

# Solihull



# Drinker

Issue No: 61

Autumn 2012

## Solihull CAMRA's 14th Annual Beer Festival coming soon!

October is almost upon us and for all local real ale enthusiasts that can only mean one thing - the welcome return of the largest selection of real ale in our area at Solihull CAMRA's annual beer festival.

This year's festival will be held on Friday 5th and Saturday 6th October at

our usual venue at the Royal British Legion, Union Road, Solihull conveniently located in the centre of Solihull and only 15 minutes walk or a short bus journey from Solihull Station. Opening times will be Friday 5.30-11pm and Saturday 12noon-11pm. As usual food will be available to help soak up the beer. This year's festival will satisfy the thirst of even the most ardent drinker with all styles of beer represented and will be supplemented by a cider and perry. The sponsor this year is our local brewery, Whitworth, from Shirley. Both their Sobriety and Sobriety Blonde will be available for you to sample. Check the Solihull website during September to get beer list updates. Comprehensive information on the entertainment schedule for the Saturday session will be found elsewhere in this Drinker.



Have you considered advertising with us? We distribute 2,000 magazines each quarter which go to 90+ outlets across the Solihull & District area and are read by countless people. Get your pub, club or business into view!

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***Now that Autumn approaches, let's hope for an Indian summer!! If so relax  
in our beer garden or if the Indian summer passes us by sit in the bar in  
front of a warming fire with a great pint from the 4 real ales on offer today,  
together with a plate of locally-sourced seasonal food.***

# Solihull Drinker — apologies!

Readers may have noticed that this edition of the Drinker has been published later than usual. Our stalwart editor Julia was taken very ill back in early May and has had a prolonged stay in hospital. I am very pleased to report that this month she is now back home with Carl (our Branch Chairman) and is recovering steadily.

Firstly therefore, our best wishes go out to Julia for a speedy recovery and to Carl for looking after her. And secondly many thanks to Steve Dyson for stepping into the breach to edit this edition of the Drinker and for all others who have stepped into the breach while Carl and Julia are out of action.

Ray Cooke  
Vice Chairman Solihull & District CAMRA



Whitworth Brewing Co, sponsors of Solihull Beer Festival 2012, are passionate about the CAMRA Local initiative. Sobriety and our new beer Sobriety Blonde are available at the best real ale pubs within 25 miles of our Solihull brewery. Our beers are hand crafted using the finest ingredients and top quality American Hops.

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**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

The Solihull Drinker is the quarterly newsletter of the Solihull & District Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale.

**Contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to Julia Hammonds, The Editor, Solihull Drinker, c/o 4 Kendrick Close, Solihull B92 0QD or e-mail [julia.hammonds@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:julia.hammonds@blueyonder.co.uk)**

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

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# Hail to the Ale!

## Local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

### The Winged Spur, Ullenhall

The Winged Spur at Ullenhall closed in a bit of a hurry early last year, reopened again briefly, closed again, but has since reopened. More details will be on the website soon, but they are open 11 -11 every day (food at lunchtime and evening every day except Monday). Now owned by the same people as the Coach and Horses at Weatheroak, and serving Weatheroak Hill Brewery beers.

### The Navigation, Lapworth

Elsewhere in the Drinker there is a report on the reopening of the Navigation and the availability of Guinness on handpump. The editor popped down to verify this and sure enough Guinness is on handpump. First, it is not a real ale but the same Guinness one gets in any pub. Some gizmo has enabled the Navigation to serve it through a handpump. Strictly speaking CAMRA frowns on this as being deceptive, as drinkers may think that it is "real". It is fair to say that if asked the staff will unreservedly admit it is not real. Of more interest to me was the Lapworth Gold brewed by Byatts of Coventry to the Navigation's owners recipe.

On tasting this golden, clean, hoppy 4.2% beer I asked where the owner came from. When barman Rob answered, "Yorkshire", he confirmed what I suspected. This beer is an absolute gem of a Yorkshire hoppy brew, up there in flavour with the likes of Phoenix, White Lion and Fernandes at their best. Other beers on were Holdens Bitter, Marston's Pedigree, Taylor Landlord and Draught Bass. The pub has only been open a couple of months and has more of a wine bar feel to it, the bar having lost its homely feel that many will remember. Food is available with both a bar and restaurant menu available throughout the pub.

### Whitworth Brewery outlet at the Warwickshire Lad, Wood End

The Warwickshire Lad at Wood End stocks both of our local brewery Whitworth's beers, Sobriety Blonde and Sobriety. The Blonde at 3.6% is a quaffable session beer. It is a golden beer and has a very clean taste and is full of hop flavour. The stronger Sobriety at 4%, again a golden, clean tasting beer, hoppy but with more body than the Blonde. Other beers on tap were St. Austell Tribute and Black Sheep Bitter.

