

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

www.solihullcamra.org.uk



Solihull Drinker

Issue No: 45

Summer 2008

Solihull and District Win Major Award!!

Our Website wins over 157 other branches

Yes, you heard it here first—our Branch won the Website of the Year at the recent CAMRA AGM!! This is a tremendous honour, and a fitting tribute to the work that some of the Branch members, and above all, Kevin Clarke, our current Webmaster, have put into the website over the last year or two.

Kevin and Roger Dipple, Branch Chairman, travelled down to Cardiff to attend the AGM and receive the award. Although we did not know in advance that we



Kevin proudly displaying the award for CAMRA
Website of the Year

had won, a hint from our regional director suggested that it would be in our interests to attend, and the result was outstanding. Given that there are many larger branches than ours across the country with many more members, thus making management of a website easier, we are truly stunned to have received this award, and very proud of this achievement.

If you have never been onto our website, then can I please urge you to have a browse—there is always up to date news on pubs, beers and

breweries—we have just 'acquired' the Discovery Brewery in our patch, of which more inside; and a new section prepared especially for the summer gives you all the details of pubs by canals in our area, for those warm summer evenings (yes, they will happen!) when a relaxing beer and a lovely place to drink it in is wanted. You can also post your own comments on pubs and beers, which helps us keep to date with the best (and worst) places to drink locally.

The website address is www.solihullcamra.org.uk—do take a look.

Inside: Don't miss the Dates for your Diary



THE BULL'S HEAD

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**VISIT OUR 15th CENTURY VILLAGE INN
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OF THE PUB OR IN OUR SEPARATE INTIMATE RESTAURANT
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***Summer's here, and come rain or shine, The Bull's Head will be waiting
to welcome you with a great pint and superb food. Drink or eat in or out,
depending on your mood and the weather—either will be wonderful.***

All Hail to the Ale! - local Beer, Pub and Brewery news

Sophie is the Perfect Pint Puller!!

Sophie Clarke, of The White Lion, Hampton in Arden, was the winner of our PPP competition. In addition to the votes from visitors to the pub, the Branch judging panel twice visited all the five finalists nominated, and finally settled on Sophie as the outright winner, based on a warm welcome, efficient service with a smile, a full pint in a clean glass, and excellent knowledge of the choice of drinks available. Sophie won £50 towards an outing of her choice, and was presented with an award by the Branch. She was also unexpectedly given the night off by her boss John, and enjoyed celebrating the occasion with regulars and the Solihull CAMRA branch visitors.



Three nominees were also randomly pulled from the hat and given a beery reward for entering their favourite PPP into the competition.

Sophie showing the warm welcoming smile that helped her win the PPP award.

Sad news

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Don Dykes, of the Waggon & Horses in Halesowen., on 20th May, following a stroke.

Over the last 20 years, together with Bob Dummons, he turned the pub into a paradise for real ale drinkers and many Solihull CAMRA members have travelled regularly to Halesowen to sample the excellent variety of ales, which Don ensured were always of top quality.

We offer our sincere condolences to Bob, on the loss of his dear friend and colleague, and to Don's many friends at the Waggon who will surely miss him.

The Annual Trip — Exeter, September 2007

Solihull CAMRA explores Exeter and the Exe Estuary—Part Three

Every year Solihull CAMRA visits a part of the country with good pubs and breweries. Late last year Exeter was our base for the weekend. Many of you will have read the last Drinker which retold our first days adventures. On to Day Three.....

Saturday - our final full day and were we flagging? Well maybe a little. A hearty breakfast soon cured that and we were on our way for our day of trains and boats; a visit to a maltings and a beer festival. Daunting? Possibly. Achievable? Definately... I think!

