

Most Improved Pub or Club of the Year 2014

Solihull CAMRA holds a vote for the Most Improved Pub or Club in the Solihull area each year, and for 2014, the worthy winner was the Lady Lane Wharf at Earlswood.

There was a change of manager at the club 18 months ago, resulting in Grant Hyland and partner Lynn taking over. Now, ably assisted and complemented by their team, they have made the Lady Lane Wharf a friendly, family-oriented club where non-members are welcomed and it is a pleasure to drop in for a visit.

Branch members gathered together on 12th November to celebrate the

occasion, and watched along with regular visitors while chairman Carl Wright presented bar manager Neil Ford with a framed certificate to confirm the win. It is noticeable that since the change of management the number of real ale hand pumps has increased, the choice of real ales has been spread wider than previously, and Neil sources beers that are not seen so frequently in the Solihull area, such as Thwaites Magic Sponge, Hook Norton Haymaker and Sadlers Hop Bomb. This has resulted in many favourable comments from CAMRA members who have tried the various brews on offer over the last few seasons. Grant has also arranged several special events such as rugby breakfasts, where followers of the England rugby team could tuck in while watching their games; and last June the club held its first beer festival which went down very well with visitors.

The club sits amidst wonderful countryside on side of the Stratford-



Branch chair Carl and Neil with the award

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tucked up next to the pub fire with a plate of home-cooked food and
a pint of seasonal beer, you can relax and enjoy yourself, whatever
the British weather is doing. Cheers!!*



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upon-Avon canal, and this peaceful setting is a pleasant place to sit outside with a beer and enjoy the tranquillity, especially during the summer months. It was a suitable setting for the beer festival, which it is hoped is the start of a long and successful annual tradition.

An updated menu is being launched in the New Year. New local suppliers are being sought for locally-sourced ingredients and the emphasis will be on home-cooked good-quality traditional pub food. Visitors can expect pub classics including steak, fish and chips and Sunday roasts, all competitively priced. Bar foods will also feature snacks such as real pork crackling and spicy nuts, all freshly made to recipes of head chef Alex's devising. *(I can vouch for the spicy nuts!! - Ed.)*

The new CAMRA Cask Ale Club will be continuing, with all cask ales

at £2.50 per pint to CAMRA members between 5pm and 8pm on Mondays to Fridays. Look out for regular updates on the real ales in stock and coming soon.

News of the award left Grant and Lyn stunned, but they are at pains to point out that the win belongs to everybody on the team. "Running the Lady Lane Wharf is a team effort, and we couldn't do it without them!" as Grant observes.

Solihull CAMRA wishes Grant, Lynn, Neil and the rest of the team well for the future, and looks forward to more celebrations soon.



Part of the LLW team proudly displaying their award



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Features in this issue include:

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Hail to the Ale!

- local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

Updates of our local breweries (in alphabetical order):

Blue Bell Brewhouse, Earlswood

The Blue Bell Brewhouse continues to satisfy thirsts at the Blue Bell Cider House with a selection of real ales—its IPAs have proved most popular since it commenced brewing a year ago. A BBB ale was featured at our recent beer festival: Quince Buster, a pale wheat beer infused with locally sourced quince, vegan-friendly and using all-British hops.

The Shed Brewery, H. Heath

The Shed sponsored this year's beer festival homebrew competition, which was very well received. Its Warwick Bear was voted into joint second place for Beer of the Festival. The brewery is now revving up for Christmas, brewing and bottling beers ready for local consumption. If you would like to purchase individual bottles or gift packs of 2 bottles and a commemorative Shed glass, then give them a call on 07742 246455.

Silhill Brewery, Catherine-de-Barnes

Silhill has now settled into its stride at its new premises and is working on a Christmas beer, a 4.5% raspberry oatmeal stout made with fresh raspberries. Silhill sponsored the bars at the beer festival and supplied 3 of its ales, from among which Gold Star took joint second place for Beer of the Festival.

Whitworth Brewing Co., Shirley

Whitworth continue to supply their beers to various Birmingham and Solihull outlets. They were the overall

sponsors of our beer festival and we had 5 of their ales over the weekend.

The Red Lion, Knowle

The Red Lion, under the management of Abby since last summer, has a new cask dispense system called Caskwidge in place—this uses a flexible pipe with a floating filter that draws the beer from the top of the cask. This method means that any oxygenation and contamination is prevented from spreading down into the beer below, keeping the beer



in its best condition. Once in place, the cask does not need to be disturbed and can be left upright, meaning more casks can be stored. (*Thanks to Jon Knibb for report and photo.*)

The Pumphouse, Parkgate, Shirley

A new JD Wetherspoon, The Pumphouse, is opening in Parkgate on 9th December. The pub is named after the old ESSO garage that used to stand on this site. It will have 12 hand-pumps, with Greene King Abbot Ale and IPA as regulars plus changing guests. Parking is available in the nearby ASDA car park. Another real ale gain for Shirley—expect the usual wide-ranging JDW fare choices and price deals, plus occasional beer festivals.



Desco Lounge, Parkgate, Shirley

The Desco Lounge does not after all have real ale, which is a bit of a let-down. It will also soon face very close competition from the new Pumphouse nearby.

