

# Solihull Drinker


Issue No: 52

Spring 2010

## Membership on the Up

It was heartening to see five new faces at the February branch meeting, plus a couple of people who have recently started coming along. Our current membership is now 368, yet of this number we rarely see more than 25 people at meetings and socials. I know not everybody joins CAMRA to come to meetings, and people have their own social lives which include commitments on CAMRA nights, but it would be nice to see more faces still, even on an occasional basis. We always publish forthcoming meetings in this magazine and on our website, [www.solihullcamra.org.uk](http://www.solihullcamra.org.uk) (look on the left of the home page) so try coming along to one near you some time. Our socials vary from local meet-ups at pubs, sometimes with a meal as well, to outings to breweries and pubs farther afield, and in spring and summer there is often a walk —starting and finishing at a pub of course. We usually go on a long weekend away in September; past trips have included Norwich, Hull, Exeter, Newcastle and Liverpool, so the setting varies greatly. Again, socials are publicised in the magazine and on the website (look on the right of the home page under Events).

Our main event of the year is our annual beer festival. Now in its 12th year, as usual we will be at the Royal British Legion. I am pleased to say that all the festival committee posts have now been filled so planning can start in earnest. It is particularly pleasing that two new faces are going to split the role of festival publicity officer between them —this is a new post, designed to get us maximum local exposure for the festival, and I am sure both Jacqui and Simon will manage it very well. We also need branch members to staff the festival in various roles. Of the three



ning, Saturday lunchtime, the festival is busiest on have helped in the past really good fun. We split ageable portions, and the the less people have to for volunteers towards Have a think —maybe this is something that you might be interested in doing.

sessions (Friday eve- and Saturday evening) Friday, but those who all agree that it is the sessions into man- more helpers we have, do. We will be asking the end of summer.

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



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## Branch events to look forward to...

The Solihull Branch is planning a couple of outings when the clement weather arrives.

Firstly, the trip to the **Long Itchington Beer Festival** proved so popular that we will be doing it again. The Festival runs from April 30th to May 3rd in the village, where all six pubs will be participating in a joint event. There will be a great choice of beer, food and entertainment. Last year's branch visitors were highly impressed and enjoyed themselves immensely. Look out for details of the day of the proposed trip on our website. Further general details can be found on the village's own festival website [www.longitchingtonbeerfestival.co.uk](http://www.longitchingtonbeerfestival.co.uk).



Secondly, on Saturday 26th June there will be a **minibus trip to the Peak District** to visit various hostleries. Full details have yet to be arranged, but it is hoped to start with a tour of the Leatherbitches' Brewery, located at the Green Man in Ashbourne. Pubs will include the Old Poets Corner, now the home of the Ashover Brewery; the Barley Mow at Kirk Ireton, the Charles Cotton Hotel at Hartington, and the Lamb at Holymoorside. Beers from Whim, Thornbridge and Abbeydale are also likely to be sampled. The trip, when finalised, and published, will be on a first come, first served basis, so if interested, keep your eyes on our website and the next issue of this magazine!

And it's a long way ahead yet, but don't forget our **12<sup>th</sup> Beer Festival**, on Friday 1st and Saturday 2nd October, at the Royal British Legion in the town centre. This year we will have around 35 beers, plus two ciders and a perry; food will be available, and there will be entertainment on the Saturday night. Those who have been before will know what a great event it is. Those who haven't—come along and try it for yourselves!. Full details will be published in this magazine and on our website nearer the time.

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:  
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or e-mail [julia.hammonds@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto: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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# Hail to the Ale!

## Local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

### **The Plume of Feathers**

The Plume of Feathers, Stratford Road, Shirley, branded by M & B as a Crown Carveries, has been reported as now having three hand -pumps for real ale, although only two are on offer except at Christmas. It has also received Cask Marque accreditation. This is a real ale gain for the Solihull and District CAMRA area. At the last visit, real ales on offer were Greene King IPA and Marston Pedigree.

### **The Bird in Hand**

The Bird in Hand, on the Birmingham Road near Henley -in-Arden, has recently been taken over. It has been renamed The Henley Palace@The Bird in Hand and the menu is now Indian cuisine. The pub has a smart café -bar feel. At the time of visiting the only real ale on offer was Everards Tiger. It remains to be seen whether more real ales will feature, or whether the hand -pumps might eventually come out.

### **J.D. Wetherspoon**

If you were to be told you could select your favourite ale and it would appear in your local - would your taste buds believe it? The two Solihull J.D.Wetherspoons can offer you just that. Every quarter JDW release their guest ale list. Even bigger and better than any other; the current list, which runs until end March, has 57 ales for you to choose from.

