

# Solihull



# Drinker

Issue No 104  
Spring 2025

*Free*  
*Please take one*

## ***A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY*** ***Solihull CAMRA Real Ale & Cider Festival 2025***

We are pleased to announce that we have provisional dates for our next Solihull & District CAMRA real ale and cider festival, and that this will take place at a new venue for us. I say provisional, as we still need to have our business case approved and a contract in place with the venue. But we wanted you to know in advance so you can put this in your diary.

**The festival is intended to run over the weekend (Friday – Sunday) of 25 – 27 July 2025.**

This date is a clear departure for us from our usual October timeframe, that we've been running over recent years. However, our change of venue has necessitated a corresponding change of date.

**Our new venue is the Oliver Bird Hall on Church Hill Road in Solihull, B91 3RQ.**

And yes, you are right, that's also the venue of the St Alphege beer festival that runs later in the year (and another reason we needed to move the date of ours). So, this venue is tried and tested when it comes to hosting a beer festival, and is still eminently reachable via public transport, with plenty of nearby bus services and only a 15-minute walk from Solihull Station.

If you are lucky enough to have a designated driver, then there is free car parking available at the venue, though you will have to enter your car registration details on the keypad in the foyer. Failure to do so will result in a parking fine from UKPS.

Our festival committee is working hard to get its business case approved and to ensure we have a successful 2025 real ale and cider festival. As there is no bar at the Oliver Bird Hall, we intend to sell soft drinks, plus wine and gins. And we will have caterers present to meet the needs of hungry drinkers.

The beer/cider list is still being decided but, going on those ordered by our bar manager Paul in previous years, it will be an interesting and varied selection, with something for everyone.

For anyone reading this who'd like to give their business a mention, it would be great to have you as a sponsor. That could be sponsoring a cask of beer or box of cider, or simply advertising in the programme. Anyone wishing to do so or who wants to discuss other possibilities should contact the festival organiser (our branch chair) Martin Buck at [chair@solihullcamra.org.uk](mailto:chair@solihullcamra.org.uk) as soon as possible.

**Further details will follow.**

# ALE HUB

• MICROPUB •

Both our micropubs have 4 rotating cask ales and 2 craft beers as well as a range of other drinks. We are dog friendly and under 18's are welcome until 6pm.

## LOCATIONS:



### **Ale Hub Shirley**

Opening Hours:

Sunday - Wednesday: 09:00 - 22:00

Thursday - Saturday: 09:00 - 23:00

Coffee Served from: 09:00 - 14:00

Ale Hub Shirley, 277 Longmore Road, Shirley, Solihull, B90 3ER



### **Ale Hub Dickens Heath**

Opening Hours:

Sunday - Wednesday: 12:00 - 22:00

Thursday - Saturday: 12:00 - 23:00

Ale Hub Dickens Heath, 73 Main Street, Dickens Heath, Solihull, B90 1UB



**Dogs Are Welcome!**

## Dates for your diary

### Branch Meetings

(Branch meetings start at 8.00pm except where noted otherwise)

Monday 7 April	Rowington Club
Monday 12 May	Crown, Claverdon
Monday 2 June	Drum & Monkey

For more details and contacts for the above, please call Secretary Allan Duffy on 01564 200431 or visit our website [www.solihull.camra.org.uk](http://www.solihull.camra.org.uk)

### Committee Meetings

(8.00 start. Members may attend but only participate if invited to do so)

Monday 17 March	Crown, Claverdon
Monday 19 May	Saxon Monday

### Socials

Wed 5 – Fri 7 March	Liverpool trip
Fri 4 April	Wordsley & Amblecote crawl
Sat 10 May	Rugby trip

For more details of socials please email [steve\\_dyson@solihull.camra.org.uk](mailto:steve_dyson@solihull.camra.org.uk)

**Most, though not all, of our local pubs have disabled access. If you wish to attend a meeting and require assistance please contact us beforehand and we will do our best to help**

## Upcoming Midlands Area Beer Festivals and Events

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

[www.camra.org.uk/beer-festivals-events/](http://www.camra.org.uk/beer-festivals-events/)

### 14 - 15 March (Fri – Sat)

Knowle & Dorridge Round Table beer festival  
Knowle British Legion  
Warwick Road  
Knowle B93 9LU

### 27 - 29 March (Thurs– Sat)

Burton & S Derbys beer festival  
King Edward Place  
Burton  
DE14 2EB

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Contributions, comments and advertising enquiries should be sent to

[editor@solihull.camra.org.uk](mailto:editor@solihull.camra.org.uk)

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Leeds



The Editor reserves the right to amend or shorten any items in the newsletter, but will always strive to honour the spirit & intention of the contribution

4 - 5 April (Fri - Sat)

Nottingham Independent's Castle beer festival  
Nottingham Castle  
Nottingham  
NG1 6EL

30 May - 1 June (Fri - Sun)

Case Is Altered beer festival  
Five Ways  
Hatton  
Nr Warwick  
CV35 7JD

15 -17 May (Thurs - Sat)

Shirley beer & cider festival  
Camp Hill rugby club  
Hasluck's Green Road  
Shirley  
B90 2EF

25 - 27 July (Fri - Sun)

Solihull CAMRA beer & cider festival  
Oliver Bird Hall  
Church Hill Road  
Solihull  
B91 3RQ

## A Trip to Halesowen

In January, an intrepid party of CAMRA members embarked on a trip to Halesowen.