Gordon purchased a massive wad of Exe Valley Circular train tickets at the station for our day on the Exe Estuary and in no time at all we were all on the 9.50am train to Newton Abbott and the famed Tuckers Maltings. Tuckers is one of the few maltings left that still germinates the grain on the floor in the traditional way. I have wanted to visit it for years so today was a milestone for me. On arriving we were offered an unexpected pleasure in the form of a tour of Teignworthy Brewery which is on site at the maltings. We were joined by two knowledgeable Canadians who were very keen on small breweries and brewery owner John Laughton answered all our questions as he described the brewing process to us all. The brewery uses Goldings, Fuggles, Brambling and Challenger hops. The malt comes from Tuckers [of course]. Moving on rather quickly to the sampling room as is our way we enjoyed the best pint of Teignworthy Reel Ale that we had tried all weekend. Why oh why can't they serve it like this in the pubs I thought? The Scum Down and the Beachcomber were not quite as good. Having sampled we gathered for our tour of the maltings.



Tuckers supply enough malt to make six million pints a year. Small scale in the scheme of things but to see the malt drying on the vast drying rooms and machinery, some of which is over 100 years old is a sight to see and evocative of a tradition rapidly disappearing. Our tour was well over an hour and included a visit to the sample room where we tasted Teignworthy's naturally conditioned bottled Maris Otter at 5.2%... rather nice.

We were now seriously behind schedule by an hour, having not expected the brewery tour so we knew that our visit to the South Devon Beer Festival would be curtailed by an hour.

Somewhat out of town at the race course the festival was luckily not too busy and with over 140 beers, ciders and perrys we had to be selective. We formed a small team and tried about twelve beers in about half an hour. We had not enough time to do the festival justice. The venue is spacious and food was available. The best beers for me were Goachers Real Mild and Marble Ginger Marble, the others being fair to good as is par for most beer festivals [apart from Solihull's of course!]. Time was so tight we had to leave to get our train out to Star Cross to link with the boat across the Exe estuary. At Starcross we just had time to nick into the Atmospheric Railway for an uninspiring Draught Bass and not interesting Otter Ale, which was in good condition.



As to the pub... definitely not atmospheric and not a place to tarry. Across the road rather snappish and a quick jaunt and we were all on the ferry cross the Exe.

Standing at the prow of the ferry and Kevin having done the Titanic pose, the fresh air cleared our heads whilst the sun beat down on us, and everything seemed right with the world.

So leaving the ferry at Exmouth we headed for the Grove on the Esplanade, a Young's pub. It is an imposing Victorian building with decorative barge boards spoilt by an inept extension on the front, whilst inside it is both bland and characterless having suffered the one room makeover in which to cram in as many holiday makers as possible. However, on our visit 90% of the patrons were sitting in the garden and so charging our glasses we to joined them. An outside balcony at first floor level alongside the restaurant seemed inviting but on closer inspection was closed so we sat at bench tables. The usual Young's beers were available namely Bitter, Special, Waggledance and Courage Directors which were in good condition. It was just a shame that the guest beer was not very imaginative. With the sun beaming down on us we were loathe to make a move, but move we did. A quick walk up the road bought us to the Powder Monkey a typical Wetherspoons pub opened in 2000. The pub takes its name from one Nancy Perriam, an Exmouth resident, whose sewing skills with shirts and sails were much appreciated by the Royal Navy. She also acted as a 'powder monkey' which is naval slang for the young boys who filled shells and cartridges with gunpowder. We were so short of time here that the Cotleigh Buzzard; Greene King Hooker No. 2 and Abbott Ale; O'Hanlon's Yellowhammer and Royal together with Marston's Pedigree hardly touched our throats before we made a mad dash for the train which we duly missed. We decided therefore to give the Redwing at Lymestone a miss and go straight to Topsham. After a few phone calls to tie in with meeting local CAMRA members we settled down to await our train, entertainment being provided by Bob Jackson scrumping apples alongside the track.

