Solihull

Issue No 76 Summer 2016



Drinker

Free Please take one



The Bulls Head at Barston wins Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year for the 7th time

Solihull CAMRA members visited the Bulls Head at Barston on the 27th April to present Brad with his 7th Pub Of The Year award. Even without the CAMRA visitors the pub was extremely busy for a Wednesday, a testament to its popularity.

This award comes during Brad's 50th year as a licensee and in his 29th year at the Bulls Head. Having started at the Wayfarer in 1966

(five years before CAMRA was born), he spent 6 years at what is now the Miller and Carter in Hockley Heath, then 12 years relief in Solihull, before taking over at the Bulls Head in 1987. His first Pub Of The Year award was in 1998.

Brad prides himself on the quality of the beer he serves, and praised his experienced staff who all contribute to the success of this friendly pub.

THE BULLS HEAD

Barston Lane, Barston B92 0JU Tel: 01675 442830

Brad, Joy & the team welcome you to their award-winning
15th century village inn



Opening hours: Mon—Thurs: 11am—2.30pm & 5.00pm—11pm Friday, Saturday and Sunday: 11.00am—11.00pm.

Winner: Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year award 2016

Listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide for over 20 years & 7 times Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year winner

Cask Marque accredited—3 real ales on at all times

Home-cooked meals available lunchtimes and evenings Mondays to Saturdays in the comfortable pub bars or separate intimate restaurant (Sundays: Lunch only: available from 12 noon to 3pm)

"No, Sir: There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn."

— Samuel Johnson



www.TheBullsHeadBarston.co.uk

Hail to the Ale! Local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

The Pup and Duckling, Olton

After opening in February with a choice of 4 real ales, the offering has now been expanded to 6 with the addition of another couple of handpumps. 6 real ciders are also now offered. The garden at the rear is now useable, and there are potentially plans to expand it. Business continues to be good and the turnover of real ales is high (so if you see an interesting one on the Facebook page get there quick!). Over the weekend of the 14th May Jeff served his 90th different beer.

The Fieldhouse, Solihull

There will be two more "Meet The Brewer" events over the summer. Timothy Taylor will be visiting again in June, and Marstons at the end of July. At the end of September the pub will be receiving a major refurbishment—details to follow in forthcoming issues of the Drinker.

The Lyndon, Olton

The Lyndon is under new management.

The Wharf, Hockley Heath

The Wharf is under new management. Samantha, who was previously at the Bear Tavern in Smethwick, is used to offering a good variety of beers and aims to re-build the beer range. Two fixed beers are on on the bar: Golden Hen and Greene King IPA, with the other 4 pumps containing a variety of regularly changing beers.

The Reservoir, Earlswood

The Reservoir has been recently refurbished and rebranded as a Hungry Horse. Three beers were on tap on a recent visit; Greene King IPA, Abbott, and UBU.

Inn on the Green

The Inn on the Green in Acocks Green recently won the Birmingham CAMRA 2015/16 Pub of the Year award. The Inn prides itself in serving a good variety of unusual beers. Check their website for details www.innonthegreen.pub. Their next beer festival is due on the 14th—16th July and is worth a visit.



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THE COLEBROOK INN

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT.

Shiv and the team welcome you to the new look Colebrook



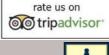
Haslucks Green Road Haslucks Green Solihull B90 211

Tel: 0121 744 6871



The Colebrook Pub Shirley

@TheColebrook





Opening hours: Mon—Frí: 11.30 am—midnight Saturday and Sunday: 10.00am—midnight NEW!

Join us for weekend brunch. From 10.00 am Sat and Sun Food served 11.30—10.00 pm every day.

Serving between 7 and 9 cask ales, including up to 7 guests. Monday Cask Ale Club All cask ales £2.49/ pint CAMRA members get 20p/ pint discount Tues-Sun

The Colebrook Inn, Shirley

The Colebrook re-opened after a rapid renovation on the 22nd April. As well as opening up the interior to feel more spacious, new furniture has been added and the pub decorated. 14 more benches have been added outside at the front and side of the pub. The pumps and beer lines are new and a caskmaster appointed. 2 regular beers are now offered with between 5 and 7 changing guests.

Stratford Alehouse

The Stratford Alehouse has won the Shakespeare CAMRA Pub of the Year award. You can find it easily when walking from the station into Stratford, and is well worth dropping in for some refreshment.

The Beech House

Will be closing in June for a full refurbishment.