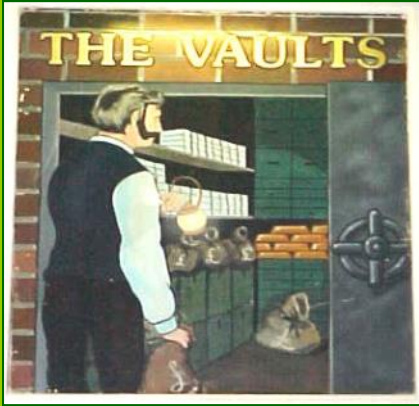
Red House, Hermitage Road

The Red House reopened on Friday 31st October after a refurbishment of the kitchens, meaning that carveries are now a major feature of the menu. Thwaites ale continues to feature

Beers seen around Solihull reported over the last few weeks: Lady Lane Wharf: Wye Valley HPA, Sadlers JPA and J.W. Lee's Bitter, Box Steam Gold-

en Bolt, Nobby's Biggus Dickus and Dorking DB Number One.; Blossomfield Club: Hop Back Redsell's EKG, Rat White Rat, Kelham Island Pride of Sheffield, Ossett Madeleine Lily, Downton Thirst XI, St Austell Proper Job, Oakham Deep Thought and Holdens' The Man with the Holden Gun; Red Lion, Knowle: Bath Ales Forest Hare, Saltaire's South Island Pale, Sunny Republic Hop Dog, Oakham's Inferno and Exmoor's Exmoor Ale; Blue Bell Cider House: seasonal special Pumpkin Ale; the Boat, Catherine-de-Barnes: Okell's Bitter, Wychwood Hobgoblin and Sharp's Atlantic; and at Knowle & Dorrige Cricket Club: Salopian Darwin's origin and Wychwood Pile Driver.

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
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Fri & Sat: 12.00-11.30pm; Sun 12.00-11.00pm.***

Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

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

Monday 5th Jan	The Fieldhouse, Monkspath
Monday 2nd Feb	The Harvester, Tanworth Lane
Monday 2nd March	Tom o' the Wood, Rowington

Committee Meetings

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

Monday 19th Jan	White Lion, Hampton in Arden
Monday 16th March	Wilsons Arms, Knowle

Socials

Saturday 31st Jan	Beer & Thai, Bartons Arms, Aston
February	Pint, Pie & Pint, Fleur de Lys (date to be confirmed)
Saturday 7th March	Coach day trip to York

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.

Note: At the time of going to print no details of any WM CAMRA beer festivals from December 2014 to March 2015 were available. You can check the 'CAMRA Beer Festivals' page on the main CAMRA website www.camra.org.uk/events for updates as and when they are added.

SHIRLEY BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL


**KEEP
CALM
AND
SAVE
THE DATE**



15TH & 16TH MAY 2015



THE WHITE LION

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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, Banks' Mild, Bass Premium Ale and Hobson's Best)*

Restaurant A la Carte menu; Sunday roasts from £9.50

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!

Beer Festival Report

The sixteenth annual Solihull Beer Festival took place over the first weekend of October, and those of you who attended will know that it was a huge success. We had more visitors, and sold more beer, than ever before. Once again we had an excellent selection of beer, including the top three in the Champion Beer of Britain competition: Timothy Taylor's Boltmaker, Citra, from Oakham, and Darwin's Origin, from Salopian, were overall winner, second and third. In addition we also had the Gold winner in the Strong Ale category: Church End's Fallen Angel. All of those were understandably popular: Boltmaker sold out before 8 pm on Friday! There was still plenty of choice: over the two days, we had no fewer than 46 different real ales on offer plus 8 ciders.

We made some changes this year; we opened at noon on Friday, and split the beers between two bars. Friday afternoon proved a success, attracting new visitors without being too crowded. The rearranged bars came into their own on Friday evening, which was very busy – but with



All set up and ready to go

the main doors to the lounge open, people could still circulate. On Saturday, visitors before 3 pm received a voucher for a free pint – and there was more free beer on offer, with samples from the popular Home Brew competition available. The quality of entries in the competition was very high, with only four points separating first and third places. We're grateful to The Shed Brewery, Hockley Heath, for sponsoring the Home Brew competition.



The Brass Quintet in action

Later on Saturday the Warwick University Brass Quintet entertained people from 5pm, and the amazing Strumtroopers once again had the audience singing and dancing to their weird and wonderful interpretations of rock and pop classics.

The increased range of beers meant there was a reasonable choice right up until 11 pm on Saturday – although Friday evening's thirsty crowd meant we had to do some



The festival in full swing

quick restocking! As mentioned earlier Boltmaker was the first to run dry, followed by St Austell Tribute Extra and Oakham Citra. With festival-goers voting for their Beer of the Festival, it was incredibly close; in the end—the winner was Double Tea, from Riverhead, with runner-up being shared by two local beers: Warwick Bear, from The Shed, and Gold Star, from Silhill. The mystery ale was Spitfire – and despite one person saying the name, we didn't have a single correct entry.

A big thank you to our local sponsors, whose generous support enabled us to freeze the beer prices for another year. Overall festival spon-

sor was Whitworth Brewing Company, while the festival bars were sponsored by Silhill Brewery, and as mentioned earlier, The Shed sponsored the Home Brew competition.

As always, the volunteers are the backbone of the festival - without them, we simply couldn't hold the event at all. If you enjoyed the festival, why not come along to one of our branch meetings or socials, and maybe even consider volunteering for next year's festival. All volunteers are entitled to buy discounted beer, and also get invited on a Thank You trip after the festival.