### Bulls Head, Barston

All Brad and Joy's friends in Solihull CAMRA wish to congratulate them in celebrating 25 years at the Bulls Head. Brad has always supported the real ale cause and has hosted many of the branch's AGM's and branch meetings. Here's to another successful 25 years!

### Vaults, Knowle

On the 8th September the Vaults is holding an "End Of Summer Beach Party" in aid of the Help For Heroes Fund. Nick plans a barbecue and is encouraging regulars and visitors to arrive in their best beachwear. To celebrate Halloween on the 27th October pop along in your most ghoulish fancy dress and enjoy a frightening experience!

**The 62nd edition of the Solihull Drinker will be published on Monday 3rd December, 2012.**

**Copy deadline for advertising and contributions will be Sun. 18th Nov, 2012.**

# Whitworth Brewery Opening Celebration

In a small suburban street is an unassuming house with a garage at the end of the garden. A year ago it housed the usual junk and detritus found in most garages, but today it is a pristine, white-painted room with custom-built drainage, high-tech security and a shiny new set of brewing vessels, gleaming in the sunlight and currently creating one of the best new ales I've tasted in a long time.



Brewing equipment at Whitworth Brewery

Steve Whitworth first tried brewing many years ago, feeling certain he could do better than the home made wines his father made during his childhood. His first attempts were simple affairs, using pre-mixed tins of malt and hop extract, yielding a reasonable but unexciting result. But more importantly, it sowed the seeds of a future adventure. Later he built his own equipment using cut-off pressure kegs and a ferocious gas burner that would take off your eyebrows in a flash, given half a chance. He inflicted his concoctions on friends and neighbours and was surprised to find that not only did he still have friends, but they were coming back for more.

Many moons passed, during which Steve patiently honed a number of recipes, tweaking malts here and hops there with the unerring assistance of his friends, now dubbed the Tasting Technicians. He estimates that his main brew, Sobriety, has been brewed some 50 or 60 times before being released on an unsuspecting world. The result is a delightful

blend of citrusy sweetness with a gentle but noticeable bitterness, plenty of malt taste and a remarkable length, allowing one to enjoy the taste a good while after swallowing. Somehow he manages to achieve this with only 4% ABV, a level at which many other beers can be bland and uninteresting. Further beers will follow in due course - the Tasting Technicians assure me that the porter and wheat beer are worth waiting for.

The marketing brains behind this new venture is Charlotte, Steve's wife. In a very short space of time she has raised awareness of Whitworth Brewery to the level of being recognised in the park by complete strangers while out walking her dog, Missy, a huge St Bernard (still apparently a puppy!) Despite having made only one brew, Sobriety is already available in Bernie's Real Ale Off-license, Rowington Club (both regular entries in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide) and the Warwickshire Lad, [*Blonde, the brewery's second brew, is now available. Ed.*]. She has also managed to secure a place on the SIBA delivery list, which will allow their beers to gain recognition across a much wider area.

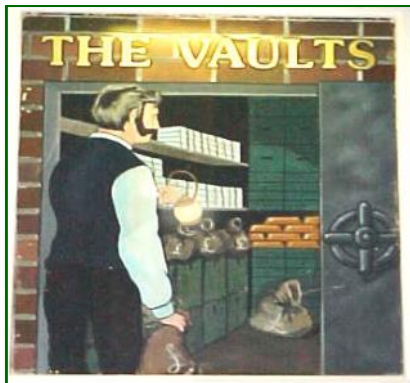
Solihull CAMRA was delighted to join Steve and Charlotte to celebrate the opening of the Whitworth Brewery. We wish them well in their venture and look forward to celebrating many successes in the forthcoming months and years.

Gordon Clarke



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welcome you to**

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***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.***

### **Sounds Like Real Ale Competition Winner**

Were you perplexed by the questions in our Spring edition "Sounds Like Real Ale" quiz? If so here are the answers, and also a picture of the winner, Mike Gunn left, receiving his prize from Branch Vice Chair Ray Cooke at our August branch meeting in the Tom O'the Wood at Rowington. Congratulations to Mike and thanks to all who entered.

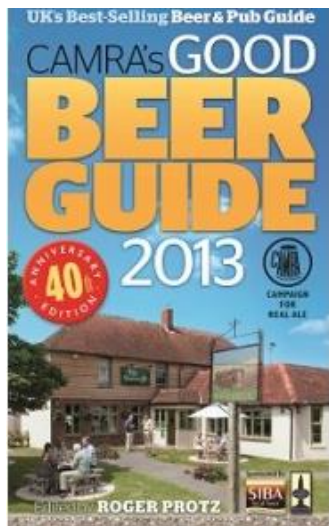
The answers were - 1.Wells Bombardier; 2.Woodforde's Wherry; 3.Badger Tanglefoot; 4.Hogs Back TEA; 5. Greene King IPA; 6.Flowers Original; 7.Black Sheep Best; 8.Jennings Cumberland; 9.Ringwood Fortyniner; 10.Hook Norton Bitter; 11.Hobgoblin; 12.Tetley's Imperial; 13.Shepherd Neame Spitfire; 14.Butcombe Bitter; 15.Courage Directors; 16.Everard's Tiger; 17.Timothy Taylor Landlord; 18.Old Speckled Hen; 19.Adnam's Broad-side; 20. Ruddles County; 21.Wadsworth 6X; 22.Fuller's London Pride; 23.Marston's Pedigree; 24.Sharp's Doom-bar.