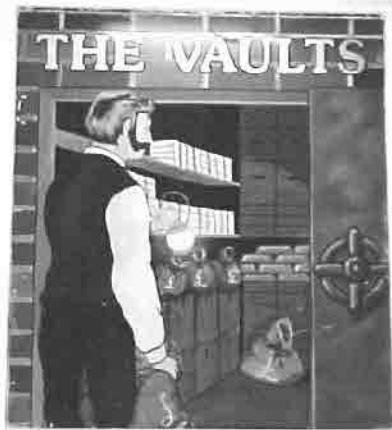
Topsham is a lovely little town. Originally a Roman settlement, it was granted a Charter in 1300 by Edward I. It developed into a major British port and shipbuilding centre. There are Dutch houses from this maritime past, and many examples of Georgian and Edwardian architecture. In 2000 it celebrated it's 700th year, with a visit being made by the Queen. But a little more of that anon. Our first Topsham pub was the Globe. Dating from before the 1700's it is now a hotel with a lively bar [called the Inn Bar], which is full of character but unfortunately has a dreary bland lounge dominated by a large screen TV, which suited some who needed a Rugby fix. Me, I preferred the bar and the range of beers. On tap was Fullers London Pride; Dartmoor Best Bitter; Sharps Doom Bar; Butcombe Bitter and Otter Ale. I tried the Dartmoor Bitter a pleasant light bitter. Interestingly the name the Globe could originate from the sign of the Portuguese Wine merchants, which is a globe, who traded in the locality in the past.

As it was early evening our minds and stomachs turned to thoughts of food and so we moved on to the Lighter Inn on the waterfront and though ideal for our evening meal, lacked any distinctive character. However the beer was in excellent condition but not very imaginative being King and Barnes Bitter and Badger Gold. Surprisingly the pub has a long history, once being the Customs House. The present building is a new build from the 1970's when the original was burnt to the ground. Its location is adjacent to the quay where ships unloaded their wares onto lighters, boats that were small enough to pass through the Exeter Ship Canal. Hence the name, "Lighter Inn". Furthermore on the quayside is the "King's Beam" once used to punish sailors for any bad behaviour and to hang those condemned to death. Then again another source calls it the "King's Weighers" the remains of a huge set of scales which weighed the bales of wool, and other goods coming into and out of the Topsham. At this late stage in the weekend both stories sounded plausible to me!



(Continued on Page 7).

Nick and Gwen welcome you to



The Real Ale venue in Knowle

- ◆ Six hand-pumped beers including regulars Ansell's Mild, Deuchars IPA, Gales HSB, Tetley Bitter; and two guest beers
- ◆ Real cider from Weston's
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**Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year
2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, & 2008**

Our beer range can't be bettered in the area—come and see for yourself what we have to offer and why locals vote us a really great pub!

Nick, Gwen and our great staff look forward to welcoming you.

CAMRA Good Beer Guide listed since 1993



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

The Annual Trip (cont.)

After replenishing ourselves with pub grub we moved onto our final pub for the night, The Bridge. I have tried many times to visit the pub when it is open and until now have failed miserably. Apparently mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 it is on the CAMRA National Inventory of heritage pubs. It also has the accolade of being the only pub the Queen has visited. It is a gem of a pub dating back to the 16th century where beers are served by gravity from the cellar. It has a large bar and a small sitting room where access is limited by the pubs owners to regulars and friends. There were six beers on when we arrived: Exmoor Beast; Adnams Broadside; Branscombe Vale Branoc; Stonehenge Great Dane and Cotleigh 25, all in good to excellent condition.

Being our last night we partook of a pint or two at the Great Western to retire to bed contented with our day and the weekend.

Hold on though... there is always a little bit of Sunday to try another pub... and where else in Exeter could we go? There were two choices: the Turf, or the Double Locks on the Exeter Ship Canal. The Double Locks won. Built in the early years of the 18th century as the lock keeper's cottage and stabling for horses working the canal it is not easy to get to in a car. You have to negotiate a tight bridge over the Exeter Canal to get there but it is worth the visit. When we arrived the place was seething with families, walkers and cyclist, so much so that it was impossible to appreciate the traditional qualities of the pub. It is a Young's pub which relies very heavily on the food trade, but has a superb unspoilt bar. The beers were somewhat predictable being Wells Bombardier; Youngs Bitter and Waggledance but welcoming to see Otter Ale and Bitter; O'Hanlons Firefly and Yellowhammer and for the cider drinkers Green Valley Cider which was served from a precarious hanging contraption above the bar.