Rock and Roll Brewery

Mark Shepherd who brews for the Blue Bell Cider House has moved the Rock and Roll Brewery to the Jewellery Quarter from the Lamp with his Brewster Lynn Crossland. The new premises increases his capacity, but brewing at the Blue Bell Cider House is unchanged.

The Shed Brewery

Perry Clarke of the Shed Brewery announced at the recent Shirley Beer Festival that he would be mothballing the brewery as of the 1st June. He thanked his customers and expressed a hope to be back in a few years.

innonthegreen.pub

CAMRA Birmingham PUB of the YEAR 2015

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BEER FESTIVAL 19TH JULY

20 + ALES 6 CIDERS

ROASTED PIG Fri & Sat from 4pm WESELL AWESOME

ALES, CIDERS

CRAFT BOTTLES

CRAFT KEG

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Sat 16th - TREVOR BURTON

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We always seek New Breweries New Ales

Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

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

Monday 4th July Rowington Club, Rowington
Monday 1st August The Drum and Monkey, Dorridge

Monday 5th September The Vaults, Knowle

Committee Meetings

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

Monday 18th July The Lyndon

Socials

Wednesday 8th June Harborne Crawl

Saturday 25th June Charlbury Beer Festival Trip Saturday 9th July Coventry GBG Pubs Crawl

July Lichfield Crawl (date and details TBC)
TBC August Real Ale Ramble (date and details TBC)

For more details and contacts for the above, 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.

Midlands Area Beer Festivals

June 9–11 (Thu-Sat):

41ST WOLVERHAMPTON BEER FEST

Newhampton Arts Centre, Dunkley St, Wolverhampton WV1 4AN. Note: venue change. Open Thu 5-11pm, Fri + Sat noon-11pm. Entry: Thu £3 Fri 12noon-5pm, £2; 5-11pm £4, Sat Free all day. CAMRA membs get £1 beer tokens except Sat. 75 real ales + range of ciders, perries + foreign bottled beer bar. Entertainment Fri eve only TBA. Facebook: Wolverhampton CAMRA Beer Festival 2016

June 10-11 (Fri-Sat):

10TH STRATFORD-UPON-AVON BEER & CIDER FEST

Stratford-uponAvon Racecourse, Luddington Rd, Warwickshire CV37 9SE. 70+ real ales, 30+ ciders/perries. Theme: Wales, West + the Best. Organised by Shakespeare CAMRA. Open: Fri 12noon-11pm; Sat 11am-11pm. Approx 20min walk from Rail Stn, brown tourist signs to Racecourse

all roads in + around Stratford. Minibus: via train stn. Food avail all sessions. Live entertainment on Sat. Quiet room avail. Tkts avail at entry, £10 package incl Commemorative glass (fully refundable), Fest Prog + £5 Beer/Cider tokens. CAMRA membs with valid membership card get 2 free half pint tokens.

Website: www.stratfordbeerfestival.org. uk Twitter: @SoABeerFestival #StratfordBeerFest

June 11 (Sat)

BLUE BELL CIDER HOUSE BEER FEST

All day, free entry. Band (Bang on the Ear) from 5pm to 9pm.

June 17-19 (Fri– Sun)

LADY LANE WHARF BEER FESTIVAL Lady Lane, Earlswood—20 beers and 6 ciders. Fri 6pm-11pm, Sat 11 am —midnight. Sun Father's day deal (see ad). Music Fri eve Riggerz, Sat pm 1-5 Back In The Band, Sat 9 pm New Street. Free entry and tasting notes.

Continued on page 8

The Award Winning

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- ♦ fresh, home-cooked food to order
- ♦ live music every Saturday
- ♦ the finest cask ales—3 main brands & 1 guest
- ♦ speciality ciders

www.ladylanewharf.co.uk

Tel: 01564 702552

open: Monday — Saturday: 11.00am — 11.00pm Sunday: 11.00am — 10.30pm email: granthyland@hotmail.co.ul

2016 beer festival: Friday 17th to Sunday 19th June 20 beers & 6 ciders

Fathers Day (19th) 1pint of cask ale free with Dad's Sunday Lunch

Come and try us. A friendly, relaxed atmosphere awaits you!



