



Solihull drinker



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

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Spring, 2004



Mild blow at the Lyndon, Olton

Local drinkers are bemoaning the decision by the Lyndon pub to remove the last real ale from the pub and thereby further contribute to lack of real ale available in that area of Solihull.

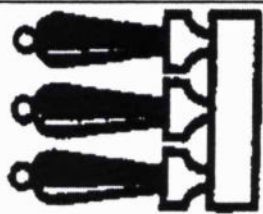
The Lyndon was a former Pub of the Year in 1989, when the local branch of CAMRA, The Campaign for Real Ale, awarded the hostelry that accolade. It used to serve a selection of Ansell's ales and had the reputation of serving the best Ansell's mild in the area, but when the 'real' version of mild was taken out recently it became another pub in Olton that no longer offers real ale.

Ray Cooke, chairman of the Solihull & District branch of CAMRA, remarked how badly drinkers are served in that part of the borough. "Although a few pubs in Olton do sell real ale those that do have a very limited choice, usually coming from one of the large national breweries. Recent statistics show that there has been a growth in the sales of real ale from smaller regional and micro breweries, as these outlets offer the customer a wide variety of tasty and interesting beverages" Ray commented. "We urge licensees to meet this demand and offer drinkers the opportunity to enjoy these quality drinks."

Branch Pubs' Officer Julia Hammonds said that offering real ale makes good business sense. "Many landlords and pub managers wrongly believe that if they were to offer real ales or a greater choice thereof there would be no market for them, but research proves that offering something new stimulates customer curiosity and interest, leading to increased sales and greater profits. Many local pubs in this country which are awarded the title of Pub of the Year are actually establishments which have brought in real ales and seen 'locals' visit more often and new customers visit and become locals" stated Julia.

The local branch has produced an authoritative guide on all the pubs in Solihull and the surrounding districts and is asking local drinkers to help the branch monitor the beers available within the borough. "We urge drinkers to ask 'mine host or hostess' to put on a greater choice of real ales and ciders in their pubs, and as part of our campaigning we are happy to speak to licensees on drinkers' behalf" said the Guide's editor, Steve Dyson.

[Our sister branch the Heart of Warwickshire reports that the Case is Altered has also taken out mild replacing it with a guest beer whilst the Shelly Farm, Monkspath now has M&B Mild. Ed.]



BERRIDGES

REAL ALE

Off Licence

*** AN EVER CHANGING SCENE
OF EXCITING DRAUGHT
BEERS THROUGHOUT THE
YEAR**

*** 200 DIFFERENT BEERS
DURING A YEAR**

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



*** PARTY BARRELS
AVAILABLE FOR
ANY OCCASSION**

*** ORDER EARLY TO AVOID
DISAPOINTMENT**

*** SALE OR RETURN ON
SEALED GOODS**

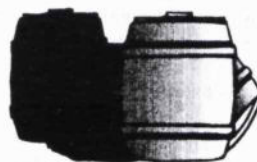
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**Mon-Thur 11.30-2.00, 5.00-10.00, Fri/Sat 11.30-10.00,
Sun 10.00-3.00**



Fighting to Keep Local Communities Alive...

Four out of ten parishes in rural England have no shop or post office; six out of ten no primary school and three quarters no bus service or clinic. Village Pubs struggle to remain in business and Village Halls, once the scene of local activities, lie empty or are sold for redevelopment.

The Local Communities Sustainability Bill sets out to reverse the decline by empowering Local Authorities and creating new laws that shift the balance towards the interests of local communities. It will give local people a greater say in determining how their local services and activities are developed, and how their natural environment is protected and improved.

The Local Works campaign, whose slogan is 'Bringing the global economy home' is gathering pace, with over 4000 supporters, many organisations and 200 MP's backing it already. Local MP John Taylor has already signed up in support of the bill and the Bell Inn, Tanworth in Arden is putting it into practice.

When the village Post Office Stores was forced to close, the owner of the Bell saw an opportunity to supplement the income from the hostelry by incorporating a Post Office, a delicatessen and a coffee bar into the pub.

The pub has now undergone extensive refurbishment with a modern, open plan feel inside. It is now a far cry from the pub I used to drink in when I was a village lad in the late 60's, and I can't help feeling that Jack Hood (the then Landlord) would turn in his grave if he could see it. Beers on offer are Black Sheep, Old Hookey and London Pride. The pub is mainly food orientated, though there is a small 'Smoke Room' area that can be used by Drinkers (tough if they don't like smoke).

Presumably the owner has done his research, and if that's what the local clientele want, then I feel sure it will be a huge success, particularly with a new generation of drinkers. Some of us will no doubt be wishing that the transition could have been accomplished whilst restoring the pub's character, rather than destroying it.