Things must come to an end and soon we were motoring up the motorway back to Solihull. Were we happy and contented? I think so considering the gentle snoring coming from Kevin and Gordon in the back. So a quiet thank you to them both for organising a cracking weekend. Liverpool next year?

Steve Dyson



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

**All contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to Julia Hammonds:
The Editor, Solihull Drinker, c/o 4, Kendrick Close, Solihull, B92 0QD
or e-mail julia.hammonds@blueyonder.co.uk**

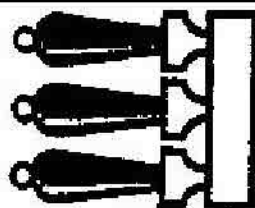
The Editor reserves the right to amend or shorten any contributions in the Solihull Drinker,
but will always honour the spirit of the contribution.

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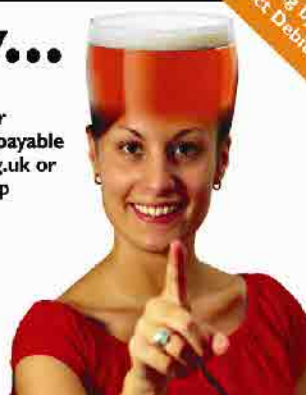


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I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

I enclose a cheque for

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Applications will be processed within 21 days



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Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

Monday 7th July	Navigation, Lapworth
Monday 4th August:	Bluebell Cider House, Warings Green
Monday 1st September	The Wharf, Hockley Heath
Monday 6th October	The Black Boy, Heronfield
(NB. All Branch meetings start at 8.30pm except where noted otherwise)	

Socials

Saturday 7th June	Bass Museum visit
Saturday 12th July	Bromsgrove Beer Festival trip

Forthcoming Beer Festivals

Friday 4th to Sunday 6th July: **BEER ON THE WYE IV: Hereford Beer & Cider Festival:** Riverside marquee at Hereford Rowing Club, Greyfriars Avenue, HEREFORD. HR4 0BE. (20-25 mins walk from rail station) Open from 2pm onwards on Friday 4th until 5pm on Sunday 6th. Over 100 cask beers, foreign and bottled beers bar, plus over 50 Herefordshire ciders and perries. Launch of 'Herefordshire Pubs' exhibition. Good food, plus live music from the *Rumbajax* and *Floyd Earl Band* (Fri eve) and *Hagglebag* (Sat eve). Saturday afternoon is more laid back with the *Hereford Big Band*. Sunday is family fun day with Morris men, displays, folk music, mini-farmers' market and kids activities. CAMRA members half price entry. For more information, please go online at: www.herefordcamra.org.uk

For meetings/socials yet to be confirmed or if more details are needed, visit our website: www.solihullcamra.org.uk, or contact Chairman Roger Dipple on 0121 705 6606

Membership Matters

We now have approximately 315 members in our Branch. However, we only see a fraction of these people at Branch meetings and other events. It would be wonderful to see a few more of you now and then, as you are what bolsters this Branch up and enables us to carry on functioning. How about coming to one of our meetings in the future and seeing how we run the Branch—the venues are always publicised a few months ahead in this magazine, or alternatively on our website www.solihullcamra.org.uk

These aren't just stuffy events, but can be really fun get-togethers, especially as we always choose real ale pubs—and the socials can include some very interesting and out-of-the-way breweries. If I see you and you're new to me—I'll buy you a pint—can't say fairer than that!

**Carl Wright,
Membership Secretary**

The White Lion

Hampton in Arden



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"The return of the village pub"

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Our Festival Thank-you Trip

Tunnel Brewery Visit



Relaxing, waiting to be called for our trip round the brewery (it's hard work but someone's got to do it)

One thing that all CAMRA beer festivals have in common, whether they are as large as the GGBF and Peterborough or as small as Solihull's own, is that they are totally dependant on volunteers for their planning and actual staffing. Like many branches Solihull puts on a post festival trip as a way of thanks to all those who gave up their time to make the festival a success. A brewery visit is usually included and in past years we have visited Church End, Purity, Windsor Castle and Weatheroak.

