



Solihull drinker

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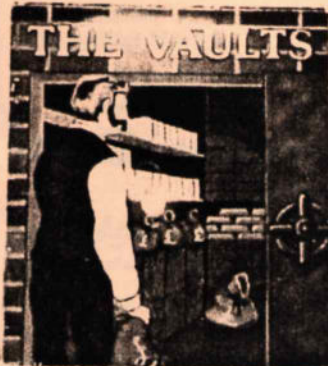
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOLIHULL BRANCH OF
CAMRA, THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

Issue No: 25

website: www.solihullcamra.org.uk

Summer, 2003

Vaults, Knowle wins Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 2003.



It seems a long time since the Branch gave The Vaults in Knowle an award for the range and quality of beer available at the pub, in fact, it was in the years 1993 and 1994, when it won the Branch's Pub of the Year Award.

The Branch are pleased to announce that it has won the 2003 Pub of the Year Award. Nick Worrall has been licensee for many years and supported the Branch's early beer festivals in 1994 and 1996. After the move last year from the old building into the new one next door the beers have been excellent

and included many guest beers seen nowhere else in the borough. As per usual the Branch will be awarding Nick with a plaque at a date to be arranged in June, where no doubts we shall partake liberally of at least six hand pumped beers, including a mild [more of which below] that will be on tap that night and maybe the traditional cider too!

Making May a Mild Month

To celebrate CAMRA's annual May Mild month a coach party of local members visited three pubs for a pleasant Saturday evening social/campaigning session. We started off at the Case is Altered, Five Ways where the Jennings Dark Mild not seen in the area usually, and at 3.1% was full of flavour. We moved on then to the Punchbowl in Lapworth to sample Banks's Original, but this was only a convenient stop on the way to our final pub the Vaults in Knowle where Nick had put on an extra mild for the night, Pardoes Dark Swan at 3.9% as well as the Ansell's Mild always on tap there. Suffice to say the Dark Swan ran out that evening not long after our arrival! Some of us stoically stayed on the mild all night, others fell by the wayside trying the other beers available at the pubs visited which came to 13 different beers

Solihull CAMRA 2003 Beer Festival

Festival planning is well under way, so make a note in your diary for Friday and Saturday October 3rd-4th when we shall open 5.30-11 Friday and 12-4; 6-11 on Saturday. The venue will be the same as last year, The British Legion Club in Union Road, Solihull, 5 minutes walk from the town centre. The provisional beer list is sorted and looks good with a fine range of beers to suit all palates and we've increased the number since we as good as run out last year. Cider, perry, entertainment and bar snacks will all be available to compliment the beer. More details in the next issue of the Drinker



Solihull times

Socials

Advance warning of an impending whopper of a weekend away! This year we shall be visiting Norwich for our traditional extended weekend away. The dates to mark in your diary are Thursday 23rd to Sunday 26th October. It's a self-drive social. More details to come in the next Drinker. However, reserve your place with Bob asap

Sunday 22nd June	Lunchtime walk/crawl around Lapworth and Rowington. Meet at the Navigation, Lapworth at 12noon
Saturday 19th July	Alcester minibus trip. Pickup at 7pm at Solihull Station. Phone Bob for seats
Saturday 16th August	Worcester Beer Festival by train
Saturday 13th September	Metro Pub Crawl

Beer & Baltis

Friday 27th June	Blue Bell, Henley in Arden	8-8.30pm
Friday 25th July	Bowling Green, Warwick	8-8.30pm
Friday 29th August	Railway, Dorridge	8-8.30pm
Friday 26 September	Bartons Arms, Aston	8-8.30pm

Branch Meetings

Monday 7th July	Fleur De Lys, Lowsonford	8.30pm
Monday 4th August	Boat, Catherine De Barnes [tbc]	8.30pm
Monday 1st September	British Legion, Solihull	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 2003 ©

The 26th edition of *Solihull Drinker* will be published on September 1st, 2003
The deadline for advertising or contributions will therefore be
August 16th, 2003

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Sun 10.00-3.00, 7.00-9.30**

The story of The Royal Oak...

A recent CAMRA press release has listed the most popular pub names in Britain. Third on the list, with 541 known examples is the Royal Oak. The name arose from Charles II's attempts to escape the Roundheads by hiding in a tree in 1651. There are two examples of this name locally. The Old Royal Oak just outside Hockley Heath is a large roadside establishment currently owned by Greene King. On offer is usually Greene King IPA, Greene King Abbot and Morland's Old Speckled Hen. The pub itself replaced a much older hostelry closer to the main road.

