



Issue No 68

Summer 2014

Solihull Pub, Club & Brewery News



Featured in this issue:



**Spotlight Inn:
The Wharf,
Hockley Heath**



**Solihull & Dis-
trict CAMRA
Pub of the Year:
The Red Lion,
Knowle**



Is Your Home-brew a Winner??

With four months to go, preparations are already under way for the 16th annual Solihull Beer Festival. Listening to feedback, we're making some changes: the festival will now be open from noon until 11 pm on both Friday 3rd and Saturday 4th October. We're also rearranging the bar area, to reduce crowding.

We're also delighted to announce that the Home Brew competition will return this year, sponsored by The Shed Brewery of Hockley Heath (owner/head brewer Perry Clarke won our first ever home-brew competition back in 2010).

Held on Saturday afternoon, the rules are simple: any amateur* brewer can enter, providing they have brewed the beer themselves. So whether you brew using ready-to-go kits or whether you grind your own malt and grow your

own hops, all you need to do is come along on Saturday afternoon with a 2-litre sample. Nearer the time we'll ask you to tell us if you intend to enter – that's just to guard against us being overwhelmed by entries. There will be a suitably beer-related prize for the winner – not to mention the fame that comes with being named Champion Home Brewer of Solihull!

The Solihull Beer Festival will again be held at the Royal British Legion club, Union Road, Solihull. Look out for more details in the September issue of the Drinker magazine.

Martin Buck, Festival Organiser

*(*must not hold a commercial licence)*



**Have you considered advertising with us? Get your pub, club or business into view!!
To advertise and for rates: call 0121 603 1621 or email editor@solihullcamra.org.uk**

THE BULL'S HEAD



Barston Lane, Barston Tel: 01675 442830

**Open Monday—Thursday: 11.00am—2.30pm & 5.00pm—11.00pm;
Friday, Saturday and Sunday: 11.00am—11.00pm.**

Brad, Joy and the team welcome you to their award-winning 15th century village inn with its selection of real ales (Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 1998, 2000, 2002, 2009, 2011 and 2012)

Listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide for over 20 years

Cask Marque accredited

Home-cooked meals are available lunchtimes and evenings Mondays to Saturdays in the comfortable pub bars or in our separate intimate restaurant

(Sundays: 12 to 3pm for lunch - no evening meals)

TELEPHONE RESERVATIONS WELCOME



"Here Comes Summer", as the song has it. It's time to get out of the house, stretch your legs, do a bit of gardening, go for a walk in the countryside—and then relax with a great freshly-pulled pint and a spot of lunch in our sunny beer garden. Cheers!!!



www.TheBullsHeadBarston.co.uk

Red Lion in Knowle named 2014 Solihull Pub of the Year

The Solihull and District branch of CAMRA recently made their 2014 Pub of the Year award and for the first time since the award was inaugurated, The Red Lion in Knowle was crowned Solihull's best pub.

It is no coincidence that back in 2007, The Fieldhouse was voted Solihull's number one pub. The landlord of the Fieldhouse then is the same landlord who currently runs the Red Lion, Richard Norton. Richard continues to put his dedication to real ale to good use, with the pub always having a wide range of well-kept guest beers to support the excellent regular ales.

Long gone are the days when real ale drinkers used to avoid this pub for all they were worth. As the Felon & Firkin, lager sadly ruled but over more recent times, restored to its rightful name, there has been a steady improvement culminating in the much sought after award of Pub of the Year under Richard's expert guidance.

The Red Lion's rise to prominence is not restricted to this one pub. A record number of pubs were nominated this



Branch Chairman Carl Wright presenting land-

year as the standard and variety of real ales available in the borough continues to improve. While The Red Lion won at a canter, it is a sure sign that real ale is going from strength to strength and Richard will have to be on his toes if he is to hold off the competition and repeat his win next year.

If you think there is a better pub in the Solihull area, we would love to hear from you. Solihull & District CAMRA holds branch meetings on the first working Monday of every month. The next meeting is at 8.30pm on Monday 2nd June at the Red House, Hermitage Road, Solihull, where all members, non-members and prospective members are most welcome to join us.

Paul Wigley

40 Years of CAMRA in Warwickshire

The first meeting of the Warwickshire branch of CAMRA was held in the Virgins and Castle in Kenilworth in 1974. Now, 7 branches serve Warwickshire, and all are involved in planning celebrations of the anniversary, including a commemorative buffet for the early members; a prize-winning Real Ale Trail to be launched at the Coventry Beer Festival, followed by similar trails at the Nuneaton, Rugby and Stratford beer festivals during the year, with the winner announced at the Harbury beer festival.

Some local Warwickshire breweries are expected to hold open days; and the close of the celebrations will be the Champion Beer of Warwickshire competition to be held at the Wild Boar in Warwick in November.

Further details will be available from the 7 Warwickshire CAMRA branches shortly.

Hail to the Ale!

- local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

The Railway, Dorridge

The Railway's Real Ale & Cider beer festival takes place on Friday 6th—Sunday 8th June: 8 real ales, including beers from Backyard, Black Hole and Church End; + 9 traditional ciders are expected to be on. Mix-&-match of 2 x 1/2 or 3 x 1/3 pints available; plus buy 6 pints and get a free Railway Inn souvenir glass.

Knowle & Dorridge Cricket Club

The Club has certainly been doing their members and guests proud recently - the following guest ales have been seen on there over the last two months: Hopback Golden Best (3.5%), Oakham Citra (4.2%) and Inferno (4.0%), Abbeydale Deception (4.1%), Naylor's Sunset Ale (4.2%), Salopian Darwin's Origin (4.3%) and Shropshire Gold (3.8%). It is worth noting that non-members are welcome to visit the Club (when they will pay about 10% more for their drinks than members unless they are with a member and signed in).