Martin Buck
Festival Organiser



Staff volunteer Ray enjoys a pint

**Opening 9th
December**

JD WETHERSPOON proudly presents

The Pumphouse

Unit 1A, Parkgate, Stratford Road, Shirley

Opening times: Sun—Wed: 7.00am—12.00am;

Thurs—Sat: 7.00am—1.00am

12 Hand

Greene King Abbot & IPA all day every day; Fullers' London Pride, Sharp's Doom Bar or Adnams' Broadside guest-



**See local press for time of
Grand Opening!!!**

**Alcohol served from
10.00am**

Food available from

A Crawl Round Worcester

2014 has seen CAMRA socials that I have organised visit towns which begin with W. In the summer we did Worcester and in September we went to Wall-sall, Willenhall and Wolverhampton. Furthermore the forthcoming Christmas social is to be in Warwick. (I didn't plan it like this, it is just pure coincidence.)

Our trip to Worcester began with a visit to the Paul Pry in The Butts. It is a pub that has had a chequered history over time, having originally been a Banks's pub for many years. It has had a few closures and re-openings in different guises but under the new management it really is a must visit for real ale fans. The pub has an listed interior consisting of a plethora of tiles and does food during the day. There were three beers on: Worcester Brewing Company's Sabrina Porter, Teme Valley Blonde, which I found very drinkable and Ludlow Best.

We then moved across the city towards the cathedral to visit the Plough, an unspoilt gem in Fish Street. Like the Paul Pry this is a listed building and is quite unspoilt inside. It is quite small but does have a small drinking area outside. Five hand-pumps presented us

with Hobsons Best, Ludlow Black Knight, Salopian Oracle, Malvern Hills Black Pear and Little Ale Cart Flying Scotsman. I tried the Black Knight and the Little Ale Cart, both in very good condition.

Moving on to the medieval streets of Worcester we next visited the Cardinal Hat in Friar Street. Reputed to be Worcester's oldest pub, it certainly has an unspoilt interior with rooms radiating off the bar and an outdoor seating area at the back. Propping up the bar were Purity Mad Goose, Cotswold Lion Brewery Golden Fleece, Salopian Oracle and Church End Poachers Pocket. The beers here were all very drinkable, particularly the Church End which was in excellent condition. A short walk from here saw us at the Pheasant in New Street where the beer was expensive—they did not sell halves but thirds of a pint for £2.50, and had Wells IPA, Sambrooks Wandle, Fullers Chiswick Bitter and West Yorkshire Good Old Boy. The Wandle, my choice, was excellent.

Close by is the Swan with Two Nicks, again in New Street. The beers available were St Georges Valour, which was excellent, Frog Island Best Bitter, Beowulf Wiglat and Malvern Hills Malvern Rocks Ale, all in good condition. As good as next door is the King Charles the Second. Originally a joint venture between Craddocks of Stourbridge and Sadlers of Lye, it has settled down to be an outlet for Craddocks beers. On our visit the bar sported Sadlers Mud City Stout, Thirsty Dog's American IPA and Pacific Ale, Gloucester Cascade, Craddocks Saxon Gold, Craddocks Troll and Craddocks Crazy Sheep. I only tried the Pacific Ale, however it was very



In one of the pub gardens

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Home-cooked food served daily
in pub and 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-



6 Real Ales (3 regulars + 3 guests)

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Opening Hours:

Mon—Fri: 11.00—3.00pm 4.30—
11.00pm
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Secluded, peaceful beer garden & children's play

*3 course Christmas menu £13.95, available
from 1st to 22nd December—book now!!*

*2015: To celebrate our family centenary, 100
years at The Railway Inn: monthly offers al-
ternating between food (starting January)
and drink (starting February). Check at the
pub and on website for more details of each
month's offer.*

drinkable. We then moved around to the Firefly in Lowesmoor which is housed in a Georgian building. There were three beers on, Oakham Improbability, a superb pint, Alchemy Ritual Pale Ale and Otley Thai-Bo, both in good condition. Next, into the Dragon in the Tything. The pub is a longstanding GBG pub and although a little run down it is a must visit. Beware though, it does not open in the afternoon until 4pm. The pub is a showcase for the Little Ale Cart Brewery in Sheffield. On the bar was Millstone's Grain Storm, Vale Mill, and True Grit, Little Ale Cart

Best Bitter, Mallinsons Speckled Wood, and Mighty Oak Kick Off. I had the Mallinsons, probably my most favourite brewery, which was in good condition but not as good as I had hoped.

To finish our day out we visited JD Wetherspoon's Postal Order, mainly for a bite to eat. The usual range is complimented by guests but unfortunately I did not write them down. The great advantage is that the pub on Foregate Street is only minutes from the station and home.

Steve Dyson

A Hidden Treasure in Earlswood

LADY LANE WHARF

The Real Ale Bar and Eating House



Excellent quality hot and cold food served all day
Live Bands / Entertainment every Saturday Night
New: Cask Ale Club— exclusive to CAMRA members

"We may not be the biggest or the most fashionable drinking venue but we certainly know how to serve real ale and quality food. Over and above our 'resident' Wye Valley HPA, we offer 3 other casks which are constantly changing. Our Cellar Manager, Mr Neil Ford (a CAMRA member himself), strives to endure that we offer not only a wide range of tastes and flavours but also that every beer we serve is second to none in quality and presentation."

◆ Winner of Solihull CAMRA's Most Improved Pub or Club award 2014 ◆

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.