Ray Cooke

## Good Beer Guide 2013

The 40th edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide will be published on the 13th September. At £10 for members who purchase online and £12.99 for non members, the Good Beer Guide



is **the** guide for real ale drinkers.

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This year we are also celebrating the 40th edition of the Good Beer Guide by offering every member of the Privilege Club a free subscription to the new Good Beer Guide Mobile app. Visit the CAMRA website for details of this and the purchase options.

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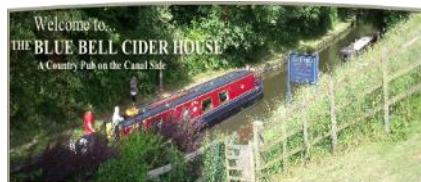
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# A Pub Crawl in and around Huddersfield

My favourite area for a variety of quality beer has to be the Greater Manchester/West Yorkshire area. Recently Brian and Dave Queenborough [ex Bernies] and I travelled up to the area for a 3 day binge of pubs, beers and canals.

We stayed at the Navigation, Mirfield, some five miles out of Huddersfield. The pub, in the 2012 Good Beer Guide, offers accommodation and a selection of beers from the Theakston stable, plus a guest or two. We were, however, here to try better beers than Theakston's!

We arrived in Huddersfield not long after opening time and headed past the station to the Sportsman. The pub has been lovingly restored to its former glory as a 1930's



Tile in the gents at the Sportsman

Art Deco pub. The gents loo has superb 1930's tiled pictures. Together with its own on site brewery it is a must-visit pub. 8 beers were on tap. We tried the Sportsman Town Mild, Empire Brewing, Beyond The Pleasure and Mallinson's Neptune.



The Sportsman, Huddersfield

We then moved round to the station itself which has two pubs at either end of the building. The Kings Head [the King being Jimi Hendrix] consists of a large square soulless bar with a small side lounge. However the quality of the beers is second to none. There were 10 beers on: Pictish Marynka, Magic Rock Curious, Goose Eye Over and Stout and Hop Head Dark Star were all sampled and were brilliant! The pub at the other end of the station is one of the Head

of Steam's pubs. A superb interior...shame about the beer. 10 beers decorated the bar. Sliding down our throats went Higson's Stout and Trouble Dark Arts, both not right. We called it quits at that and made our way to our digs to prepare for the evening session.

A full evening meant careful planning. Our first pub was the brewery tap of Golcar, The Rose and Crown. A quick stop here saw us sample Town End Bitter, a quaffable hoppy bitter. We could not stay to try the other three beers, none of which were from Golcar.

Up and down dale bought us to the Sair Inn, Linthwaite. This is a truly magnificent pub. Multi roomed and like a time warp, hidden up a steep hill, not easy to park by, but it must be on the itinerary of every lover of historic pub interiors. It is also the home of Linfit Brewery. 6 Linfit beers were on and to be honest I have never been a big fan of their beers but we tried the Swift and the Bitter which were quite acceptable.

Our tour of the countryside around Huddersfield finished, we headed for the city centre to give some time to the star pubs of Huddersfield. Our first port of call was the Star Inn, a traditional local tucked away to the south of the city centre. 9 beers propped up the bar. We tried four beers here; Lytham Twilight, Dunscair Bridge, Doug's New Brew, Nine Standards Gold Standard and Kelham Island Bohemian Rhapsody. Unfortunately the quality of the beer disappointed us and we were keen to move on. The Rat and Ratchet our next hostelry with thirteen beers on tap and an on-site brewery was a real ale drinkers mecca. The brewery is part of Ossett's micro brewery chain. Of all the beers on tap we sampled Pictish Black, Rat Golden Rat, Rat King Rat and Brightside Maverick IPA. All except the Golden Rat were in superb condition. The pub is a large rambling multi level hostelry, but it is very comfortable and we were reluctant to leave but we had to move on to keep to our schedule. The Grove is a beer drinkers pub, basic but with live music and both friendly staff and drinkers. We had a cracking evening here. Fifteen beers were available including some which were unusually on keg. What to try from this range? We decided on Gadds No. 8 Pale Bitter Ale, Durham Summit Wicked,



Marble Emelisse, Bubbermans Best, Buxton Axe Edge, Dark Star Golden Gate, Otley Oxymoron, Kirkstall Dissolution and Beer Works Ancient Grease, all in beautiful condition. Together with the bonhomie in the pub we had a great time. Leaving, we decided to drop into one more pub, the White Cross at Bradley. Being on our way home it seemed trite not to pop in. On tap was Copper Dragon Golden Pippin, Idle Black and Tan and the beer we tried Idle Black Abbott, which was absolutely superb. Time was still on our side so we tried the Old Colonial club in Mirfield where we were staying. Two beers were on but no staff in situ so after a long wait we left for our digs. Dave tried a beer or two at the Navigation and before we retired to bed we thanked our driver Brian who had not drunk much beer. The thank you consisted of another nine beers Dave had bottled during the course of the day. What a way to end the day!

