



Solihull drinker

free

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

Issue No: 23

website: www.solihullcamra.org.uk

Winter, 2002



Solihull CAMRA Beer Festival, an astounding success...

Organisers of the recent Solihull CAMRA beer festival at the British Legion in Solihull are still recovering from the success of the festival. It was expected that just over five hundred drinkers would attend the event, when in fact, seven hundred plus turned up.

Steve Dyson, Festival Organiser said, "by late Friday night we knew we had a success on our hands, and on Saturday morning when checking out the amount of beer left we had to get a rush order of the equivalent of five more firkins to last us the Saturday evening session." Church End Brewery rose to the challenge supplying Nun's Ale, Goats Milk and more Boston Fat Boy and Bats in the Belfry, whilst Bernies Off Licence brought in two more beers. Even with these extra stocks it was a close run thing with only 40 pints left for staff to drink when knocking down the site on Sunday morning. Solihull CAMRA Branch Chairman Dave Hobbs recovering from a weeks hard work said, "I'd like to thank all the people who gave their time freely to work at the festival and to the staff at the British Legion for their support, they all contributed to the



A few of the Saturday evening drinkers...

Stop Press !!

If you enjoyed this years festival it might be an idea to make a note of the following dates for next year... Friday and Saturday 2-3rd October... confirmation will be in the Drinker

success of the festival" It didn't help in that two of the beer ordered were undrinkable when tapped so Moorhouse's Black Cat and Ryburn Stabbers were returned to the breweries. The first beer to run out was Oakham JHB, hardly surprising as this is a superb beer. This was followed shortly after by Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby. The Beer of the Festival vote went to Church End "Bats in the Belfry", which, incidentally also won the same award at the recent Harbury Festival. Furthermore, all the festival glasses were sold, surely now a collectors item! And to top it all twelve new members joined CAMRA at the festival. Visitors came from all over the world as far afield as Connecticut in the US, Finland and Germany. A great time was had by all... be there next year!



Ian Hunter and John Salmon undertaking sterling work behind the bar



Bar staff wringing every last drop of beer out of the casks on Saturday night

Local News and Beers around 'ere...

The Red Lion, Shirley is one of the pubs in our area that can turn up unusual beers such as the recently seen Phoenix Bantam and Tring Side Pocket for a Toad, then next serve the ilk of John Smiths Magnet. The Case is Altered, just off our patch as been found serving Church End Vicar's Ruin, whilst the Winged Spur at Ullenhall has had Summer Hog Bitter. At the Navigation, Lapworth Cottage Our Ken has been drunk, whilst in Solihull at the Hogshead, Wychwood Pumpking has been spotted amongst it's usual unimaginative range. The Blue Bell, Warings Green, CAMRA Solihull Most Improved Pub of the Year has had Theakstons Lightfoot, Gales HSB, and Lock, Stock and Barrel, can't remember the brewer for that one! Surprisingly seen at the Vaults, Knowle, Davenports Bitter! At the Fleur De Lys, Lowsonford, which usually serves a mediocre range of beer rather expensively there was Hook Norton Steaming On available recently. Shelley Farm, Monkspath has replaced the Bass with the temporarily unavailable Fullers London Pride, whilst the Plough at Monkspath, due for refurbishment soon has replaced Greene King Speckled Hen and Flowers Original with Bass and Bankss Bitter complimenting the existing Boddingtons Bitter and Marstons Pedigree. The Red House, Solihull has lost Thwaites Mild. Of no great interest to real ale drinkers but Morrisey's part of the Regency Hotel at Monkspath has closed, a pub loss to Solihull.

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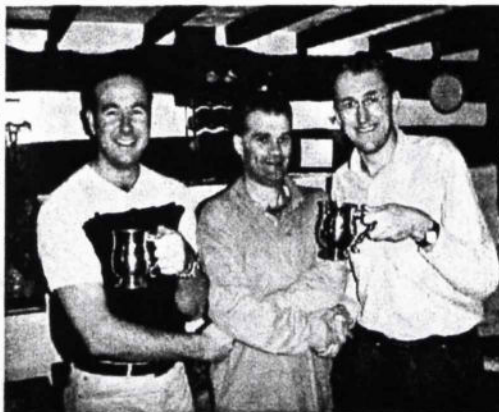


All change on Solihull CAMRA Committee...