Both The White Swan & The Assembly Rooms are very open to suggestions from their customers. Whether it be a favourite you spot on the list or one you fancy trying, all you need to do is pop your suggestion in a box and the pub team will do the rest. Watch the 'what's in the cellar' board and spot your tippie on your visits. On the other hand, if there is an ale you really want to see featured in one of the pubs, just speak to the management team and they will do their best to track it down for you with the help of East West Ales.

Keep an eye out for the forthcoming JDW ale festival tasting notes (the festival runs from 7th to -26th April) and the next quarter list. So.... get selecting & suggesting....

### **The Arden Club**

The Arden Club had three real ales on recently: Icen Pale Moonlight, Everards Tiger, and Morland Old Speckled Hen.

### **Tom o' the Wood**

The Tom o' the Wood at Rowington which reopened under new management last year is still serving real ale with three hand -pumps on. Beers served over the festive season and well into January were seen to be Rosey Nosey and Everards Tiger. Greene King IPA had also been on but had just finished and was due to be replaced shortly.

## The Fieldhouse

The Fieldhouse, Monkspath, has been raising money for charity: after raising £1,125 for the RSPCA, it has now turned its attention to the charity Help for Heroes, with a target of £2,000. Events organised by the pub include quizzes and raffles, and of course individual donations are always welcome.

## The Olton Tavern

The Olton Tavern asked people to bring in unwanted Christmas presents: everything from a single toy to a filled bag. The gifts were donated to the UK charity Kids Out, which runs a scheme providing toys for children fleeing domestic violence in the UK. The charity also made gifts of toys to an orphanage in Thailand in one of the worst —-affected areas following the Boxing Day tsunami.

## The Vaults

The pub raised over £1,000 for Troop Aid through events last year around Halloween. Now Sarah Worrall of the Vaults and five friends are preparing the scale the heights — they are running in the Three Peaks Challenge in April to support Troop Aid. The Three Peaks Challenge is a gruelling event where the highest peak in each of England, Wales and Scotland —Scafell Pike, Snowdon, and Ben Nevis respectively —must all be scaled within 24 hours.

If you want to sponsor Sarah, pop into the Vaults and add your name and amount to the sponsorship list. We wish Sarah and friends all the best in their endeavours.

*NB. Don't forget that if you are a pub raising money for charity, then PubAid, a charitable organisation set up to support pubs and record their charitable activities, would like to hear from you. You can contact them and register for free , at [www.pubaid.com](http://www.pubaid.com). .....Ed.*

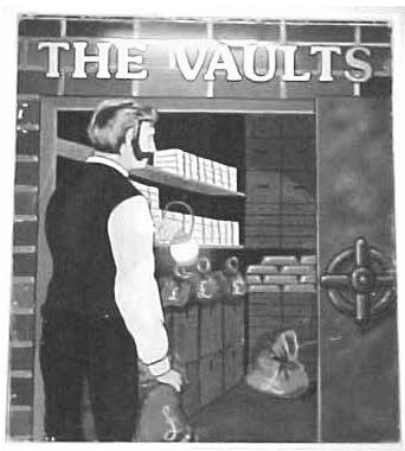
## The Miller and Carter

Contrary to our assumptions in the last Drinker that the Miller and Carter (formerly the Cheswick Green Inn) was not serving real ale, this has proved not to be the case. A recent visit has confirmed that they had on Marston's Pedigree and Purity UBU. This sounds like another real ale gain for our area.

## The Waterman

Not in our area, but close —the Waterman at Hatton, which overlooks the famous 21 —lock flight known as the 'Stairway to Heaven', introduced a novel new meal idea last year: takeaway fish and chips. The service, which is available every Friday evening between 6pm and 9pm, features the pub's own locally-brewed Arkwright ale for the batter, has proved a resounding success to date and is set to continue for the foreseeable future. The pub, very popular with visitors all year round, offers real ales as well as traditional food. A stroll up and down the canal bank watching the narrowboats coming and going through the locks, followed by a restful pint in the pub, is a very pleasant way to pass the time.

# Nick and Gwen welcome you to



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# Bus with your Beer anyone??

Two friends have come up with a novel business idea combining their two interests, beer and buses, in the stunning scenery of the Yorkshire Dales, Moors and Coast. Paul Kirby of Wetherby and Brian Thackray of Wakefield were chatting one night (down the pub, where else?) and realised there was a gap in the market for holidays specifically catering for fans of real ale and traditional pubs who enjoy travelling on public transport. Said Paul. "We believe there are many people out there who share our passions and don't want the stress of driving everywhere whilst on holiday. They can give the car a rest and enjoy a pint or two in a nice pub without the worry of being over the limit".