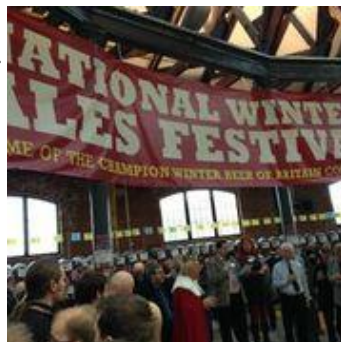
2015 National Winter Ales Festival

In February 2015 CAMRA's National Winter Ales Festival will return to Derby at the Roundhouse, with over 400 beers available, and will showcase some of the very best ales, ciders, perries, bottled world beers and mead in 3 separate areas. Located beside the Pride Park exit of Derby Railway Station, the historic Roundhouse will host four brewery bars: award-winning Blue Monkey from Nottingham, innovative North Star from Derbyshire (both in the Main Hall), Derby's own Brunswick Brewing Company in the Music Marquee, and Yorkshire's Brass Castle in the Carriage Room.

The National Winter Ales Festival is home to CAMRA's prestigious Champion Winter Beer of Britain Competition which sees the 4 winter styles of beer (porters, stouts, old ales/strong milds and barley wine/strong old ales) being

gathered from across the UK to be judged and a winner declared. There will however be lots of pale beers and golden ales to choose from too.

The festival is open from Wed 11th to Sat 14th February 2015—please note that this is a pay on the door event—advance tickets will not be available. Well-behaved and supervised under-18s are welcome until 7.00pm each evening (after which they must leave due to licencing requirements). The festival website www.nwaf.org.uk will be updated regularly with details of admission prices, live entertainment, tutored tastings and special hotel rates.



How is Pub of the Year awarded?

People sometimes ask how a pub gets to be our branch Pub of the Year—"My local never wins" is frequently heard! It's a democratic process, and as we are nearing this year's selection process, here's a quick run-down on the abridged procedure.

At our December and January branch meetings, attending members are invited to nominate and second local pubs (any clubs and off-licences) for this year's awards. The nominator then completes a survey by visiting it and speaking to the publican, including a brief description of the pub.

At the February branch meeting the nominations are spoken for by the nominees and the scores of the Nation-

al Beer Scoring System (NBSS) are also presented by our Pubs Officer.

All nominated pubs are then voted for inclusion in the next Good Beer Guide, (our allocation is typically 5 W. Midlands and 2 Warwickshire entries). Finally at our March meeting, the short list of pubs is voted upon again by attending members, and the one with the most votes becomes our branch Pub of the Year.

So to answer the question: it is **you our branch members** that make it happen — IF you are at the meetings to nominate, then vote, for the pubs and clubs which you feel merit the awards. Keep an eye out for emails about it over the next few months, and do come along and have *your* chance to nominate and vote.

Market Bosworth Rail Ale Festival

Over the weekend of 25th—27th July the Battlefield Railway, in conjunction with Hinckley & Bosworth CAM-RA, organised a "Rails & Ales" weekend. The Goods Shed at Market Bosworth station was the location of the beer festival, with other attractions including steam rollers, traction engines, a fairground organ and various vintage vehicles, including the 1920's Daimler bottle car from the Bass Museum, in the station yard. There was also an unusual steam locomotive giving brake-van rides in the adjacent platform. Jeannette suggested we give it a try so on Saturday 26th July we made our way to Shackerstone station and boarded the 10:00am departure for a round trip to Shenton.



The Daimler bottle car

Real ale was also available on the train, with two hand pumps in the buffet car dispensing Leatherbritches *Lemongrass & Ginger* and Church End *Poachers Pocket*. It was a bit early in the day for me to start drinking so we decided to do the trip to Shenton and back and return to Market Bosworth for the festival.

Having purchased Day Rover tickets, we were able to take the next service at 11:00 to Market Bosworth, to wander round the various exhibits (indulging another passion of mine – photography) and then enjoy the beer festival. The beer list showed 53 real ales available, with 18 ciders/perries also to be had, and the train was very busy with many people enjoying the ales on offer.



The festival bar

I started with Byatts *XK Dark* (3.5%) a delightful mild with a good malty taste. My next beer was Dem Bones *Leicester Triple Glory*, a 4.5% black bitter, which was followed by *Vic's Tipple*, also from Dem Bones brewery. This was a 4.9% golden best bitter with a very hoppy kick. I had then intended trying the Cader Ales *Cader Gold* but it had sold out, as had several of the other beers that I wanted to try.

We decided instead to go in search of food, then catch the next train to Shenton and enjoy a beer on board the train. Having settled for a sandwich, we caught the train to Shen-



THE FIELDHOUSE

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Fieldhouse,
Solihull

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Mon—Sat: 11.30am —12 midnight

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Hot & cold meals served Monday to Sunday all day till 10.00pm

Weekly quiz: Sundays and Tuesdays, 9.00pm start

Live Bands (see Facebook page for dates and further details)

5 Real Ales on at all times including 3 regularly changing guests. All Cask Ales are £2.49 a pint every Monday.



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

ton. I noticed that the previous on-board beers had given way to Church End *What The Fox's Hat* and Leatherbritches *Belter*. I was about to order a beer when I was told that they had run out and could not re-stock until they had returned to Market Bosworth! Just my luck, I thought.



Steam locomotives in the station yard

Time was getting on so, after a brief stop at Market Bosworth for a last look round, we reluctantly started for home and elected instead to stop for a meal on the way back. A diversion to Orton-on-the-Hill took us to the Unicorn Inn, where I enjoyed a very well-kept pint of Marston's *Pedigree* with my meal.

