

The newsletter of the Solihull & District branch
of CAMRA - the Campaign for Real Ale

www.solihullcamra.org.uk



Solihull Drinker

Issue No: 57

Summer.2011

Are you free on Saturday 4th June??

If so, then do come along to our 'Biggest Ever Branch Social' at the Railway, Dorridge from 1.00pm —where a range of real ales will be on offer and hopefully good weather too. We will be asking for a small voluntary donation in aid of the Ian Edwards Cancer Break Trust, a charity set up by Ian's parents after Ian lost his fight for life last year. You can find out more about the work of the Trust through the link on our website: www.solihullcamra.org.uk, and if you want to make a donation, the account is at Barclays Bank, the account number is 9327 2176 & the sort code is 20-77-62.

Also, watch out for our annual PPP competition, coming soon throughout local Solihull & District pubs, where you can vote for your favourite barman or barmaid. They must give you a great welcome, have good knowledge and advice about the range of real ales on offer and any other drinks that you might want, give you efficient service and serve a full pint in a clean glass. The winner will receive a certificate and a cheque, and three voters chosen at random will receive a voucher for a free pint or other drink at the pub they voted from.

More information soon available from our website including voting forms.

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TELEPHONE RESERVATIONS WELCOME**

You deserve a good summer: hot days, warm nights, rain just at the right time and not spoiling anything you've chosen to go and do or see. Holidays are on the horizon but if not out and about, come and put your feet up in our pleasant beer garden with a refreshing pint and let the world go by.

2011 Beer Festival

It's hard to believe it but time is ticking on and it won't be too long before summer draws to a close and it's time, once again, for our annual beer festival. Still at the ever-welcoming Solihull Royal British Legion, in Union Road in the centre of town, it will be held on Friday 30th September, from 5.30pm till 11.00pm, and on Saturday 1st October, from 11.30am till 11.00pm (note the new longer opening hours on Saturday!).

We will also be featuring our popular Home-Brew competition which was started last year, during Saturday lunchtime, and people who come on the Friday will receive a discount for a return visit on Saturday.

Entertainment will again, we hope, be provided by the Warwick University music department—but who knows what they will play this year?

There will be over 40 great, carefully chosen and lovingly tended real ales, plus cider and perry, and hot food will be available at all sessions.

Our theme this year is 'Urbs versus Rure' (a pun on the Solihull motto of 'Urbs in Rure' - the Town in the Country) so there will be a wide and varied choice of beers to represent both, and as well as voting for your favourite Beer of the Festival, you will be able to vote for 'Urbs' or 'Rure'.



Solihull Beer Festival 2010—laid-back or what??

Put it in your diary: we really hope to see you there!!

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

**All 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**

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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measures, contact Solihull
Trading Standards on
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Hail to the Ale!

Local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

The Bull's Head, Barston

As usual, expect a great day out at the Barston Fete on August Bank Holiday Monday, when the village turns out from 12.00 till 5.00pm in support of local charity stalls and a wealth of afternoon entertainment including the ever-popular egg-throwing competition. A barbeque stall and a drinks tent will keep you fed and watered—all that's needed is fine weather! The event is held in fields behind the Bulls Head, so afterwards, why not drop into the pub on your way out for a last drink and enjoy the cool of the bars or their sunny beer garden.

The Forest, Dorridge

The Forest will be holding a beer and cider festival from 14th to 16th July—no entrance fee, just turn up and sample the drinks on offer.

Heron's Nest, Heronfield

This Vintage Inns pub has widened the selection of real ales available, a welcome policy that, from recent observations, appears to have been adopted across the Vintage Inns chain. Recent offerings have been St. Austell Proper Job, Leeds Brewery Midnight Bell and Cairngorm Tradewinds. At £3.30 per pint, though, the beer at this pub is a bit pricey.

The Tom o' The Wood, Rowington

It is with great delight that we can report that the Tom O' The Wood at Rowington has reopened after being closed for two years. Sue & Debbie have taken on the tenancy and have introduced an incredible steak menu: all sorts and sizes right the way up to 48 oz!! There is a separate daytime menu as well. The décor is apparently really good too. There were three real ales on at the time of visiting: Marston's Pedigree, Greene King IPA and Timothy Taylor Landlord — they have flown out of the cellar so far, especially the Landlord. All are guests so expect more beers to be on offer in the future. Sue and Debbie are brand new to this and want to see what works and what doesn't so are certainly open to persuasion—please visit and support them in their brave venture, and let us know what you think.