The Wharf, Hockley Heath

The Wharf reopened its doors on 14th March after an extensive refurbishment and is now offering 6 beers on hand-pump plus 2 craft beers and bottled beers (*see the Spotlight Inn feature on The Wharf on pages 8—9*).

The King's Arms, Heronfield

The Kings Arms (formerly the Heron's Nest) has reopened after a month's refurbishment. It now has 5 beers on the bar and is seeking to continue to improve its real ales.

Bernies, Shirley

Bernies has changed hands since the last issue of this magazine but no major changes are planned.

The Hogshead, Solihull

No definite date yet on the closure for refurbishment of the Hogshead, but it is likely to be in the Autumn.

The Saddlers Arms, Solihull



A change of hands at The Saddlers in Warwick Road, Solihull will mean more locally sourced ales for drinkers. Backyard Brewhouse's Blonde, Gold and Bitter will be on the bar permanent-

ly, whilst guests such as East India IPA, Lionheart and Chinook IPA will make appearances. In addition local brewers will be featured, in particular The Shed from Hockley Heath. Bottled beers from Backyard are also on sale this month at Laithwaite's.

Lady Lane Wharf, Earlswood

Lady Lane Wharf will be holding its first ever beer festival on Friday 20th—Sunday 22nd June, featuring a minimum of 10 beers and 4 ciders and a special limited bar menu over and above the usual daily fare. Full programme and tasting notes together with beer tokens available from the bar beforehand and each day. Itinerary: Friday: from 6.00pm, band from 8.30pm “Any Other Business”; Saturday: from 11.00am, live music in the afternoon and “Hopwood Junction” in the evening;

Sunday from 11.00am. Kindly sponsored by Whitworth Brewing Co.

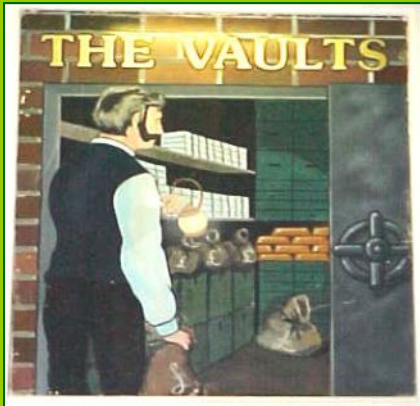
The Oak, Hockley Heath

The Oak has reopened including the adjoining new motel. The pub has one real ale on, Sharp’s Doom Bar.

Beers seen around Solihull:

The Forest, Dorridge: Newark Brewery's Patriot Ale (3.7%); the Boot, Lapworth: Purity Longhorn craft beer (5.0%) [at £4.95 a pint] and the Woodman’s Rest, Solihull: 2 pints available for £5.00 Mon—Fri and Mild on at £1.00 per pint.

Nick, Gwen and staff welcome you to the Real Ale venue in Knowle



*CAMRA Good Beer Guide listed
since 1993*

**Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 2013
(& 7 times between 1992-2008)**

Wi-Fi now available for individuals
or meetings: ask at the bar for details.

**NEW: Cocktail nights from
6.30pm Fridays & Saturdays**



**Food available lunchtimes from
Monday - Saturday, 12.00-2.00pm**

6 hand-pumped beers including Tetley Gold, Sharp’s Doombar, Adnams Lighthouse and St Austell Tribute + 2 ever-changing guests, and a frequently changing **guest real cider**.

The Vaults, St John’s Close, Knowle Tel: 01564 773656

***Opening hours: Mon-Thurs 12.00-2.30pm and 5.00-11.30pm;
Fri & Sat: 12.00-11.30pm; Sun 12.00-11.00pm.***

Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings 2014

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

Monday 7th July* The Wharf, Hockley Heath

(* Preceded at 8.00pm by "Meet & Greet" for New Members)

Monday 4th August The Saddlers Arms, Solihull

Monday 1st Sept The Drawbridge, Majors Green

Committee Meetings

(8.30pm start. Members may attend but only participate if invited to do so by the Committee)

Monday 21th July The Plume of Feathers, Shirley

Monday 15th Sept The Highwood, Olton

Socials

Saturday 28th June Trip to Charlbury Beer Festival

Saturday 12th July Worcester Crawl

Saturday 16th August Local Real Ale Ramble (Dorridge/Lapworth)

For more details and contacts where appropriate, please call Secretary Allan Duffy on 01564 200 431 or visit our website: www.solihullcamra.org.uk

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

Fri 6th—Sun 8th June: Real Ale & Cider Festival, The Railway, Dorridge (Fri. 5.30—11pm; Sat. 11am—11pm; Sun. 12 noon—10.30pm). Minimum of 6 real W. Mids. Ales inc. LocAle + 9 ciders.

Fri 13th—Sat 14th June: Rugby 31st Beer & Cider Festival, Thornfield Bowling Club, Bruce Wms Way, Rugby (Fri. 2.00—11pm; Sat. 11am—11pm). 50+ real ales, ciders & perries + foreign beer bar. £2 entry all sessions/£1 card-carrying CAMRA members. Details at www.rugbybeerfestival.com

Fri 13th—Sat 14th June: Stratford-upon-Avon 8th Beer & Cider Festival, Stratford Racecourse. (Fri. 12 noon—11pm; Sat. 11am—11pm). 70+ real ales, 30+ ciders & perries. £12 entry package incl. beer tokens & refundable glass (discount for card-carrying CAMRA members). www.stratfordbeerfestival.org.uk

Fri 20th—Sun 22nd June: 1st Beer Festival, Lady Lane Wharf, Earlswood (Fri. from 6.00pm; Sat. and Sun. from 11am). Mini-

Midlands Beer Festivals 2014

mum of 10 real ales and 4 ciders; special bar menu; live music Fri. 8.30pm and Sat. afternoon and pm. Programme and tasting notes available beforehand & on each day.