Wednesday was to be as intensive as the day before. We based our pub crawl on our other interest, canals. Off we went to Marsden and the Huddersfield Canal and the Riverhead Brewery Tap overlooking a stream with a waterfall. The pub has a large main room and an upstairs dining room. Nine beers were on handpump with a strong showing of Ossett beers. This is another pub brewery owned by Ossett. We tried Butterley Bitter, Ossett Pale Gold, and Fullers London Porter, the latter being an absolute cracker!



Puzzle Inn, Sowerby Bridge

We then moved on down the canal to Slaithwaite and after walking along the canal which hugs the main street together with the road and footpath we popped into the GBG Commercial. With eight beers, choice was difficult. Owenshaw Mill Salt Road Blonde did not go down too well but Empire Commercial was excellent.

Our next destination was the Sowerby Bridge junction of the Calder and Hebble Navigation and the Rochdale canal. The Puzzle Inn is a strange quirky pub in the backstreets of Sowerby Bridge. It has a small bar area with another room with comfy sofas. We preferred the bar in which we drank Saltaire Blonde, Green Mill Flavia Blonde Beer and Brewsters Glass Half Full which was a beautiful beer. There were another three beers on the bar but time was not on our side so we made our way down the same street to the Works, a converted factory with nine beers. The pub is massive inside, having a large bar area and an upstairs concert room. Down

to the beers: Naylors Pinnacle Porter, Bridestones Cluster, and Millstone Tiger Rut went down a treat but then we had to move on to the Jubilee Refreshment Rooms on the station. 4 beers here, Elland Amnesia, Elland Midnight Rider, Greenfield Copper Cascade and Roosters Wild Myle, all of which were most drinkable.

Leaving Sowerby Bridge we headed for the tap of Elland Brewery at Elland. This pub is a drinkers pub and it so happened that it was a "Meet the Brewer" night headlining Geaves Brewery. We tried a couple of their beers but they were a little lacking in flavour but we did enjoy the Milltown Platinum Blonde. There were another six beers on tap but we saved ourselves for the last pub of the night, the Red Rooster at Brighouse. The pub, a locals pub, was seething as it was quiz night. Fighting our way to the bar we had a choice of eight beers. With such a fight to get to the bar we quickly supped a superb Bank Top Port O' Call and left as our bed was calling us... again after a few bottles to settle us down for the night.

Thursday being our last day, we decided this would be less intensive. We again did some canal walking then headed to the Town Arm at Dewsbury and Leggers a first floor pub in presumably old stabling. Five beers on tap here. We tried Goose Eye Tinker Bridge and Partners Spike's, the former pleasant enough, the latter superb. Next stop was Dewsbury Station Refreshment Rooms, a superb station bar with railway ephemera all over the walls. Nine beers met us at the bar. We only had time for three, York Guzzler, Thornbridge Brother Rabbit and Acorn Gorlova, best of which was the Acorn. Heading homeward now we popped into the Tap, Ossett the new tap for the aforesaid brewery. Comfortable, multi roomed but very quiet when we arrived, it had a good range of beers on eight

handpumps. We tried Fernandes Smooth English, Ossett Yorkshire Blonde and Hawkshead Drystone Stout, all very tasty. Not far away is the other well known Ossett pub just near the brewery, the Brewers Pride. We could not pass this by with its nine beers. Acorn Magnum IPA, Glentworth Siesta and Bob's White Lion were our choices, all going down a treat.



Dave and Brian enjoying our last beers at Fernandes in Wakefield

And so to our last pub before heading home, Wakefield and Fernandes Brewery Tap. This brewery too is owned by Ossett and we were a little unsure what to expect as recently Fernandes beers seem to have lost their way a bit. The pub is not easy to find and is a nightmare to park near. We arrived just at opening time. The pub is accessed upstairs and is traditional in décor with breweriana decking the walls. Below on the ground floor is a continental beers bar. We, of course stuck to the British beers. Ten beers to choose from, we were absolutely spot on! Malt Shovel Mild, Sunshine IPA, Wakefield Pride and Nightjar were all in excellent condition.

And so our holiday came to an end and it was time to head back to Solihull. Our tally for the holiday, one hundred and fifty different beers of which we tried seventy four. It was an intensive time, possibly too intensive for some but I would encourage any real ale drinker to visit the area and enjoy some of the pubs mentioned above. I can guarantee that you will not come away disappointed.