Beer of the 2007 festival award to Bob Yates and Mike Walsh of Tunnel Brewery in Ansley near Nuneaton. Beer of the festival winner Solihull Silver Shield was brewed there, with the help of branch members Kevin Clarke and Robert Cawte, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the branch's founding.

Our visit started in the Lord Nelson Inn as we waited for an earlier group to finish their tour. It was then a short walk through the Lord Nelson's beer garden to the brewery itself. With the presentation of the beer of the festival award by branch chairman Roger Dipple complete, our visit became a tasting session of many of the bottled versions of Tunnel's brews with Mike Walsh acting as tutor.



Listen and learn—this is how we make our wonderful beer (and I have to say it tasted great too)

We then returned to Lord Nelson for lunch and our minibus back to Solihull, which conveniently dropped us off near to the Assembly Rooms.

Malcolm Harry

Think you'd like to help out at this year's beer festival?? - then get in touch with one of the Committee members—details on page 7 or from our website, and make you interest known. You too could be on the 2008 Thank-you Trip! Ed.



Bob and Mike clearly transported by their award

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(full membership: £10.00 per annum)

There are plenty of forthcoming events this Summer—usually no booking fee, just turn up.

Saturday evening events a speciality: phone the Club for details of who's on - all who come will be welcome.

**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

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



Three guest ales
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Children Welcome
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**Further information from the pub on
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**Mondays-Saturdays (except Tuesdays) 5.00-11.30pm
Sundays: Eat-in 5.00-10.30pm Take-away 5.00-11.30pm**

A visit to Harborne (or how we kept on meeting Tim Taylor)

One example of the way that choice in real ale has improved over the last few years is the greater availability of beers that were previously restricted to their own regions. A point that was made on the branch's recent visit to Harborne in Birmingham.

Starting point was the Old Contemptibles opposite Snow Hill station. While obviously not in Harborne, it was a central meeting point, does food throughout the day and is near to Colmore Row and the number 22 or 23 bus stop. Beers on tap included Fullers London Price and Timothy Taylor Landlord.

Staying on the bus through Harborne the first stop was the Bell, a 300 year old former coaching inn next to St Peter's churchyard. Listed in the 2008 GBG, two real ales are available from the small bar situated in the hallway. Sitting in the panelled snug overlooking the bowling green we all enjoyed a pint of Everards Sunchaser.

It was a short walk back into the centre of Harborne and the Junction, with its modern bistro style pub interior. Both Everards and Timothy Taylor were represented, with the latter's being Golden Best rather than the usual Landlord.

Next stop was at the other end of the High Street and the Green Man, a typical Ember Inn, which is also in the 2008 GBG. Again of the four real ales available two were from what were traditional regionalists: Charles Wells Bombardier and Timothy Taylor Landlord.

The final pub was the White Horse, a traditional pub situated just off the High Street. There is a central island bar for the front snug and a large lounge at the back. With eight real ales available it is no wonder that it is in the 2008 GBG. Included in these was the by now rather common, and how we would have liked to be able to say that in the days when the on

and an organic beer from Black Isle. The bar/restaurant section has a number of specific areas for those who only want to drink.

Malcolm Harry

Is Your Local Under Threat?

By the time you read this, Community Pubs Week will be over and the dust will have long settled – or will it? It still remains a frightening reality that, on average, two pubs a day in Britain are closing their doors for good and indications are that this figure could be significantly higher. Worse still, the majority of these pubs are not high street chain bars or theme pubs, but community pubs, recognised by most people these days as important community amenities.

The local pub, like the local post office, newsagent or grocery store, is often at the heart of the community. I am not just talking about rural village pubs here but town and city-centre establishments too. We have already lost the Ring O' Bells in Yardley (albeit this pub is not in Solihull CAMRA's branch area) and the Lincoln Poacher in Olton this year alone. CAMRA has successfully run National Pubs Week in previous years in an attempt to convince more people to visit more pubs more of the time.