Thurs 26th—Sat 28th June: Bromsgrove Beer Festival, Bromsgrove Rugby Football Club (Thurs. 6—11pm [CAMRA members only]; Fri. 12 noon—11pm; Sat. 11am—9pm). 120 real ales, 50+ ciders & perries. £3 entry all sessions incl. prog. (£1 card-carrying CAMRA members) + glass deposit. www.bromsgrovebeerfestival.org.uk

Fri 31st Jul—Sun 2nd Aug: 7th Stafford Beer & Cider Festival, Blessed Wm Howard School, Stafford (Thurs. 6—11pm; Fri. 11.30am—11pm; Sat. 12 noon—11pm). 85 real ales, 30 ciders & perries + bottled beers. Entry: £1 Thurs/Fri aft; £3 Fri eve; £2 Sat aft; Free Sat eve. Card-carrying CAMRA members: Free Thurs/Fri aft & Sat eve; £2 Fri eve; £1 Sat aft. Details at www.staffordbeerfestival.co.uk

THE WHITE LION

High Street, Hampton in Arden, Solihull B92 0AA

Tel: 01675 442833 www.thewhitelioninn.com

Mon—Wed: 12.00—11.00pm; Thurs—Sat: 12.00-12.00

Sunday 12.00—10.30pm



Solihull CAMRA Most Improved Pub of the Year 2011

Bars *Six real ales on at all times (currently Brew XI, Sharps Doom Bar, Banks Sunbeam, Robinsons Dizzy Blond. Thwaites Lancaster Bomber and Hobson's Best)*

Restaurant A la Carte menu; Sunday roasts from £9.50 (Gallettes & crepes Mon—Fri lunchtimes + first Wed. evening every month)

Accommodation All en-suite; 2 miles from the NEC, Birmingham airport and Birmingham International station

A proper pub with a bit of je ne sais quoi!

Spotlight Inn:



The Wharf Tavern, Hockley Heath

The Wharf Tavern has stood in Hockley Heath village for some 200 years, although not always in its present form as a pub. Through the centuries it has played a significant part in village life: here is a little of its story.

In the 13th century, Hockley Heath village was referred to as Huckeloweth. It was on the main road or track which ran across the heath and through the Forest of Arden.

The village owes its existence and development to two main factors: firstly its position on the main route between Birmingham and London via Stratford-upon-Avon and Oxford; and secondly its position on the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal. With up to four coaches a day, places were needed where meals could be obtained, passengers refreshed and horses changed and fed. Hockley House, now unfortunately demolished, was such a coaching house; and post horses were kept at stables where the nearby Nags Head inn now stands.

The coming of the railways drove the horse-drawn coaches off the roads. Hockley Heath, not served directly by the railway network, became comparatively isolated except for local carriers plying between Birmingham, Warwick and Stratford upon Avon.

The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal reached Hockley Heath in 1798 and the construction of a wharf area soon followed. The construction of the remaining link to Stratford was delayed until 1816, at which date

the canal was fully opened. This meant that during the intervening years, the village being at the end of the canal, all goods for the surrounding area and beyond had to be unloaded there and alternative means of transport arranged for the onward journey.

This is where the Wharf Tavern's life begins, as a coal storehouse in Hockley Port, as the area was then known. A considerable amount of goods passed though here, and there was even a Hockley Port Association for the Prosecution of Felons, the local security force to guard against goods being stolen. The waterway was extensively used until railways again took over in 1850.

The Wharf segued from storehouse to hostelry after the decline of the canal trade and is still a convenient stopping-off point for boaters, although now it is pleasure boats that now make their way through the village.

In past years the pub was a Chef and Brewer, but became part of Scottish Courage in the mid-1990s; and was then acquired by the Spirit group as part of their John Barras portfolio.

Sam Buckingham, the current manager, took over at The Wharf at the beginning of January this year. He says "I

The Wharf Tavern from the road





L—R: Sam, Naomi and barman Ian

the job so much that I continued it after my course. My fiancé Naomi Wallis also works in the pub with me helping to bring a woman's touch to any areas of the pub that need it. I met Naomi whilst working at the Ferry Inn in Nottingham and she has worked with me in all the pubs I have been to since.

knew that running the Wharf would be a wonderful opportunity as it was in an ideal location, being placed on the canal in a nice little village that wasn't already full of other pubs to visit for a drink. The pub was a little rough around the edges but still had a dedicated number of patrons and everyone that dropped in had a great community spirit.

"We have since had a fantastic investment and the pub looks great. We've taken on 10 new members of staff and had an extensive new menu. The Wharf is now very focused on offering a great choice of real ales, craft beers and wold lagers. With the beers we offer changing regularly, we are still retaining some house favourites".

The pub still consists of one large room with bar, but the décor has been brightened and the furniture upgraded, and the beer range now boasts six hand-pumps plus two craft beers served from behind the bar as well as bottled beers.

Sam continues "The Wharf is the first pub I have run after acting as a deputy general manager for the Spirit pub company in a number of pubs in the Midlands. At 25 years old I'm quite young to be running a pub but I love the job. I got into the pub game whilst studying a masters degree in law at Nottingham law school and I enjoyed

"We have built a strong team now and have many plans to keep the Wharf Tavern growing, including fantastic entertainment and great activities throughout the week. We currently have a darts night on Mondays, poker night on Tuesdays, quiz night on Wednesday and Sunday roasts on Sunday; along with great bands and entertainers booked throughout the year. We have a real focus on the community and are always happy to help the locals in anyway way we can.