The incorporation of the Post Office is a good example of how a local community can retain its local services. Maybe pubs could also sell local farm produce, offer banking facilities, dispense prescriptions and so on in future. Then the pub really would be the hub!

Solihull CAMRA acknowledges the Local Works Newsletter

Roger Dipple

Wendy Owen and David Preston invite you to

The Cock Horse

**Country Pub and Restaurant
Old Warwick Road, Rowington,
Warwick, CV35 7AA
Tel: 01926 842 183**



5 cask conditioned ales - Fuller's London Pride, Adnam's Broadside, Hook Norton Bitter and 2 guests.

We are a small family run pub and restaurant and look forward to extending you a warm welcome.

**Special two course menu available Mon - Fri 12-2, and Mon-Thurs 6-7.
Blackboard specials and a la carte available lunchtimes and evenings.**

Friday night is music night and the folk club is held on the 3rd Wednesday of every month. Admission is free.

***CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2004 listed**

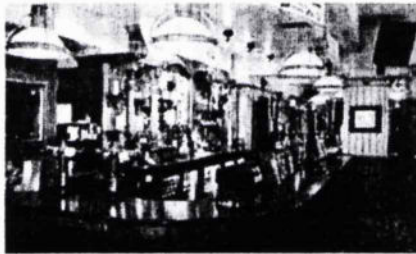
*** Solihull CAMRA Most Improved Pub of the Year 2003**

Ask for real ale choice and quality. Support your local pub and it will be delivered...

Trying to enjoy some of our Islands 2000 real ales can be difficult when some of the real ale champions do not live up to their promise. The Wizard Inns estate has more than 60 pubs and bars across the midlands and Southern England. In Solihull we have the good fortune to have the Saddlers Arms on Warwick Road. Wizard Inns tell us that they "develop crafted, unbranded pubs, with high quality facilities, serving food and a wide selection of real ales and fine wines through out the day."



So why not drop in and ask for some Wizard real ale... sample a Wizard welcome and Wizard table service. Currently in our Solihull pub the real ale selection is reduced to only one of three quality pumps on tap across large portions of the opening hours. 'No one asks for the other choices' seems to be the current thinking. Let us visit and ask for our favorite as often as we can. Use this facility or we will lose it.



I have written to the Wizard marketing Director requesting improvement and am sure that they will be keen to maintain their previous high standards. Indeed nearly half of all Wizard Inns' pub managers have gained the Cask Marque accreditation to underline the company's commitment to quality when it comes to serving real ale. They really want to develop the business with a large selection of quality real ales.

The Saddlers has previously had experts from the Cask Marque Trust assess there temperature, appearance, aroma and taste of the pints on offer. Indeed Wizard Inns, has also recently become a corporate member of the Cask Marque Trust, the gaining of the seal of excellence for its pubs is a key part of its business strategy. So lovers of quality and choice please "Ask for real ale choice and quality when supporting your local Pub and it will be delivered."

Ian Hunter

Woodmans Rest...

This Ember Inn in Union Road, Shirley was recently closed for a few days for "Home from Home" improvements! Not much has changed inside except for a degree of redecoration... and the little matter of SEVEN extra handpumps appearing! Brew X1, Draught Bass and Marstons Pedigree are usually on offer but other beers spotted in February were Charles Wells Bombadier, Everards Tiger, Adnams Broadside, and Timothy Taylors Landlord. A definite step in the right direction!

Dave Queenborough

JOIN CAMRA NOW

Just fill in this form and send with a cheque [payable to CAMRA Ltd.] to:

**The Membership Secretary, CAMRA,
230 Hatfield Road,
St. Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 4LW**

Current rates are: Single £16, Joint £19,
Concessions £8, Joint Concession £12

Name [s]:.....
Address:.....
.....
.....
.....

I/We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum And articles of Association

I enclose a cheque for £.....

Signature [s]:.....

Date:.....

**solihull
drinker**



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VISIT OUR 15th CENTURY VILLAGE INN
WITH A SELECTION OF REAL ALES AND
REGULAR GUEST BEERS

Listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2004

Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 2000 and 2002

HOME COOKED MEALS AVAILABLE
LUNCHTIMES AND EVENINGS
IN THE PLEASANT SURROUNDINGS OF THE PUB,
OR IN OUR SEPARATE RESTAURANT

(No meals Sundays)

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NOT QUITE WARM ENOUGH TO SIT IN OUR EXTENSIVE GARDEN YET, SO
RELAX IN OUR COMFORTABLE BAR AND LOUNGE, IN FRONT OF OUR LOG
FIRE, SUPPING OUR GOOD BEER!