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www.wharftavern.co.uk



Great beer garden

Home Cooked Roasts every Sunday

Live Music every

Under New Management 6 frequently changing cask taps Wide range of World & Craft Beers 10% discount for CAMRA members For updates & more information go to www.facebook.com/wharftavern

Opening Hours: 12 noon—12 midnight Food Service: 12 noon—10.00pm

Continued from page 6

June 17-18 (Fri-Sat):

NUNEATON & BEDWORTH BEER FEST

Co-op Social Club, Dugdale St, Nuneaton CV11 5QJ. Thirst & Last beer fest. Town centre venue 5min walk from railway stn. 40 real ales, ciders/perries. Open:12noon-1030pm both days. Entry: card carrying CAMRA membs 50p, all others £2. Entry pack to incl beer tokens + souvenir glass (refundable). Food avail all sessions. Entertainment Fri night MacAwe (folk & blues) Sat night Furious Custard (punk & rock) more info see www.nuneaton.camra.org.uk or facebook Nuneaton Bedworth CAMRA

June 30 - July 2 (Thu-Sat):

14TH BROMSGROVE BEER FEST

Bromsgrove Rugby Football Club, Finstall Rd, Bromsgrove B60 3DH (5min walk from Bromsgrove rail Stn). £5 entry incl prog + refundable £2 souvenir glass. CAMRA membs get extra £2 worth of drinks tokens. 144 real ales + 50 ciders/perries. Food, camping + entertainment on field, provided by Bromsgrove Rugby Club. Thu 6pm-11pm (CAMRA membs only), Fri 12noon-11pm, Sat 11am-9pm. bromsgrovebeerfestival.org.uk facebook.com/BromBeerFest

July 6-10 (Wed—Sat):

DERBY SUMMER BEER FESTIVAL

Market Place, Derby. Further info at: http://www.derbycamra.org.uk/summer -beer-festival/

July 14-17 (Thur-Sun):

INN ON THE GREEN BEER FEST

2 Westley Road, Acocks Green, Birmingham B27 7UH. 20+ales, 6 ciders. Roasted pig Fri and Sat from 4.00pm. Music Fri and Sat live and free. 20p per pint off for CAMRA members.

July 15-17 (Fri-Sun):

HOPPING BONKERS BEER AND MUSIC **FESTIVAL**

Silhillians Sports Club. Warwick Road, Knowle, Solihull B93 9LW. Just off M42 at Junction 5. £17.50 entry to include festival glass, programme and £10 worth of drinking vouchers. CAMRA members get extra £2.50 worth of drinking vouchers. Up to 100 beers and ciders, street food and live music. Friday 4pm till 10.30pm, Saturday 12 noon till 10.30pm and Sunday 12 noon till 4.30pm. www.hoppingbonkers.co.uk facebook.com/hoppingbonkers Twitter @HoppingBonkersJuly

July 22-24 (Fri-Sun):

MARKET BOSWORTH RAIL ALE FEST

Goods Shed, Station Rd, Mkt Bosworth CV13 0PF. Presented by Hinckley & Bosworth CAMRA joint with Battlefield Line Preserved Railway. Open: 11am-11pm Fri & Sat, 11am-6pm Sun. 70 real ales, cider/perry & fruit wines at Goods Shed & on trains. Pimm's Bar Dr Busker Fri & Sat



eves. Many full size rd engines + narrow gauge steam train rides, brake van rides pulled by Teddy (Rev. Boston's engine), vintage vehicles, fairgroundorgan, stalls, hot & cold food +

children's entertainment. Regular steam+diesel trains between Shackerstone, Mkt Bosworth + Shenton. Entry: £5, free to CAMRA membs. Free minibus to + from Hinckley (must book). Free parking at Mkt Bosworth + Shackerstone Stns. Camping & caravanning (£12/night) Day out for whole family. More info: www.hinckleyandbosworthcamra.org. uk Facebook: www.facebook.com/MarketBosworthRailAleFestival/

July 28-30 (Thu-Sat):

9TH STAFFORD BEER & CIDER FEST

Blessed William Howard Schl, Rowley Ave, Stafford ST17 9AB. (10min walk from Stafford rail stn, off Newport Rd.) 80 real ales + 30 ciders/perries + country wine + bottled beer bar. Incl LocAle Bar. Food avail all sessions. Live music Fri eve, Sat aft + eve. Open: Thu 6-11pm, Fri 1130am -4pm + 4-11pm, Sat 12-7pm + 7-11pm. Fri + Sat aft families welcome, other sessions over18's. Entry: £1 Thurs & Fri aft; £3 Fri eve; £2 Sat aft; free Sat eve. £1 entry discount to CAMRA membs with valid cards. Refundable glass hire £3 or souvenir glass £3 (while stocks last). www. staffordbeerfestival.co.uk