"My past work in pubs has focused on higher end quality food and real ales, and I mean to bring this to The Wharf soon with the introduction of our 'Specials' boards which will feature more interesting meals for those who are looking for that bit extra. We also have plans for beer and cider festivals throughout the summer for people who really want to get to know the drinks".



Sam and Naomi raise a glass to The Wharf

The Great London Beer Flood

The London Beer Flood occurred 200 years ago on 16 October 1814 in the parish of St. Giles, London at the Meux & Co. Brewery.

The owner, Sir Henry Meux, had bought out smaller breweries including the Horse Shoe Brewery located on the junction of Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street. Atop the Horse Shoe stood several large vats of beer. The largest was the porter vat, a 22-foot-high monstrosity held together by 29 large iron hoops and containing 135,000 imperial gallons (610,000 litres) of beer.

In October 1814, the beer had been fermenting for months (as was the need with porter), and the metal and wood of this huge vat was, unbeknown to the majority of the brewery workers, beginning to bulge at the seams. Suddenly, at about 6.00pm, one of the heavy metal hoops snapped - probably due to corrosion - and the contents of the porter vat burst out, causing a chain reaction with the surrounding vats. The resulting noise was apparently heard as far as five miles away.

A total of 323,000 imperial gallons (1,470,000 litres) of beer under pressure smashed through the twenty-five foot high brick wall of the building, and gushed out into the surrounding area. The brewery was among the poor houses and tenements of the St. Giles Rookery, where whole families lived in basement rooms and cellars that quickly filled with beer. The torrent swept

through houses, demolishing two in its wake, and through Great Russell Street, swamping neighbouring George Street and New Street and killing two people. *The Times* reported



of 19th October *The type of vat used at of the flood: London breweries in the "The bursting of 18th & 19th centuries the brew-house walls, and the fall of heavy timber ...contributed to aggravate the mischief, by forcing the roofs and walls of the adjoining houses."*

Hundreds of people ran outside carrying pots, pans, and kettles to scoop it up - while some simply lapped at the liquid washing through the streets. Back at the brewery, one man managed to save his brother from going under the vast wave, but as the tide receded the true damage could be discovered. The beer flood left nine people dead; others were swept away and died of their injuries. One victim actually succumbed some days later to alcohol poisoning, after drinking as much beer as he humanly could. Incredibly, no-one at the brewery was killed, though several were badly injured.

Because of the poverty of the area, relatives of the drowned took to exhibiting their families' corpses in their homes and charging a fee for viewing. Later, the funerals of the dead were paid for by the St Giles population, coins left on their coffins. The stench of the beer apparently lasted for months, and after the initial excitement, many found both their homes and livelihoods swept away with the flood. In amongst the misery of clearing away the dead and cleaning up the streets, though, there was compassion. *The Times* concluded: "*The emotion and*



The brewery in around 1830

humanity with which the labourers proceeded in their distressing task excited a strong interest, and deserves warm approbation."

The brewery was eventually taken to court over the accident, but the disaster was ruled to be an Act of God by the judge and jury and the deaths were simply by 'casualty'. In other words, no party was to blame. The company continued working despite the incident but found it difficult to cope with the financial implications of the disaster, with a significant loss of sales made worse because they had already paid duty on the beer. Although fined over £20,000 by Parliament for the incident, they made a successful application to reclaim the £7,250 duty, which allowed them

to continue trading. The company continued brewing until 1961, when it was sold to Friary, Holroyd and Healy's Brewery Ltd of Guildford. The firm became Friary Meux Ltd before being bought outright by Ind Coope (& Allsop) of Burton-on-Trent three years later. Brewing ceased altogether in 1969 and in 1997 Allied sold its brewing interests to Carlsberg-Tetley.

The brewery was demolished in 1922, and today the Dominion Theatre occupies a part of the site. In 2012, a local pub, the Holborn Whippet, started to mark this event with a specially created vat of porter.

Chris Lloyd

(Acknowledgements: This article has been written from a combination of the following: Wikipe-



The Railway Inn

Grange Road, Dorridge

Tel. 01564 773531

Opening Hours:

Monday—Friday: 11.00—3.00pm 4.30—11.00pm

Saturday: 11.00—11.00pm

Home-cooked food served daily in pub/beer garden

Food service times:

Monday 12-2.00pm and 5.30-8.00pm

Tuesday-Thursday 12-2.00pm and 5.30-9.00pm

Friday-Saturday 12-2.00pm and 5.30-9.30pm



Secluded, peaceful beer garden & children's play



6 Real Ales (3 regulars + 3 guests)

www.railwaydorridge.

BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL!!!

Friday 6th—Sunday 8th June

(Fri: 5.30—11.00pm; Sat: 11-11pm;

Sun: 12 noon—10.30pm)

Featuring 8 real ales (inc. LocAles) from W. Midlands breweries + 9 traditional ciders

Mix & match 1/3's and 1/2 pints

A Hidden Treasure in Earlswood

LADY LANE WHARF

Bar and Eating House



Breakfast from 9.30am
Hot and cold meals served all day
All meals home cooked

Live bands / Music

4 Cask ales, changing frequently - all excellent quality
Speciality ciders

Beer Festival: Friday 20th—Sunday 22nd June

Fri. from 6.00pm; Sat. and Sun. from 11am. Minimum of 10 real ales and 4 ciders; special bar menu; live music Fri. 8.30pm and Sat. afternoon and pm. Programme and tasting notes available beforehand & on each day. Sponsored by Whitworth Brewing Co.