Paul added "You can meet some real characters on rural buses and the views from double-deckers are wonderful. For example, the Coastliner service to Whitby is now completely double-decked, giving fantastic views as you sit back and enjoy the scenery of the North York Moors. And we have the first ever coach-standard service double-deckers on the Ripon to Leeds route – the famous 36 – on which you can relax in leather-seated luxury and watch the red kites and deer in the grounds of Harewood House".

Beer n Buses holiday-makers are provided with travel tickets and all the information they need for the day out, including maps and a detailed timetable. They are not accompanied on every day of the holiday but CAMRA member Brian says "We will be with them for the brewery visits, like the one to the Black Sheep Brewery at Masham. People don't want to be shepherded around and told what to do all the time so our timetables provide different options for them. This flexibility is a major selling point, we believe, as well as the variety of trips during the eight-day holiday".

Brian promises there is no need to leave the wives and girlfriends at home. "On the Beer n Buses itinerary there are plenty of interesting places for the partners who aren't necessarily into pubs and real ale." Included are TV locations in the West and North Ridings of Yorkshire, such as 'Last of the Summer Wine' country around Holmfirth, the Dales countryside in the much loved 'All Creatures Great and Small', and the village of Goathland of 'Heartbeat' fame. Said Brian, "The picturesque town of Knaresborough has a market on the day we visit, plus there are excellent shopping centres in Leeds and York."

Beer n Buses holiday-makers can also travel on trains – namely the historic Settle-Carlisle line and the scenic North East Coast mainline. The journey to Berwick is the beginning of a day out travelling down the dramatic Northumbrian coast with its castles, islands and white beaches. The day ends in Newcastle where there's the option to enjoy a bit of Geordie hospitality until the last train back at 22.45.

The travellers stay in the modern city of Leeds and historic city of York. Prices start at £370 per person and as Paul explains, "We cater for limited numbers because of the restrictions of some of the buses". Because of this, Paul recommends booking early for the holidays, which begin on 8th May 2010. All details are on their website [www.BeerAndBuses.co.uk](http://www.BeerAndBuses.co.uk).

The two entrepreneurs have been assisted by the generosity of the Yorkshire breweries, pub chains, bus companies and local pubs and cafes who have offered customer discounts. Hopefully this unique venture will attract many more visitors to Yorkshire and help boost the tourist trade in the White Rose county for 2010 and beyond.

# Ludlow Food Spring Festival

Come and meet SIBA (Society of Independent Brewers, established in 1980) brewers at the Ludlow Food Spring Festival: Beer, Bangers & Bread! We will be celebrating the SIBA/Ludlow Spring Festival at Ludlow Real Ale Festival 2010 in the Festival Pub in the grounds of the historic Ludlow Castle, with 150 different ales, from independent brewers throughout Wales, the West and the Marches. Ciders and fruit wines will also be available.

Now in its second year, the festival is going from strength to strength, playing host to the SIBA Wales & West Beer Competition 2010 with a variety of classes being judged, followed by an opportunity for the public to taste award winning beers in a relaxed atmosphere.

For information on opening times and ticket prices, please go to [www.springevent.org.uk](http://www.springevent.org.uk)

If you are over 18 and think you have what it takes to help judge the region's best ales, or if you would like to win 2 tickets for the festival, you simply need to send your contact details, including postal address, with your answer to the competition question below. Applications should be sent to **BeerCompetitions@SIBA.co.uk** and the judges/ticket winners will be selected at random. The closing date is **6th April**. Judges will need to be available at Ludlow Castle from 10.30am to 3pm on the 7th May. Judges will also need to arrange their own transport and accommodation. Judges and ticket winners will be contacted by email.

For the chance to win, send your answer to the following question:

**Which anniversary will SIBA celebrate this year?**

**A 20 years**

**B 30 years**

**C 50 years**

For full terms and conditions see [http://www.siba.co.uk/events/?page\\_id=599](http://www.siba.co.uk/events/?page_id=599) or the details below:

## **Terms & Conditions (SIBA):**

The organisation that represents independent local brewers is launching a search for beer lovers to help judge the Wales & West of England's most important beer competition. With an ever-growing number of members in this region, the competitions are usually split in order to accommodate the large volume of beer entries. This year however, all will be available at the Ludlow Festival. The winners of the beer competition will go on to the SIBA national final in February 2011.

SIBA are inviting 5 members of the public to join industry professionals and beer experts to decide the region's best beers on Friday 7th May 2010, as well as giving away 10 pairs of tickets for the weekend festival. The judges will all be given advice about what sort of things they need to look for and the 'public judges' will be placed on tables alongside seasoned beer industry experts. Judges will need to be available at Ludlow Castle from 10.30am to 3pm on the 7th May. Judges will also need to arrange their own transport and accommodation.