Rover's Return...

It was the first time I'd been back drinking in Solihull for five years. Five years! It's a long time in politics, and a long time in pub ownership. The mid-session interval of the beer festival allowed me to renew my acquaintances with several old haunts and a few new ones. Five years on.

If I remember rightly, the Hog's Head (pig) used to be the Hogshead (barrel) and before that the AA shop (not alcoholics anonymous). My trusty drinking buddy Ken and I entered and ordered pints of Deuchars IPA, the only real beer available. Seated at a high table on stools, we were able to watch TV behind the bar - advertising all the special offers available at the pub - as well as regular TV in the distance. There's even a video to watch on the XXXX font. Fortunately the promised loud music had not yet begun. The Hog's Head (pig) is a barn of a place, with exposed ventilation ducts with wood everywhere and strange fire buckets in which condiments are carried to your table. The "floor staff" will even refill your beer glass whilst you sit and gaze at the multi-screens. Fearing the need for a tip, we declined the waitress' kind offer once our glasses were in need of recharging. The beer was cold but tasty. The "team only" sign on the staff room door was just unnecessary Americanism.

We ventured from here to the Coach House. In my time, this was sited in the middle of a car park, isolated from the town centre, and it sold Banks's, Pedigree and a guest beer, all real, and all served on handpumps. The pub looks very much the same now, though the handpumps are gone, and so is the Morrells (hooray) that used to be the permanent guest. It's now surrounded by multi-storeys - how it's come up in the world! The Banks's I guess was real, though the Marstons was probably not. There was no guest beer. Either way, we waited a long time for service (the pub was busy) and settled for a half of each of the available brews, which was more than enough. We escaped before all the Sixth Form College students arrived. When I were a lad, the Sixth Form College students used to drink at the Masons, as well as all the school kids. These days it seems to have attracted a more mature crowd, and has a pleasant front bar. Bass is the only beer, and it's good, but they do advertise a TVR for £1.95, which is far less than I've just paid for one. You get the feeling this pub could be a classic. It's got the location in the old village centre, it has the old buildings and the beamed interior has got some class. It's a shame about the big back room where they show football, it sort of ruins the atmosphere, but it's still separate from the front bit. And it's a darn sight better than it used to be.

Time for a visit to the Saddlers, in my day a dingy, dark, bikers pub that was so close to the main road it had white lines down the centre of the bar. The building shook due to passing traffic. It vibrates to a different beat today and the bikers have ridden off into the sunset, though it still serves real ales; Highgate Dark Mild and Everards Original on this day. In fairness, conversation was king at the time we were there, but I'm told by others, and warned by the presence of bouncers, that the late night scene is somewhat different. It's no longer dingy - in fact, it's bright and welcoming - though it's decorated like a Battenburg cake and the room flickers with the glow of gaming machines. Nevertheless, there's a good crowd of regulars here who will make you welcome, even if they swoop like vultures to capture your seats once you leave. It must be standing room only on Saturday nights.

It would have been rude to return to the beer festival without paying a visit to Bar Co. On second thoughts, it might not have been. What a stupid name. I'm not saying it was anything special when it was the Golden Lion, but at least it had a proper name. Bar Co sounds like some multi national food distributor, and is an anagram of cobra. Is this significant? No, probably not. "Bar Co" does sell real ale, and to my horror it was Wychwood Hobgoblin. Fantastic. We were told by the manager that he had a firm commitment to real ale, so we dutifully ordered pints. The pub has been opened out into one room since I last visited, and this certainly makes the pub more useable, but the purple, red and yellow décor does nothing to enhance what was once an original pub interior. Never mind. I can live with bright colours. I'll even put up with silly names. It's the bouncers and loud music culture in central Solihull I don't like. Where are the traditional pubs? Where do the ordinary people go for a chat and a pint? Not here obviously. Especially when Wychwood Hobgoblin is the result of a commitment to real ale. My friend and I drank half of our pints each, and made a quick but welcome exit once we were safely out of the sight of the manager.

I thought things were supposed to improve with age. Solihull town centre doesn't.

Matt Bullock

Branch Awayday Weekend in Norwich Part 2...

I left you last having described our first, full day in Norwich having given some of the Norwich pubs a "going" over. Friday saw us on a brewery visit and a train journey out to Great Yarmouth.

We were all up early for a cooked breakfast then made our way round to the local taxi firm who were able to furnish us with three taxis to take us out to Buffys Brewery at Tivetshall St Mary some 15 miles from Norwich.