Twitter: @StaffsBeerFest

Facebook: Stafford Beer Festival

July 29-30 (Fri-Sat):

BLACK EAGLE BEER FESTIVAL

Large selection of real ales and ciders Friday 29th & Saturday 30th July 11.30am to 11.00pm both days. Food available all day, free admission. 16 Factory Rd, Hockley, Birmingham B18 5JU. (100 yds from Benson Rd Metro station)

Tel: 0121 523 4008.

www.theblackeaglepub.co.uk

Aug 4-6 (Thu-Sat)

16th WORCESTER CAMRA BEER, CIDER & PERRY FESTIVAL

Worcester Racecourse. Over 170 real ales, over 100 real draught ciders and perries, fruit and grape wines, food and entertainment. Thurs: 5pm - 11pm, Fri: 12 noon - 11pm, Sat: 12 noon - 10pm. Entrance £6 Thur & Sat, £9 Friday. Friday is limited to ADVANCE TICKETS ONLY. Advance tickets are also advised for Saturday. Buy advance tickets on-line from the festival website www.worcesterbeerfest.org.uk/.

Aug 11-13 (Thu-Sat)

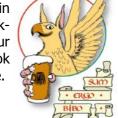
BLACK COUNTRY BEER FESTIVAL

Lye Cricket Club, Stourbridge Road Sports Ground, Lye, West Mids DY9 7DH. Up to 105 real ales, ciders and perrys. £10 entry includes glass and £5 of drinks vouchers. £2 off for CAMRA members. Live music, Black Country BBQ. Times: Thur 6-11pm, Fri & Sat 12pm -11pm Contact 07916 620 934 or www.blackcountrybeerfestival.com/ for more details.

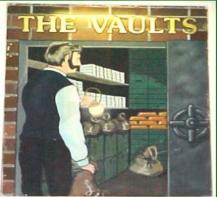
18th Annual Solihull CAMRA Beer Festival

Our own branch beer festival will take place this Autumn.

Details will appear in the September Drinker magazine, on our website and Facebook page nearer the time.



Nick, Gwen & staff welcome you to The Vaults



St John's Close, Knowle

the Real Ale venue in Knowle

6 hand-pumped beers including Sharp's Doom Bar & Atlantic, Wadworth Henry's Original IPA and Salopian Shropshire Gold + 2 ever-changing guests, plus Rattler's Cornish Cyder

Previous multiple Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year award winner

Continuously listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide since 1993

> Food available lunchtimes Mondays - Saturdays 12.00-2.00pm

Opening hours: Mon—Wed:

12.00-2.30pm & 5.00-11.30pm

Thurs, Fri & Sat:

12.00-11.30pm Sun:

12.00-11.00pm

Exclusive New Beer Launched at Ember Inns



Ember Inns has launched Ember Inns Pale Ale in collaboration with Black Sheep Brewery.

Ember Inns Pale Ale is the first beer Black

Sheep has brewed exclusively for another brand. The 4.0% ABV has been crafted in collaboration with Ember Inns Cask Ambassadors, involved in every step of the process from the first meeting to approving the final tasting.

This new beer is now served across Embers' 147 UK pubs.

David Briggs, Operations Director for Ember Inns said: "We're always looking for innovative ways to develop our offer, and with our reputation for serving quality ale, the partnership with Black Sheep was a natural next step. The brew has been shaped by the Black Sheep and Ember team, using in-depth knowledge of our guests and their tastes. Black Sheep really impressed us with its modern approach and commitment to quality and embraced the collaboration, working side by side with us to create a consistent final product.

ADRIAN AND THE COMMITTEE WARMLY WELCOME YOU TO The Rowington Club



Featured in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide Solihull & District CAMRA Club of the Year 2014

Rowington Green, Rowington, Warwickshire CV35 7DB Telephone: 01564 782087

Three regularly changing real ales always on

Large car park Games available: Snooker, Pool, Darts, Dominoes

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

12 noon – 11pm

Full membership: £20.00 p.a.
Single visits for guests: £1.00
(free to card-carrying

CAMRA members)

There will be plenty of entertainment going on during Summer! For full details of all events, please ring Adrian at the Club

Bath Long Weekend Away—Part 2

Our next stop, The Griffin is a street corner pub and to my mind has one of the best beer ranges in Bath. Consisting of two rooms and again modern in style it also offers B&B. On tap were Moor 'Nor Hop Left Handed Giant Brewing Co. USPA, Electric Bear Persuasion, Bristol Beer Factory Nova, and Timothy Taylor Landlord. The Moor was just my drink, light, clean and hoppy.