CAMRA members across the country have worked hard to promote pub-going in response to the growth in home drinking. Despite low supermarket prices, nothing can match the British pub for its service and atmosphere.

In the light of increased threats to community pubs CAMRA has, in recent years, changed the focus of the week of action to help raise the profile and importance of pubs in the community and encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to use community pubs more. If you value your local pub, support it and use it – or risk losing it!

CAMRA HQ

Other news

We have a Brewery on our patch!!!

We are delighted to report that the Discovery Brewery has been confirmed as belonging to the area covered by Solihull and District CAMRA Branch.

Simon began brewing in September 2007 at Brook Farm, Packington, near Coleshill. His day job is as a Physics Teacher and the name for the brewery, 'Discovery Ales', was chosen in part due to the nature of 'I'll soon discover if this was a waste of money!' and also because he had decided to name all the beers after scientific discoveries / discoverers / inventions etc.; however this has now diversified into anything to do with discovery, but with science being the main theme.

He was motivated by a passion for the beer and the realisation that you only live once, and he so enjoys the genuine experimentation of producing new beers that he plans to carry on experimenting and producing new beers on a regular basis.

He is currently distributing most of his beer through Dowbridge Distributors, which limits the availability, but we have high hopes that we will see more of his beers in the future. Here's to you Steve, well done and keep in touch!!

Recommended beers so far include; Dynamite (5.0%), Columbus (4.7%), Pioneer (4.2%), Captain Cook (5.0%), Newton's Cream (4.8%) Darwin's Delight (4.4%), Lightening Frank (4.5%) and Albert's Pale (4.2%)

The two new brews on their way are 'Albert's Pale 4.2%' and 'Hawking's Hole 4.6%'.

Dorothy Goodbody - not in breach of code

The label on a bottle of Dorothy Goodbody Wholesome Stout does not breach the Portman Group's Code of Practice, the Independent Complaints Panel has decided.

Alcohol Concern complained that the drawing on the drink's label of a young woman, whose dress is pulled back to reveal her thighs, was "sexually suggestive".

The Dorothy Goodbody brand has been used by Wye Valley Brewery for over 15 years and is intended to be a fun, light-hearted image which captures the 'spirit of 1950's rural Herefordshire'.

Said Vernon Amor, Managing Director of Wye Valley Brewery 'We were surprised that a complaint of this nature was made against Dorothy, the beers are high quality, high value and made with the finest ingredients. We have won lots of awards for our beers, especially for Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout. We give a food matching suggestion on the label too, this beer is to be savoured and enjoyed!'

Wye Valley Brewery won a major award for packaging at the SIBA Local Brewing Business Awards. This award followed a complete rebranding and the judges said of the new designs 'A well executed, comprehensive and co-ordinated approach. In particular, Wye Valley succeeded in achieving the difficult task of contemporising traditional imagery'.

'We are obviously delighted with the outcome of the Independent Complaints Panel, if you were to ban Dorothy Goodbody, where would it end? Next thing you know there would be a ban on all the 'Carry On' films and the iconic British seaside postcards'.

David Poley, Portman Group Chief Executive, said, in this case the producer has not crossed the line from acceptable to irresponsible marketing.



Long Itchington Trip

What better way to spend a warm spring bank holiday Saturday than drinking beer outside a series of pubs in a picturesque Warwickshire village - aka the Long Itchington Beer Festival?

Exactly, nothing, so that's what we did.

Saturday 3rd May 2008 was a great day—many thanks to Ian Edwards, who had organised it. We met at Solihull station for a train to Leamington Spa, and from there a local coach to the village. The return journey offered an early departure, or a full day option. We should use this approach more often. Who went? Well, some of the usual faces, some of their friends, and a load of new people..... our organiser had clearly done a great job promoting the trip. The formula was simple, it was like a mini pub crawl, you could stay and sample another beer, or move on, and usually bumped into someone from the party at the next pub, or they caught us up. Our paths kept crossing, which was very sociable, without any rush to move on or having to wait. This was probably just as well as some of the pubs only had limited numbers of pumps and staff and were perhaps not quite ready for the rush.