It is not the easiest of places to get to from Solihull. However, for this crawl it proved not that difficult. A direct train to Stourbridge Junction, rail shuttle to Stourbridge Town and boarding the number 6 towards Halesowen saw us arrive at our first port of call, The Whitley. A Black Country Ales pub with the usual suspects on handpull but with up to 5 guest beers. Very much a traditional pub with open fires it proved agreeably warm. Some of our party even took advantage of the cobs on offer. Beowulf, Downton, Brew 61, Holden's' and M&B Brew XI gave us a range of beer to go at, and all in good condition. I don't think though anybody was tempted by Brew XI though.

Crossing the road and a short walk along it brought us next to the King Edward

VIII. A comfortable traditional 2 room pub with a range not as exciting as The Whitley, but certainly better than Solihull. Wye Valley, Enville, Three Tuns and Holden's are staples here, enhanced by 3 guests, one of which was another in the Wye Valley range.

Continuing down the road towards Halesowen and again crossing it, we come to a long standing CAMRA favourite, the Waggon and Horses. Originally dating from the 1830s and refurbished in 2017 by Black Country Ales after being an M&B and then a free house in 1985. Many may remember the Barbara Cartland Room all done out in pink and run by the two Bob's. Usual Black Country Ales range plus up to 8 guests. Ciders are also available on



handpull. A great pub to suit everybody's taste. We then sauntered on to Wetherspoon's for food... enough said.

Tracking back some 200 yards we visited Roberto's Bar, a craft brewery tap but stocking two real ales. One of the new style micro's in an old shop it nevertheless is not cramped inside but has many seats. Pictish and Mallinson's were on the bar. Being a Mallinson's fan I went for the El Dorado a pale hoppy American style West Coast IPA.

Our next pub, the Crafty Pint, is some way out of Halesowen but luckily the bus station is close by and both the 142A and 192 pass right by it and takes no more than 10 minutes. Check the timetables so you can leave Roberto's with time to spare to catch the bus. The Crafty Pint is a must visit pub, so don't be put off by it being out of town and do check opening times. We arrived at about 3.30 on a Friday afternoon and just managed to get a seat. Although in an old shop it is quite extensive inside. So busy is it that the

adjacent shop has been incorporated into the pub. Wye Valley are the 2 regulars plus up to 5 guests. Titanic, Bewdley, Oakham, Ludlow and Church End on this occasion.

After a cracking day we had to get back to Stourbridge. Luckily the 142A passes Stourbridge Junction and then goes on into Stourbridge. Ideal for those who may wish to explore the pubs in the town centre or alighting at Stourbridge Junction and popping into another Black Country Ales pub, the tiled Seven Stars. But beware the 142A is an hourly service with the last bus just before 6, so check the timetable.

Steve Dyson



*Thanks to Steve Evans for the photos. My favourite is the one pictured left, but he can't remember which pub that was in!*

*Solihull*  
**THE FLUTE & FLAGON**

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**Solihull B91 3SB**

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6 Real Ales  
&  
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Opening Hours

09.00 - 23.00 Sun - Thur  
09.00 - 24.00 Fri - Sat

## Tegestology – beer mat collecting

Tegestology is a term coined from Latin (teges "covering" or "mat", and etis) defined as the practice of collecting coasters, with practitioners known as tegestologists.

You don't see as many beer mats (many other countries call them coasters) in pubs these days. I haven't found a definitive reason, but some online sources suggest it's down to EU legislation and food hygiene (a bit like not allowing bent bananas?!).

So, what's their history? Beer mats were introduced in pubs around the 1880s. They seem to have originated in Germany where they were used to absorb condensation from cold beer glasses and prevent spillages, and to place over the top of a glass to prevent insects getting in. Early ones often sported tri-colour designs that promoted beers sold at the bar. Their lovely designs caused these beer mats to become sought after collectors' items.

Depending on the source, the first beer mats as we know them were cardboard based and produced by Friedrich Horn, a German printing and board mill company. Not only did they create small thin(ish) cardboard mats but they also printed messages on them. Others suggest it was Robert Sputh, also in Germany who began to produce much thicker, highly absorbent mats which were made of liquid pulp and set overnight in moulds. It was Sputh who patented his design in 1892, and beer mats are still the same design and material as they were over 120 years ago! The coaster material is a wood-pulp that absorbs liquids and also maintains its rigid structure.

In any event, a whole new industry was born and early examples of beer mats can be very collectable.

In the UK the British Beer Mat Collectors Society was formed in 1960 by Chris

Walsh (so BBCS are as old as me – Ed). His main objective was to meet other collectors and share his hobby, which he managed to do and went on to form the BBCS. [Cardiff University claim to be the UK's first and only official Tegestology Society. I suspect semantics might be involved in that they use Tegestology rather than Beer Mat in their title].

One thing that really helped launch them was that Chris managed to enlist the legendary comedy duo Morecambe and Wise to be the very first presidents of the society. In 1963 Eric & Ernie were interviewed about their new appointment by the Dublin Evening Press. Whilst they were keen to emphasise that initially their involvement was a bit of a joke they admitted that after being briefly immersed in the 'tegestive' world they, "genuinely began to take an interest in it".