Lady Lane Wharf
Lady Lane, Earlswood,
Solihull B94 6AH

T: 01564 703 821 or 01564 702 552

E: granthyland@hotmail.co.uk

 Lady Lane Wharf

www.ladylanewharf.co.uk

Opening hours:

Monday — Saturday:
11.00am — 11.00pm

Sunday: 11.00pm — 10.30pm

Food served: 9.30am — 9.00pm

Find us: From the crossroads by Earlswood Post Office turn NE onto Valley Road and continue for roughly 650 metres / half a mile then turn right onto Lady Lane, turning right into the pub car park just before the canal.

Membership Matters

Struggling to find a gift for Fathers' Day on the 15th June? Well fear not - how about a year's gift membership to CAMRA? Prices starts at £25 and for this the recipient of your gift will receive a monthly newsletter called "What's Brewing", a quarterly magazine entitled "Beer" & £20.00's worth of JD Wetherspoon vouchers, plus numerous other discounts at partner retailers/companies. Please see website www.camra.org.uk for more information on gift packages & a full list of current membership rates.

As well as enjoying the benefits listed above your membership fee also goes towards various national campaigns. CAMRA has recently been successful in lobbying Parliament by getting the beer duty cut in the last two budgets, and at present is campaigning nationally for PubCo reform.

We also help communities campaign to keep their much loved local open. If you stop and think about it, wouldn't it be a sad day in this country if you were unable to enjoy a pint of real ale in a beer garden on a sunny afternoon because the pub had closed and had been

converted into housing or a supermarket? 'The Pub is the Hub'—so use it!

So come on, what are you waiting for, fill in the form in this magazine or go to www.camra.org.uk

and add someone to the over 160,000 other like minded people with a love of real ale and pubs.

Dave Mckowen
Membership Secretary

"Meet & Greet" Evening

P.S. I have been branch Membership Secretary for nearly a year now, and during this time have not seen many new faces at either branch meetings or socials. With the aim of seeing a few more of you out there, I will be emailing all members who have joined the Solihull & District CAMRA Branch since this time last year to invite them to a "Meet & Greet" event which we are holding before our next Branch Meeting, at 8.00pm on Monday 7th July at The Wharf, Hockley Heath, where I will be buying a [free pint](#) for any new member attendees.

The Solihull Drinker is the quarterly newsletter of the Solihull & District Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Views expressed in the Drinker are not necessarily those of the Branch or of CAMRA.

Contributions, comments and enquiries to the Editor, Solihull Drinker, c/o 4 Kendrick Close, Solihull B92 0QD; or email julia.hammonds@blueyonder.co.uk



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The Editor has the right to amend or shorten any items in the newsletter, but will always honour the spirit and intention of the contribution.



3l Duvel glasses—Don't you wish you lived in France?

Beer Fest Helpers take a Trip

The March Social was the thank-you trip for the volunteers at the 2013 Solihull beer festival. We began at the Tunnel Brewery at Nuneaton, where we were given an interesting talk about the farm where the brewery is now sited and the history of the brewery, which is downstairs in a two-story brick-built building. There were had samples of hops and malt for us to sniff and taste, after which we tried a couple of the beers.



At the Tunnel Brewery

Tunnel has what might just be the most comfortable bar of any small brewery. One room had café-style tables and chairs, while the other had sofas and armchairs. The small bar had two hand-pumps, serving Grubber golden bitter and Nelson's Column strong ale. Both went down very well!

Next, to the Griffin Inn, on the outskirts of Shustoke. Run by father and son team Mick and Oliver Pugh, this wonderful pub is a current branch Pub of the Year – not surprising when it aims to have ten real ales available; plus its own brewery, which is where the Tunnel brewery began. They had kindly reserved the conservatory for us, and supplied a huge buffet lunch. The main problems with the Griffin are

deciding which of the range of ales to try – and avoiding banging your head on the low-beamed ceiling!

After lunch we went onto the Lord Nelson in Ansley, home to the Sperrin brewery. There were five different Victory beers on offer, including the 2013 Champion Beer of Warwickshire, the 6.5% Thick as Thieves.

Another short journey took us to the Church End Brewery Tap, where people were faced with a vast choice of beers and took advantage of the afternoon sun to sit out in the garden for a couple of pints.

On to our final stop, the Crown in Nuneaton. The Crown is another CAMRA favourite, with a wide range of 8 to 10 real ales. There are magazines from several CAMRA branches available, and it's a regular venue for live music.

It was a very pleasant afternoon, offering proof that there



Buying beers at the Crown

are great pubs, and a great brewery, on our doorstep, as all five stops on our tour are between 10 and 15 miles from Solihull. The 4 pubs are all in the current Good Beer Guide, so it's no surprise that we found a wide variety of real ale in them. This is a great way to say Thank-You, so to take part in next year's trip, all you have to do is join the team!

Martin Buck

The Acres

Rowood Drive
Solihull

B92 9NG

Tel. 0121 711 1659

www.the-acres.co.uk



The Acres Solihull



A Community Pub in the heart of Damsonwood, The Acres offers a pleasant place to meet and drink or dine. Indian food available as eat-in or take-out.

6 hand-pumps serving 5 real ales + 1 traditional cider.

- Live entertainment Saturday nights including cover bands.
- Games... Darts, Pool Table and live Sky Sports.
- Function Room available free of charge—talk to the manager about availability and your requirements.



Opening hours:

Mondays—Thursdays: 11.00am—11.00pm

Fridays & Saturdays: 11.00am—11.30pm

Sundays: 11.00am—11.00pm

*Food service hours 11.00am—11.00pm Tues—Sun
(Restaurant and Take-away service closed Mondays)*

ADRIAN AND THE COMMITTEE WARMLY WELCOME YOU TO



The Rowington Club

Rowington Green, Rowington, Warwickshire CV35 7DB

Telephone: 01564 782087

Featured in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide

Solihull & District CAMRA Branch's Club of the Year 2013

Normal opening hours: Mon-Fri: 2.00 – 11pm; Sat-Sun/Bank Hols: 12 noon – 11pm

Large car park. Games available (dominoes, darts, snooker and pool)

Three regularly changing real ales

Full membership: £20.00 per annum.