## **Restrictions and conditions**

You must be aged 18 or over to enter. SIBA employees & competing breweries or their families are not eligible

Only email entries will be accepted, to: **BeerCompetitions@SIBA.co.uk**

Entries received after the deadline in the entry details are ineligible, null, and void

SIBA will not be responsible for and will not consider incomplete or incorrect entries

SIBA is not responsible for entries that are sent but not received by SIBA for any reason. The judges and ticket winners will be selected at random. The decision of the judges is final. By submitting an application to SIBA, you are agreeing to allow us to use your name for publicity purposes if you are selected as one of the winners. The name and home town of the winners who are selected will appear on the SIBA website and in a press release sent to the media. No other personal details will be published. SIBA reserves the right in its sole and absolute discretion to alter any contest rules at any time. Entrants will be notified via the SIBA website. By entering the competition, you are deemed to have agreed to be bound by these contest rules and terms and conditions.

### **How to claim your prize**

Up to 5 people will be invited to help judge the SIBA Wales & West Competition at Ludlow Castle. Ten people will win a pair of tickets to the weekend festival.

The 5 judges and 10 ticket winners who are chosen will be contacted by email. Judges, you will need to respond within 4 days to confirm that you will be able to attend the beer competition from 10.30am to 3pm on the 7th of May or someone else will be invited to take your place. Judges and winners will also need to arrange their own transport and accommodation and should take into account that judges will not be able to drive after the event.

The name and home town of the selected judges and ticket winners will appear on the SIBA website and in a press release. No other personal details will be published. A list of the people selected to be judges and ticket winners will be available from SIBA.:email [secretariat@siba.co.uk](mailto:secretariat@siba.co.uk).



**Ludlow Food Spring Festival**

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For full details of all events, please ring Adrian and he will be only too pleased to talk to you about a wonderful time out.

# A Visit to the Eccleshall Brewery

Back in November 2009 a group of members went to taste some Slater's ales at the Eccleshall Brewery, a family business. We were met by Andy Slater, who started pouring pints of Why Not from a cask he had ready. We then wandered round the brewery, an impressive stainless steel 30 -barrel plant. The brewery is a functional building, with plenty of room for expansion, so everything is laid out logically with fixed pipes to join it all together. We peered into the brewing vessels – spotless. The brewery has some large temperature controlled rooms, the

fermenting room pleasantly warm on a cold winter's day and the conditioning room would no doubt feel pleasantly cool if it was summer.

We started the tour at the dry end with the malt and hop store. Slater's ales use the traditional pale malt and some crystal in their main beers and add a bit of roasted barley mainly for the seasonal beers. For the hops, most of the beers use Goldings (we saw plenty of boxes from Kent and not a pellet in sight) and Challenger, but the Slater's Supreme uses Mount Hood. This took us up to lunch with more Why Not, followed closely by the Top Totty .

It was a great opportunity to talk to an enthusiastic brewer about what he does and why, such as the names and the recipes. They don't have a pilot plant as recipes don't scale up that easily. There are not only economies of scale (such as the heating) but a larger plant gets far more sugar out of the malt and the hop extraction is more efficient too, so a perfect beer on a pilot plant would still need tweaking to get it right in production quantities. Over time they have experimented with the brews and new ones have been slotted into the range. Original was between the Bitter and the Premium; Bitter is now called Why Not, and why not? Top Totty uses Goldings only, although this was puzzling as there weren't any in the hop store, and what did they use the WBV hops for? The reply was something of a surprise: WGV is Whitbread Goldings Variety; who'd have thought they would be responsible for such a fine hop? They have also experimented with fruit beers – adding fruit into the brew at various stages.

Andy is very much the brewer and his parents still help to run the business, as well as their original pub where it all started. The brewery was founded by Ged and Moyra Slater in 1995, behind the George Hotel in Eccleshall (hence the brewery name) on a 10 barrel plant. They won numerous prizes, not to mention fans, and the business expanded until they needed more space and the bigger plant that they now have. They built the new brewery in 2006 and moved to it in 2007 when it was opened by Roger Protz, no less.

The George is also the brewery tap, so it seemed only right to go there for a pint before heading home. A good decision as it offered us all the Slater's range, not to mention a superb inglenook log fire for us to gather round, or in some cases gather inside. We passed the rest of the afternoon here until we felt we ought to visit the other pubs in the town.