BBCS began to list beer mats into a beer mat catalogue though, as you might imagine, that task was somewhat onerous. And with the expansion of the brewing industry and growth of microbreweries they are no longer able to operate the system. They do though have a museum of British brewery beer mats, stretching back to the 1930's. They say it's by far the largest and most important collection of brewery beer mats in the UK and it offers a visual record of brewery advertising, brewery history and changes to brewing styles over the past 80 years.

You can also find links online for various beer mat collections and one in particular is BeerMatMania ([beermatmania.com](http://beermatmania.com)), which was founded in 2004 and has a fully interactive gallery of worldwide beer mats of over 80,000 images.

And why did I compile this article? Jon Knibb sent me a page of local beer mats dating from the 1960/70's, and which includes one from a Birmingham held 1966 world cup match.

A sample of Ansell's beermats from Jon's collection, including one from the 1966 World Cup.

Amazing what he keeps in his attic!



**KNOWLE & DORRIDGE CRICKET CLUB**  
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 WWW.KNOWLEANDDORRIDGECC.CO.UK

## VINE INN (one of our lost pubs), Dorridge

The Vine Inn in Dorridge was located in what is now called Vine House (pictured right) in Station Road opposite Sainsbury's supermarket. The buildings date back to the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and from about 1860 there were market gardens at the rear of the premises.

At the 1861 census, and also the 1868 Kelly's Directory, John Rudd is listed as the occupier and described as a gardener but no mention of an inn. However, by the 1871 census he is described as an innkeeper and gardener.



The origin of the name is believed to be from grape vines that grew in two glasshouses in the market gardens behind the premises. A cattle market existed between the outbuildings and

where Copstone Drive is today. The cattle market may have been the reason for John Rudd to use part of the buildings as an Inn for the visiting cattlemen.

In the 1880 Kelly's Directory John Rudd continues to be listed as an innkeeper and nurseryman. Similarly in the following year's census when John was listed as aged 62 along with his unmarried daughter, Fanny aged 23, acting as a barmaid. John Rudd died at the Vine in 1887 leaving £362 5s 7d to his widow Ann.

By 1896 Samuel Power was the proprietor and from an entry in Kelly's Directory (extract below) we learn that home-brewed beers were purveyed as well as Burton ales and stout. Even accommodation for cyclists and stabling for horses was advertised.

**Vine Inn P.H. (Francis Samuel Power, proprietor), wines, spirits & cigars of the best quality, home-brewed beers & burton ales & stout, dinners & teas provided for private & small parties on the shortest notice, first-class accommodation for cyclists, good stabling (two minutes' walk from station)**

From 1904 until about 1919 the licensee was Joseph Lawrence being superseded by Mrs Emily Hardwicke about 1919, then Harry Clews in 1928 until the inn closed in 1933.

Mrs Hardwicke was fined 20s in January 1920 for "technical breaches" of the licensing laws. According to the Coleshill

Chronicle & Advertiser in December 1923 an extension to the licence was granted for the fat stock sales in the adjacent cattle market, which was probably a regular occurrence.

The Birmingham Gazette for October 1925 reported a court case brought against David Goudie, of the Vine Inn, who was fined £2 for trespassing in search of game, and 30s for using a gun without a licence. He claimed he was attempting to shoot a rat that had climbed up a tree!

On 8<sup>th</sup> February 1933 the Birmingham Daily Gazette reports that the Solihull justices had been considering the renewal of the Vine's licence. However, it was stated that the tenant was "not yet of age and the house was being administered by trustees" and consequently the licence was not renewed. The following year the same newspaper reported on 7<sup>th</sup> March that Harry D. Clews, the licensee, was granted permission by the justices to transfer the licence to the Forest Hotel.

At various times parts of the building were rented to local businesses including the Midland Bank, a local sculptor, cattlemen and even an antique dealer.

(Dr) Iain Wells

If you would like your pub, or a pub that has disappeared (we will do our best to find information about it), to be featured in this series please contact the editor ([editor@solihullcamra.org.uk](mailto:editor@solihullcamra.org.uk))



### The Case is Altered

Five Ways, Hatton, Nr Warwick CV35 7JD

An old-fashioned Ale House

Opening Hours

Mon – Wed 6pm – 11pm Thu – Sat 12-2pm & 6pm – 11 pm

Sunday 12pm - 7pm

DATE FOR THE DIARY

BEER FESTIVAL

Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May - Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> June

With a minimum of 20 Ales

# Campaigning trip & GBG scoring

Early each year we have to undertake the onerous task of deciding which of our pubs should go into the CAMRA Good Beer Guide (GBG) for the following year. I say onerous, because it does involve visiting the nominated pubs to quality control the beers available. I know, a hard task but someone has to do it, right?

The process actually starts towards the tail end of the previous year when we ask our branch members to nominate pubs they think worthy of being in the GBG. This isn't just about nominating their favourite pub. Nominations have to be for pubs providing a selection of real ales that are consistently in good condition.

Anyway, we had a list of nominated pubs by January - 16 for our bit of the West Midlands and 5 for our bit of Warwickshire (our branch only covers a limited part of each area). CAMRA require us to submit confirmed GBG entries for 9 pubs from our bit of the West Midlands and 2 pubs in our bit of Warwickshire, so the visits and sampling are all in aid of getting our entries spot on!