Following the recent AGM held at the Bulls Head in Barston the committee has undergone some changes. The new Branch Chairman is Ray Cooke, whilst secretarial duties have been taken over by Steve Wood, ex Campaigns Officer, replacing Brenda Duffy who stands down from the committee after some 10 years. Campaigning and Publicity have been amalgamated under Martin Collinge's wing.

We also welcome John McDermott on board as Membership Secretary.

Keven Parker has stood down as Social Secretary and is superseded by Bob Jackson. Both Dave Hobbis ex Chairman and Keven Parker will be leaving the Branch area soon, and in appreciation of their work for Solihull CAMRA, the Branch presented them each with a tankard



Branch Publicity Officer Martin Collinge presents Keven Parker [left] and Dave Hobbis [right] with a tankard on their retirement from the Committee



BERRIDGES

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YEAR**

*** 200 DIFFERENT BEERS
DURING A YEAR**

*** CAMRA GOOD BEER GUIDE
LISTED
CONTINUOUSLY
SINCE 1983**



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SHIRLEY SOLIHULL



Summer crossword winner...

Congratulations go to Mark Alley from Cornyx Lane, Solihull for completing the crossword. Their prize will be a carry keg of real ale of their choice from Bernies, Shirley. Here is the solution to the crossword.

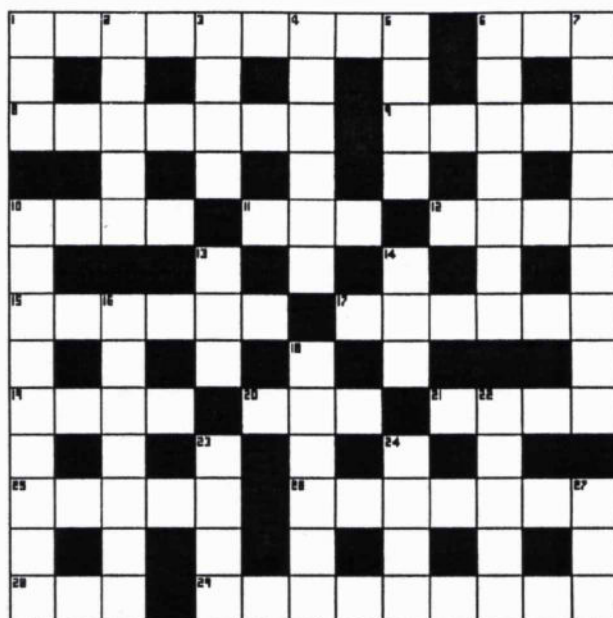
ACROSS:

1. Forth; 4. Obese; 10. Tea; 11. Corvedale; 12. Blencowe; 14. Mead; 16. Vault; 18. Flask; 22. Odin;
23. Goose Eye; 26. Flavoured; 28. Oil; 29. Slate; 30. Egret

DOWN:

2. Orate; 3. Tic; 5. Bees; 6. Slaters; 7. Stabs; 8. Crowd; 9. Heady; 13. Call; 15. Plus; 17. Abigail; 19. Goffs; 20. Court; 21. Wells; 24. Erode; 25. Boat; 27. Dog

Below is the next crossword. Send your entry to: The Editor, Solihull Drinker, 79 Walsgrave, Drive Solihull, B92 9PP by 16/3/03. The first correct answer pulled out of the hat will receive the same prize from Bernies



CLUES

Across

- 1] That Edna woman (9)
- 6] Goff's gravity gone away (3) (5)
- 8] Quack's remedy (7)
- 9] Aberdeen beef (5)
- 10] Last beer leaves brier rose French drink (4)
- 11] Something strange found in Boddingtons (3) (7)
- 12] Used to be cone (4)
- 15] First man's acquired name brews in Suffolk (6)
- 17] He's fatter we hear (6)
- 19] Cosier than the bar (4)
- 20] Jump for flavouring agent (3)
- 21] Beer maker without hesitation (4)
- 25] User friendly alcohol (5)
- 26] Beery bowmen from Swindon (7)
- 28] Brewer Taylor loses lot of spark (3)
- 29] Woodforde's best drinker (9)