All in all, not the most successful day out I've had to a beer festival, but this was in no way the fault of either the Battlefield Line or Hinckley & Bosworth CAMRA. The organisation could not be faulted. Given the good weather and a fine selection of ales, it was bound to be popular. If they do it again next year, I'll give it another go if I can.

Chris Lloyd

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 2014

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)

Christmas and New Year opening:

Christmas Eve: 2pm—12 midnight, featuring the Christmas Eve raffle draw

Christmas Day: 12 midday—2.00pm

Boxing Day: 12 midday—8.00pm.

New Year's Day: 2—8.00pm

New Year's Eve: 2pm till after Midnight (children welcome until 8pm)

HAPPY CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR TO ALL FROM THE COMMITTEE

PubCo Reform Update

History was made last month and 8,000 CAMRA members can give themselves a pat on the back for lobbying their local MP over the past weeks to make it happen.

As previously reported, CAMRA has been campaigning tirelessly for the last 10 years, with the invaluable help of members and branches, to achieve pub company reform and stamp out unfair practices. It was very pleasing that so many CAMRA members lobbied their MPs to put their name to an amendment to the Bill introducing a market-rent only option, which was debated in Parliament on Tuesday 18th and Wednesday 19th November.



CAMRA has been backing a cross-party amendment to the Small

Businesses Bill to give PubCo tenants the choice of remaining tied or opting for a non-tied agreement at an open market rent. Achieving this would deliver more investment in local pubs, better choice and ultimately fewer pub closures.

After the 3rd reading of the Bill on 19th November, the Government were defeated by 284 votes to 259 as MPs from all parties voted to introduce a market rent only option for licensees tied to the big pub companies. This is a landmark victory and

an amazing achievement, which will help spell the end of PubCo licensees being forced out of business through high rents and tied product prices.

The next step is to fight for the Government to go even further with guest beer options for tied publicans.

Another of CAMRA's concerns has been not only the number of pubs shutting each week (new figures have shown that pub closures have risen to 31 a week), but the fact that neither landlords nor the public have any say in what takes their place. In fact, pubs can be converted into other uses including small supermarket stores, estate agents and pet shops without even planning permission being needed, and can also be demolished with planning permission.

CAMRA's aim now is for a simple change in planning law so a planning application is always required before a pub is demolished or converted into another use. Please get involved with this cause today by lobbying your local MP; and take a look at CAMRA's 'Pubs Matter' campaign site www.pubsmatter.org.uk for more ways you can get involved

A campaign poster with a white background and a dark purple horizontal band. The text 'NO TO PUBCO GREED' is in large, bold, black capital letters. Below this, 'YES TO PUBS' is written in large, bold, white capital letters on the purple band. At the bottom, there are two logos: on the left, a logo for 'FAIR DEAL for your local.com' with a small 'MP' icon and the text 'Time for Pubco Reform' below it; on the right, the CAMRA logo with the text 'CAMRA CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE' below it.

“Three Sheets to the Wind”

I start with a word of warning: Pete Brown’s ‘Three Sheets to the Wind’ could be the most expensive book you ever buy—after reading it, you may find yourself planning trips to all manner of far-flung locations. The idea is simple: the author set out to research drinking culture in other countries, to see how it contrasts with British pub culture. From Ireland and Belgium to Australia, Japan and the United States, Pete took on the arduous task of visiting breweries and bars, and talking to as many people as possible – and drinking rather a lot of beer along the way. It’s a tough job, eh?

The premise behind the book is that in this country there is the perception that drinking lots makes people aggressive and violent, hence the mayhem in the nation’s A&E departments every Friday and Saturday. Yet this doesn’t happen in other countries – places such as the Czech Republic, where they drink more beer than anywhere else, and it’s usually strong lager. As his Czech friends tell Pete, generally people drink to have a good time, to be sociable with friends – to feel better. So why should that inevitably lead to the notorious ‘lager lout’? Presented with this conundrum, Pete sets off on a global odyssey, looking at the different styles of beer and drinking cultures around the world, and the book documents his journey. Brown is a master of self-deprecating humour, and this is a *very* entertaining book. He does express concern that he might be documenting the end of an era (the book was pub-

lished in 2006): that there might be a decline in diversity. I think the continued proliferation of microbreweries both here and in the States should reassure him on that score.

Some visits sound predictably appealing: based on his wonderfully evocative description, Oktoberfest should be on any beer drinker’s bucket list. His efforts to find the *craic*, and the difficulty in doing so in Dublin, have given me one more reason to visit Ireland. He makes the Portland, Oregon Brewfest sound like another essential visit; naturally, Belgium features significantly; and his description of the futuristic Tokyo cityscape has put it on my ‘some day...’ list.

The conclusion he reaches is that there’s an important difference between social drinking – where the aim is to enjoy yourself, while staying the right side of embarrassingly drunk – to the sort of town centre beer and alcopops bingeing so gleefully shown with righteous outrage in the tabloids. But he also went out in his home town of Barnsley and saw lots of people drinking and enjoying themselves, without a fight breaking out. In conclusion, he doesn’t really have an answer for the peculiarly British link between prodigious drinking and anti-social behaviour – but that shouldn’t stop you from reading the book. Entertaining and informative, humorous but with some serious points to make, it’s a great read. Just don’t blame me if your holidays start to become more expensive...

Martin Buck



Membership Matters

It's that time of year again, when thoughts turn to Christmas and finding a suitable Christmas present for a relative/friend/loved one. If pounding up and down the high street struggling to find such brings you out in a cold sweat, fear not! I have the answer to the problem. A year's CAMRA membership won't break the bank, and at £23 (which equates to about 44p a week) I think you will agree this represents good value for money.