For more information about local pubs, see our website www.solihullcamra.org.uk

The Golden Acres

The Golden Acres re-opened in March but has since closed its doors again, apparently due to lack of custom. Its future remains unknown at the time of going to press. If anyone has any information, please pass it on.

The Assembly Rooms

For those who missed our (very enjoyable) trip to the new Two Towers brewery in the Jewellery Quarter, here is another chance to meet them: The Assembly Rooms are hosting the Two Towers Brewery at a Meet the Brewer night on Wednesday 8th 7.30 pm,

For more information about the Two Towers Brewery, based in Birmingham, go to their website www.twotowersbrewery.co.uk

The Cock Horse, Rowington

The Cock Horse is another pub that's been limping along for some time since the licensees left a year ago. Temporary manager Chris has done a sterling job of keeping the place open, but it looks like a major change is on the cards as information has been received that a planning application has been submitted to change the use of the pub to a residential dwelling. The consultation period may not be over so that may be another local pub we have lost. It will be a real pity if the Cock Horse goes as it was a lovely pub a few years ago, with a great range of real ciders and entertainment including folk music nights.

Please go and visit your local pubs, especially if they are down on their luck—once they're gone, they're gone forever, and if this keeps happening we will lose a major British tradition.

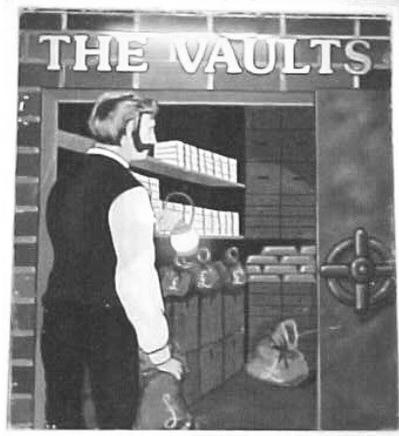
The White Swan

'Flushed with success': that's the White Swan after winning the Loo of the Year award for yet another year (reported in this magazine in 2010). Not a great deal, you may say—but if you visit a pub and need to visit the loo then it's always nice to have clean rooms and toilets.

On another note, the White Swan is planning a Wednesday Pie and a Pint night for CAMRA members, coming soon—apparently a succulent steak and kidney pie is in the offing, although there will also be a veggie option.

Check out too the JD Wetherspoons Cider Festival, running from Thursday 21st to Sunday 31st July at both the Solihull pubs—more details about all of this at www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk/home/pubs/the-white-swan-solihull

Nick and Gwen welcome you to



The Real Ale venue in Knowle

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Wines, aperitifs, and other alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks also available for your day or evening get-togethers and parties—come in and talk to us about your requirements and we will always be glad to help.



Choice which cannot be bettered

Nottingham Trip: Saturday 26th March 2011

This trip was for those who had worked at the branch beer festival in October 2010. The most popular beer was Castle Rock Harvest Pale which sold out in a couple of hours, so we decided we needed to visit the brewery, and a few pubs as well.

Castle Rock Brewery – Gordon Clarke

A clear run up the motorway to Nottingham meant that we arrived at our first stop, Castle Rock brewery, a few minutes earlier than expected. With time on our hands this was a good opportunity to sample one or two of their ales at the brewery tap next door, the Vat and Fiddle, before the brewery tour started. Most of us opted for a non-Castle Rock beer, knowing we'd be partaking of more later.



Castle Rock Brewery

Our guide for the tour was Charlie Blomeley, the Commercial Manager, Brewing was first started on the premises as a partnership between Bramcote Brewing Company, who needed to move to expand beer production, and the Tynemill pub group. Castle Rock was born from this partnership in 1997. The original owners from Bramcote's later left to start Nottingham Brewery. Early last year the brewery completed another move to new premises and increased its brew length to 40 barrels, which was far too big to be housed in the old building. So they bought the building behind - the city's old probation offices - a maze of small offices, corridors and storage rooms. Half of the building was stripped back to a shell in order to accommodate all of the required brewing kit. Even so, it was a bit like a jigsaw puzzle, squeezing all the equipment into spaces between the ironwork that holds the building together. The kit now consists of a grist mill, hot liquor tank, mash tun copper, hopback, two 80-barrel fermenters, five 40-barrel fermenters and two racking tanks (one of which Charlie insists looks just like the rocket from Wallace and Gromit's Grand Day Out). Scaling up the recipes for the larger kit is an inexact science. Their first attempt at brewing Harvest Pale created a beer with an ABV around 1.5% higher than expected. The beer had to be renamed before it could be sent to the pubs and the original recipe revised. However, the move has been proven a great success, with Harvest Pale being re-elected as CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain in 2010. The brewing process is more or less the same as most other brewers, with the exception that all of the malt is passed through the head brewer's trouser leg. This isn't as bad as it sounds - it's simply a way to reduce the dust as the malt is dropped into the mill. He's not wearing the trousers at the time, and I'm assured they were well washed first.