Down

- 1] Pub found in Spinning Dog (3)
- 2] Follow unseen without point
- 3] Seldom cooked lightly (4)
- 4] ----- Ale from Harveys (6)
- 5] This road can be impetuous (4)
- 6] Of beer, plant or animal origin (7)
- 7] Edinburgh brewery (9)
- 10] Endangered Oxfordshire brewery (9)
- 13] Short pint measure (3)
- 14] This hopping is for a fuller flavour (3)
- 16] As good as 27 down (7)
- 18] Don't drink it - put it on your hair! (6)
- 22] He needs rum but disease results (5)
- 23] After ---- From Triple FFF (4)
- 24] Shortage without city leaves its mark (4)
- 27] It's nice when full (3)

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

The Real Ale venue in Knowle with:

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- ◆ **Real cider from Weston's**
- ◆ **Food available lunchtimes Monday - Saturday**
- ◆ **Occasional Beer Festivals**

THE VAULTS

Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 1993 and 1994

CAMRA Good Beer Guide listed since 1993



*The Vaults, St Johns Close, Knowle.
Tel: 01564 773656*

Blue Bell, Warings Green wins Solihull CAMRA Most Improved Pub Award for 2002...

Just after Bonfire Night a happy gathering of Solihull CAMRA members descended on the Blue Bell Cider House to declare it the Most Improved Pub of the Year for 2002.

This annual award for pubs in our area is usually presented when a pub has improved the beer range and quality in recent times.

The Blue Bell at Warings Green near Earlswood, now has three changing guest beers and although one is usually from Scottish Courage, there is always something different on every visit!

On the award evening we drank Woodham Old Chopper at 4.1%, Gales Bitter 4% and Hydes Autumn Gold at 4.5%. Two traditional Bulmers Cider are always available too.

This two roomed country pub which also has a large veranda style entrance is in an excellent situation by the Stratford Canal which is overlooked by a large garden, which has recently been refurbished. Food is available every day 12-8, but only from 12-4 on Sunday's.

Keith Jones and his wife Ruth were delighted to receive the award and we hope he keeps up the good work stocking different ales and wish him well in the future



New Solihull Branch Chairman Ray Cooke on his first outing presents Keith and his wife with the award

Dave Queenborough

Bewdley Beer Fest 2002, Or 'Four go to Bewdley' ...

Our intrepid heroes were, in no order of preference*, myself, Steve, Malcolm and Bob B. The other three obviously being more intrepid beer hunters, or perhaps realising getting there at 3 ish saved them having to watch Solihull Boro that afternoon (?), sallied forth to Bewdley on an advanced reconnaissance mission. I likewise arrived at Kidderminster Station with the similar intention of travelling to Bewdley on the Severn Valley Railway (SVR). As I had half an hour to burn (or drink) I went into the King & Castle, a *Good Beer Guide* (GBG) pub which is adjacent to the SVR and mainline railway stations. I had the enormous pleasure of getting my lips round a blonde... a Goldthorn Blonde to be precise. The King & Castle had a bank of 5 handpumps, the other ales on offer being Highgate Dark Mild, Archer's Special, Batham's Bitter and Royal Piddle (Wyre Piddle Brewery unless I stand corrected?)

The others were enjoying the delights of The Woodcollier's Arms-no problems there, it is the 21st Century after all, and the also had 3 real ales on in this GBG pub. After enjoying a threesome we finally became a foursome at the 19th hole, aka The 4th Bewdley Beer Festival, 23rd to 26th August. This is not a CAMRA festival but there are CAMRA members who are part of the staff, indeed the festival organiser (sorry, I've forgotten her name, I think it was the packet of nuts and not the xxth beer that did it) used to run the GBG-listed Tiplers off-licence in the town.

So what was on offer? According to the Festival programme there were 39 beers from various breweries from a goodly cross-section of locations in England, plus one Scottish, one Orcadian and one Cornish beer (they do consider it an autonomous republic, after all) and several from Yorkshire (see previous comment!)

Some of the usual suspects were there, e.g. Harviestoun Schiehallion-for the uninitiated, a cask-conditioned lager, but well worth trying if you've never had the pleasure. The range of breweries was, in my humble opinion, excellent as there were some unusual names on the roll of honour....

See what you think.....

Arundel, Beckett's, Berrow, Brewsters, Broadstone, Brunswick, Freeminer, Hadrian, Hanby, Harviestoun, Hobson's, Hopback, Ichen Valley, Mighty Oak, Milk Street, Museum, Nottingham, Oakham, Okells, Old Cottage, Orkney, Ossett, O'Hanlon's, Otter, Ryburn, Salopian, Shardlow, Sharp's, Teignworthy, Teme Valley, Titanic, Tower, Tring, West Berkshire, York

So what did we drink? Well, we slaked our thirst on a variety of beers, me being game for summat different tried a half of the 6% (!) Hanby Cherry Bomb-as the tasting notes said: "Beer made with the addition of cherries. Frankly you'll love it or hate it". Unlike Marmite, I loved it!