Don't feel like filling in the membership form in this magazine? If you visit www.camra.org.uk you will find various types of gift membership: there are concessions for Under-26 and Over-60 age groups, and some packages include either a copy of the 2015 Good Beer Guide or other real-ale related publications.

So by joining CAMRA, they will be joining one of the largest volunteer organisations in the country with well over 167,000 members, all with a love of real ale and good pubs. They will get a monthly newsletter called "What's Brewing", an interesting quarterly magazine entitled "Beer", and free or reduced entry to the many beer festivals organised by local CAMRA branches all over the country; and lastly, he/she will get £20's worth of JD. Wetherspoon vouchers as well as other great money saving deals with partner companies Visit the website for full details: www.camra.org.uk. The member-

ship fee gives more power to the campaigning elbow and at present CAMRA is using this money to argue the case with the government for PubCo reforms and changes to planning laws to stop valued community pubs being turned into yet another supermarket.


On to our branch! We hold monthly meetings at a local pub with good real ale, but if you don't fancy those, then come along to one of our social events and we will make you more than welcome. Please see the 'Dates for your Diary' section on page 6 or visit www.solihullcamra.org.uk.

Finally I would like to wish all of you reading this publication a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and do enjoy whatever ale you try and/or buy over the festive season.

N.B. I have arranged another of our "Meet & Greet" events for all new members who joined CAMRA between 1/7/14 and 31/11/14: this is to say hello for a friendly chat and an informal introduction to the branch. If you are new to us, do try to come along at 8pm on the 1st December at "The Railway" in Dorridge—I'll be buying a free pint for all the new members there. (PS. Please don't forget to bring your membership card.) Looking forward to seeing you!

Dave Mckowen
Membership Secretary

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★ **Editor's Note:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ **CAMRA membership prices go up** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
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 <p>CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to the Editor, Solihull Drinker, c/o 4 Kendrick Close, Solihull B92 0QD; or via email to julia.hammonds@blueyonder.co.uk</p>	
<p>Printed by Thistle Print Ltd, Leeds.</p>	<p>Solihull CAMRA 2014 ©</p>
<p>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.</p>	

Shed News

The Shed have been busy over the past months: as well as supporting the Solihull Beer Festival, they have been supplying barrels to the Manchester area where the vegetarian finings-free beers go down extremely well. Two barrels also went to the Birmingham Beer Festival recently. Watch out for Spotted Cock (4.5%) at the Saddlers Arms in town from December; it may become a regular fixture.

As well as producing all their beers without finings, the Shed is the only one of our 4 local micro-breweries to bottle-condition them, guaranteeing the best possible taste for consumers. Perry and team are now working hard to get ready for the Christmas rush—don't forget that you can buy bottles of Shed beers direct from the Hockley Heath microbrewery plus gift packs, which make ideal presents. To try before you buy, contact them on 07742 246455 and find out what the people of Hockley Heath, Redditch and Stratford upon Avon are enjoying.

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A Welsh Beer Festival – and a Stag Weekend

My son got married in June and, as a last “hurrah” before tying the knot, he nominated the weekend of 7th - 9th June as his Stag Weekend. This coincided nicely with the Great Welsh Beer & Cider Festival in Cardiff and, when I mentioned this to him he said, “That sounds like a plan. You’re coming, aren’t you?” He instructed his two best men to make the necessary arrangements and so, on Friday 7th June, I set off by train to Cardiff. Two others drove down from London whilst the Stag plus three friends drove down from West Yorkshire.



The Gower Brewery stand

I met up with the two from London, checked into the hostel where we were staying, then the three of us made the short walk to the Millennium Stadium for the beer festival. Before entering, we had our bags searched by security staff and were told to dispose of the bottles of water we had with us. We, of course, queried this and were bluntly told “You can get water in there.” Water reluctantly binned, we collected our beer tokens, programmes and (plastic) festival glasses and made our way into the stadium. A quick phone call revealed that the others were running

late and were still on the M6, somewhere north of Birmingham.

It was early afternoon. What else to do but start drinking? My first beer was Gower *Gower Gold* (4.5%), a thirst quenching golden ale brewed with Cascade hops resulting in refreshing citrus flavours. My next beer was Celt Experience *Dark Age* (4.0%). This had a smooth chocolate and caramel body with a hint of spice in the finish.

Shock horror: an alien in the festival!



Going in search of my third

beer to try, I was horrified to find a Foster’s stand right in the middle of the stadium! This has no place at a real ale festival so, presumably, was there at the behest of the Millennium Stadium management. It certainly generated some critical letters to *What’s Brewing*, CAMRA’s newspaper, afterwards.

Anyway, Foster’s stand given a wide berth, I headed for the Tiny Rebel brewery stall and sampled their *Dirty*



Stop Out (5.0%). This was an amazing smoked oat stout with a blend of nine malts which, according to the tasting notes, had "all the hallmarks of a heavy night out" - ideal for a stag weekend, then! A further phone call revealed that the Stag and friends were now on the M50 but still some way away. Oh well, another beer – this time Big Bog *Bog Standard* (3.6%), a refreshing pale straw-coloured beer brewed with Wye Challenger and Cascade hops. For my fifth beer, I elected to try Zerodegrees *Russian Imperial Stout* (9.1%). The tasting notes merely said "Does what it says!" It was unbelievably good, with plenty of clout! I decided to take it easier with my next, Jacobi Brewery *Gold Miner* (3.9%), a light, summer ale named for the Roman gold mine workings on which the brewery now stands.