Single visits for guests: £1.00 (free to card-carrying CAMRA members)

Forthcoming Events:

Football: Follow England's progress in the World Cup: We will be televising all the games and following England as they take part

There will be plenty of entertainment going on during 2014—for full details of all events, please ring Adrian at the Club

Beer Apps to Whet your Whistle

There now quite a few beer apps on the market which aim to help you find a great pub: here is a few of them.

CAMRA's Good Beer Guide

You can have a taster for free. I have not found the taster of much use as most features require the subscription. Not really well designed or easy to use. However full of knowledge and a great reference for beers, breweries and the like. A very useful APP if you subscribe.



The Good Beer Guide Mobile app is a free download but operates on an 'in-app' subscription model. A 'Taster' version of the app can be installed on your device for no cost, however a subscription is required to open up all search functionality and listings information. A 12-month subscription is available for just £4.99. (If you owned a previous version of the GBG Mobile app it is important that you set up an account following an update to the latest version.)

Barchick

This works well and I guess it means bars that ladies will enjoy. It only works in major listed cities. Birmingham has the Lord Clifden, and Rose Villa Tavern along with some others I have never been to. Useful if you are in a major city in a mixed group. It's a free app and has a web site that performs well. Typical entries, about Birmingham, under Things We Love: "It is the home of Cadbury's Chocolate – amen" and "It is the home of Duran Duran



and Black Sabbath".

Perfect Pint

This gathers your email and tries to get you to set up an account. In the small print it then allows itself to share your data. However it tries to answer the question: What beer is serving near me right now? Will I like the beer? It tries to show you what they are like, hoppy, nutty, citrus, IPA, nutty chocolate, mild. It has a beer boffin feature that learns your tastes and recommends beers for you. It can try and navigate you to the pub also... To me, it wants to create a perfect pint community, as CAMRA should be doing I suppose.



Cask Marque Pub Finder

Cask Marque-assessed pubs are in this app but I have not tried it to any degree. It tells you about certain pubs with quality ale in an area, not all pubs but not a bad start. Fed by data from 20,000 Cask Marque inspections per year and 1,500 beers and 250 breweries from the Cyclops database, we believe the CaskFinder app provides the most accurate and up to date pub information across the whole UK pub industry. So far over 90,000 people have downloaded the app on iPhone and Android and it is being used over 50,000 times each month to find Cask Marque pubs.



So there you are : you pays your money and you takes your choice. Happy drinking!

Ian Hunter

Shed News

Perry and colleagues at The Shed have been doing their bit for beer festivals recently: they had a barrel on at the Long Itchington and the Reading beer festivals in May; plus 3 barrels at the Shirley Round Table beer festival at which they again sponsored the T-shirts. In June, they will be supplying a barrel each to the Lady Lane Wharf and Bromsgrove beer festivals.

Also, look out for Shed beers starting to appear at the Saddlers Arms in Solihull on a regular basis from June onwards, along with Earlswood cricket club.

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CAMRA's brand-new book, **The Beer The Select-O-Pedia** is available now from the CAMRA Shop.

The book gives you all the information needed to create your own 'must taste' list of beer styles with Select-O-Pedia's "Periodic Table of Beer". Whatever you are drinking, from British real ale to traditional continental lager and New World beers from the Americas, you simply find the appropriate style and are guided to its closest relatives.



Each style is presented in a highly visual format with tasting notes, food matching options, key production facts and some sample beers to get you started.

CAMRA Member Price £10.99 (RRP £12.99)

You could WIN your Dad a Father's Day Beer Case if you buy a CAMRA Gift Membership Pack —the pack includes 12 months of CAMRA membership plus the choice of one of two great CAMRA books: either *CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2014* or *The Beer Select-O-Pedia*.

CAMRA and Beer Hawk are working together to give three lucky Dads an extra special Father's Day. If you purchase a CAMRA Gift Membership before Thursday, 12th June you will automatically be entered into the draw. Three lucky winners will each receive a case of beer delivered to their Father's door by the Beer Hawk team (Terms & conditions apply).

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Go to www.shop.camra.org.uk/ for further details and for the terms and conditions.

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Trains and a Beer Festival

For me a beer festival at a steam train museum goes together wonderfully well. A party of five Solihull CAMRA members spent a very pleasant day at the Barrow Hill Roundhouse Rail Ale Festival just outside Chesterfield recently.



Inside the Roundhouse

It's a very atmospheric place for a beer festival. The Roundhouse itself is massive with steam trains everywhere, set amongst which

were the bars. Outside were free steam train rides supported by traction engines and vintage buses. Better still, if you are unable to drive there a free bus service runs from Chesterfield Station direct to the site and CAMRA members get a free half pint up to the value of £1.50.

Let's take a wander round the bars, which I found a little confusing. There was a Derbyshire bar, an A-Z by brewery bar, an Everards supported bar and a craft beer/continental keg bar. There were also cider, fruit wines and world beers available. Some beers were on hand-pump, others direct from the barrel. I found those on gravity much better as the beers I tried on hand-pump were a little warm due to sitting in the pipes. This is a small gripe in what was a great day. Together with the food court and entertainment,

everything you could want is at hand. With over 200 beers, picking favourites is arbitrary. However, Acorn Bitter



Bump, Double Top Citra Tip, Fernandes Ale to the Tzar, Rat Mutant Rat, Totally Brewed Slap in the Face and Ashover Littlemoor Citra all scored 4 out of 5. Indeed a great day out!

Steve Dyson

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A Day out in York

On Friday 22 November last year I embarked on a day out to York to meet up with some former colleagues from the railway industry.



