moment had been reached, Solihull was proudly declared an official Branch of the Campaign, and the inaugural meeting was held at the Red Lion, Knowle on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1982. The first Committee was elected, consisting of:

Malcolm Glass (Chairman); Clive Deacon (Secretary); Brian Queenborough (Treasurer); Eric Moseley (Membership); Andy Lyndon (Socials); Richard Adkins (Pub surveys); Alan Machin (Publicity)

The first act of this fledgling Branch was to present local pub The Railway, Dorridge with a certificate for appearing in the first ten Good Beer Guides (although the Branch demonstrated their independence by not including it in the 11<sup>th</sup> the following year!). The end of 1982 also saw the opening of a local Real Ale Off-Licence, Bernies, in Shirley, which has been a major asset to local campaigning ever since.

Since these early pioneering days, the Solihull Branch has gone from strength to strength. Clive Deacon took over as Chairman in 1984, a local pub guide was published in 1987, and that same year also saw the award of the first Solihull & District Pub of the Year (won by the Navigation, Lapworth). In 1988 Steve Dyson took over, local membership reached 100 in 1991, while 1994 saw the first Solihull area CAMRA Beer Festival, above the Vaults in Knowle. Brenda Duffy became the new Chair in 1995, a new annual award for the Most Improved Pub was instigated in 1997, the same year that saw the Branch newsletter relaunched as The Solihull Drinker following the 52 editions of the original, produced between 1982 & 1995. In 2000 new chairman Dave Hobbis saw local membership reach the 200 mark. Shortly before he stood down in 2002, the Branch held the first of its many successful Beer Festivals at the British Legion in Solihull.

Dave was replaced as Chair by Ray Cooke; during his tenure the Branch created its website and produced the first comprehensive 28 page Local Pub Guide in 2003. 2005 saw the start of a regular column in a local newspaper, entitled 'The Beer Hunter'. Finally, in 2006 Roger Dipple became the 7<sup>th</sup> Chair of the Branch, who saw Branch membership reach the 300 mark in his first year at the helm.

So, thanks to all involved in helping make the Branch the success it is — a lot has been achieved in 25 years. Who knows what the next 25 years will bring?

Steve Wood

ALISON AND ADRIAN WARMLY WELCOME YOU TO

# The Rowington Club

On Rowington Green, Rowington, Warwickshire CV35 7BD

Telephone: 01564 782087

Opening hours: Weekdays: 2.00 pm – 11.00 pm

Weekends and Bank Holidays: 12 Noon – 11.00 pm

Large car park

Come and relax playing dominoes, cards, snooker and pool

Three regularly changing real ales available

(With your support we can even increase the range of ales!)

Live music most Saturdays and Special Events every month

Being a club, we charge £1.00 per visit (free to card-carrying CAMRA members)  
(full membership: £10.00 per annum)

## **Forthcoming Events**

Sunday 7th October: Marrow Sunday (open day, anyone welcome!)

Compete for the Heaviest Marrow, Longest Carrot, Longest Runner Bean,  
Longest Parsnip, and Heaviest Onion, Best Jam Sponge, and Best  
Preserves (special section)

Live music, real ales, hog roast, raffles and competitions, and entertain-  
ments: Bale Push; Ferret Racing; Welly-Whanging and Pooch Race - in  
fact plenty to keep everyone amused all day long and much, much  
more!!

For full details of all events, please ring Adrian or Alison at  
The Rowington Club, and they will be only too pleased to  
talk to you about a wonderful night out.

# The Golden Acres

Rowood Drive

Damsonwood, Solihull

Tel. 0121 704 9002

Joint Solihull & District CAMRA  
Most Improved Pub of the Year 2005

Three guest  
real ales  
plus a  
regularly-  
changing  
traditional  
cider



Sports  
coverage  
a regular  
feature

Children  
welcome

Traditional Sunday Lunches 12.00 - 4.00pm

Try our authentic Chinese food  
Eat in and/or Take-away

Mondays-Saturdays (except Tuesdays) 5.00-11.30pm  
Sundays: Eat-in 5.00-10.30pm Take-away 5.00-11.30pm

## Yet another trip: Boot Beer Festival, 7<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> June

No, not the Boot in Lapworth, but the village in Eskdale, Cumbria. Every year it hosts a beer festival with three pubs participating:- The Boot, Brook House Inn and the Woolpack.

We travelled up on Thursday, stopping off for lunch in the Good Beer Guide-listed Euxton Mills in Euxton, near Chorley, and enjoyed a brief lunch with the Jennings range to choose from.

The evening took us to the Brook House Inn, which is just on the edge of the village, on the main road (in fact only a narrow lane) between Ravenglass and Coniston. An impressive pub for such a sparsely populated area, with a bar even more so with 8 hand pumps. The beers were clearly chosen with "food miles" in mind and included:- Bank Top Samuel Cromptons Ale, Boggart Hole, Yates, Taylor's Ram Tam, Abbeydale Black Mass (6.6% - not tried), Copper Dragon, Durham White Gem, Hawkshead Bitter and Leadmill Old Oak Bitter. The beers were changing even while we were there and it was hard going to keep up. I voted the Samuel Crompton my favourite.

The next day we visited Ravenglass, travelling in style on the narrow gauge railway conveniently running between Ravenglass and Boot. It was originally a Roman port but now is only a railway junction, but a very charming village for all that.