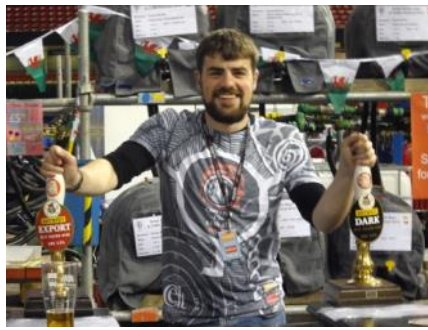


**Brecon
Brewing and
Celt Experience bars**



It was early evening before the Stag and friends

from up North arrived and, almost before he had a chance to draw breath, was handed a pint of *Imperial Russian Stout* which, fair play to him, he sank with enthusiasm. I upped my pace by sampling Heart of Wales *High As A Kite* (10.5%). The Stag, meanwhile, had been handed another pint, this time of Celt Experience *Ogham Willow* (8.8%) which also disappeared quickly. He was then given a pint of *High As A Kite*. A



The Rhmney Brewery bar

veil shall be drawn over the events of later that evening, suffice to say that, next morning, the Stag was not feeling too bright!

Saturday 8th June saw us head off to a farm at Henbury, near Bristol, for a morning session of range buggy driving, clay pigeon shooting and quad-biking. On arrival, the Stag was dressed up in a Dalmatian costume (don't ask!) and made to tackle the three events in this guise, much to the amusement of a hen party who were also there.

Afterwards we returned to Cardiff and went back to the beer festival. The Stag, who was feeling a bit better by now, was allowed to take off the Dalmatian outfit once inside. I opted to try the Neath Ales *Marvellous Medicine* (4.4%), a finely-balanced crisp, golden ale. I then tried Llangollen *Welsh Black Bitter* (5.5%). This had chocolate and toffee flavours with a hoppy finish.

After a break for food, during which the Stag had been decorated with some dubious headgear fashioned from balloons, it was back to the Gower brewery stand to try *Black Diamond* (4.2%). The tasting notes stated this had "Smoky, chocolate and liquorice flavours, with subtle spicy bittering hops." The next beer I tried, Cwrw Llyn Y *Brawd Houdini* (3.6%), was an ex-

Continued overleaf...



The Stag plus balloon hat

tremely drinkable blonde, lightly hopped beer but full of taste and character. This was followed by another 4.2% beer, Waen

Pamplemousse, a pale ale brewed with Cascade, Brewer's Gold and Citra hops. I then went for Radnorshire *Mixen Black* (5.0%), a dark, dry stout with a rich, malty flavour. To round things off before leaving for a meal I had Gower *IPA* (4.8%), a triple-hopped brew with lovely citrus aromas and bitterness.

As we left the festival, further upset came when we tried to reclaim the deposit on the festival glasses, of which we now had two each. We were told by the security staff that only one deposit refund was allowed no matter how many glasses we had, which did not enhance our opinion of them.

After our meal we elected to try a couple of the local pubs: firstly the Prince of Wales, a Wetherspoon's outlet converted from a former theatre, a most impressive building internally but fairly quiet for a Saturday night. I selected a pint of Brecon Brewing *Welsh Beacon*, which was in good condition. We moved on to another bar where there

was music at full volume, a DJ who must have been profoundly deaf, and at least two hen parties well on the way to oblivion. Ordering a drink was, I found, impossible but most of the others somehow managed it. For some reason we attracted the attention of the hens, and decency again prevents me from relating subsequent events: just that I was relieved when the place closed at 2am- and I *still* haven't seen the photos! Sunday morning saw several of our group feeling a bit worse for wear although the Stag himself was surprisingly chirpy. After breakfast and a brief look round a nearby farmers' market I left the others for the station and my train home.

In conclusion, this was generally a well-organised beer festival and Cardiff CAMRA did a superb job given the limitations that were, I assume, imposed on them by the stadium management. However, I feel that they need to take a firmer grip on arrangements for future and certainly should resist having fizzy, mass-produced keg beers included in the line-up. The Millennium Stadium, as a venue, was excellent. However, the bag searches, plastic glasses, stingy deposit refund policy (a deposit was paid on *each* glass on entry) and general high-handed attitude of the security staff left a poor impression on us. Will I go back again next year? I'll take a bit of convincing.

Chris Lloyd



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Beer and Sausages, Anyone?

The Oktoberfest is the largest popular festival in the world; larger, it's claimed, than Mardi Gras in New Orleans or Carnival in Rio. Created by Bavarian King Ludwig I to celebrate his wedding in 1810, it encapsulates German-ness in a way everyone can engage with—and every year hundreds of thousands do. The Germans everywhere not only enjoy beer, but celebrate it in style.



And they seem to have been doing it for at least 2,000 years. In fact it is almost the first thing that any foreigner wrote about them around 100 AD: "A liquor for drinking is made of barley or other grain, and fermented into a certain resemblance to wine. To pass an entire day and night in drinking disgraces no one."

This is in part why, when Germany later needed to forge a new sense of identity, beer in the 19th Century became a touchstone of being German. When German nationalists set to work on the symbolic status of beer, they unearthed the Bavarian *Reinheitsgebot*, the Beer Purity Law, first promulgated in 1487 by Duke Albrecht IV of Bavaria. This Purity Law became the basis of some very successful myth-making. The 19th Century nationalists assumed it was designed to make sure that only clean, unpolluted water was used to brew beer: evidence that the integrity of the

national drink had been defended for centuries.