**Robert Cawte**

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# Off Our Patch

## Essex

During the Christmas holidays Chris and I visited the Essex village of Henham. As we walked through the picturesque village, past 3 very frozen over duck ponds, we came to a very inviting hostelry called The Cock Inn. This establishment is a free house, but was formerly a Benskins Tied House, and bears the Benskins signage on the outside walls. Sadly Benskins of Watford, established in 1750, has long since closed and the brewery site is now part of a shopping centre.



The beers on offer at The Cock were Greene King IPA 3.6%, Morlands Old Speckled Hen 5.2% and Saffron Brewery Saffron Blonde, a 4.3% citrusy pale golden coloured bitter. Saffron Blonde was the only cask ale that we sampled and was in very good condition.



The Saffron Brewery is a micro brewery, the premises of which are just across the green, opposite the pub. The brewery does pre-arranged visits for large groups. It was closed when we were there (on Boxing Day). The pub had three very cosy bars: the Public with wide screen TV, Saloon bar and Restaurant. All three areas had real open fires. Friendly, children and animals welcome, disabled friendly and definitely worth another visit when we next go to stay with Chris's mother who lives in a neighbouring village.

Jeannette Lloyd

## France

Solihull Drinker readers might be interested to know that the 2009 Solihull Beer Festival continued in a small way later in October in France thanks to members Ian & John Edwards, who offered the players and management of Dordogne football team at Les Eyzies the chance to sample a range of classic bottled English ales.

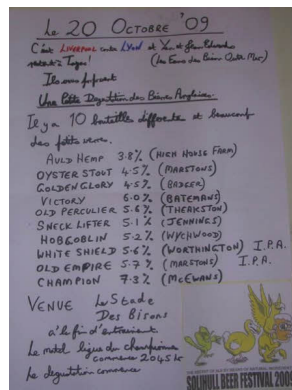
After the regular training session, several of the team, known affectionately as "Les Bisons" met and enthusiastically took up the offer to taste 14 different brews while watching the Liverpool v Lyon Champions League tie. The photos show some of



the beers listed in the advert and the 'degustation' about to start.

Normally lager drinkers, the French really appreciated the chance to sup some real ales and were amazed by the range of different flavours they were able to savour. The two India Pale Ales were thought particularly worthy of comment.

John Edwards



# The White Lion

Hampton in Arden



Now returned to its former glory

Traditional Bar Meals

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A selection of fine wines

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All this *and* a Great Atmosphere

“The return of the village pub”

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# Dates For Your Diary

## Branch Meetings

Monday 1st Mar	The Bluebell Cider House, Wareings Green
Monday 12th April	The Bulls Head, Barston
Monday 3rd May	The Red Lion, Knowle
Monday 7th June	The Boat, Catherine -de -Barnes

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

## Committee Meetings

Monday 19th. April	The Bell, Tanworth -in-Arden
Monday 21st June	The Vaults, Knowle

*(8.30pm start. Ordinary members may attend Committee meetings but only participate if invited to do so by the Committee)*

## Socials

Friday 5th March	Coventry BF (PM —see website for times)
Friday 12th March	Knowle Beer & Balti starting at the Vaults
Saturday 20th March	Beer Festival workers' thank-you trip to the Burtonbridge Brewery and Burton BF
Wednesday 21st April	Meet the Brewer, 8.30pm, White Swan, Solihull
May	Long Itchington BF (date/time TBA)
Saturday 26th June	Derbyshire Minibus trip (times TBA)
July	Redditch BF (15 -17) (date/time TBA)

***For more details, contact Secretary Allan Duffy on  
01564 200 431 and visit our website : [www.solihullcamra.org.uk](http://www.solihullcamra.org.uk)***

## Membership Matters

As the interest in real ale grows, together with CAMRA membership, its sphere of influence broadens. Northern Ireland was virtually dry only a few years ago but now, thanks largely to Wetherspoons, real ale is freely available in Belfast and there are now three breweries in the Province. Whilst on a brewery tour of Fullers last year we were told that its beers were exported to both Spain and France. "Pasteurised of course" we ventured no not at all, we were assured - in cask form. So you see there's hope even for the wine zones of Europe. Perhaps they've become aware of burgeoning organisation and taking serious note .

Bob Jackson, Membership Secretary



# New glasses please?

Nearly 87,000 injuries are caused by glass attacks each year in England and Wales, according to the Home Office. Many more are hurt as a result of accidents. The worrying figures have prompted a redesign of the classic pint glass, with police, facial surgeons, pubs and brewers all voicing concern about the high number of glassings. The government hopes introducing safer pint glasses, still made of glass, will help reduce injuries. As well as the human cost, it also hopes it will reduce the financial burden of alcohol-related crime, which currently costs the NHS £2.7bn a year.