After spending a most pleasant couple of hours (or was it 120 minutes, time's not my strong point) we repaired to the previously GBG-listed George Hotel for some serious food stoking, as the Festival's albeit excellent rolls were not enough for our appetite. If I recall rightly, Tetley's and Pedigree were available, but also one guest, Hobson's (you've guessed it!) Hobson's Choice, and very palatable it was.

Although not visited by myself on the night, other GBG pubs in Bewdley are The Black Boy (up the steep Wyre hill, not the one in Wribbenhall), The Cock & Maggie and The Little Pack Horse.

Then after a taxi ride back to Kiddie Station we spent a short while in the King & Castle, a return journey for me but a first time for the others, who echoed my positive comments on the pub. Then back to Brum- the heady atmosphere of the evening lead us to one last pint or two in The Briar Rose in Brum City centre, one of Wetherspoon's.

All in all a most enjoyable day in a lovely little English town drinking an excellent selection of beers in a well-run festival... a and Stockport County won away as well!!

* It's not vanity, it's sarcasm.

Martin Collinge



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Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 2000 and 2002

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WINTER IS WITH US, RELAX IN OUR COMFORTABLE BAR AND
LOUNGE IN FRONT OF OUR LOG FIRES, SUPPING OUR GOOD BEER!

Spotlight Inn...

Saddlers Arms, Solihull



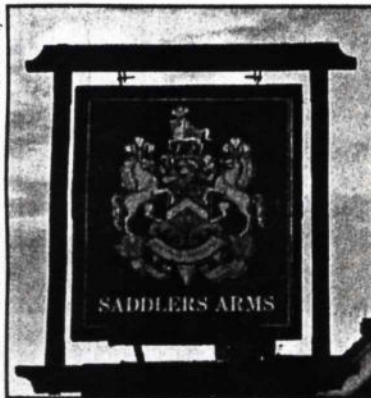
The Saddlers Arms - a view towards the patio area

The centre of Solihull is possibly not the first choice for those wanting a quiet drink and to sup a wide variety of ales. The former is definitely out after 8pm in the evening, but there is a wide choice of beer available in the town centre. The trick is to go for the lunchtime session when the pubs are quieter, pandering more to the lunchtime food trade of Solihull office workers.

The Saddlers Arms is on the Warwick Road just round the corner from Poplar Road and is an ex M&B pub, which although sporting a large screen television does have some semblance to a traditional pub. Along with the Golden Lion this pub used to appeal to the older

clientele of Solihull. In fact, it is believed to be on the site of the oldest pub in Solihull. Erected in the 1860's it was substantially rebuilt in the then fashionable half-timbered style in the 1920's. Now, however it's a lively L shaped town centre pub popular for TV sport. The pub, however, does have two football teams. Unlike some other Solihull town centre pubs it has no dress restrictions [within reason], but, at busy times bouncers control the unruly element. Being open all hours available and until 12.30pm on Thursdays to Saturdays means you can enjoy the beer there, which is Adnams Broadside, Youngs Bitter and a guest beer, which at the time of my visit was Shepherd Neame Spitfire, all on handpump. On all the visits I have been there the beer has been consistently good and if you need to soak it up with food it is available Monday to Thursday 11-9; Friday and Saturday 11-8.30 and Sunday 12-9. There is a patio area which overlooks the Warwick Road which is quite frankly not very inviting view wise, but it has to be said that the pub has made the best of a difficult location. There is full access for disabled, a lamentable situation in many other pubs in our area. If you are travelling from afar the pub is only 15 minutes walk from Solihull station and together with the Hogshead, Masons Arms and Bar Co can give you an acceptable excuse for a pub crawl

Steve Dyson



Saddlers Arms, Warwick Road [B4102] Tel: 0121 711 8001

in brief....

Pitcher and Piano goes all keg

This wine bar, come pub, come eatery in Solihull town centre has removed its handpumped Marston's Pedigree replacing it with its nitrokeg counterpart. To paraphrase the barman, "It's still the same beer, but it's served with the assistance of a bit of Nitrogen". Oh dear, where do people like this come from. Furthermore, what kind of manager employs them and ultimately what type of company runs this joint!