One way of getting a number of people out to some of those slightly further afield, or less likely to be visited due to being more difficult to reach by public transport, was to lay on a minibus trip. Paul sorted out a great deal with Bromsgrove Bus & Coach Company for a minibus and we set out on Saturday 25 January, hoping to get round as many as possible on a list he'd produced for the day.

Due to time constraints, we didn't manage to get to all of them, but we gave it a decent go. We started by meeting at the Shaking Hand in Shirley, followed shortly by the Pump

House. Now, I know these are not further afield, but we needed a starting point that would double as a bus pick up point for those members who live in the Shirley area, so it was convenient to include them.



From Shirley, we headed off to the Bull's Head in Earlswood (see above). This is still just within the West Midlands part of our patch but not easy to reach unless someone drives. It's also a good starting point for the Warwickshire pubs, with the Warwickshire Lad at Wood End being our next port of call. The Lad now regularly sells a beer from the Infinity Brewery based behind it, appropriately named The Lad Next Door.



Henley in Arden was our next target, where there are 2 pubs nominated this time: the Station (a community pub in the converted Henley in Arden railway station buildings) and the Three Tuns (pictured right) in the High Street. A warm welcome was found in both. A short drive then to Claverdon, where we called in at The Crown, even though that's not on the list of GBG nominations. We stopped in simply to show our support, oh,



# CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2025



Ember Inns Pub of the Year 2024

## THE FIELDHOUSE



10 Knightcote Drive  
Solihull B91 3JU  
0121 703 9209



[www.emberinns.co.uk/the-fieldhouse-solihull](http://www.emberinns.co.uk/the-fieldhouse-solihull)

6 Real Ales on at all times

CAMRA members (membership card required) 20p off pint of cask ale every day (except Mon/Thurs)

CAMRA members 10% off food bill

Open Mon – Thurs 11.00 – 23.00;  
Fri 10.00 – 23.30; Sat 10.00 – 24.00;  
Sun 10.00 – 23.00

Hot & cold meals served all week from  
11.00 am to 9.00 pm  
Brunch 10 am – 12 noon Sat & Sun

### Live Music & Events

Quiz nights Tues & Sun from 8.45pm  
Steak nights Thurs from 5.0pm  
Curry night Fri from 5.0pm  
Sun 30th March - Mother's Day -10% off  
for CAMRA members  
Sat 15th March - Vinyl Revival Party

<p>MONDAY &amp; THURSDAY</p> <p><b>CASK Ales</b> £1 OFF</p> <p>ALL DAY</p>	<p><i>Cocktails</i></p> <p>2 FOR £12.50</p> <p>HALF PRICE</p>
<p>THURSDAY &amp; SUNDAY</p> <p>FROM 5.00PM</p> <p><b>WINE Club</b></p> <p>Bottles FROM £12.99</p> <p>ADD DRINK OFFER</p>	<p>FRIDAY &amp; SATURDAY</p> <p>FROM 5.00PM</p> <p><b>Fizz</b> WEEKEND</p> <p>Bottles FROM £14</p> <p>ADD DRINK OFFER</p>
<p>SHOTS</p> <p>4 FOR £12.00</p> <p>HALF PRICE</p>	



and have a drink. We then called in at the Red Lion, which is nominated, but we didn't stop. They only had one real ale on, and a party of diners made their feelings known that they'd prefer us to drink elsewhere!

So, we left and made our way to the Fleur de Lys, which is one of my favourite pub buildings in our area, with lots of history. This is mainly a food-oriented pub and there didn't really seem anywhere a party of our size might

realistically sit. Indeed, though I didn't experience it, I'm told some felt unwelcome, having been asked to move out of the way. But move where?

Move we did, and it was a bit of a trek to the Bull's Head in Barston. From here we'd hoped to go on to the White Lion at Hampton in Arden, but time was against us, and we knew we really only had time for one more stop before heading home. So, we opted for the Pup & Duckling (see below) n Hatchford Brook Road. Those who live in that area don't see it as hard to reach, but most of us need to get public transport into Solihull and then a further bus to the Pup. (cont. Pg 14)



# THE THREE TUNS HENLEY IN ARDEN



**CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2025**  
**Serving 5 real ales, including Batham's Best Bitter**  
**Consistently good real ales**  
**in**  
**16<sup>th</sup> century, family run pub**  
**Solihull CAMRA Warwickshire branch Pub of the Year**  
**2022 - 2024**

**Opening times:**

**Mon – Thurs: 3.30 – 10.00pm, Fri – Sat: 12.00 – 11.00pm**

**Sun: 12.00 - 10.00pm**

**Come and visit Eliza  
and her team at:  
103 High Street  
Henley in Arden  
B95 5AT  
01564 792723**



The three tuns



@thethreetunspub



**15th-17th May**

**Camp Hill Rugby Club**

**REAL ALES**

**CRAFT BEERS**

**CIDERS**

**COCKTAILS**

**STREET FOOD**

**LIVE MUSIC**

**FAMILY FUN DAY**

**COMEDY NIGHT**



We left a number of the local living members here (to clarify, that's members who lived locally rather than those who were still alive at this stage of the day!!!), but the minibus then dropped us off in Solihull centre or at KDCC. And some of those dropped at KDCC managed to get a final half in.