After the tour we were escorted back to the Vat and Fiddle (not the traditional Cat and Fiddle - it is deliberately mis-named, as the local tax office is just across the road).

The Vat and Fiddle – Gordon Clarke

The pub is a 1930s rebuild of a typical Victorian hostelry and so has a very traditional feel to it. One regular is Kipper the pub cat, who moved in and took over a number of years ago.



In the Vat and Fiddle

He is quite happy to let visitors stroke and feed him when the mood takes him. As well as an impressive range of whiskies the bar is graced with a range of 10 different ales, obviously including all of Castle Rock's regulars and often one or two of their irregular or seasonal ales. We were fortunate enough to catch a sample of what could be the last ever brew of Nottingham Gold, as well as the delightful Harvest Pale and Elsie Mo (actually named after one of its main ingredients - Low Colour Maris Otter malt... LC MO). I was advised to try the Screech Owl, but warned that, at 5.5%, it creeps up on you! The advice was right - the Screech Owl is well worth drinking, and possibly the best ale on offer. We also had the choice of Ossett's Treacle Stout, the rather good Darwin's Origin from Salopian and the intriguing Brewster's Stilton Porter, brewed with real Stilton. No piped music so we passed a pleasurable hour in conversation with Charlie and the bar staff before leaving.

The Canal House – Malcolm Harry

First stop on our tour of Nottingham pubs was the Canalhouse, a short walk away or a slightly longer minibus tour of Nottingham's one way system. One of Castle Rock's own pubs, the Canalhouse is housed in a listed former canal museum. For a pub it has the unique distinction of the canal arm coming into the building, with room for two canal boats and a bridge over leading into the main bar area. Once we had visited the bar, which had Castle Rock's own Harvest Pale and Elsie Mo as well as a beer each from Salopian, Ossett and Black Country, we waited at our reserved tables for our food ordered from the extensive menu. Everyone seemed to be pleased with their choice of food.



The Canal House—complete with narrowboat

Fellows Morton & Clayton Ltd – Ian Hunter

We sat in the lovely Victorian pub and could only see England losing another cricket match. A multitude of screens could be seen and the football England v Wales came on as an ideal backdrop to the fine selection of cask ales; Cask Marque approved.

The evolution of the name: for a long time Fellows Morton & Clayton Ltd were the largest and best known canal transportation company in England. They had a large fleet of boats which ranged far and wide over the canal system. Then in 1947 a sad ending when FMC incurred its first trading loss ever, and with the added competition of roads and railways the company went into voluntary liquidation and the assets were taken over by the then British Transport Commission. A grand era had come to an end. But the Canal Street pub keeps its name alive and provides refreshment for modern leisure barges like us.

The Bell Inn – Ray Cooke

Then on to the Bell Inn in Angel Row and just off the Market Place, also known as Slab Square and where the Nottingham Goose Fair was originally held. It is thought the pub has its origins as a guesthouse to a Carmelite monastery situated nearby on Best Market Hill. As such there are claims that this may be the oldest pub in England, though timbers have only been dated back to 1420AD, and it is believed the building did not become a public house until the mid 1500s. In the main bar at the back of the building, the one containing a well, there is a list of licensees but the earliest is only from 1759, one John Goldsmith.

(continued on pg 10)

(Nottingham Trip: continued)

Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem – Robert Cawte

This is a historic pub dating back to 1189 according to the sign outside and hence claims to be the oldest pub in Britain. I'd heard about it, and even seen it on television, so it was a long-overdue visit. After the hubbub of the Fellows Morton this was a much quieter place, but did seem to suffer from tourists dashing in and out for a photo. It has several small bars and numerous seating areas, but the unusual feature is that it is built mainly underneath the castle and consists of what can best be described as a series of caves. There is a dusty looking model of a sailing ship in a glass case, and the legend goes that anyone who cleans it dies; it does not seem to say how quickly this happens and some of the people who dusted it lived a fair while. So much for legends, but what about the beer? It is run by Greene King and sported the usual beers, plus the pub's own-label beer Olde Trip (also from GK). They also offered a local beer Extra Pale Ale from The Nottingham Brewery. Olde Trip was the better of the two on this occasion. Nottingham Brewery's Legend, being a trifle darker, was more to my liking. They also stocked Lion's Pride from Milestone – another Nottinghamshire brewery. Onwards...