Now, two new prototypes for beer glasses have been unveiled, as part of a programme involving the Design Council. Launched by the Home Office's Design and Technology Alliance, the aim is to use design to tackle crime.

The clear plastic coating is the secret of the first design, called Glass Plus, says Matt Cotterill, creative director of Design Bridge, which is behind the new glasses. The coating or bio-resin is put inside a glass and prevents it from breaking into dangerous shards when smashed. It can be used to treat existing pint glasses and drinkers might not even notice the difference.

The second design, called Twin Wall, is inspired by car windscreens, which have gone from being made of toughened glass to being made from laminated glass. The glass is actually two thin-walled glasses inside each other, which are resin-bonded together. Again this stops the glass from shattering into pieces. It does look significantly thicker than a traditional pint glass, although the designers say it is an early prototype and they are still working on improving it. An additional benefit of the design is that it makes beer easier to pour.

But for pubs and breweries the cost of replacing their beer glasses is a valid concern, says CAMRA. It is reserving judgment on the designs until it knows more, but is worried about putting an extra burden on already struggling pubs.

"Who will pay for these additional glasses?" said a CAMRA spokesperson. "52 pubs are closing down each week because of administrative burdens, high taxes and the smoking ban. Pubs are suffering and should not be asked to pay for supposedly improved glassware". Home Secretary Alan Johnson believes the glasses are "an important step forward which could also provide retailers and drinkers with a preferable alternative to plastic glasses". But the drinks industry will not be forced to introduce the new pint glasses, with the Home Office acknowledging the financial strain some pubs are under.

## Apology!

In the last issue of the magazine, a poem was sent in by Jeanette Lloyd which she had adapted from the original by Mandy Elwood (known as Mandy Lifeboats) of the Medway CAMRA branch

Your editor is to blame for the mis-accreditation, as Jeanette did put Mandy's name at the bottom of her email. Sorry both!

However Mandy has forgiven and forgotten with another little ditty.

"Well as the resident poet  
I had better reply in rhyme  
I was pleased to see my poem  
Being used a second time.

I can see the mistake was genuine  
Apology accepted with good cheer  
Now lets get back to the real work  
Of appreciating good beer!"

All the best

Mandy Lifeboats

# The Green Acres

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

A real community  
and family pub

Three guest ales  
plus a regularly  
changing  
traditional cider



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Beer garden with  
play frames

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Eat in and/or Take -away

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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

# OFT re - opens inquiry into UK pubs market

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has reached agreement with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) to stay its appeal to the Competition Appeal Tribunal challenging the OFT's initial response to CAMRA's super-complaint in October 2009. CAMRA's appeal is now stayed until Sunday August 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 to enable the OFT to consider further evidence of anti-competitive behaviour by the large pub owning companies. The OFT will now conduct an open public consultation before reaching a final decision. CAMRA's super-complaint argued that anti-competitive practices are inflating pub beer prices by around 50 pence a pint, restricting consumer choice and leading to chronic underinvestment in the nation's pubs.

Mike Benner, CAMRA Chief Executive, said: "We are delighted that the OFT has responded to our appeal by agreeing to conduct an open consultation and I encourage all parties to use this opportunity to submit further evidence of anti-competitive practice. The consultation will lead to a new and final decision from the OFT. We are hopeful that on re-examination of the pubs market the OFT will decide to act against anti-competitive behaviour in order to deliver a fair deal for consumers. CAMRA looks forward to working with the OFT to deliver reform of the beer tie so that the pub market works in the interests of consumers."

CAMRA's fundraising appeal for the reform of the beer tie, which has raised over £8,000 since January, will be suspended during the consultation period. The funds will be put towards CAMRA's legal fees. CAMRA reserves the right to re-activate its appeal should it be dissatisfied with the OFT's final decision following the consultation.

## 10,000 jobs in 250 new pubs

Pub operator JD Wetherspoon has announced it will open 250 pubs over the next five years, creating 10,000 jobs in the process. The new pubs represent a slight increase in the group's current rate of expansion. The group opened 39 pubs in the year to the end of July 2009, and had already announced it would open 40 new pubs by the middle of summer. It currently operates 743 pubs in the UK.

Wetherspoon's recently reported record sales in the year to the end of July 2009 and the group said it would invest £250m in the new outlets over the next five years.

"Our pubs are extremely popular and we wish to build on their success by opening more," said Wetherspoon's chairman Tim Martin. He told the BBC that recessions "can be a good time to expand" because property prices fall.

"We slowed down our rate of expansion a few years back as we felt that property prices were at an unsustainable level. Now that they've dropped, it does make it easier."

This is the third recession it has experienced in its 30 years of trading. Pubs are closing at a rate of 52 a week according to the British Beer & Pub Association.