The splendid frontage of the York Tap

The agreed meeting point was the York Tap, located on York station in what was originally William Bell's 1906 Tea Room and Cafe and which had latterly housed a large model railway layout. The pub can be accessed either from the street or from the station platform.

The interior has been tastefully refurbished with crimson walls, art deco plasterwork, art nouveau stained-glass domes and leather seats.

A central circular bar boasts 20 (yes,



The York Tap bar

twenty!) hand-pumps, dispensing 18 real ales and 2 ciders and/or perries.

Several of our group had already arrived so, greetings over, I perused the choice of ales available which were: Wellington Inn *1st Duke* and *Dark Arty*, Maxim *Double Maxim*, Phoenix *Last Leaf*, Oakham *Bishop's Farewell*, Burning Sky *Devil's Rest*, Marston Moor *Mongrel's Shake A Leg*, Thornbridge *Ryan's Roar*, *Colorado Red* and *Sequoia*, Walls *Northallerton Dark*, Ilkley *Rye 'n' Dry*, Worthington *White Shield*, Sunny Republic *Dorset Cross*, Tapped Brewing Co. *Brambling English Hop Golden Ale*, Yorkshire Dales *Surrender Bridge*, Cromarty Brewery Co. *Red Rocker* and Roosters *Buckeye* and *Yankee* (Roosters *Yankee* replacing the Thornbridge *Colorado Red* which sold out while we were there). The other two pumps had Thistly Cross *Traditional Cider* and Blaengawney *Perry*.

I started with the Wellington Inn *1st Duke* (3.7%), an enjoyable session bitter. Several of the group were still to join us so I then opted for the Walls *Northallerton Dark* (4.4%), a dark coloured bitter ale brewed using Chocolate malt and a combination of First Gold and Admiral hops giving an orangey aroma and taste. This was in superb condition and, for me, was the beer of the day.

Still waiting for some stragglers, we delayed our departure for our next venue (with such a choice, there was no hurry) so I then went for the Roosters *Yankee* (4.3%). This is a

light, easy-drinking pale ale, brewed with Cascade hops and was also in excellent condition.

With the rest of our party now in tow, we set off for the next stop, the Maltings in Tanner's

Moat, just down the road from the station. This was to be our lunch stop. The choice of ales here were Roosters *Astro*, Bridestone's *Dark Mild*, York *Guzzler*, Loose Cannon *Abingdon Bridge*, Black Sheep *Best Bitter* and Sonnet 43 *Ideal Grace*. I decided to sample the Bridestone's *Dark Mild* (4.5%).

This is made with four English malts and hopped with East Kent Goldings, resulting in a creamy, velvety mild with strong malt characters and overall sweetness. It was in really good condition, too. Food was quickly provided and I found time for a swift half of Loose Cannon *Abingdon Bridge* (4.1%), a copper-coloured traditional



The Maltings

bitter, again in very good nick.

With lunch duly consumed, it was off to our next port of call, the Ackhorne in St. Martin's Lane. On hand-pump here were Robinson's *Dizzy Blonde*, Caledonian *Deuchars IPA*, Wychwood *Hobgoblin*, Partners *Shoddy Porter* and Roosters *Yankee*. I opted for the Partners *Shoddy Porter* (4.5%).

This is brewed with chocolate malt, torried wheat, caramel wheat and a



The bar in The Ackhorne

blend of three different hops. This results in a dark strong beer with a fruity, slightly smoky character with a hint of caramel.

Time was getting on and those of us with a considerable distance to travel headed back to York station to catch our trains. I travelled back to Birmingham in the company of an old friend from Bristol and we spent the journey recalling past outings and reflecting on the delights of a good day out.



The Ackhorne

Chris Lloyd



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CAMRA members receive a
discount of 20p off the price of
any pint of Cask Ale.

Craft Beers: the Debate goes On

Having followed the great "craft beer debate" in the letters pages of "What's Brewing" I have decided to add my four-penneth. As a CAMRA member who is also a small shareholder in Brewdog & Beerbods, most of whose offerings are not 'real ale', I feel CAMRA's approach towards "craft beer" is complicated by what its acronym stands for. As I see things, CAMRA was set up to campaign against bland, boring keg beers.

At the time the only alternative was real ale so this became what the organisation campaigned for. However, 'craft' beers are certainly not bland, nor boring and therefore CAMRA should embrace them, regardless of whether

they are 'real ale' or not, especially if they help wean younger people off dreadful UK lagers.

Give me a lightly filtered pint of 'craft' beer oozing with flavour than certain nondescript session 'real' ales any day. Taste is all important. And of course, large brewers such as Batemans can call themselves craft brewers whether they are producing real ale or a filtered, yeast-free offering!

Our only enemies should be the 'crafty' brewers like Fosters who proudly proclaim they produce bland beer to make a quick buck from advertisement-blinkered punters because "that's what they want."

John Edwards



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A Beer or Two in Arizona and Las Vegas

A trip to America in the past consigned the beer drinker to a fortnight of beer that was fizzy and flavourless. Indeed Budweiser is probably the national beer, its only saving grace that it serves its purpose as a cold alcoholic drink on a hot day. So it was with trepidation that on my recent trip to Arizona I wondered if I could find any of the "craft" breweries I had heard were establishing themselves all over the country. I was not to be disappointed.

Let's get things straight first. You are very unlikely to find a cask-conditioned beer. Some of the breweries do brew such, but this is available on a very ad-hoc basis. So the beers they do brew are what we would call a "craft" beer: not naturally conditioned but more flavoursome than the likes of Budweiser. Furthermore they do a range of beers that we would recognise in England. Amber, Lager, Wheat, Pilsner, IPA and Stout styles are the regular brews, supplemented by seasonals and speciality beers. It is also worth bearing in mind that beers in the US are rarely less than 5%. It is most unusual to find a session beer at 3.8%; indeed, my experience tells me that 6% is the norm.