The usual suspects outside Ye Olde Trip

The Roundhouse – Dave McKown

The Roundhouse pub was originally part of a hospital, the rest having been sadly demolished; but what is left, the unusual rotunda, has been turned into a very nice pub with a main area with tables & chairs and some very comfy chairs and sofas. The central part of the ceiling had an interesting mural painted on it .

Around the outside were a few booths primarily for eating. The beers were served by young informative staff, beers with a Camra discount of 10p per pint available on the day we visited were Dr Mortons "Duck Baffler" (4.1%), Theakston Black Bull Bitter, Roundhouse Gold(4.0%), Nutbrook Banter, Nutbrook More, and "Drop o' The Black Stuff"(4.0%) from Springhead Brewery. Rather good snacks were available too! (the pork pie and pickled onions were really tasty).



The Roundhouse

Ye Olde Salutation Inn – Allan Duffy

Our next port of call was the Salutation Inn. This is one of the very old pubs in Nottingham dating back to 1240. It is a sizeable multi-room pub with lots of hidden snugs where drinkers can sit unnoticed. There is also a large network of caves under the pub extending under the city. There were 7 different beers available on hand pump plus one cider, but we only tried one each as we were pacing ourselves for a long day. I had Abbeydale Deception which was excellent and Brenda had Deuchars IPA which was in its usual fine form. Colourful posters on the wall led me to the upstairs rooms which are used to host live music from heavy metal bands. Ian Edwards would have loved it – good ale and good music in the same place.

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

Ladies' Day: June 19th (afternoon): free champagne, strawberries and ice-cream for the lady attendees, prize for best hat, entertainment (it's also Father's Day, so feel free to bring your father—although he won't get the free champagne and strawberries—sorry!!)

Beer Festival: August Bank Holiday weekend (Saturday 28th, Sunday 29th and Monday 30th August)with live music each day, many guest ales and ciders, hot food available throughout.

For full details of all events, please ring Adrian and he will be only too pleased to talk to you about a wonderful time out.

(Nottingham Trip: continued)

Fortunately the beers are more recent and offerings were a selection from Greene King in the form of IPA, Speckled Hen and Abbott Ale, and very interestingly Tolly English Ale at 2.8%. They also had Olde Trip at 4.3% though Greene King rather craftily still advertise this as Hardy & Hansons on the pump clip. Funny since the brewery has long since gone the way of some others taken over by this super-regional. Lucky there were Nottingham Brewery beers also available in the form of Rock Bitter 3.8%, Legend 4.0% and EPA at 4.2%.

The Gatehouse - Don Green

Having been told that the pub had once been an Undertakers, a morbid search for funereal artefacts proved fruitless with no evidence of the Grim Reaper found. The barman was questioned but denied that the premises had been used for funereal proceedings. He said "Anyway, where would they have put the coffins, there's no room here!" On offer there was the inevitable Rock Bitter, Buxton Best at 4.3%, Burton Bridge Porter at 4.5% and Copper Dragon Golden Pippin at 3.9%. On the advice of an ex-local, the latter brew was tried. It was in excellent condition with a light fruity taste. (a 4.0 on the CAMRA scale).

The Hand and Heart—Brenda Duffy

Another of Nottingham's historic pubs, the Hand and Heart started life in 1866 as a brewery. Beer was brewed in the stables at the back, and stored in the cave beneath. There is a large room behind the main bar, cut into the sandstone and known as the "Cave Bar". Real ales available in this freehouse at the time of our visit were Deuchars IPA, Burton Bridge Bitter, Holland Mad Jack Stout, Magpie Thieving Rogue and Springhead Roaring Meg. The Blue Monkey Infinity at 4.8% was highly rated. At 7pm prompt, we boarded the minibus to sample the delights of Beeston.



Kevin and Gordon Clarke on The Throne in the Hand and Heart (don't ask!)

The Crown, Beeston—Bob Jackson

An up-market pub with good ale and food; didn't get to the bar but know that it was well stocked with real ales. Sensationally good pork pies were the pride of the pub. Very busy and frequented by sophisticated customers just like us!!