A short walk brought us to the GBG Raven, which I found a little disappointing. Beers on the bar were Raven brewed by Blindmans, Two Cocks Muskett, Teignworthy Sea Dog, and Sunny Republic Huna Red, two of which were in poor condition. The pub dates from the 18th century and is a free house. Comfortable, but there is a need for them to monitor their beer quality more closely.

On to the Salamander, another Bath Ales pub, easily missed as it is well hidden. The refurb that Bath Ales gave it when they took it over in 2000 has detracted from the cosy pub I remembered. Nevertheless there were a bank of handpumps boasting Bath Ales Barnsey, SPA Festivity and Beerd Silvertip [an arm of Bath Ales]. Quality was good but the Festivity seemed to me to be end of the barrel.

Not far away was the Old Green tree, and despite a few of us having visited it on the previous day we returned to a much busier pub. There was one different beer on tap, Indulgence Ruby Porter at 5.2% - just a half for me, a cracking beer.

Tucked away in New Bond Street was our next pub, the Volunteer Rifleman's Arms. Another compact pub it has a downstairs bar and an upstairs eating area. I felt the beer range was a little unimaginative with VRA Best Bitter brewed by Moles, Butcombe Bitter, Fullers London Pride, and Exmoor Gold.



A great offer at the Volunteer Rifleman's Arms

Packing them in we made our way to the GBG listed Pig and Fiddle. On arrival we found the pub to be heaving. It has always been popular with all ages so it did not surprise me and with it being Friday night the night life was beginning to hit the pubs. Nevertheless a fight to the bar showed a good range of beers. Oakham Car Thief, a superb hoppy dark beer and only 3.6%, Butcombe Bitter [not too good], Crimson King Big Red, and Provenance Alsace [brewed by Hydes] propped up the bar. The noise led us to leave sooner than we might have done, but we did have two more pubs to visit before the end of the night.

The Star Inn is one of **the** pubs to visit in Bath. It has a long history. On CAMRA's National Inventory it is a little

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4 Craft Beers

Opening Hours 08.00—23.00 Sun—Wed 08.00—24.00 Thurs

08.00—01.00 Fri—Sat

way out of the town centre. Licensed in 1760 it is one of the oldest pubs in Bath. The interior we see today dates from the late 1920's when it was refurbed by Gaskell and Chambers, a Birmingham firm which specialised in handpumps. It's an extremely comfortable pub having grown organically over the years, never losing its atmosphere. It has always been renowned for selling Draught Bass direct from the



barrel. Abbey Ales from Bath now own the pub so it is nice to see them serving other breweries' beers. Maybe this explains its success. The pub was very busy and a folk group was tucked into one corner of the pub. As well as Draught Bass there was Abbey Bell Ringer; Castle Rock Elsie Mo and Brains Open Gaskett. With reluctance we made our way to the last pub of the night, The Bell.

The pub was packed, however we managed to get to the bar where Milk Street Blonde, Butcombe Bitter, Hop Back Summer Lightning, Bath Gem, Otter Ale Jurassic Durdle Door, Bunces Danish Dynamite, and RCH Pitchfork were waiting. Excellent range of beers and a very friendly pub. We got talking to two couples from Lichfield who were down in Bath for a long weekend. So our first full day in Bath was at an end,

Continued overleaf

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and contented we made our way back to our hotel for a good night's sleep.

Saturday morning was a bright, clear day so our decision the previous night to do a little sight-seeing enabled us to wander around Bath to enjoy its architecture, shops, museums, and cafes. We planned to meet up at 3pm. Suffice to say a small splinter party found it difficult to pass an open pub so by the time we met at the James Street Brewhouse they had already had a drink or two in the Hall and Woodhouse of which they were not too impressed. It was churlish too for them not to pop into the Garrick Head and the Assembly Inn too.

The James Street Brewhouse was the local CAMRA groups Pub of the Year 2015. An onsite brewery in an extensive pub which also had a heated marquee to take the overflow proved a fine start to the afternoon with Electric Bear Persuasion, Celt Golden Age, Castle Combe Pendulum, and the pub's own beers James Street Gladiator, Emperor, and Ostiarius. I sampled all 5 and gave the Celt, Emperor, and Ostiarius 4 out of 5. They really were superb. Although very much a foody pub it is a must for anyone visiting Bath.