Buffys suffered from a fire earlier in the year and the effects of it were still obvious when we arrived. The brewery buildings were all but devastated but the brewery was still producing beer. Our hosts were Roger Abrahams and Julie Savory. Roger gave us a tour of what was left of the brewery and showed us the new brewery rising from the ashes. With no roof on it at that time Roger was producing beer, which we were sampling as we wandered round. Buffys Bitter and Hopleaf went down very well and kept out the chill as we were outside for most of the time. The cold became too much for us eventually so we moved into the small brewery office where we enjoyed a half hour or so sampling and chatting to Roger, a most enjoyable time.



CAMRA Solihull and brewery staff at Buffys' Brewery

Our taxis arrived to take us back to Norwich, where after a quick lunch we were off to Great Yarmouth to sample the beers of that town. To be frank I tried none of the pubs in Yarmouth but took a walk down to the front, most bracing in October! A



few of us met up and decided to pop out to Gorleston to try the GBG pubs there as they looked quite promising... they did no disappoint!

However, it was a two mile walk from Great Yarmouth. When we did get there we popped into the Dock Tavern where Humpty Dumpty Claude Hamilton, Adnams Broadside and Regatta, Taylor Landlord, Elgoods Black Dog Mild and Greene King IPA. Not a bad start. Our second choice was the Admiral Nelson in Trafalgar Road and what a

cracker it was.

Not easy to find but I counted 16 beers on offer, most housed in a cool cabinet and served direct from the barrel. Beers included some from the Adnams, Tindall, Chalk Hill, Wolf range and to give a few examples of other beers, Castle Rock Hemlock Bitter and Woodforde Great Eastern. A comfortable pub we found hard to leave but we needed to get back to Norwich. Fortunately we caught a bus back to Great Yarmouth and were at the station in time to catch our train to Norwich.

Friday night saw us take in Norwich pubs to the north-west of the city, our main thrust being the Fat Cat. On the way we popped into the St Andrews Tavern for a bite to eat. They don't actually do food here but they will arrange to get it in for you from local takeaways. The beers were the usual Adnams plus Dark Star Hophead and Cheriton Village Elder amongst others. We did not stay to long as the pub was full of under age drinkers who were quickly disposed of by a polite but firm bouncer. We popped our head around the door of the Alexander Tavern but the pull of the Fat Cat stopped us having a quick one and it was packed.

The Fat Cat is a must for anyone visiting Norwich. A long bar and a small back room is about it... and it was packed. Here's the beer list. Roosters Cream and Special, Mauldon Mid Autumn Gold, Kelham Island Pale Rider and Easy Rider, Cheriton Village Elder, Hop Back Summer Lightning, Youngs Special, Taylor Landlord, Oulton Broad Cormorant Porter, Fullers 1845 and ESB, Woodforde Wherry, Adnams Bitter and Barleymead, Icini Raspberry Wheat, Skinners Cornish Blonde, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Oakham Bishops Farewell and Attila, Elgoods Black Dog Mild and and Greene King Abbott and 1799... phew what a selection. We all had a good go at the beers, many, like the Admiral Nelson in Gorleston were direct from the barrels housed in a cooled room behind the bar visible through large glass windows. Being over this side of the city we decided to give the Nelson a look in just in case they had some beer in that we had not tried. Only a few yards away from and much quieter than the Fat Cat there wer beers we had not seen before including Nethergate Old Growler, Gales Trafalgar, Elgoods Greyhound, Wolf Golden Jackel and Woodforde Nog... what a way to end the day... the walk back to the hotel helped sober us up a little bit.



Solihull times

Socials

Saturday 13th March	All day coach trip to Oxford.
Friday 16th April	Evening train trip to Warwick.
Saturday 8th May	Stratford Line Mild Crawl.
Sunday 13th June	A Meriden ramble with a pint or two thrown in!

Phone Bob for details for all the events above

Pub & Grub

Friday 26th March	Anchor, Birmingham	7.30-8pm
Friday 30th April	Red Lion, Shirley	7.30-8pm
Friday 28th May	Church Inn, Hockley, Birmingham	7.30-8pm
Friday 25th June	Railway, Dorridge	7.30-8pm

Branch Meetings

Monday 5th April	Red House, Solihull	8.30pm
Monday 10th May	Red Lion, Earlswood	8.30pm
Monday 7th June	Boat Catherine De Barnes	8.30pm
Monday 5th July	Royal Oak, Hockley Heath	8.30pm

For those meetings/socials as yet unconfirmed or where more details are needed please contact the Social Secretary Bob Jackson

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 2004 ©

The 29th edition of *Solihull Drinker* will be published on June 7th, 2004

The deadline for advertising or contributions will therefore be

May 23rd, 2004

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*