The Holly House, a small unspoiled pub, provided lunch and was mainly memorable for the incredibly large amount of cheese in my roquefort baguette that cost only about £3.00. The Jennings range of beers was available. The other pub there was the Ratty Arms, a severe looking building right on the station, and with a name like that was unmissable. A Jennings beer and Theakstons Bitter were on. The pub apparently gets its name from the narrow gauge railway which is called the Trod Rat. (Don't ask!)



The Ratty Arms

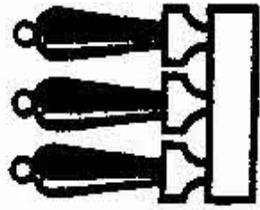
We booked a table at the Boot Inn for our evening meal in anticipation of the Saturday night being busy and sure enough it was, with plenty of drinkers and eaters outside as well, all enjoying the warm weather. Complimenting the excellent food were beers from further afield than the night before. These were:- Schiehallion, Black Sheep, Shugborough (see Titanic in the GBG), Coachman's Tipple, Wards Best Bitter, Inveralmond Independence, Robinson's Hatters Mild, Osset Silver King and Hartley Cumbria Way.

Off to the Woolpack next, which turned out to be a good mile and a half up the road and deeper into serious sheep country. The sign above the entry door says all - "BAA". This is the home of the Hardknott Brewery and very much a macho drinkers pub – all bare boards and hard seats – and staff to match. Their own beers were Hardknott Cascade, Colonial Breakfast and Woolly Fusion, all of very distinctive character and not mainstream styles. The others were Yates IPA and Geltsdale Tarnmonath plus Vic Holders perry. It was hard to know how they manage to sell beer at any time, especially during the winter, with not a house for miles, but there were plenty drinkers on the night.

The brewery gets its name from the Hardknott Pass, which goes all the way from Boot, past the Brook House Inn and the Woolpack, eventually to Coniston. It claims to have the second steepest gradient in England – 30% - and this is the way we went on the Saturday morning with serious risk to paintwork and rubbing wing mirrors with complete strangers. The Black Bull Inn in Coniston is the Home of the Coniston Brewery and surely nowhere better to try the Bluebird.

A barbeque was enjoyed later in the day with carry-out Bluebird from the excellent King George 1V nearby, and rounded off by a log fire well into the night.

Bob Jackson



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## The Word on the Street...

### Purity Brewing Company

Purity are celebrating the fact that real ale lovers will now have access to their favourite local brew thanks to a new direct delivery service unveiled by the Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA) in conjunction with national retailer the Thresher Group. A distribution agreement with Thresher brokered through SIBA's Direct Delivery Scheme (DDS) means that for the first time local brewers such as the Purity Brewing Co, based at Upper Spennall Farm, near Alcester, get their products on the shelves of a major seller. The scheme enables Purity to deliver directly to Thresher outlets up to 40 miles away from their bespoke brewery, thus connecting micro suppliers with macro customers. In support SIBA DDS will provide a leaflet unique to each store to promote the launch and offer tasting notes on each store's individual beer range. The leaflet also promotes the long term sustainability of the scheme and the benefits to the local economy and environment of direct delivery by local brewers.

Paul Halsey, sales director of Purity said "We think this is great news and a first within a major multiple retailer. It gives microbreweries like us massive exposure and a chance to compete with the big boys. Consumers are increasingly on the lookout for local food and drink products provided by producers such as ourselves that are unique to their area. We're already delivering to 12 local Thresher and Wine Rack stores and look forward to increasing that number. This service is a great way of demonstrating our flexibility and commitment to helping the discerning beer drinker have a greater choice and flexibility."



*Sales Director, Paul Halsey, with staff from the South Warwickshire rurally based Purity Brewing..*

The local ales sector of the beer market has long claimed to be unique, with its focus on quality beers through hand crafted brewing, one-off seasonal and innovative ales or dedicated responses to individual customer requests that larger breweries cannot service.

Mike Benner, Chief Executive, CAMRA, points to the explosion in the number of bottled beers available which he estimated at 1,000. He confirmed that spotting the commercial opportunity from localism is a clever move on Thresher's and SIBA's part and declared the launch a great step forward for British beer.

For more information about the brewery check the website: [www.PurityBrewing.com](http://www.PurityBrewing.com)

### Free Beer mats for Publicans

Is your pub crying out for beer mats?? If so, CAMRA can help. They produce seasonal beer mats with current messaging. Order from [gillian.dale@camra.org.uk](mailto:gillian.dale@camra.org.uk).

The Farmers' Union may also have beer mats to give away to publicise their campaigns; contact [Lee.Woodger@nfu.org.uk](mailto:Lee.Woodger@nfu.org.uk) or tel. 02476 85866.

Finally, pubs can request some Cyclops POS, which could include beer mats, by completing a form in the Cyclops licensee area by clicking on [www.camra.org.uk/Cyclops](http://www.camra.org.uk/Cyclops) or [direct link to the form](http://www.camra.org.uk/page.aspx?o=229120) - <http://www.camra.org.uk/page.aspx?o=229120>

# Hampton Wines

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## OPENING TIMES

Mon—Thurs

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11.30—2.00 5.00—10.00

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Sunday

10.00—2.00

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The Solihull Drinker is the newsletter of the Solihull & District Branch  
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All contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to Julia Hammonds:  
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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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