The Victoria Hotel, Beeston—Gordon Clarke

The selection of beers was impressive, with 5 real ales in draft in each of the two bars. The pub was extremely busy, with even standing room being at a premium. According to the signage, the Victoria Hotel dates back to 1899, and has a brick facade that highlights its heritage as an outlet for Ind Coope's Burton Ales. The bar we sat in was a tall rectangular room covered with interesting artefacts including old beer bottles. Beer was Castle Rock Harvest Pale, the widely available Everards Tiger and Batemans XB and the highly unusual Blue Monkey, and Original and Oldershaw Roaring Forties. I sampled 3 of the ales, on offer as 3 thirds for the price of a pint. The cellar was large and impressive with a long row of casks on tap with more waiting and many of these were 18 gallon, not the usual 9½ gallon firkins, which tells you something about the quantity of beer they get through. An excellent final stop to a great day.

September Social

The Solihull and District CAMRA member's weekend away this year will be to Cambridge on the 1st-4th September, the idea being to arrive in Cambridge on Thursday evening for a full day out on the Friday and Saturday. This should be another great weekend away with a good selection of brewery visits and pubs. We are keen to see you and need to get firm numbers and deposits sorted out as soon as possible. If you are interested please either e-mail or speak to Ray Cooke (ray.cooke@hse.gsi.gov.uk) or Paul Wigley (paul.wigley@3mrt.com) to book a place and then either pay a £20 deposit (per person) at the 6 June Branch Meeting at the Nags Head at Henley in Arden or send a cheque for £20 (payable to Solihull CAMRA) to Ray at 16 Milton Road, Bentley Heath, Solihull B93 8AA. As we will be using a minibus for the Friday day out numbers are limited, so please book early! The itinerary as currently proposed, though subject to change if any breweries pull out, is as follows:

Thursday - People make their own travel arrangements to get to Cambridge. In the evening: a small crawl based on the East Road/Grafton Centre Area- leaving approx. 8.00pm. This would take in some of the following pubs: Tram Depot; Bakers; Cricketers; Free Press; Elm Tree (2011 Cambridge runner up POTY); Clarendon. People can decide which to try - (maps and further details will be provided at the start of each day).

Friday - day out by minibus (approx £14 per head for transport as long as we fill the bus): Brewery Visit – Wells & Youngs – Provisionally booked in for 12pm; circa £14 per head to include drink and lunch. We may get time to visit The Wellington or the

Cricketers in Bedford as well.

Brewery Visit –B&T brewery (Banks & Taylor) in Shefford, followed by visit to Brewery Tap. We may get time to visit the Black Horse here in Shefford, though it's more likely we will call in on the Engineer's Arms in Henlow which isn't far away.

Brewery Visit – Son of Sid, at Little Gransden near St Neotts, with its own pub, followed by Brewery Visit – Lord Conrad's Brewery – Bar Hill, which brings us to the north west of Cambridge, so we'd then travel back into the city for a North City Centre Crawl, taking in a selection of the following, The Sir Isaac Newton; The County Arms; The Castle; The Pickerel; The Baron of Beef; The Anchor; The Mill; and The Eagle (where the RAF guys in WWII signed their names on the ceiling).

(continued on next page)

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**For more information & bookings please call Kevin
07715 584 067 or visit SumnerBarServices@BTinternet.com**

(September Social—continued)

Saturday -2 brewery visits (by public transport)

Brewery Visit – Milton – Followed by Waggon & Horses in Milton

Brewery Visit – Cambridge Moonshine – Has moved out to Fulbourn but not a problem –
The Bakers Arms will follow, before we travel back into Cambridge for the Mill Lane/King
Street Run, taking in a selection of the following

The Empress – 2010 pub of the year; Devonshire Arms – 3rd 2011 pub of the year; The
Kingston Arms; The Geldart; The Cambridge Blue – 2011 pub of the year; Salisbury Arms;
The Live and Let Live; The Tram Depot The St Radegund; The Champion Of the Thames;
The Elm Tree

Is that enough for you!?!

Sunday –This day is free for people to do whatever they wish - recover ready for the
drive home or take in any of the pubs you didn't get a chance to visit on the other days.

So, if you are interested then please do something about it as soon as possible to make
sure you book a place on what is looking like another fascinating weekend away

Cheers

Ray Cooke & Paul Wigley

Organisers, September Social.



Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

Monday 4th July The Rowington Club, Rowington
Monday 1st August The White Lion, Hampton in Arden
Monday 5th Sept The Coach House, Solihull
(Branch meetings start at 8.30pm except where noted otherwise)

Committee Meetings

Monday 13th June The Sharman's Cross, Solihull
Monday 15th August The Navigation, Lapworth
*(8.30pm start. Ordinary members may attend Committee meetings
but only participate if invited to do so by the Committee)*

Socials

Saturday 30th July Stafford Beer Festival (details TBC)
Saturday 27th August Rowington Club, Rowington: Bank
Holiday Beer Festival (free entry; meet up from 1pm onwards)
Thursday 1st — Sunday 4th September: weekend away,
Cambridge area (further details TBC)

***For more details, contact Secretary Allan Duffy on
01564 200 431 and visit our website: 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.

Solihull CAMRA Young Members

Hi, my name is Simon and I have recently been appointed as the Young Persons Contact (YPC) for the Solihull CAMRA Branch.

So what does this mean? Well, I am responsible for attracting young people (18-35 year olds) in the Solihull area to drink real ale and join CAMRA – simple! This is something I am very passionate about and I want to dispel the myth that real ale is just for 'old fogey's'.

Like many young people I used to be a bit of a 'lager boy' and the furthest I would stray from the 'amber nectar' was to have the odd pint of Guinness. This changed around 5 years ago when I got taken on a pub crawl around the

(continued)

Black Country with my girlfriend and her parents. They convinced me to try a pint of real ale, and I realised that it actually wasn't as bad as I thought. After 2 or 3 more pints of various brews I came to the conclusion that this real ale stuff was pretty good. It actually has taste, character and variety, which are not words that usually get associated with the big lager brands.

Since that day I have been completely converted to drinking real ale and strongly believe that if other people give it a go, they will be too. That is why I joined CAMRA and started getting involved in the Solihull Branch activities. I want other young people to give it a go, because I'm sure they will be surprised by what they taste and know and it can open up a whole new world of enjoyment.

I first got involved in the Solihull Branch activities around 18 months ago when I volunteered to help out with the 2010 Solihull Beer Festival. I was responsible for advertising the event by getting articles included in the local newspapers. I also organised a home brew competition, which was the first of its kind at the event, as well as the Saturday evening entertainment. Since then I have regularly attended the branch meetings and been on a few of the branch social events. Now that I am the Young Persons Contact, I intend to come up with new ways of attracting younger people into drinking real ale, becoming a member of CAMRA and being active with the Solihull Branch.

I've got lots of ideas which I intend to implement over the next year, which include writing regular articles in the Drinker Magazine, contacting the current young members to get feedback and starting a 'Recommend a Friend' scheme for new young members (further details to follow in the next edition).

I have also set up a Facebook page for the Solihull Branch. This is so we can get messages out about social events and general beer news, and hopefully attract new members to CAMRA. You can view the page at www.facebook.com/pages/solihull-camra/154207611309607 or just search for 'Solihull CAMRA' in the Facebook search. Feel free to 'Like' the page and get the updates in your Facebook news feed.

Well, that's it from me for this issue, but I plan on writing regular articles in the future editions of the Drinker where I will keep you updated on progress and news regarding young members.

Simon Tomlinson

Solihull CAMRA Young Persons Contact





**The Royal British Legion
90th Anniversary Celebration
In aid of the Poppy Appeal
at Solihull Royal British Legion,
Union Road, Solihull B91 3DH**

Thursday 9th June: 8.00pm start: The Sharmanaires Big Band; Beer Festival with wide range of 10 real ales; Raffle; admission £5.00 per person.

Friday 10th June: 11.00am start: Beer Festival—wide range of real ales; All Day Bar; “All Our Yesterdays”: display of photographs and memorabilia reflecting the history of SRBL; admission free.

Saturday 11th June: 11.00am start: Beer Festival—wide range of real ales; All Day Bar; Barbecue; “Something Special” Variety Show; raffle/Tombola and many other events; admission free.

Sunday 12th June: 11.00am start: Beer Festival—wide range of real ales; All Day Bar; Phil Phillips Quintet; Raffle; Hot & Cold food; admission £5.00 per person.

Come and join us in the festivities and have a great time—everyone welcome: children, family and friends!!

Membership Matters

If you're not already a CAMRA member you probably won't know what it costs to join, or indeed how the level of fees are decided. In this month's "What's Brewing" (the free newspaper you get each month once you've joined) it is reported that the method by which fees are to be set is not to be changed.