The other local example is the Old Royal Oak at Wood End, currently owned by Pubmaster. For a time this pub was called the Warwickshire Lad, as shown by the old pub sign now hanging inside the pub. On offer here is Tetley Bitter plus a guest (Marstons Pedigree on my last visit).

At least these two are close to the escape route Charles II used when fleeing the country after the Battle of Worcester, which is more than can be said about a Royal Oak I recently visited in Rhandirmwyn, Carmarthenshire, ie in deepest Wales. However, it is a cracking pub. It was South and Mid Wales CAMRA Regional Pub of the Year in 2001. Run by an English couple, there are normally 4 guest beers on, all with an emphasis on local breweries such as Wye Valley and Brecon. On my visit the Wye Valley Bitter was augmented by beers from Hydes, Fuller's and Orkney. Fortunately, being tucked away, as it is in a stunning Welsh Valley, the pub does offer good food & accommodation.

Right, three down, only 538 more Royal Oaks to visit! (By the way, the actual Royal Oak was at Boscobel, near Albrighton in Shropshire) Coming soon - the second most popular pub name in Britain.

Steve Wood



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Ember Inns – Festival of Champions

The last Ember Inns Beer Festival was recorded in the Drinker as a bit of a disappointment in terms of the variety of beers on offer. Maybe, someone at Ember took this on board because the recent festival saw far more interesting beers available.

The event, the third organised by Ember, ran for about six weeks up until the end of April. Ember Inns is a chain of pubs of which there are four in our area, the Red Lion, Knowle; the Colebrook, Haslucks Green; the Woodman's Rest, Shirley and the Fieldhouse, Monkspath.

The festival had a range of about twenty beers of which two or three appeared at any one time over the six weeks. Compared to previous festivals it was by far the most interesting line up seen in Ember pubs. As the festival title "Festival of Champions" implies, many of the beers were CAMRA national winners, whilst others were beers of the festival at regional CAMRA beer festivals.

The Woodman only had one beer on at a time and was overshadowed by the Colebrook and the Fieldhouse who really got into the swing of things, sometimes having four interesting beers on together.

The balance and range were indeed, admirable. Milds came from Thwaites, Brains and Moorhouse's alongside light bitters such as Deucher's, Woodforde Wherry and Fuller's Chiswick. Three classic beers, Oakham JHB, Timothy Taylor Landlord and Rooster Yankee were rare and special visitors to our area. Some stronger old ales finished the range like Ringwood Old Thumper, Woodforde Norfolk Nog and Mauldon's Black Adder Stout

I tried most of the beers on the list and it bought some good variety to pubs that don't normally have many guest beers. Unfortunately they were rather expensive, often about £2.50 a pint!

Dave Queenborough

Banbury Beer Festival...

This March saw a contingent from Solihull [and Knowle] travel south to the Banbury Beer Festival. Credit to the Chiltern Rail Service, we actually got to Banbury quicker than if we were catching a bus into Birmingham. This year the festival was in a new venue, the Banbury TA Centre. 40 beers were on offer, covering breweries from Scotland to Cornwall. I particularly enjoyed Roosters Hooligan and Hop Back Crop Circle. After a very pleasant lunchtime session we wandered down into Banbury to try some Hook Norton at the Olde Reindeer. At this point the party split up, some remained in the Reindeer to watch the England football match, while the rest moved on to the Exchange [Wetherspoons]. We re-united after the football and moved on to the Bell, which is handily placed for the Railway Station. So endeth another successful Solihull day-trip (& England won as well).

Steve Wood





THE BULLS HEAD

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Listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2001 and 2002

Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 2000 and 2002

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COMFORTABLE BAR AND LOUNGE SUPPING OUR GOOD BEER!**

CAMRA Membership benefits

You may not realise but there are a number of "hidden" benefits to CAMRA membership which are not always widely advertised. In addition to supporting CAMRA and enjoying a pint of real ale you can also benefit from the following current special offers and discounts:

CAMRA members can save ££s on weekend breaks away!