Steve Dyson

## Membership Matters

If you're reading this then you're probably a beer drinker, real ale of course, who is very aware of the exorbitant taxation you pay on your pint. You may also know that the government's beer duty escalator raises the amount of tax we have to pay by 2% above the rate of inflation. CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale) has initiated an e-petition, [www.saveyourpint.co.uk](http://www.saveyourpint.co.uk), which, when reaching 100,000, will trigger parliamentary debate which will put pressure on the government to scrap the escalator. Please spend a couple of minutes by signing the petition and encourage others to do so. This CAMRA campaign is not just about reducing the price of the pint, but to save pubs already struggling with excessive burden of taxation. Surely all this is worth the annual membership cost of about £20?

Bob Jackson, Membership Secretary

(For more information about CAMRA, its aims, how to join and benefits for members, go to: [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk))

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Saturday evening events a speciality: phone the Club for details of who's on.

## **Forthcoming events:**

**October: Members: Marrow Sunday - October 7th.  
Nurture your marrows, onions, carrots, runner beans  
and parsnips with loving care to be in with a chance of  
winning!!**

Adrian, The Committee and all the members of the Rowington Club wish Julia, editor of the Solihull Drinker, all the best and wish her a speedy recovery

## Solihull Beer Festival Entertainment schedule

After huge success and great feedback from last year, the Solihull Beer Festival entertainment will once again be provided by The Warwick University Brass Society and The Strumtroopers.

The University of Warwick Brass Band is the highest ranked student Brass Band in Britain. The band is completely non-auditioned and so gives the chance for brass musicians of all abilities and tastes to get together and play.

The band has over thirty-five members, and performs concerts throughout the year. They play an eclectic mix of music, ranging from classic brass band standards and test pieces, such as Paul Lovett-Cooper's "Dark Side of the Moon"; through the occasional bit of jazz and swing, such as "New York, New York"; to popular tunes and music from stage and screen, such as "I Wanna Be Like You" and "Tom Jones in Concert".

Over the years the band have performed in a variety of prestigious locations such as the Birmingham Symphony Hall - as well as regular performances in the Butterworth Hall in the Warwick Arts Centre. There are also regular tours, both foreign and domestic - which give the band the opportunity to play in venues such as St. Stephen's Basilica in Budapest.

The Strumtroopers are a multi-instrumental ukulele based covers band from Birmingham, specialising in irreverent re-imaginings of rock and pop classics from ABBA to The Specials.

It started with a gift. Tom 'Capt. Mountain (ret'd)' Reed was given a ukulele as a joke in 2008, and began formulating a plan with Ben 'The Librarian' George. The plan was to assume lead and rhythm parts in a ukulele band which would one day change the face of music. Two years passed and the band began to finally take shape with the addition of other neglected music geni from the West Midlands. Paul 'The Beard' Horn was found wandering the beer desert of Erdington bearing only a PhD thesis, a bass guitar and an owl. Adam 'Director of Comedy' Hickman was the straight backed guitar king of St Andrew's, willing to drop down a level on the promise of having the Strumtroopers' attack built around his play. Sean 'Sunshine' Harris was recruited from the Bolivian jungles, where he had continued the fight of Che Guevara's rebels until his discharge for demanding 43 years' back pay. The Owl that had been nesting in Paul's beard turned out to be Ben 'Bezy Bebb's' Bebbington, who finalised the line up by providing bongos, tambourine and general vibes. The Strumtroopers are not to be missed, and should under no circumstances be approached with seriousness. They are reported to be uke'd and dangerous.

Saturday afternoon will see the 3rd annual homebrew competition take place. There were 7 entries last year and first prize was won by Stuart Robinson with his Best Bitter, Commodore Ale. There will, of course, be free samples for the festival patrons to try so make sure you don't miss it!

There are still some places available for the competition if you would like to enter. Entrants must submit 2.5 litres of their homebrew real ale to compete, and be present at the festival for judging (limited to over-18s only). To submit your nomination and for further details, please email [sctomlinson1@gmail.com](mailto:sctomlinson1@gmail.com) by 14<sup>th</sup> September. The competition takes place at lunchtime, and there will be prizes and certificates for the top three brews, judged by CAMRA officials. Simon Tomlinson



## Solihull CAMRA 2011 Beer Festival Thank You Trip

A pleasant Saturday in late March saw Solihull Beer Festival workers head off to taste the delights of the beers available in south Warwickshire and North Oxfordshire. After our final pick up at Knowle we headed south for our first port of call, the Plough, Warmington.

The landlord had agreed to open up early for us and Julia, Beer Festival Organiser had arranged a most welcome free bacon bap and a free half pint. Looking at the beer range I tried the Hooky Bitter and the new Greene King IPA Gold, which at 4.1% had a little more flavour than its weaker counterpart. Other beers on the bar were Greene King IPA and Greene King Abbott Ale. Not a very imaginative range of beers but the welcome of the staff and the comfort of this typical Cotswold local compensated for the beer range.