So, what are we judging when we visit our nominated pubs? Well, I'm glad you ask. It's not just about the beer, though the clue is in the title of the publication – the Good Beer Guide. In our branch we emphasise the scoring importance with respect to the beer by scoring both the quality and the range of beers involved. Now, range does not just mean the number of different beers available: it's also very much about the range of beer styles. So, let's say one pub has 5 different ales on, but they are all golden, light and hoppy, and another has 3 ales on but there is one golden, one traditional bitter and say a porter. On our scoring system, the pub with 3 ales has a wider range of beers so will score more highly.

We also consider a range of other factors, including welcome, atmosphere,

décor, community values, support of CAMRA aims etc. Very much therefore not a popularity contest – provided you adhere to the scoring criteria.

If you are a Solihull & District branch member then you should have seen emails about the latest scoring and, hopefully, you may well have submitted some scores onto our website. If so, then thank you and if not, then there's always next year.

By the time you read this we should have a good idea which of the pubs being judged have been successful in being put forward as our entries for GBG 2026.

We will also then be in a position for voting for our branch overall Pub of the Year, and our West Midlands and Warwickshire Pubs of the Year. Our winners are then put forward to the Region as our entries into the regional judging. Regional winners are then entered into the national competition, and you might then find yourself in an article like that below.

Ray Cooke

## CAMRA National Pub of the Year

The Bailey Head in Oswestry (pictured right), Shropshire has been crowned CAMRA's National Pub of the Year. It was previously known as the Castle Tavern, named after the nearby remnants of Oswestry Castle, which pre-dates the town. A Royalist stronghold during the Civil War, the castle was destroyed after the war by the Parliamentarians to prevent it being used as a base for a resistance movement. The current name still reflects those ties with the castle.

Duncan Borrowman and Grace Goodlad bought the failing pub nine years ago from a major pub company, after CAMRA had listed it as an ACV (Asset of Community Value). They have transformed it into a haven for the community and, as well as this award,



it's won West Midlands Pub of the Year and West Midlands Cider Pub of the Year 2024; has been a serial winner of the Branch Market Towns Pub of the Year and winners of the overall title three

times; Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA) Best Rural Independent Craft Beer Pub or Bar 2020 and a finalist many times. It was also voted Most Dog Friendly Pub in the West Midlands in 2017.

Aside from providing a welcoming atmosphere, the Bailey Head also boasts an impressive array of cask beer and cider, having 12 handpulls serving six cask beers and six ciders and perries, plus 16 other draught lines. This includes at least one dark cask and one dark KeyKey beer.

The winning duo said, "While all of the focus tends to be on us as a couple, this win was also down to our incredible team of welcoming and knowledgeable staff, and to our wonderful regulars who have become very much a community in their own right."

The other finalists, who definitely deserve mention, were:

Black Horse, Preston (pictured below) A visually stunning Victorian Grade II-listed pub opposite the historic Preston open market, the Black Horse is a fantastic example of Victorian architecture, retaining original fittings from the era.



Three B's, Bridlington (pictured above right). Run by a husband-and-wife team which is passionate about beer and cider, the popular micropub is described as "Bridlington's Real Ale Destination",

showcasing four cask beers with a focus on stocking Yorkshire beers.



Little Green Dragon, Winchmore Hill A former shop, Enfield's first micropub opened in 2017. Focussing on the quality and diversity of cask beer, the Little Green Dragon has an ever-changing selection of four cask beers sourced from local microbreweries and other independent brewers from further afield, plus real cider, perry and four keg beers.

And it is a local West Midlands club that has been named CAMRA Club of the Year 2024, The Firs Club in Codsall, having won the West Midlands Club of the Year for three years in a row.

The multi-award-winning social club is a must visit for cask beer fans, with an onsite microbrewery opened in 2017 which features in its November festival - a real highlight in the local beer calendar. Firs Brewery has been featured in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide and produces a core range of ales, including some exclusives for the club. As well as Firs beers, the bar offers five locally sourced ever-changing cask beers, usually including one mild.

The other club finalists were: Haydock Reading Rooms in St. Helens, Kettering Midland Band Social Club in Kettering, and Marden Village Club in Kent

Ray Cooke

## The past is a foreign country.....

People often refer to the 'good old days'. Life was simpler. Mobile phones were certainly not as ubiquitous, and they were just that – phones. No internet or fancy add ons. If you wanted to find out about pubs in your area or in an area you were set to visit, then a local CAMRA pub guide might well have been the thing to look for.

Solihull & District CAMRA produced such a guide in 2003 (thanks to Steve Dyson for compiling, editing and producing this). A major drawback with a guide of this nature is that, by its very nature it is almost out of date as soon as it is printed. Indeed, if you visit our website these days and open the pub guide pages you won't find a copy of it. What you will find is information on all our pubs (and those clubs that CAMRA members have access to) in electronic format, as we can keep this up to date far more easily, and it can also be consulted at the drop of a hat (at least via a push of a few 'buttons') on your smartphone.