CAMRA has teamed up with Express by Holiday Inn to offer all members an exceptional deal. From just £39 per room per night (Friday to Sunday including continental breakfast) you get modern, spacious accommodation with all the mod cons, including Sky TV, power showers and tea and coffee making facilities. The Family rooms easily accommodate up to 2 adults and 2 children at no extra charge. To further ensure your enjoyment all hotels have fully licensed bars and are always located either next to, or very close by a friendly pub or restaurant. For further details about this offer, including hotel locations contact John Cottrell at CAMRA HQ John.Cottrell@camra.org.uk (Offer valid until June 30th 2003).

Old English Inns offer

CAMRA has teamed up with Old English Inns to offer members the opportunity to stay in one of their historic properties for a special rate of only £23.50pp including bed and breakfast. To take advantage of this special offer, all you have to do is call FREE on 0800 9173085 quoting "CAMRA" and you will receive a colour directory and a list of participating hotels. The offer is based on two people sharing a twin or double room for a minimum of two nights. It is valid from now until 31st August 2003, excluding bank holidays and is subject to availability. Old English Inns are a collection of over 60 traditional properties, situated in beautiful countryside locations. Offering comfortable accommodation, real cask ales, oak beamed bars and restaurants, log fires and a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Perfect for walking, cycling, sightseeing, visiting historic houses and gardens, golf and racing breaks. Throughout the year OLD English offer a range of special interest breaks, ranging from gourmet to gardening. Full details available on request.

Free entry to Bass Museum

All CAMRA members receive free entry to the Bass Museum in Burton upon Trent. Situated in the heart of England and Britain's brewing capital, the Museum of Brewing brings together a unique blend of exciting interactive displays, historical artefacts and memorabilia. Spread across four galleries on a nine acre site, the Museum recreates the fascinating history of the brewing industry with shire horses, working micro brewery and cooperage, and Edwardian pub re-constructions. Don't forget to visit the famous bar and restaurant serving a range of fine ales and food- the Museum truly is a taste of history with a flavour of fun.

Real ale discounts

CAMRA Members may also be unaware that some pubs listed in the good beer guide offer discounts on beer. One such pub is the "Olde White Rose" located in Bilston near Wolverhampton, members can currently obtain a discount of 10p off a pint of real ale on production of a valid membership card.

New offers and discounts will almost certainly be made available to members in the future but you will only be able to take advantage of these by joining CAMRA and supporting the Campaign for real ale.

John McDermott, Solihull CAMRA Membership Secretary

Local News and Beers around 'ere...

Mild, alongside regulars M&B Mild, Pedigree and Worthington 1774. At the Vaults, Knowle, Milk Street Beer! at 5% (the brewery's exclamation mark!), Highgate Queen of Hearts at 3.6%, Oakham JHB, Archers The Great Bear at 5%, and Tolly Original. At the White Lion, Hampton in Arden, Hook Norton Best Bitter will replace the Bass for the foreseeable future so the range now consists of Brew XI, Black Sheep Bitter and Hook Norton BB. The Saddlers Arms, Solihull has sported Adnams Broadside, Gales Bitter and Shepherd Neame Early Bird. The Hogshead has undergone a refurbishment and is now only serving two real ales Fuller's London Pride and Deuchars IPA. The Navigation, Lapworth has had on offer Cottage Golden Arrow and Vale Crumbling Premium, whilst the Wharf has given us Oakham Bishops Farewell and Titanic All Aboard. At the Red Lion, Shirley Salopian Shropshire Gold has been sampled. At the Bluebell, Henley, Black Sheep Bitter, Adnams Bitter and Fullers London Pride have been on tap

Seen at the Red Lion, Knowle were

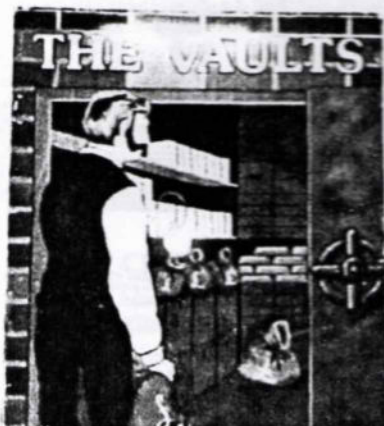
Brains Dark and Thwaites Dark

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

The Real Ale venue in Knowle with:

- ◆ Six handpumped beers including regulars, Ansell's Mild, Greene King IPA, Burton Ale, Tetley Bitter and two guest beers
- ◆ Real cider from Weston's
- ◆ Food available lunchtimes Monday - Saturday
- ◆ Occasional Beer Festivals

Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 2003



CAMRA Good Beer Guide listed since 1993



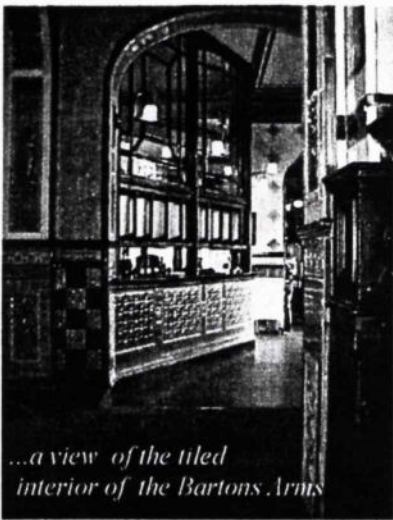
*The Vaults, St Johns Close, Knowle.
Tel: 01564 773656*

Spotlight Inn...

Bartons Arms, Aston, Birmingham

Yes, I know that the Bartons Arms is outside the Solihull CAMRA branch area, but it's a pub deserving a Spotlight Inn slot. Any local CAMRA member worth his or her salt will have already visited the pub and enjoyed the superb beers brewed by Oakham Brewery, including JHB a beautiful hoppy session beer which has been the winner at many CAMRA beer festival and believe me, the rest of the beer range is as good.

The pub is a Grade 2 listed Victorian building with superb interior tiling and stained glass. Oakham gave it a thorough restoration. Colin, the publican used to work at the Fat Cat in Norwich, a pub with an excellent reputation for beer and he has brought that reputation and a vibrant enthusiasm for the beers and his pub with



...a view of the tiled interior of the Bartons Arms

him. A recent visit saw Oakham Bartons Mild, JHB, White Dwarf, Bishops Farewell, Extra and a guest Whim Special... all in spectacular condition.

The pub is open 12-11 Mon-Fri; Saturday 11-11; Sunday 12-10.30. The food is based on Thai recipes and is available 12-2.30; 5.30-10 Tuesday-Sunday.

Some folk may be put off visiting Aston, don't be. The pub is warm, friendly and easily accessible by frequent buses from Birmingham city centre [33, 51, 107] and has it's own car park. However, I suggest you go by bus, so that all of your party can enjoy the cracking beer. It would be a crime to deprive the driver of such quality ale.

This scribe has been to the Bartons Arms on a few occasions and is not known for excessive drinking but I admit to two visits of which I am unable to remember with any clarity because the beer is so drinkable. Colin is currently planning a beer festival later this year... something I for one will, and you, should not miss

Steve Dyson

A Burton day out...

I suppose it becomes every CAMRA member at one stage in their life to visit the home of the British brewing industry, Burton on Trent. There is still a lot to see, defunct breweries hidden down side streets and pubs galore, many closed or converted to shops, but there's still plenty of beer and small breweries operating in the town. It was with this in mind our small party spent a sunny Saturday sampling Burton's best.

We started off at the Bass Museum, details of which are elsewhere in this Drinker. Heading straight for the bar we tried P2 Stout, a smooth, sweet 8%; museum brewed Five Hides 4%; Worthington E 4.8%; Draught Bass 4.4%; Worthington 1744 and M&B Mild at 3.2%. All the beers were AOK apart from the E which was "just beer".



A welcome addition to Burton's breweries

We took a quick look around the museum, not doing it justice, then went off to find the whereabouts of the micro Tower Brewery, which we found on an industrial estate! We did not tarry long as no one was about so we headed to the Alfred in Derby Street, a Burton Bridge pub which served up Bridge Bitter 4.2%; Porter 4.5%; Golden Delicious 3.8%; Festival 5.5%; Mild and guest Ossett Silver King at 4.3%....

What a range, magnificent. We did not stay here but moved on to the Old Cottage Tavern, home to the Old Cottage Beer Company to try their wares. Bitter at 4%; Stout at 4.7%; Hazy Days at 5.3% and Halycon Days, all with a flavour of vanilla, very drinkable. But, we resisted the

temptation to stay, moving on to the town centre Wetherspoons to have a bite to eat and sample a Burton Bridge beer not at the Alfred namely Spring Ale at 4.2%. The other beers on offer were a little boring... Pedigree and Spitfire.

Our evening session started at the Burton Bridge Brewery tap in Bridge Street, where we added to our Bridge menu with Rhythm an Blues at 4.5%.