We were soon off to our next venue at The Bell, Great Broughton. This basic village local holds beer festivals but the range of beers was disappointing. The GBG 2012 states that guest ales are available and there are pump clips decorating the bar back. When I quizzed the Landlord about it he said they never have guests so we all had to make do with Hooky Bitter, Old or Gold.

Time was fast approaching for our lunch time stop which was to be the Castle, Edge Hill. This pub is well worth a visit, being built in 1742 and overlooks the site of the Battle of Edge Hill. A veranda at the rear of the pub overlooks the battle site far below in the valley. It is a glorious view. Julia had booked us all in for a meal here and we all tucked in. As to the beers... Hooky Bitter, Gold, Old Hooky and Hooky Dark, a 3.3% mild.



The crew at the Castle, Edge Hill

Having downed our food and taken in the view we were ready to move on to Hook Norton and the Pear Tree, Hook Norton's brewery tap. Here on handpump was the full range of Hook Norton beers. I tried their seasonal beer, First Light which was OK but nothing special, then finished up with the Double Stout, a really nice beer. Again the GBG says guest beers were available but they were not on at the time of our visit. It is a

lovely pub in a typical village setting, a place to tarry awhile. A few of us then wandered on down to Hook Norton Brewery which is only a five minute walk from the Pear Tree. Then collecting our thoughts and belongings we were off again to the Falkland Arms at Great Tew.

This 16<sup>th</sup> century pub deep in the Cotswolds is well-known having been saved from near dereliction in the 1980's. The interior is unspoilt consisting of small rooms emanating from the bar area. As to the beers, not a Hook Norton beer in



Outside the Pear Tree, Hook Norton

sight! Wadworth 6X, Henry's, 125 and Bishops Tipple were joined by White Horse Bitter, Deuchers IPA and Brakspear Bitter. It was here I had the best beer so far which was the Brakspear. Time soon rolled by and it was time to take our leave and head for Wiggington and the White Swan. Of all the pubs we visited today this was the one with the least character. Beers were Hook Norton First Light, Bitter and Old Hooky. With the evening beckoning us on we made our way to the next hostelry, the Horse and Groom at Milcombe, a much modernised pub concentrating on food. It had on handpump Youngs Bitter and Wells Bombardier, not an inspiring range.

Our penultimate pub was the Saye and Sele Arms in Broughton, an upmarket country pub orienteered towards food but with a good range of beers. It is a 14<sup>th</sup> century building and is part of the Broughton estate whose castle, nearby is open to the public. The beer range, the best we had seen all day consisted of Thwaites Bitter, Itchen Valley Godfathers, Slaters Premium and an excellent Three Castles Spring Daze, which our table voted unanimously as the best beer of the day. We could have stayed here all night drinking the Daze and chatting to the landlord but the last pub of the day beckoned us, The George and Dragon, Shutford another modernised country pub with five beers on. Sharps Doombar, Fullers London Pride, Greene King Abbott Ale, Wells Bombardier and Fullers Chiswick Bitter. I finished the day with the Chiswick rueing the unimaginative range that this free house offered in comparison to the previous pub.

And so after a full day we headed off home to Solihull and to our beds to sleep off the beer. Thanks to Julia for arranging such a hectic day. All I ask is that next year, please no more Hook Norton!

Steve Dyson

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# Dates For Your Diary

## Branch Meetings

Monday 15th October                      Red Lion, Knowle  
Monday 5th November                    **Red Lion, Shirley, Short branch  
meeting followed by AGM**  
**[note 8pm start]**  
Monday 3rd December                    To be announced. Please check website  
*(Branch meetings start at 8.30pm except where noted otherwise)*

## Committee Meetings

Monday 17th September                Forest, Dorridge  
*(8.30pm start. Ordinary members may attend Committee meetings but only  
participate if invited to do so by the Committee)*

## Socials

Thursday 8th - Sunday 11th November    Long weekend away to Cambridge.  
The return of our famous long weekends away. Pubs and breweries abound on this  
tour around Cambridge.

***For more details, contact Secretary Allan Duffy on  
01564 200 431 and visit our website: [www.solihullcamra.org.uk](http://www.solihullcamra.org.uk)***

Many, though not all, of our local pubs are accessible to disabled people. If you would  
like to come to one of our meetings and would need assistance getting inside, please  
let us know ahead of time and we will do our best to help.