... and what's going on at the Clock, Bickenhill

Our intrepid agent went into this Two for the Price of one Meal pub recently to find three handpumps with Tetley Bitter, all turned round. The barman's retort was, "Would you like Tetley Smoothpour instead?". To quote our agent, "If Smoothpour is so good, why is it that the cask is first to go?"

... and finally, The Lodge, Solihull Lodge.

The Bass is still temporarily unavailable. How long can a pump clip be turned round before the publican says he's not having it anymore... at least six months in this case

[Editors note: Maybe Solihull CAMRA can make a new award for Dickhead Publican/Barman of the Year... then again maybe not, too many to choose from]

Barton Arms, Aston - update

The opening of the pub has been delayed due to getting permission to do some of the building work needed on this listed building... but you are assured, it will be worth the wait to sample Oakhams superb beers locally

Solihull Beer Festival, a view from the other side of the bar...

After a gap of four years it was great to see the Solihull CAMRA Beer Festival back with a bang this year! Lack of a suitable venue had been the problem in the past, but the British Legion in Union Road, opposite Beattie's, kindly offered us a room, for which we were very grateful.

It is in an excellent central location and pleasantly green too, being surrounded by playing fields and its own bowling green overlooked by a terraced patio area.

The first weekend in October saw over 700 people pour into this normally quiet and genteel club, but everything went well with no trouble - just discerning drinkers enjoying a range of real ales that Solihull town centre could normally only dream about!

All the beers were from small or micro breweries, the largest probably being Timothy Taylor's with their famous Landlord. Local concerns were well supported like Beowulf, Weatheroak, Warwickshire, Sarah Hughes and Church End. Further afield, Yorkshire and Lancashire are a hotbed of good beers such as Abbeydale, Bank Top, Goose Eye and Ossett, beers to grace the list of any beer festival. There were many styles of beer too, from strong porters like McGuinness Tommy Todd's Porter to light hoppy biters such as the wonderful Oakham JHB, the first beer to run out.

Friday evening was frantic, and if there was a complaint, it was that the venue was too small. It was lucky that the fine evening weather allowed folk to spill outside onto the patio terrace. Saturday was quieter, probably because experienced beer festival goers know that the choice of beers will be curtailed as casks run out. They did just that, with great regularity on the Saturday night. Six extra beers were brought on to cope with the demand and they were drunk dry as well, [thanks to Church End and Bernies]. The idea is not to have too much beer over as it would only be wasted and thrown away. We were delighted that thirty one casks was such a good guess.

Live music added to the atmosphere on both evenings and there was also food, cider and perry. Drinkers and staff enjoyed the event tremendously and it was deemed a great success. Hopefully, if everything falls into place again, there will be another even bigger and better festival to look forward to next year

Dave Queenborough

...and a view from the Festival Organiser...

On the Sunday after the festival I thought, thank god it's all over! But it was a great time and everyone enjoyed themselves. The biggest worry for me is keeping the beer cool which we do by keeping muslin sacks wet around the barrels, which means watering the beer [the outside of the barrels I hasten to add!] 3-4 times a day. This really works, knocking the temperature of the beer down by about 5 degrees, enough to keep it in good condition because at the end of the day at any beer festival, it's the taste and quality of the beer that counts. See you next year???

Steve Dyson

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solihull
drinker

Short Measures - Counter Measures

We all know how frustrating it is to get to the bar, order a pint of your favourite beer and then be presented with what is clearly less than what was ordered. Usually this tends to be a pint glass with at least half an inch of froth or air at the top, but in some busy pubs, especially those preferred by younger drinkers, the shortfall is rather more. To be fair, the best pubs in Solihull put the pint on the bar, take your money and then top up the glass without my having to ask. Even if I have to ask, I don't have a problem as long as the response is positive. When faced with a begrudging top up or even a refusal, I have a tactic which makes the point very well - the point that none of us likes to be ripped off.

Before I tell you what it is, a word of warning. In some pubs, using my tactic may get you thrown out, barred or even worse. However, if it means the customer fights back then why not give it a try.

Before going out to a pub where short measures have been a problem, ensure you are properly equipped. What you will need is a pair of trousers with heavy duty pocket linings, copious quantities of small change, and a bit of nerve. It also helps to know the price of the pint beforehand. Then begins stage 1.