Next to the Coopers in Cross Street, a classic pub with Worthington 1744 And Kimberley Classic 4.8% and Best Bitter at 3.9% all served from barrels behind the bar. Sad to say though, we were informed that the Classic was soon to be removed from the pub.

And so to our last pub, the Devonshire Arms in Station Street, convenient for the train home. Another Burton Bridge pub, we supplemented our Bridge list with Top Dog Stout at 5%, Stairway to Heaven 5% and the guest Hadrian Centurion at 4.5%. And so...a great day, great beers, what more can one say? Why not try the tour yourself?



The crew at the Burton Bridge Brewery Tap

Steve Dyson

in brief

The Fleur de Lys, Lowsonford has been refurbished internally and the old wooden tables and chairs replaced with more in the way of soft furnishings. Down to only three real ales - standards are Flowers Original and Flowers IPA, plus one guest (Titanic on a recent visit).

At the Boat, Catherine De Barnes Nigel and Elaine have moved on. They are due to take over the Reservoir in Earlswood when the current refurbishment is completed. They go at a time when many locals have been up in arms about the loss of the public bar at the Reservoir where the food side will be more upmarket than the usual Miller's Kitchen eateries. At least the choice of beers available at the pub will be better than before the refurbishment, but it is still sad to see a locals bar removed from village pubs

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Fringe Benefits 3. The Spread Eagle, Acocks Green, Birmingham

So far in this regular series in *The Solihull Drinker* I've talked about what ale was available in two off licences, i.e. Drinkbuster on the Warwick Road and Michael's in South Yardley. I'm now going to turn my attention to a pub!

The Spread Eagle is, I think, geographically the nearest Wetherspoon's to Solihull Town Centre. It is situated on the Warwick Road opposite Safeway's, so it has a healthy trade in passing shoppers. It became a Wetherspoon's pub in January 2000*, having previously been a Co-op. This conversion is typical of many (if not most) Wetherspoon's, as a fair number of them were shops.

The interior is standard 'wooden pub'. The walls are adorned with photos are drawings outlining the history of the site and of the previous Spread Eagle pub in the area. There are additional features of local Acocks Green history. I have a friend who says that the pub has no atmosphere because of the décor; personally I would contend that those who frequent a hostelry make the atmosphere, not the décor. The drinkers tend to congregate in the middle of the pub, either side of the doors separating the two rooms, with the diners at either end of the pub. I have gone in with my children as they are now allowed in Wetherspoon's pubs, but there are only about 3 or 4 tables where they can eat.

The beers are Courage Directors, Banks Original (aka mild!), Hop Back Summer Lightning and Greene King Abbot, plus up to 4 guest beers: there have been times where only one or two guests are available, but generally there is a good choice.

Like with all Wetherspoon's pubs there are those who complain about the low prices in that they allegedly 'screw down' small brewers, although some would maintain that it is a great opportunity for small brewers to sell their beers to a large chain, rather than a handful of pubs, and therefore have a good-sized market.

Solihull & District branch members have been to the pub at least once in each of the last 3 years on various socials, e.g. 'Beer & Balti'. We have also been there for impromptu socials such as the Spring and Hallowe'en Beer Festivals. We have generally been pleased with the pub and the quality of beer, although we did have some recent cause for concern. Just before Christmas I took some copies of *The Solihull Drinker* to the pub. The duty manager was happy to display them, but a week later they had gone, and on asking I was informed by the manager that he'd thrown them away, as they needed the space to display their own promotional material. I did write to Tim Martin, Wetherspoon's chairman, who sent a personal reply which was most apologetic, stating that he would bring the matter up at his next meeting. He also stated that he hoped that CAMRA and Wetherspoon's have much in common, both being supporters of real ale.

Overall I would recommend the pub to anyone - I like the atmosphere, the beer is usually very good and very interesting, plus it's cheap!

* Correct 'he' if I'm wrong - 'he' being the pub manager: I personally think it was open in 1999. Does anyone out there know?

Martin Collinge

Wendy Owen and David Preston invite you to

The Cock Horse

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August Bank Holiday Real Ale and Music Festival

Wendy and David invite you to celebrate our third real ale and music festival on 23, 24 and 25 August.

*

Sunday 24 August is our charity day, and our charities this year are MacMillan Nurses, Acorns Children's Hospice and a local charity. There will be a pig roast in the afternoon (3.30 onwards)

*

25 real ales 6 bands Food available 12.00 noon till 9.00pm each day