**For complaints about short measures or other  
beer-related problems, contact Solihull Trading  
Standards on 0121 704 6844**

## Blossomfield Club Beer Festival

The Blossomfield Club on Widney Lane is a sports club which, like many others in the area, is keen to promote its real ales. So, over the weekend of the 17th to 18th August, Martyn Bevins the club manager held a mini beer festival with ten beers and two ciders. The range was quite impressive. Beers were from Salopian, Rat, Fernandes, Acorn, Ilkley, Oakham and local brewery Weatheroak to name but a few. My personal favourites were Oakham Time Gentleman and Rat Golden Rat, a beautifully hoppy 3.8% session beer. The club has three handpumps, two of which are usually Greene King IPA and another beer from their stable. However, a third handpump is a free choice for Martyn. A venue well worth keeping an eye on.

Steve Dyson

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# A Campaigning Day Out

Our Branch social for July was a campaigning minibus trip around some of the "and District" part of our patch. The "and District" covers quite a wide area, mainly in Warwickshire and includes good pubs with real ale that many members do not regularly get out to. Paul Wigley and I felt this was something we really needed to correct, so we began planning a day out only to very quickly realise there are far more pubs than can possibly be visited comfortably in a single day out. Not a problem - we would target those in the area closest to us first and then we'd simply have to plan other days out to cover the others at a later date. Our Branch Committee said that if this was a genuine campaigning day out then they would helpfully subsidise the bus, and as we need to keep our pubs database updated this seemed an ideal opportunity to survey the pubs as well as show our support by drinking their real ale.

We decided members would complete a survey form for one pub each - not an onerous task. Completing a survey form with the licensee or manager shows we are keen to know more about them and are keen to check on their real ale.

We easily filled the bus and had to turn people away. But that's good as it bodes well for future campaigning trips out.

We started the day at the Forest in Dorridge, next to the railway station. This really is a pub that some remember from old as having either no real ale, pump clips turned round or the real ale being in poor condition. Those days really are long gone. There are always two or three real ales on these days, and these include regularly rotating guests from interesting micro-breweries. The Forest even has an online real ale club. All this is reflected in that they now hold two beer festivals a year too. Anyway, the weather was good so we sat outside in the beer garden to start our day of campaigning and I had a very nice Wye Valley HPA.

Pub gardens were something of a theme as we then went off to the Heron's Nest, another pub that has improved its range and quality of real ales in recent times, though unfortunately one of the beers was poor quality and had to be taken off when we pointed it out. This is a foodie pub and I'd eaten here about a month earlier. The food was good and I'd had no problems with the beer on that occasion. Given the good weather we retired to the pub garden which is next to the Grand Union canal, and spent a very pleasant half hour there before I said we needed to move on. The next stop was the Black Boy, which is also on the Grand Union canal and was to be our lunch stop too. As it is only a short stroll along the canal towpath many in our party decided to walk there rather than get back in the bus. Indeed, if they'd carried on walking they would have eventually arrived at the Navigation in Lapworth, one of our later stops in the day. There are a number of pleasant canal walks in the area that can be undertaken involving pit stops at good real ale hostelrys and I'd definitely recommend doing so.

I'd sorted out our lunch orders in advance so was able to give them to the helpful staff at the Black Boy when we arrived. It was still also relatively early lunchtime, so the food soon arrived and again we were to be found in the pub garden next to the canal. There are plenty of seats and tables in the garden here as this pub definitely and successfully aims itself at families. Though we'd allowed a longer time here, we



The crew at the Black Boy, Knowle

were able to leave slightly earlier which always helps avoid slippage in the timetable later in the day. We then skipped past the Orange Tree in Chadwick End (though didn't leave it out as it was the final pub on the tour) to go to the Case is Altered at Five Ways. This Warwickshire pub

is unfortunately just off our patch but was included as it is a real little gem on a quiet country lane. It's a traditional and very unspoiled, quiet country pub that doesn't do food but concentrates on its beer. Indeed, it has gone into partnership in opening its own microbrewery in Warwick and regularly has two of its own beers (including a very good IPA) on as well as a couple of guests. We hope to organise a trip to the brewery as part of our next campaigning day out. And back to our common theme - yes we sat in the small quiet beer garden, and here you can either sit outside at the front or back - both are very pleasant, though my favourite is at the front. This is a little oasis of calm and you can sit and look at the old building pondering which bits were built when, and which bits added to what.

From here we probably had the longest drive between pubs, all of about 10 minutes, before arriving at the Durham Ox in Shrewley. Given the Olympics being ever present at the moment, I should say that a few years ago this was owned by Nick Skelton, the show jumper who recently won Olympic gold. Again, we were warmly welcomed and again we sat in the pub garden. And this is some garden - it's huge and seems to be popular for parents and kids. This is another foodie pub but again it does look after its real ale and they do seem to be keen to expand their range from the Greene King beers they currently sell. A short hop from here took us to the Fleur de Lys in Lowsonford and for those of you who like your fish and chip shops and pie and chips in particular, if when you read Fleur de Lys you think pies, then you would be right. This is where the Fleur de Lys pies originated, albeit the brand was sold years ago so its only the pub name now. Indeed, though they still make excellent pies they cannot call them Fleur de Lys pies any more. Guess what - yes another excellent pub garden to sit out in, so we did and this one runs down to the Stratford canal. This is a Greene King pub, though they do occasionally sell a guest ale too.