We started at one end of the village at The Cuttle, odd as it looked closed from the road, but the door facing the outside seating and the canal was open. Adnams Bitter and Wyre Same Again were both good and samples were offered. Others found the service very slow. From here we could see our next target across the canal - the Two Boats. (www.2boats.co.uk)

This had a wider range of beer - but an odd queuing system that made it hard to get to the bar; still the seating outside in the sunshine by the canal was very pleasant and the weekend felt as though it was in full swing. Due to a changing of the casks (aside from the regular beers) we started with some Cropton 6% Monksmans Slaughter which I really enjoyed, but you can't do that for long, so next was some Elland Nettlethrasher, also very good. This pub majored on beers with quaint and amusing names.

Next came the Duck on the Pond, overlooking the village pond. Idyllic setting, again nice seating outside (by the car park)... but you can't order the food for an hour (at least); one of the guests was off, the other guest was St Austells Tribute - now this is a good beer, but why 5 pumps offering Courage and Bombardier - are they taking this beer festival seriously? or are they just cashing in on the other pub's hard work?

Time to cross the village pond.... to a pub which does not appear in the GBG, but should do. Apparently a newly renovated derelict building, we were greeted by more beers than pumps, service with a smile (and a sample) and they were all real guests (not fancy names for the tourists, nor the same old ones you see everywhere) - the Buck and Bell. We ordered some food (good value and well cooked) and were planning on sharing a large table with another group by the road, when the landlord found us a table in a shaded area. He had been masquerading as a punter with a pint in his hand, clearly keeping an eye on things and it showed in both the service (more samples) and beer choice and quality. Beers: Sadlers Golden Gremlin and Oakham JHB..... we wanted to stay, but it was only fair to try the other pubs in the circuit; we vowed to return. (www.buckandbellpub.co.uk/)



The Harvester was next - this was a strenuous 3 minute walk and it nearly rained on us. This is in the GBG and I enjoyed a Cherwell Valley 'Cropredy Bridge 1664', named after the battle. The pub is definitely a village local. The beer range did not seem that great, but I missed a trick (draught Budvar dark which I would have liked to try) and others who returned later said the range kept changing all day - so they were obviously doing something right and it explains why they are in the GBG. (www.theharvesterinn.co.uk)

(Continued overleaf)

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Last, on the first lap, was the Green Man at the far end of the village: Envile Nailmaker mild (well, you have to now and again) and a Goffs White Knight. This was the first pub to serve a duff pint - the end of the cask - pity they handed it over without noticing, but swapped it without question (it had just run dry). Plenty of seating outside in the sunshine and a pig roast was laid on. I can see this being a popular local on a summer's evening.

As promised, we returned to the Buck and Bell - clearly the best choice of beer, welcome and beer quality for me. We found some space inside - there were numerous rooms of different styles which is nice to see in a new business - and bumped into some other members of the party we hadn't seen for a few hours. Tried a few more beers between us: Blackwater Zulu (which someone raved about - just shows why we need variety) Exmoor Gold - it truly deserves its reputation and was on excellent form - Roosters Yankee (also very good, but what a contrast, see what I mean ?) ... time to buy a festival glass and go home.



A great day out, the Buck and Bell a clear winner, several other pubs with good beers - and it all worked well because they had joined forces for the weekend. Must do it again next year

Robert Cawte

Ale is good for you—official!

Rejoice! The (moderate) consumption of ale has been linked with various health benefits, most notably decreased risk of heart disease, stroke and mental illness. Ale is in fact a rich source of nutrients thanks to the yeast used in the beer making process and is thought to contain high levels of magnesium, selenium, potassium and B vitamins. Just don't overdo it, otherwise you could end up with cirrhosis, which is definitely not 'super'.

Budget Tax Increase "to cut Alcohol Abuse"

The Chancellor's swingeing tax increase on alcohol in this year's Budget has stunned drinkers and the brewing industry alike with 4p on a pint of beer (13% increase), 3p on cider (14% increase), 14p on a bottle of wine and 55p on a bottle of spirits (both up 10%). The tax is also set to rise further with annual increases of 2% above inflation for the next four years.