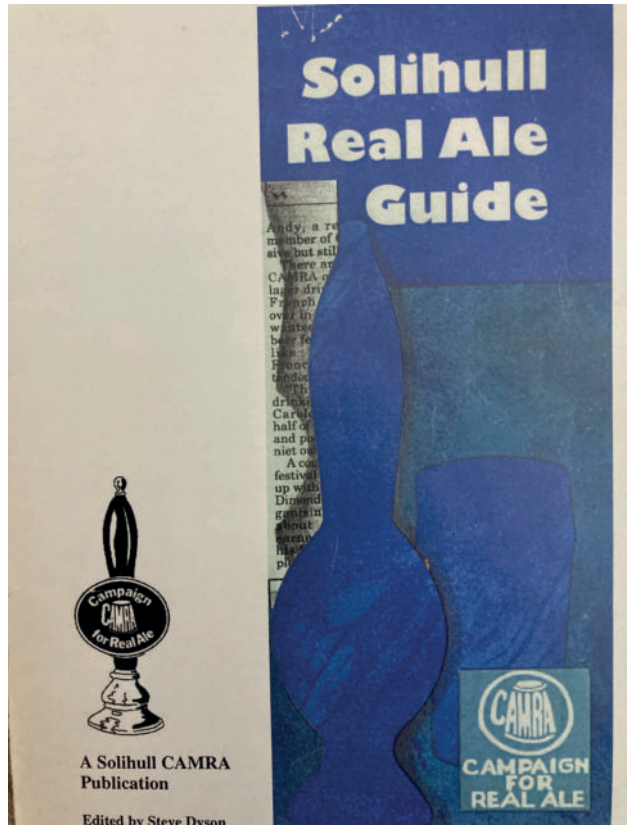
Since 2003 our pub landscape has seen important changes, not least of which was the smoking ban in 2007. Remember the doom-mongers saying it would be the end of pubs? Personally, as a non-smoker I hated the day after an evening at the pub. I'd wake up with my clothes and bedroom smelling of eau de stale ashtray. It didn't matter if you could find a decent pub with a no-smoking room, as smoke doesn't read the no smoking signs and seeps, inevitably, into every nook and cranny.

Anyway, having read an article along these lines in the local Rugby Winter 2022 Inn Touch magazine, I thought I'd look at our 2003 guide and compare it to where we are now. Overall, we've

done pretty well on our patch with the number of pubs closed being rather matched by new ones that have opened.

The main offerings of beer on sale in the pubs in 2003 looks very different to now, with a significant number then offering M&B, Banks, Courage, Tetley, Ansells, and Draught Bass (I do wish Draught Bass was as widely available now as it was then). Indeed, we've been blessed in recent times by the growth of microbreweries and a far wider selection of available real ales.

It's telling to see part of Steve's introduction, where he offers the following "Undoubtedly, the best pub in the Solihull area is the Vaults at Knowle, don't miss it. Nearby in Dorridge the Railway is worth your time. In the



countryside, visit the Cock Horse at Rowington and maybe poke your nose around the doors of the nearby Tom O'the Wood at Rowington and the Navigation at Lapworth. These pubs are in superb countryside and are worth making a day out of. Over towards Redditch way pop into the Bell at Tanworth in Arden. Heading. Along the A34 from Stratford pop into the Wharf at Hockley Heath and the Red Lion in Shirley. If you are travelling on the A45 then drop into the Harvester in Olton. Finally Solihull town centre....the Saddler's Arms is the best followed by the Hog's Head."

Oh, how the mighty are fallen!

The real shame over those Steve says to try, was the sad loss of the Cock Horse at Rowington. That was a glorious old, half-timbered building with low beams in the bar and a huge inglenook fireplace. David and Wendy really knew how to run the place, and they had a regular, well attended beer festival every year.

Another notable loss, and far more recent, has been the Crabmill at Preston Bagot. If it hadn't been for the fire that ripped through and devastated much of the site, they were strong candidates to make it into the CAMRA Good Beer Guide. The pub has not reopened, with much of it having had to be demolished.

All that having been said, in my opinion, we are far better served now than we were then. And I think most establishments better understand how to keep real ale in decent condition these days.

Overall, we haven't really lost pubs in our area. Well, we have, but new ones have opened to keep up our numbers. Notable new ones are our 'micropubs' the Ale Rooms in Knowle, the 2 Ale Hubs in Longmore Road and Dickens Heath, the Pup & Duckling in Hatchford Brook Road, and the Shaking Hand in Shirley. So, some of our local high streets remain similar to the way they were in the 2003 guide, such as Knowle, which still has the four pubs listed then

(Greswolde, Red Lion, Vaults and Wilsons Arms) but these have been supplemented by the Oktagon and the Ale Rooms.

We've had new additions elsewhere too – Skogen in Dorridge, Station at Henley in Arden (in my view, this is a community pub and a must visit), and Pump House in Shirley.

It's probably the centre of Solihull where most changes have taken place, though from conversations I've had with those hoping to open pubs, they will tell you that business rates and rent in the town centre are very off-putting, so they look elsewhere.

The 2003 guide has the following listed in the town centre – Bar Censsa (Poplar Rd), Bar Co (Warwick Rd), Barley Mow (Poplar Rd), Casa (Touchwood), Coach House (Herbert Rd), Hog's Head (Station Rd), Mason's Arms (High St), Pitcher & Piano (Warwick Rd), Pump House (High St), Saddler's Arms (Warwick Rd) and Yates in Station Road.

As far as I can see, the Masons is the only one to remain as it was. Bar Co is now the Beech House; the Barley Mow is O'Neills; the Hog's Head is the Flute & Flagon; and the Saddlers is the Tap & Tandoor. The Yates finally morphed into the Assembly Rooms but has been closed for some time. Coach House closed and is now a restaurant. We do though have a Wetherspoons, the White Swan, in Station Road. As far as the others are concerned, as they didn't serve real ale, they weren't much of a loss in my opinion anyway.