At the recent AGM in Sheffield (not a bad place for a pub crawl I understand!) the proposal that the National Executive would be allowed to change the cost of membership without further consultation was defeated. This means that changes will, as before, have to be agreed by a vote at the AGM. I hope that by telling you this that you'll be so impressed by the very democratic way we do things in CAMRA your desire to join will become irresistible. And now back to the actual cost; Single Member, £20, Joint £25. See the separate page in this magazine for the application form with full details. What could be easier?

Bob Jackson, Membership Secretary

POTY 2011 - The Bulls Head, Barston

The Bulls' Head at Barston won one of a CAMRA branch's highest accolades recently when it was voted as its Pub of the Year. The presentation of the award took place on Tuesday 24th May, when licensee Martin Bradley took possession of a framed certificate from Carl Wright, Branch Chairman.

Carl explained that the Bulls Head always offered a warm welcome to all-comers, has wonderful home-made seasonal food, and most importantly has a good range of excellently-kept real ales, which had not gone unnoticed by local CAMRA members.

He went on to say that it gave the Solihull and District Branch of CAMRA great pleasure to announce that we had awarded the Bulls Head, Barston, Pub of the Year 2011. This award is not new to the Bulls Head, having previously won it in 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2009, and we were all pleased that Brad and Joy, together with their hard-working staff, had once again been successful in winning for this year.

They are to be commended for all their efforts and we would like to offer our congratulations to the worthy winner: the Bulls Head.



Martin Bradley receives the POTY award from Carl Wright (photo courtesy of Steve Evans, Seven Stars Photography)

The White Lion

Since the White Lion, Hampton-in-Arden, reopened last autumn, I had been meaning to go there for a meal, but didn't manage it till this year. My recent birthday seemed a good excuse and as my partner Carl and I had friends staying over I booked us all in for lunch. The beers proved particularly tempting to the two men, and were pronounced in excellent condition, while I went for dry white house wine which was very crisp and pleasant. Starters consisted of the duo of calamari and the soup of the day, tomato, and I have to say that the battered calamari was the best I have ever



eaten, including when holidaying in Greece. The mains did not disappoint either: the fishcakes were eaten with relish, the moules were great, and the scallop and bacon brochettes were lingered lovingly over. Portions were generous and cooked very well, the pub was busy but not crowded and we were made to feel welcome and not rushed. I'd certainly recommend eating there, especially for a special occasion; and next time I'm planning try the impossibly enormous Sunday roast option!

Julia Hammonds

Crafty Contest

"I could have been a judge but I didn't have the Latin. I didn't have the Latin for the rigorous judging exams."- E.L. Wisty.

When Karl at Church End Brewery asked me to help judge the Homebrew Forum's Spring Thing, the task seemed a daunting one. Who was I, unschooled in the rigorous art of judging, to assess their good work? On the other hand, who better? Show me to the ales. Judging was by The National Guild of Wine and Beer Judges and, er, me. The NGWBJ has rigorous admission exams, whereas I have not. I fancied the beers in my class were going to be less rigorously examined than they deserved. Thank you to the President, Richard Brooksbank, for giving me my instructions. In the class I judged, the brewers were challenged to aim for Church End's Cutting Ale: 4.8% and single-hopped with Centennial. There were six more classes for other lovely beer styles. In mine, the ten entries concealed amongst them a works entry from our hosts at Church End. I felt the entrants fell into three categories, those with faults, those that reproduced Cutting Ale, and those distinguished by vivid hop character. This was a relief, because I had feared they would all turn out the same.



Everyone started with the same recipe but the variety of the results was astounding. My winner had the floral hop nose, complex palate and satisfying bitterness which bitter drinkers are forever in search of. It was no coincidence that my third placed beer was entered by the same genius, Jon. My silver medallist, Rich, entered a beer which sacrificed nose and bitterness for the most sophisticated and scintillating a palate I have enjoyed in years. The scoring is weighted for flavour so it got 51 out of 65, equal in points to my winner. Jon explained to me that the difference between his two brews was in the timing of the addition of the hops to the boil. But I was already on my eleventh beer of the morning and was no longer paying attention. In the increasingly blind tasting, I had failed to identify the works beer. "39 out of 65. Well balanced, but under-hopped," I had written in the notes. "I agree," said a despondent Karl.