Although not on our itinerary we popped our noses into the Cork where Box Steam Going Conkers,; Castle Combe Pendulum, and an excellent Dark Star Rockhead at 6% made the visit worthwhile.

Back on the itinerary, the Ring O' Bells is near Bath railway station in Widcombe. It was very quiet inside. Beers available were Moles Best and Elmo's Fire. It was disconcerting that the beer was in a jug at the bar which glasses

were filled up from. Quite how long it had been standing we did not know, but the barmaid said that she did not want to see it go to waste. However, we insisted on fresh beer from the pump. All I can say was the beer was OK. I've never been a great Moles fan.

Our next pub is one I've wished to go to on many previous occasions when I have visited Bath, but never quite got there. The Royal Oak at Twerton is some way out of the city centre. Maybe the route we took was not the best either. On arrival at the pub we were greeted by a quite basic two roomed pub sporting 8 handpumps and 11 ciders. Butts Jester, Barbus Barbus, Kelham Island Pale Rider, Yeovil Ales Ruby, Downton Wicker Man, Chimera IPA, Grafton Sir Tristan, and Borough Puddlers were a refreshing change to the beers we had seen during the last two days. They were all in good condition, the Pale Rider being very good indeed. Being peckish we negotiated with the landlord who made no objection to us bringing in some fish and chips from a nearby shop.



Some of us didn't fancy the walk back into the Bath so we caught a taxi to our next pub. The rest of the party

walked back to enable them to revisit some of the pubs that we had done on Thursday so we arranged to meet them at the Pultney Arms.

The pub was heaving with Rugby fans from the Bath vs Leinster match so it was a struggle to get to the bar.. A pub since 1792 and GBG listed it proved to be a very friendly, comfortable pub partly due to the well-oiled Rugby fans. Timothy Taylor Landlord, Otter Ale, and Youngs Special were on the bar. Not very inspiring however the Landlord was in excellent condition. The others hadn't turned up by the time we considered leaving so we made our way to the last pub of the night, the King William. A quick phone call located them and we arranged to meet up there.

A little way out of the centre of Bath the King William is a small street corner local and part of the company who own the Garrick Head. Stonehenge King William, Three Daggers Dagger Ale, and Otter head were available. We didn't bother with the Otter, the others being in good condition. The others still had not turned up so we made tracks to go home when they arrived just as we left the pub. They had been delayed by visiting the Bell and the Star on the way to meet us. They decided to call it a day also, so we all made our way back to the hotel.

Bath is a fine city and ideally suited for a short holiday or as a base for a week. It also has some fine pubs. We did not get to every pub in Bath, maybe a return visit is called for!

Steve Dyson

HOPPING BONKERS AT THE OLD SILHILLIANS SPORTS CLUB, KNOWLE

SOLIHULL'S PREMIER BEER FESTIVAL

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Haslucks Green Road, Shirley 0121 744 6871



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TUES

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PROSECCO/PI

FRI/SAT/SUN

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SUN

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OODMANS REST

Union Road, Solihull. 0121 745 3904

RED LION

1672 High Street, Knowle. 01564 771522

BULLS HEAD

1320 Stratford Road, Hall Green. 0121 7020931



ALL CASK ALES 9 PINT - ALL DAY

RGER AND DRINK FROM £6.99*

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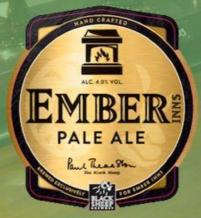
NK BUBBLy - £10 ET -£30 BOTTLE*

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SELECTED WINE 10 PER BOTTLE*

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HOME OF



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CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE



Bewdley Daytime Crawl

Continuing our daytime weekday pub crawls, a party of seven of us descended on the Severn riverside town of Bewdley. It's easy to get to from Solihull as a direct train takes us to Kidderminster, where frequent bus services take you to the heart of Bewdley.

Our first port of call was to be the Bewdley Brewery Tap, only open Friday and Saturday. On entering we were told it would not be opening until Easter time so we went onto our next port of call, the Little Packhorse.

Just a few yards from the Tap the Little Packhorse is a long standing GBG entry. Dating from the 15th century it is hidden at the far end of High Street. Having a small bar and a long lounge/dining area it sported on the bar Hobson's Twisted Spire and Town Crier and Three Tuns XXX. I sampled the fine Hoppy Twisted Spire.