Looking through the old guide gives some idea of the societal changes, but certainly of the changes in breweries and ales available over the last 20 years. There's no point in trying to predict the future; if I could do that I'd have won the lottery by now! However, I think you can guarantee that our drinking scene and the pubs that go with it will continue to see plenty of changes.

Ray Cooke

# Crowdfunding the Solihull Drinker

I want to say a huge thank you to those long-term advertisers who have stuck with us, and to those who are new. Without you we simply cannot publish the Solihull Drinker magazine, our core campaigning tool.

We fully appreciate the financial constraints the hospitality industry face (changes to minimum wage/employers' NICs for example), so we keep our ad rates as low as possible. However, we do understand some can't afford them but might still wish to support us.

So, we want to try something different: a kind of 'crowdfunding', where pubs and clubs contribute a nominal £10 per quarter. Supporting us would put the magazine on a much sounder footing, hopefully without making a noticeable dent in your profitability. In return, we will name and thank our contributors, and we'll do the same on our social media channels and website.

Assuming this works in the longer term, if you make this contribution for six issues, you'll be entitled to a free ¼ page ad in the magazine – consider it micropayments towards your own ad.

I hope you think the Drinker is worth publishing; it's our main way of informing people of local matters and events, while highlighting the campaigning work done by CAMRA to support pubs, clubs and real ale. And I really hope you'll consider giving us a small financial leg-up, to secure future issues.

If you are interested, please do get in touch. If you feel there's anything else we can do to raise funds for the magazine, then we'd love to hear from you!

**Thank you to the Tap & Tandoor, the White Lion, the Station and the Pup & Duckling for starting us off in this venture.**

## Useful Contact Numbers

### **Chair/Beer Festival Organiser**

Martin Buck. 01564 770708

### **Secretary**

Allan Duffy 01564 200431

### **Membership**

Dave Mckowen 01564 778955

### **Social media**

Martin Robins 07771 842046

### **Website**

Keith Whitehouse

[webmaster@solihull.camra.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@solihull.camra.org.uk)

### **Pubs Campaigning / Cider & Perry**

Paul Wigley 07402 312457

### **Treasurer**

Brenda Duffy 01564 200431

### **Solihull Drinker Editor**

Ray Cooke 01564 777890

### **Social co-ordinator**

Steve Dyson

[steve\\_dyson@solihull.camra.org.uk](mailto:steve_dyson@solihull.camra.org.uk)

### **Young Members**

Iain Wells

07810 827043

## **Trading Standards contacts:**

For local consumer advice in our area please contact the following

Solihull – [www.solihull.gov.uk/tradingstandards](http://www.solihull.gov.uk/tradingstandards)

Warwickshire – [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/contactustradingstandards](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/contactustradingstandards)

Citizens Advice Consumer Service – phone 03454 040506

## Advertise Your Business Here With Us

We distribute around 2500 free copies to some 80 pubs (and some clubs, restaurants and off licences) around Solihull, and local parts of Warwickshire and Birmingham. This magazine also goes onto our website and onto our social media pages. This gives you the opportunity to put your business in front of people who are in the habit of visiting pubs and restaurants, etc.

You definitely don't have to be a pub or restaurant to advertise. Any business seeking local reach (tradespeople, take aways, taxi companies etc) could benefit. For further details or information about advertising, or to discuss any proposed advert, please contact [editor@solihull.camra.org.uk](mailto:editor@solihull.camra.org.uk)

It might be possible for us to offer adverts for certain sectors on an exclusive basis, so if you run a taxi company (as an example) we might be able to agree that yours would be the only such advertiser benefitting from being in our magazine.

Our advertising is competitively priced, see rates set out below.

We offer a 10% discount for advertisements by CAMRA members (membership number required). We also offer a 10% discount for advertisers taking out an advert for 4 consecutive editions (the advert can be amended for each edition, if you needed to include time related offers for example). If both discounts are applied, it is 20% off the advertising rate quoted below.

SIZE	INNER PAGES	FRONT COVER
Full (A5) page	£120.00	Not available
1 / 2 page	£90.00	£120 (landscape only)
1 / 3 page	£66.00	£90.00
1 / 4 page	£54.00	£72.00
1 / 6 page	£42.00	£56.00

## CAMRA Real Ale, Cider and Perry Vouchers

The CAMRA Voucher scheme is a member benefit that entitles members to £30 (60 x 50p) vouchers off a pint of Real Ale, Cider or Perry. The vouchers in this CAMRA owned and operated scheme remain valid for the length of membership for added flexibility.

They are redeemable at over 1,550 pubs nationwide, including J D Wetherspoon and Amber Taverns managed pubs. To get an up-to-date listing for pubs participating near you, enter your postcode at [https://camra.org.uk/membership/camra-discount-scheme?landing\\_style=discount\\_scheme&benefits\[0\]=MemberDiscountScheme&sort=nearest#pubs](https://camra.org.uk/membership/camra-discount-scheme?landing_style=discount_scheme&benefits[0]=MemberDiscountScheme&sort=nearest#pubs)

CAMRA promotes responsible drinking and thus encourages all vouchers to be used responsibly at all times.