Whilst the barman is pouring your pint, you need to find out the price. With a bit of luck the barman may tell you when he places your foaming pint on the bar. "That will be £2.10 mate" The secret now is to look down at the pint and estimate the extent of short measure. You then look the barman in the eye and immediately look down again at the beer. Some bar staff take this as a hint that the pint is short and needs topping up. If you are in a good pub, you will get your top up without asking. If not you need to proceed to stage 2.

Stage 2 entails a quick rummage in the reinforced pockets to pull out the pile of change. It may save time if you have handy a pound coin and some silver amounting to what you know to be the correct price. You then take one more look at the pint and hand over say £1.90 if you calculate the short measure to be about 10%. The barman will then take the cash and start to count it. The important thing here is to stand your ground so that he will see you expect him to query the amount tendered. He will probably then say "the pint was £2.10 - you've only given me £1.90". At this point, it is important that you look down at the pint again (the froth will have started to go down by now!), look the barman in the eye again and reply "it looks about right from where I'm standing" You then look down at the pint for the last time (hopefully) and then move on to stage 3.

Stage 3 can involve any number of scenarios. At worst you will be kicked out on your arse and maybe barred as well. Would you want to go back??? The middle ground is your pint will be grudgingly topped up and you will grudgingly hand over the 20p owed. The barman will probably avoid serving you for the rest of the night. But what tends to happen with most reasonable people is they see your point rather more clearly when you short change them in the same way they do. Too many people simply accept short measures in the pub whereas in other situations it would cause either a few feathers to be ruffled or a fully fledged riot.

Imagine if the milkman delivered 90% of a pint of milk. What if the newspapers left out the TV guide? Imagine if you applied for tickets for Villa v Blues which forced you to leave 10 minutes from the end!! (On second thoughts maybe that isn't such a bad thing)

Whilst I have been making light of this issue, do remember that there is a serious point behind all this. I hope my little short changing idea will help to reinforce the concept that the customer should get what he wants. Do also remember that in most pubs, staff are working hard to serve customers quickly, and sometimes this may produce a short pint. In most cases, a polite request for a top up is all that is needed. Having worked behind the bar at beer festivals, I know how tough a job it can be.

Allan Duffy



Solihull times

Socials

Monday 9th December	Solihull Christmas Pub Crawl. Saddlers Arms 8pm; Bar Co 8.45pm; Coach House 9.30pm; Hogs Head 10.15pm
January [tbc]	Presentation to Bernies and Navigation, Lapworth for 20 consecutive years in the Good Beer Guide
Saturday 15th February	Bartons Arms, High Street, Aston 8.00-8.30pm
March [tbc]	

Beer & Baltis

Friday 27th December	Harvester, Tanhouse Farm Road, Olton	8-8.30pm
Friday 31st January	Spread Eagle, Warwick Road, Acocks Green	8-8.30pm
Friday 25th February	Red Lion, Stratford Road, Shirley	8-8.30pm
Friday 28th March	Anchor, Bradford Street, Digbeth	8-8.30pm

Branch Meetings

Monday 6th January	Red House, Hermitage Road, Solihull	8.30pm
Monday 3rd February	Drum And Monkey, Four Ashes Road, Bentley Heath	8.30pm
Monday 3rd March	Family Inn at the Golden Acres, Damsonwood	8.30pm

For those meetings/socials as yet unconfirmed please contact the Social Secretary

Bob Jackson is the Branch Social Secretary and you can contact him for information about events during the evenings on 0121 705 8743

Steve Wood is the Branch Secretary on 0121 704 5258

Any complaints about short measure? Contact Solihull Trading Standards on 0121 704 6844.

The Solihull Drinker is the newsletter of the Solihull & District Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign of Real Ale. The views expressed are those of the individual contributor and are not necessarily the views of the Solihull Branch, or the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd., or at least of the Editor.

All contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to:

The Editor, Solihull Drinker, c/o 79, Walsgrave Drive, Solihull B92 9PP
or e-mail steve_dy@yahoo.com

For advertising contact the Editor on 0121 603 8994 who can offer very competitive rates!

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

Solihull CAMRA 2002 ©

The 24th edition of *Solihull Drinker* will be published on March 3rd, 2003
The deadline for advertising or contributions will therefore be
February 22nd, 2003