The bus then took us uphill and back across the Grand Union canal to the Tom O'the Wood at Rowington (technically Turner's Green according to the map) which although not actually on the canal is very close indeed. This is a pub that has changed managers and opened and closed what

seems to have been repeatedly over the last few years so it is pleasing to see there now seems to be stability here. The pub garden is more of a seating area than an actual garden and is adjacent to the car park, though this does not detract from sitting outside. The Tom is an interesting amalgam of older buildings with a light and airy conservatory extension, on a quiet country road. The bus then took us to the Cock Horse in Rowington. We were pleased to see the pub was still open as this place has suffered over recent years and its pubco has it up for sale as a house and we understand that a sale is imminent. Nonetheless we sat outside



Tom O'the Wood, Turners Green

again and had a pleasant time in the sun and I had a decent Hook Norton bitter

Our next stop was the Rowington Club in Rowington Green. This used to be a large house next to the village cricket ground. Now it's the Rowington Club, and you can sit outside and watch the cricket. Though this is a club, card carrying CAMRA members are very welcome. My esteemed co-conspirator and organiser Paul had asked Adrian the club manager if he could lay us on a few nibbles when we got here, as it would be getting to that time in the early evening when a snack, or two, would likely be appreciated. Adrian said that might be a problem but would a BBQ suffice? I should say so. And that's what we were presented with. There was a cricket match on and we sat out in the garden to watch, whilst the club chairman and treasurer manned the BBQ. We made what I regarded as a token £2 contribution each toward the food (that was to go to charity) and then were able to eat just about as much as desired. Three burgers later I thought

I'd better call it a day! This really is a very welcoming place to come for a drink. They also run a whole series of events throughout the year, including beer festivals one of which will just have taken place by the time you read this.

From the Rowington Club we went off to the recently refurbished and re-opened Navigation at Lapworth. This is another pub under new management and yet another with a garden adjoining a canal - the Grand Union again here. The refurbishment has given a lighter feel to the building but has not taken away any of its charm. My last recollection of visiting this pub before the refurbishment was that the tables and chairs/benches in the garden were just about all falling apart. Not any more. Possibly the most interesting thing beer wise here was hand pumped Guinness. I think many of us are still wondering was this real and how was it done? But we were assured it was indeed hand pumped and was indeed Guinness. Personally I opted for their house beer Lapworth Gold, brewed by Byatts of Coventry.



The Cock Horse, Rowington - open, but for how much longer

A short hop along the road brought us to the Boot at Lapworth. I think many opt not to come here as the food (served in an attractively converted adjoining barn) may seem pricey (though I can assure you it is good), but please give this place a chance as it is still very much a pub and does serve decent real ale including the Purity UBU I sampled. Oh, and did I mention - they do have a lovely beer garden, and the Stratford Canal is within easy strolling distance. This pub is part of a small chain that includes the Orange Tree at Chadwick End and the Crabmill at Preston Bagot, and I've always had good food whenever I've eaten in any of them. Despite the fact that they are food orientated they do very much look after their beer. Leaving this pub and crossing the canal, we followed a quiet lane to the Punchbowl. This is a modern pub, built in the early 1990's after the old one was demolished. But at least it has a small pub garden. This used to overlook the car park but the hedges have now grown sufficiently to hide the cars and the garden now has a quiet feel to it. By the time we got here I was definitely feeling a little jaded and I think that the general feel of many of the group was by now a little tired. I saw at least one drinking coffee, but I'm not going to criticise as I ended up on coke at the next stop. I think the key message for me by now was we'd planned to include too many pubs in one day

Our final pub was the Orange Tree in Chadwick End, the one we'd bypassed on the way to the Case is Altered. I used to live in Chadwick End so knew the previous incarnation of this place. Though the earlier one had more of a pub feel to it, I think this one is preferable. It still feels like a pub, albeit one that concentrates on food, but it also and certainly whenever I've been in always has at least three real ales on. In terms of food, I believe this is one of the few places in the area you can get wood fired pizza. By now it was cooling down outside so I think most of us sat inside but they do have a nice eating area outside and a large pub garden.

I must say by the time I was dropped off in Knowle I was happy to walk back home to wake myself up a little. But I did enjoy myself and the feedback from others is they did too, and that's what makes organising a trip like this worthwhile. The other thing that made it worthwhile was the warm welcome from the pubs we visited and if you are a manager / licensee reading this and you were one of those we visited, then many thanks for looking after us. So, the lessons for next time and there will definitely be a next time, indeed next times - less pubs, and perhaps a slightly earlier finish so we don't clash with the food crowd. OK I've had to chase to get the feedback forms completed and handed in, but it has happened, so thanks to all who took part and see you next time.

# A Campaign

# of Two Halves



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