Two points: it is one thing to analyse a thimbleful of hop essence, another to quaff a foaming bumper and feel like a second helping. Furthermore, my gold medal choice which went on to overall victory in the show, was at least a Church End recipe. Needless to say, I enjoyed myself: the effort embodied in those hundreds of bottles and the organisation of the event itself must have been huge. They're making it bigger next year and I don't blame them. I learned from Rich that craft brewers need to use a higher hop rate in their recipes than the commercials and they certainly enjoy pitching them in. This is a wonderful thing if you like your bitters zesty.

Are we to conclude that we want our beers mashed in big vessels and boiled in small ones? Clearly more research is required. Now where did I put my curly wig and drinking gavel? I feel almost qualified to use them. Find out more about craft brewing at: <http://thehomebrewforum.co.uk/> and about judging the results at <http://www.ngwbj.org.uk/>

"Harry Porter"

The Red Lion, Erdington

Erdington is a part of the city that many Solihull CAMRA members would not think of visiting. However, there are a couple of pubs worth a visit. I recently visited one, The Red Lion.



On hearing that its beer range had improved considerably I thought a visit was called for. The pub on Station Road is only some 200 yards walk from Erdington Station and is easily recognised by its Victorian exterior. Built in 1899 for Mitchells and Butlers, the architects were Wood and Kendrick. Consisting of a large bar area and an even larger lounge at the back, it is an impressive building. It also boasts in the original design an upstairs games room. Architecturally it has a superb domed canopy over the entrance of textured and coloured glass. However the 3D

tiled bar front is something to behold. Allegedly the longest tiled bar front in Birmingham, it is really something worth seeing. The pub has recently been taken over by a publican keen on real ale.

So, to the beer. On tap at the time of my visit was Purity Ubu; Beowulf Beorma and Wye Valley HPA, which all got a score of 3 out of 5; if they had been a little cooler then 4 out of 5 would have been deserved. The only reticence I feel in recommending a visit is that some of the language in the pub left a lot to be desired and was a little intimidating.

I would like to thank Mick Slaughter from CAMRA's Pub Preservation Group for permission to use his photograph.

Steve Dyson

The Wild Boar, Warwick

For those who haven't visited recently, the Wild Boar in Warwick (27 Lakin Road, near the station) is a wonderful surprise: newly refurbished last year; the Slaughterhouse Brewery lives onsite and can be seen through a glass wall; and there were no less than 10 excellently-kept real ales on at a recent visit. They also have links with Everards Brewery which is promoting real ales (including theirs' of course, but allowing the landlord to choose many other guests,). If you want a night out in Warwick then the proximity to the station means you can be car-free, and you won't be disappointed. Bar snacks including rolls can be had but not meals so plan to eat before or while you are out.



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J.D. Wetherspoon

The White Swan and The Assembly Rooms each offer two regular ales and a good selection of guest ales from both regional and UK breweries. Both pubs are pleased to announce consistent 'Cask Marque' and 'Best Bar None' accreditations and last year both received a 4-star accreditation from the Scores on the Doors, Food Hygiene Standards.-

The White Swan, 32–34 Station Road, Solihull, B91 3SB

Phone: 0121 711 5180

Opening times:

Sun — Wed: 8.00am — 12.00am
Thurs — Sat: 8.00am — 12.30am

Offering 5 guest ales daily.

A music-free venue screening live Freeview sporting events.

2010 Winner of Solihull Best Bar None Best Town Centre Pub and Overall Winner of 2010 Best Bar None

New entry in the 2011 CAMRA Good Beer Guide



The Assembly Rooms, 21 Poplar Road, Solihull, B91 3AD

Phone: 0121 711 6990

Opening times:

Sun — Wed: 7.00am — 1.00am
Thurs — Sat: 7.00am — 2.00am

2 regular ales, 3 guest ales and 5 real ciders on hand-pull. Live sporting events screened weekly; DJ's and dancing Thurs-Saturday; and all-new Sunday Quiz Night coming soon.

Having a party? Our upstairs bar with seating for 70 is available to hire and can include music arrangements: as well as food and drink, tailored to your needs: please ask for details.



Both pubs: Cider Festival: 21st to 31st July—featuring up to 12 ciders

The Assembly Rooms are having a Meet the Brewer Night on Wed 8th June at 7.30pm
Two Towers Brewery, all welcome

The White Swan is setting up a really great Wednesday Pie & Pint offer for CAMRA members, coming soon, steak and kidney pie or a veggie alternative.—watch this space.

**For further information, please contact Dawn at The White Swan.
(Be a real JD Wetherspoon's fan— join us on Facebook!)**



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