The new pubs will be located across the UK, including sites in Sheffield, Livingston, Leominster, Otley, New Malden, Liverpool, Haverfordwest and Newcastle.

## 2009 Fuller's brewery visit (part two)

Back to that Sugar Dissolving Vessel... They used to add sugar and a few other ingredients to help the beer along and this was all done by taste – batch by batch. Nowadays they don't use such additives – just the malt & hops. The light dawned – this is what you get from progress, computers and a big company mentality. How can any of us argue against this sort of progress? The Fuller's take-over of Gale's brewery 4 years ago was certainly contentious. Tim was proud of it: they bought the business, closed the brewery and use it for storage. They make the Gale's beers here in Chiswick. At the time Gales were still adding sugars to give their beers the familiar (and no doubt popular) sweetish taste. Fullers now make the beers their way – without the extras. I'd be interested to hear what the old Gale's fans think of it now: sure they have lost their heritage, but is the beer as good, or even better? Normally you'd expect this argument the other way round – the big guys start adding stuff to make it cheap and the old guys and micros stick to the purity route. A curious twist.

Next the fermenting room: a series of huge vertical cylinders 3 stories high – could be making anything and no sign of foaming yeast anywhere, no sampling glasses or hydrometers hanging on the walls. This is progress. Downstairs to see the other end – the conical bit that collects the yeast... no smell, you'll be pleased to know; not even a wet floor. And now some more ironmongery – each of these bits of new kit seemed to have been installed at around £1million or so, this is not to be sneezed at. These are the maturation tanks – obviously these were the conditioning tanks used to make the lager, the keg and all the bottles and cans for the supermarkets; no ! All beer goes through here, even the cask. Are we being conned – is our cask conditioned beer already conditioned? Apparently not, they'd been doing it this way for donkey's years,

they always did mature the beer a while before it was put in casks – and they have the old open topped kit to prove it. Well, there you go, more of the tradition that makes English beers so varied and led to them winning our cherished Champion Beer prizes. A final quick look at the racking line and the £1m robot that puts the casks on the trucks, although you still need a chap with a mallet to whack the bungs in (plastic in summer, wood the rest of the year).



And so to the Hock cellar once more, a brick vaulted roof and numerous glass cases of brewery photos, material and memorabilia. We were politely offered a few keg options or soft drinks but were generally steered towards an impressive 6 hand pumps: Chiswick, Discovery, London Pride, IPA, Gales HSB and the master ESB to finish. The Discovery was cold and a bit like lager, but is doing a fine job in winning lager drinkers over to the real stuff, so keep it up chaps. IPA is mainly for the French/Italian and increasingly Swedish markets (unpasteurised, no less) and at 4.8% it is not into silly strength, but nor is it as intensely hoppy and bitter as, say, Meantime's cracking IPA. We were really pushed through this part of the trip – tasting modest samples but a bit too quick to savour and appreciate. (more was offered, but quantity did not override quality or variety). Well, thanks to Fuller, Smith & Turner for that – they really do fly the flag for real ale and we had already enjoyed some first class beer before the brewery trip, so you can't change your mind when you find out how they make it, especially when they have long since stopped adding sugar.



With that in mind we decided to try some of their beers out in the wild and wandered eastwards along the banks of the Thames towards Hammersmith Bridge in search of a pub. It was perfect weather – warm afternoon sunshine turning into sunset with great views over the river. First we found the Black Lion, a free house offering Caledonian 80 Schilling, amongst other things. Someone asked for a Doombar, but this was declined (not quite ready, full marks for quality over commercial interests). We watched the world go by, more cyclists than cars, a very peaceful place to sit outside.



The Black Lion, Chiswick Mall



The Old Ship

Next the Old Ship, which was actually more of a rowing club/boathouse theme (so much for marketing). This was a Young's house and we tried the Kew Gold, pleasant but not terribly exciting, especially as it was over £3 per pint. They seem more interested in wine and dining, but a nice place to sit outside by the river.

The Dove, odd feeling as we walked in here – I had been once before in the '80s, and made a note to return, but couldn't find it at the time. Quite small, very crowded, you have to book a week or more in advance to dine, or to sit out on the small balcony over the river. Thanks to the staff for being so welcoming – they did suggest other pubs we could try (we'd been there) and commented that the Old Ship was a bit out of place in



The view at The Dove

this neck of the woods, not being a Fuller's pub. We wanted to stay and drink by the river. The balcony had a small upper deck and they found an extra table for us, carried it up the spiral staircase and kindly moved other customers up a bit! As it was a Fuller's house most asked for Chiswick, which had been swapped out for IPA (which was off, pity) so we went for the London Pride. The sun was beginning to set and anything shiny was beginning to glint in the golden light, with numerous boats rowing down towards Hammersmith bridge and plenty of birdlife on the river. The London Pride still tasted good.