Ever onward we went to the Mug House on the waterfront on Severnside. More a foody pub and very busy, the bar had six handpumps that greeted us with Wye Valley HPA, Tim Taylor Landlord, Purity Mad Goose, Bewdley Worcester Way, and Ludlow



Solihull CAMRA members supping at The Great Western, Bewdley.

Boiling Well. The Mad Goose was excellent

Sensing it would be a good idea to eat we made our way to Wetherspoons George Hotel. A typical range of beers were on, supplemented by Banks and Taylors Crooked Hooker, Goddards Fuggle De Dum, Dark Star Revelation, Brains Phonics, Vale Punk is Dead, Robinsons Trooper 666, and Greene King Old Speckled Hen. Revelation was my choice here and at 5.7% proved to be ever much the American Pale Ale I expected.

A revelation to me was the next pub on our list. For many years the Great Western has had its ups and downs, but now having been completely refurbished and with six beers on together with interior decoration of railway memorabilia, it is a must visit pub. It is also convenient for the Severn Valley Railway station. So what was on the bar? Belhaven IPA, Joe Thompson Coast, Bewdlev Penpoint Cornish Worcestershire Way, Bewdley 2657, Greene King St Edmund, and Old Golden Hen. Maybe not the most imaginative range of beers, but enough to suit all tastes. Certainly the beers that we tried were all in good condition.

With that our trip to Bewdley finished. We arrived in Kidderminster with time to spare so it seemed churlish not to pop into the Weavers and King and Castle where 12 beers were there for us to sample. All in all a great day out and very easy to get to.

So, our thoughts went to where next.... Lichfield, you have been given advance warning.

Steve Dyson



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Status Quo Creation In Wetherspoons Cider Festival

The next Wetherspoons National Cider Festival runs from the 8th—24th July and contains 25 ciders.

One of the ciders selected is a joint creation of the Herefordshire firm Celtic Marches with Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt of Status Quo. Named Down Down, after the band's 1975 hit single it is a golden medium cider made with fresh-pressed cider apples grown on the Celtic Marches family farm. The cider will be available in three formats: carbonated in 500ml bottles and 30-litre keg, and still in 20-litre boxes.

The 'Dog Of Two Head' ale has also been brewed in conjunction with Hobsons Brewery in Shropshire. It is a chestnut amber traditional ale, with a modern citrus twist delivered by the British hops. The ale is made by Hobsons from British malting barley and a blend of UK-grown Fuggles, Challenger, Goldings and Progress hops.

The band were involved in the brewing process and cider making right from the off, visiting the facilities, working with each of the relevant teams in choosing the individual elements of each product – even spending a day harvesting apples for the cider.

"We know what we like," Francis Rossi said, "and we know what our fans like. And I think we can all agree that we like these!"

'Dog Of Two Head' will be available on draught at selected licensed venues from June.

Beers Around Here—Beers reported around Solihull over the last Quarter

Saxon Cheswick Green: Wye Valley HPA, Fuller's London Pride and Wadworth's Dirty Rucker

Lady Lane Wharf: Goffs Launcelot and Jouster, Jennings Sneck Lifter, Ringwood Old Thumper, Liverpool Organic Brewery Rakau, Ringwood 49er, Thwaites Wainwright, Jennings Cocker Hoop ,Wye Valley HPA Greene King St Edmunds, LWC's Hop & Glory

Red Lion, Knowle: Skinner's Lushingtons Sunshine Pale Ale

Knowle & Dorridge Cricket Club: Salopian Darwin's Origin, Ossett's Pale Gold Bay

Hillfield Farm: Silhill Pure Star and Belhaven Golden Bay

Bulls Head, Barston: Otter Brewery's Spring, Wadworth 6X, Purity Mad Goose and Adnam's Southwold Bitter

Wharf Tavern Hockley Heath: Black Sheep Holy Grail, St Austell Spring Fever, Cameron's A-Hop-Alypse Now

Pup and Duckling: Tiny Rebel Fubar plus too many to mention here.

The Boat, Catherine de Barnes: Greene King IPA & Purple Reign, Silhill Blonde Star

Fleur-de-Lys, Lowsonford: St Austell Tribute, Butcombe Bitter

The Railway Inn, Dorridge: Hobsons Town Crier, Holden's Mild & Golden Blow, Courage Directors, Timothy Taylor Landlord

The Campaign for Real Ale

proudly presents the 2016

GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL

The Great British Beer Festival offers visitors over 900 real ales, ciders, perries and international beers to explore. Tickets for the Festival are now on sale, so why not secure *your* place at Olympia London and find your perfect pint?