It is an assumption still widely accepted as true, but Harald Scholl, of the Munich Slow Food convivium, thinks otherwise. "The Law means that you are just allowed to use a few things to make beer—barley, hops, and water and nothing else," he says. "And it was a political thing; it had nothing to do with preventing the people from getting ill—it was just to prevent them from brewing with wheat or rye, because wheat and rye was used for bread." At the reunification of East and West Germany in 1990, the so-called Brandenburg Beer War fought out in the courts lasted for 10 years—all over a black beer brewed in the former GDR that contained sugar, something forbidden by the Purity Law.

To go with the beer there is the other great emblem of Germany's national diet: wurst, the sausage. Wurst, like beer, defines Germany's cities and regions. Quite apart from the obvious ones like the *Frankfurter*, every region has its wurst

and it's claimed that there are 1,200 of them. Beer and sausage



embody centuries of national, regional and local history, they are living assertions of local diversity and regional trading links—the gastronomic equivalents of the flourishing regional dialects. They have a special place in the regional and local memory—and indeed in the German national psyche.

Article originally from BBC News Magazine

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CAMRA Merchandise

If you are stuck for Christmas presents, don't forget to check out the CAMRA merchandise on sale from the online shop—as well as membership, you can buy books, clothing and gift sets.

A new CAMRA publication which hit the shelves a few weeks ago is "Britain's Beer Revolution—Behind the Scenes with the people, breweries and beers", a full-colour celebration of British brewing and beer that reflects the dramatic change to Britain's beer scene over recent years and features the breweries and personalities who are driving the vibrant beer scene. It also showcases the very best of British beer, from the classic to the revolutionary and all shades in-between.

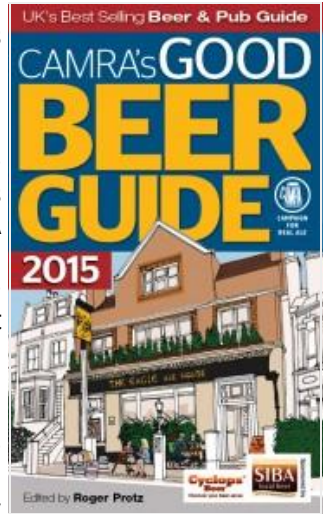
Co-authored by respected beer writer

Roger Protz and Adrian Tierney-Jones, the paperback book is fully illustrated throughout and with a strong, modern design. The price is £10.99 for C A M R A

members (recommended RRP £14.99).

Of course there's always the good old standby, the reliable "Good Beer Guide" the 42nd edition is more comprehensive than ever, with over 4,500 of the best real ale pubs in the UK listed of which over 1,200 are new entries this year. Listings include England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, the Isle of Man and the Channel islands, so wherever you visit or holiday there is sure to be a

pub for you! The entries are based purely on nominations and evaluation surveys by CAMRA members and include detailed contact information, facilities, opening hours, accommodation availability and food and service times. Also included is essential information on more than 1,200 breweries, with addresses and contact details, their main and seasonal beers, and brewery tour details where applicable.



Should clothing prove more to your taste in presents then do take a look at the range in the CAMRA online shop—members will receive a 10% discount on all clothing purchased from the shop: simply enter the code EMXAS10 in the

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there's something for everyone. For full information, sizes available and prices, go to www.shop.camra.org.uk.

FULL SPEED AHEAD FOR Platinum



◀ Pictured are two recent large scale refurbishments completed by the skilled Platinum team.

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Wye Valley Brewery News

Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout was recently awarded a Silver medal in the prestigious International Beer Challenge for 2014, and Dorothy Goodbody's new Glorious IPA won a Bronze medal.

The Wye Valley Brewery has acquired their seventh tied House; the Black Star at Stourport-on-Severn, opened on



The Black Star, Stourport

18th October after substantial refurbishment. New licensees Maria and Andy Gooding together, with Vernon Amor and the Mayor of Stourport, Cllr Cliff Brewer, cut the ribbon and welcomed everyone for a first pint.

Wye Valley are supporting a local team of amateur cooks who were invited to take Britain's Best Burger to the world's biggest food showdown and compete at the World Food Championships in Las Vegas. The Beefy Boys won Best

Burger at top UK BBQ competition 'Grillstock' on Bristol harbourside, where the Boys faced off against professional chefs, restaurateurs and grand champions. "We're really excited to be working with Wye Valley Brewery as they share our passion for authentic, quality produce from Herefordshire and taking that message out to the world loud and proud," said Daniel, founding member of The Beefy Boys. "The Beefy Boys have a winning formula for great grills and good times, and we're adding the only missing ingredient - outstanding real ale - to this mix," Jennie Hermolle, WVB Marketing Manager commented. "We're proud to provide beer fit to enjoy alongside the Best Burger in the UK".

Last minute news: The Beefy Boys made good in America: winning 2nd World's Best Burger, and their Butty Bach burger topped the final round. For more information see www.thebeefyboys.com/.

Looking forward to Christmas, Wye Valley Brewery anticipates a busy time in the brewery and online shop, with plenty of gift ideas for real ale lovers such as T-shirts, branded pottery tankards and jugs, gift packs and plenty of little stocking fillers.

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Please note that the deadline for copy, advertising and any other contributions is Sunday 15th February.

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