Pure Gold strikes Gold!

South Warwickshire-based Purity Brewing Co. has topped up its prize cabinet with another award thanks to a beer 'par excellence' from head brewer Florent (Flo) Vialan.

Pure Gold, 3.8 per cent cask premium golden ale, was recently awarded the title of Champion Beer of Warwickshire 2008 at the recent Warwickshire Beer Festival, held at The Newbold Comyn Arms, Leamington Spa.

Purity, (based at Upper Spennall Farm, near Alcester) beat off nine other Warwickshire breweries in a blind taste test by hundreds of real ale loving punters in the four week event hosted by CAMRA.

J.D. Wetherspoon

Now two Wetherspoon's pubs in Solihull Town Centre offer you a choice of casual drinking or wining and dining.

Over the last 10 years, JD Wetherspoon has won over 50 national and regional awards, acknowledging excellence in all aspects of the business; and they are consistently in the top 100 employers. Cask Marque has awarded 650 of their pubs with their accreditation so you can be sure of the perfect pint. They offer carefully chosen menus, with leaflets available to explain where all their produce comes from; and have an award winning children's' menu which combines quality, healthy goodness and value with organic options.

The White Swan, opened on March 2004, and now The Assembly Rooms, opened in February 2008, are proud to serve Solihull town centre in their separate establishments. As you can see from the above, quality produce and excellent service is a watchword, and we do hope that you will take the time to visit us at any time during the day or night during our extensive opening hours. You will be sure of a warm welcome.

The Assembly Rooms, 21 Poplar Road, Solihull, B91 3AD

Phone: 0121 711 6990

Opening times: Sun—Wed: 9.00am—1.00am; Thurs—Sat: 9.00am—2.00am

Next to an exit from Mell Square shopping centre and car park, The Assembly Rooms is ideally situated for a shopping trip break, and our opening hours should suit everyone.

Lloyds No.1 bars have pleasant background music; at the weekends, in busy towns, the party continues into the evenings – many with live DJs getting you in the mood for a great night out! We restrict music to the upper floor, leaving downstairs visitors to enjoy a more peaceful visit. With 15 hand-pumps, we are proud that we can offer discerning drinkers a wide range of real ales plus other drinks to enhance their visit.

Our pub is planning a mini-beer festival from Friday 13th June—Monday 18th June inclusive, featuring up to 10 beers from Church End Brewery. Church End Beers will be on sale for £1.49 per pint while the festival lasts (all other beers at house prices). We are hoping to get into the next Good Beer Guide, so don't be shy of letting us know your views and how we can improve on our service to you!

For any queries: contact James, the manager, or one of his staff on 0121 711 6990.

The White Swan, 32–34 Station Road, Solihull, B91 3SB

Phone: 0121 711 5180

Opening times: Sun—Thurs: 9am—midnight; Fri/Sat: 9am—1am

The White Swan was an old coaching inn at the corner of Station Road, which became a private residence known as Silhill House in the 1820s. 'Silhill' was once a popular variation of 'Solihull'. Demolished around 1926, it was replaced by the present Tudor-style shops. Solihull's transformation from a sleepy market town to a Metropolitan

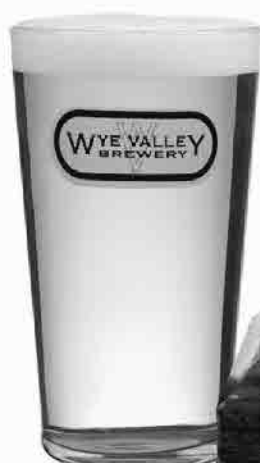
Borough dates from the opening of the railway in 1852. The White Swan is enjoying its popularity within the town and is hoping to run a mini-beer festival in the near future.



HPA

A delightful pale ale,
smooth on the palate with a
citrus hop aroma leading
to a balanced bitter finish.

Awarded Silver
West Midlands CAMRA
Beer of the Year 2007
(Best Bitters category)



Wye Valley Brewery
Herefordshire
www.wyevalleybrewery.co.uk