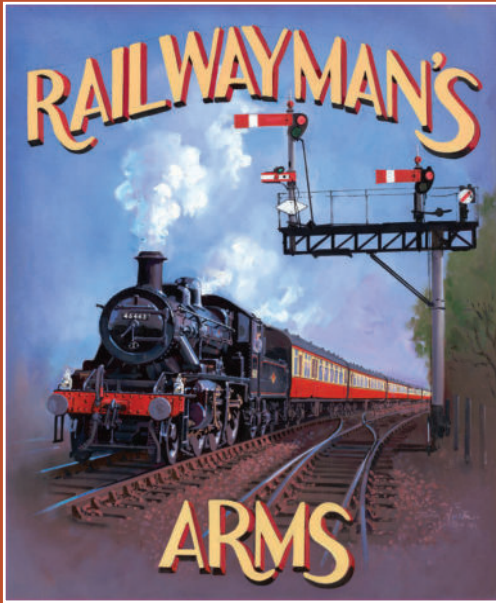




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# Hail to the Ale

The Autumn Budget proved to be a real kick in the teeth to an already struggling hospitality sector. Pubs, clubs, restaurants and the like, are now faced with the perfect storm of rising wages, higher employer national insurance contribution, a reduction in the earnings threshold and a reduction in business rates relief. Combine all of this with rising costs in general and it is easy to see why the industry is struggling.

The result across the country has been an acceleration in the rate of closure of hospitality venues.

Fortunately, in the Solihull and District branch area, we have yet to see a rise in the number of owners calling time on their businesses. Instead, pubs and clubs have been making job cuts, reducing opening hours, closing on certain days and of course, passing on the rise in costs to the punter in the form of price increases. In most venues, the price of a pint of ale is now significantly higher than it was before the budget.

**In these tough times, please do get out and support your local in any way you can. Your help is much appreciated.**

This is also the section where we update you on news related to pubs, clubs, off licences or breweries in our area. We rely heavily on you, our readers, to keep us updated so, as always, if you hear of anything you feel we or others should know about then please do drop us a line at [pubs@solihull.camra.org.uk](mailto:pubs@solihull.camra.org.uk).

The choice of real ales at the Ale Rooms in Knowle has improved over recent months, with Mark Caldicott having now taken over the day to day running. He's told us that he is extending his cellar and adding two more handpulls, extending his range to 9 real ales. He will also have a real cider on regularly.

Also in Knowle, the Red Lion will be undergoing an extensive refurbishment in March.

The Railway in Dorridge now has Tring Brewery Side Pocket for a Toad on as a regular beer, as well as the usual Landlord and Doombar.

The Henley Mile Brewery are understood to have found a new home in Henley to begin brewing again. We hope they manage to get up and running soon.

Also in Henley, the Three Tuns now stock Batham's Best Bitter, so congratulations to Eliza and her team, as Bathams don't allow just anyone to sell it. Eliza also intends to have a dark beer on in future, and at the last couple of visits it was Church End Gravediggers.

Still in Henley, we understand the White Swan to be under new management.

Nearby in Claverdon, we are concerned that the reopened and refurbished Crown is not attracting the attention it deserves. At recent visits, the beer has been in consistently good condition, so do please pay them a visit.

Alan and Pam at the Bluebell Cider House are leaving and we wish them well.

It also looks like there will be management changes at the Bull's Head at Barston, with a sign outside the pubco are looking for new tenants.

Congratulation to the Pup & Duckling in Hatchford Brook Road, who have celebrated their 9<sup>th</sup> birthday with a well-supported beer festival.

Paul Wigley  
Pubs Officer



## Membership Matters

As Spring approaches CAMRA members' thoughts turn to beer festivals, some run by local pubs others by charities and many others run by CAMRA branches situated all over the country. At the majority of the CAMRA run beer festivals members will get some type of benefit, either in the form of a reduced entry fee or free beer tokens - surely a couple of excellent reasons to join CAMRA.

One of the other many benefits you get as a CAMRA member is £30 worth of real ale/cider vouchers valid at numerous pub chains including JD Wetherspoons etc. There are many other money saving benefits to becoming a member of CAMRA which can all be found if you visit the website [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk).

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

With prices of membership starting from £30.50 per annum (58p per week) and including all of the above, I think you will agree this represents remarkably good value for money; how about giving a year's membership as a gift for Father's Day on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June.

You can scan the QR code or use the form on the left here to apply for membership.

An even greater advantage of joining CAMRA is the opportunity to become involved in your local branch, which includes social events, meeting new friends, and helping out at our beer festival, as well as campaigning. As a branch we are a friendly group of people, and you will be made most welcome whilst enjoying a good pint of real ale/cider with like-minded people.

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

And as a bonus, within their branch welcome pack all our new members will get a voucher for a FREE PINT which is redeemable in conjunction with a valid membership card upon attendance at their first Branch meeting, courtesy of Solihull & District CAMRA Branch.

For a full list of forthcoming events see the Dates for the Diary section in this magazine (page 3) or visit [www.solihull.camra.org.uk](http://www.solihull.camra.org.uk).

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

Dave Mckowen  
Membership Secretary

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The 105<sup>th</sup> edition of the Solihull Drinker will be published on Monday 2 June 2025. Please note that the deadline for copy, advertising and any other contribution for this issue is **Friday 16<sup>th</sup> May**. Thank you in advance to all contributors.



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