Time marched on so we continued east to the Blue Anchor where we found a large crowd on the walkway overlooking the river, next to another pub with a larger crowd. Someone tried the Fullers – it wasn't good – so we went for the Skinner's Betty Stoggs Cornish Bitter as the sun set.

The group broke up into two —the Euston splinter group repaired to the Doric Arch, formerly the Head of Steam prior to its recent purchase by our new friends Fuller and Co. The generous range of ales is retained and complemented by the Fuller's beers. At Marylebone there is a free house in the station forecourt, the Victoria & Albert, which served 4 real ales, including a good London Pride. Our group's Chiltern train left on time and we returned to Solihull, at the end of a near -perfect day.

Robert Cawte

*NB. For travellers between London and the Midlands, Chiltern Railways is a useful line and you can find their Rail Ale Trail leaflet at most stations, giving details of real ale pubs nearest to the railway stations along the way, including those in our area. Ed.*

# The Pub belongs to the People: a success story

Back in August 2008, the George and Dragon pub in Hudswell, near Richmond, North Yorkshire, closed its doors and has remained empty to date. However, it can now look forward to a brighter future, thanks to a community initiative.

The residents of Hudswell decided to club together to buy the pub, and set up Hudswell Community Pub Ltd, a provident society, whereby local investors could buy shares to raise the funds needed to purchase and equip the pub. The view was, "If it's owned by the villagers and the Initiative's supporters, it will get used a lot more to make sure the business works, and it will once more be the heart of the village".

The group was officially registered with the Financial Services Agency last December, and sent out a prospectus to all those who had pledged to buy shares in the pub.

However, towards the end of January this year, the fund was still some £40,000 short and there were worries that the purchase might not be able to go ahead. But there was a happy ending.



The George and Dragon —closed since August 2008

A packed meeting in Hudswell Village Hall on Sunday 7th February heard the great news that the enterprise set up by villagers and supporters now had the funds it needed to buy the George and Dragon. The members of the HCP Ltd had contributed £195,000 and they received a final boost when an organisation which specialises in supporting community enterprises —the Key Fund Yorkshire —decided to invest another £20,000.

As chair Paul Cullen explained, "With only a few days to go to our deadline we were still £40,000 short, but when the £20,000 was offered we knew we would do it. The remainder of the money came in over the following days, and today we signed the contract and next week the pub will be ours".

Mark Smith, the Fund Manager from Key Fund said "Key Fund Yorkshire is delighted to be able to support the Hudswell Community Pub IPS to complete the purchase. We are particularly pleased to have played a part in helping the Hudswell community to secure this local asset and are excited by the potential of the pub to become a hub of community activity".

The job is far from done, however. Although the pub now belongs to the village, more investment and financial help is needed to get it open again. Funds are needed to repair and equip the building before it can be opened, and the right tenant needs to be appointed to carry things forward and make the pub into a thriving business.

Anyone interested in investing, or in applying to become the pub tenant, can contact the HPC Ltd via their website at [www.richmond.org/community/hudswellpub/index/html](http://www.richmond.org/community/hudswellpub/index/html)

# J.D. Wetherspoon

Solihull Town Centre now boasts two pubs, serving breakfast daily until noon. Plus Steak Club on Tuesdays, Curry Club on Thursdays & not forgetting a roast at our Sunday Club.

Both pubs are **'Cask Marque'** and **'Best Bar None'** accredited.

## **The Assembly Rooms,**

21 Poplar Road, Solihull, B91 3AD

**Phone:** 0121 711 6990

### **Opening times :**

Sun — Wed: 8.00am — 1.00am

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Offering a total of 15 hand pulls featuring a range of regular and guest ales.

Live SKY sporting events screened weekly. Live Tribute acts last Friday of every month.

**Winner of 'Solihull & District CAMRA Most Improved Pub of the Year 2008'**  
**New entry in the CAMRA 'Good Beer Guide'.2010**

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

**Phone:** 0121 711 5180

### **Opening times :**

Sun — Wed: 8.30am — 12.00am

Thurs — Sat: 8.30am — 12.30am

Offering 2 regular and 5 guest ales daily.

A music-free venue screening live Freeview sporting events.



**Both pubs will be screening the forthcoming WORLD CUP and other major sporting events throughout the year.**

**Watch out for our Meet the Brewer nights.**

## **J.D. Wetherspoon Beer Festival**

**7th —12th April 2010**

**20 different ales will feature daily between both pubs.**

**Try 3 ales for the price of a pint**  
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