Our first stop-off was in Casa Grande just south of Phoenix. I knew of no breweries close by so we popped into one of the local garages for beers and found Sierra Nevada IPA, a truly stunning beer, full of flavour and not fizzy. I warmed mine up a little and found it very drinkable. Our other beer was an amber ale by Fat Tire - the rest of my party who preferred malty beers were more than happy with this.

With a stock of both, we then moved

on to Tucson, where we were based to the east of the city, devoid of nearby breweries, but we were lucky: a nearby restaurant had a member of staff keen on beers and as such held a continuous beer festival with six beers to choose from. I tried a few and enjoyed them immensely.

After Tucson we moved onto Tombstone. Beer was not too great here but we did find Grand Canyon Brewery's Hop Bomber. At 7% it's a strong beer, but was a real cracker. Furthermore there are hops included in the bottle in the form of a plastic bomb. Sounds loony, but the flavours of Cascade and Columbus hops were stunning.



Steve in the Bisbee Brewing Co Tap

Whilst in Tombstone we took a trip out to Bisbee, a supposed picturesque town some 20 miles south of Tombstone. We did not find it particularly picturesque but we did find the Old Bisbee Brewing Company's Tap. I ordered a sample tray and found their Royal Stout at 6.8% and Double Hopped IPA at 7% strong, but very drinkable.

Our next move was to Flagstaff, a great place for the beer drinker, having 3 breweries within a 10-minute walk from

each other. If that wasn't enough, around the corner from our motel was a garage whose manager was very keen on his beers and as such stocked some 100 different beers from small breweries upwards. But back to Flagstaff's breweries: my party agreed to visit the Flagstaff Brewing Company where we sampled their 6% Three Pin Pale Ale, amongst the other five beers they had on tap.

I left to visit the other two breweries on my own. I had limited time so you can imagine my frustration when a train came through the town cutting my access to my first brewery. It took ten minutes for the freight train to pass by, but after that within two minutes I was in the Lumberyard Brewery Tap. Their Red, IPA, Hefeweizen and Pilsner were on tap. Of course I went for the IPA at 6.1%: another amazingly hoppy beer packed full of American hops. None of the other beers took my fancy and being short of time I headed for the Mother Road Brewery round the corner. I asked if they did sample trays. They did but the barman gave me 7 sip glasses free of charge to try: Gold Road Kolsch, Twin Arrows, Drive S.H.A.F.T, Roadside American Ale, White Walls Extra Pale Ale, Golden Arrows and another I am afraid I cannot remember the name of.

From Flagstaff we went onto the Grand Canyon Village, devoid of any good

beers and so on to Las Vegas. It was a long trip to Las Vegas, some three hundred miles, so we stopped off at a cafe in Kingman and believe it or not right next door was the Black Bridge Brewery. Sadly it was closed so I could not try any of the nine beers they brew.



At Sin City Brewing Co

I did not expect a lot from Las Vegas. I was proved wrong. A twenty minute walk from our hotel took us to the Sin City Brewery Tap, which we made our "local". The beers on tap were Light, a lager style beer, Weisse is Nice, Never Pass Up A Blonde, Say Hello To Amber, The Dark Side Of Sin, Stout an IPA and a Double IPA. I went for the IPA which was very popular amongst our party. Unfortunately the Double IPA was not on during our visit. The only downside to this Tap is that the beer is served in plastic glasses.

From Las Vegas it was homeward bound to look forward to a pint of real ale. You know what though? Every time I go to the US the beer scene gets better and better and it's well worth doing a little research before you go.

Steve Dyson



Lunch-stop and the Black Bridge Brewery

J.D. Wetherspoon

The two Solihull JDW pubs each offer two regular ales and a good selection of guest ales from both regional UK breweries. Both pubs are pleased to announce consistent 'Cask Marque' and 'Best Bar None' accreditations and both hold 5-star accreditations for Food Hygiene Standards.

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PubCo Reform: Watch this Space

CAMRA has been campaigning to reform the large pub companies for nearly a decade. In April 2013, the Government launched an 8 week consultation into reform of the large pub companies and proposed to establish a statutory Code and Independent Adjudicator, and an overarching fair dealing provision of which the core principle is that a tied tenant should be no worse off than a free of tie tenant, enshrined in law.

The consultation closed in June and the Government published any received responses in December 2013, stating that due to an overwhelming level of response, they were unable to make a

decision on what action to take. CAMRA has since, and is still, continuing to urge the Government to issue a response immediately to help Britain's struggling pubs survive.

In January 2014, CAMRA launched a petition to call on Vince Cable to introduce reform. Within just weeks of launching, we secured the support of over 30,000 people who signed up to support the petition.

Thanks to the overwhelming response from CAMRA members, activists and licensees, our petition calling on the Government to "End the Great British Pub Scandal" secured over 44,000 signatures before being handed over to

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Advanced tickets are now on sale, priced at just £8 for CAMRA members, and can be bought by visiting the official festival website www.gbbf.org.uk or calling 0844 4124640.

We hope to see you there!

Facebook: [GreatBritishBeerFestival](https://www.facebook.com/GreatBritishBeerFestival)

**Tickets now
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Business Secretary Vince Cable on 14 May. Any announcements are likely to be during the Queen's Speech on Wednesday 4 June which begins at 11:30am. CAMRA will be keeping you updated on any announcements via our website, www.camra.org.uk, or on our Twitter feed

The 69th edition of the Solihull Drinker will be published on Monday 1st September.

The deadline for copy, advertising and any other contributions will be no later than Friday 15th August.