The Festival also hosts a fantastic range of musical entertainment, street food stalls, and classic pub games to enjoy, so every visit to the Festival will be an adventure and a chance to try something new.

And if you are a CAM-RA member you qualify for special discounted ticket prices on top





BOOK YOUR 10844 412 4640 www.gbbf.org.uk/tickets

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With a choice of ticket type, come to one session between 9th and 13th August, or come to them all—whichever you choose, you won't be disappointed!

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 CAMRA.



REAL ALE

Contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to Solihull Drinker Editor, 2 Dunton Hall Road, Shirley, Solihull B90 2RA; or via email to

davidcove@hotmail.co.uk

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

THE BLUE BELL CIDER HOUSE

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5 real ales at all times including beers brewed on site, plus 4 traditional & 3 sparkling ciders

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Opening hours:

Mon.—Sat: 11.30am—11.00pm Sunday: 12.00-10.30pm



April Social to The Albion Brewery

After reading the article in the Winter edition of BEER magazine about rebirths of old breweries, I was most intrigued by the section which described how the Phipps NBC (Northampton Brewing Company) had started brewing beer again in Northampton in the former Ratcliffe's Albion Brewery after a gap of almost 40 years.

I decided it might be a good idea to visit the brewery as our April social, and after carrying out some research, found that two pubs in the Good Beer Guide were within walking distance from the brewery so I added those to the day's itinery.

Using public transport, seven of us boarded the train at B'ham International, with another three already on the train, we arrived in Northampton just before 11am. After a ten minute walk with a slight detour we arrived at the Albion Brewery, where we were warmly welcomed by brewery manager Mel Tudno-Jones.

After a brief talk about the history of brewing beer in Northampton we went into the brewery itself, where Mel gave us a brief history lesson of how the Phipps NBC brand came into being and how they have changed/evolved over the years. This was very interesting and was given while we sampled Phipps NBC IPA (4.2%). This was slightly sweeter than some IPA's and it was made this way to satisfy the thirst of the leather workers in the area. We then tasted the Ratcliffe's "celebrated" Stout (4.3%) this was well received by all of our group.

Mel then took us on a more extensive tour of the brewery, including the conditioning area, barrel area and showed us the natural spring that sits under the brewery, which they have used from time to time to make some experimental brews.



After the tour was complete we retired to the bar to sample more beers over lunch which included Beckets Ale (4.5%), Diamond Ale (3.7%), and Bison Brown (4.6%) before moving on to our next port of call.

The "Wig & Pen" a 300 years old establishment was a ten minute walk away and situated just round the corner from the Law Courts as the name



Continued on page 24

THE WHITE LION

High Street, Hampton in Arden, Solihull B92 0AA

Tel: 01675 442833 www.thewhitelioninn.com

Sunday 12.00—10.30pm



Bars Six real ales on at all times (currently St Austell Proper Job, Sharps Doom Bar, Brew XI, Castle Rock Harvest Pale, Hobson's Best & Hobsons Town Crier)

Restaurant $\,$ A la Carte menu; Sunday roasts from £9.50 $\,$

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



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Greene King Abbot Ale & IPA and Sharp's Doom Bar all day every day; plus 9 ever changing guests



Alcohol served from 10.00am

Food available from 7.00am to 11.00pm daily

Continued from page 22

would suggest. Unfortunately when we arrived it seemed rather busy as it was rugby match day, but we managed to find a table to accommodate our party in the garden under the retractable shelter. Here we sampled amongst others, Elgoods Black Dog (3.6%), Merriman Merri One (3.6%).

The pub was filling up quite quickly with rugby supporters, so we moved on to our next unscheduled stop, the Princess Alexandra after one of our party, Ian, was persuaded by helpful bar staff that we might like to try it, as it served real ale and was on our way. After walking through a graveyard, and help from the locals, we eventually



found it.

It's known locally as a Craft beer and Ale House with a modern interior. We were greeted by 4 available handpumps with 2 interesting guest beers and 2 pretty standard fare. Some of our party ordered the guest beers, but these both ran out before a complete pint was poured, so they moved on to the next stop. I stopped to sample the Jennings Cumberland Ale (4%), not the best pint of the day, but in reasonable condition.

We then moved on to The Malt Shovel Tavern about a 15 mins walk from the last pub. A fairly large pub with plenty of seating, a breweriana over the walls, and a large bar with 13 hand-

pumps serving various styles of beer with 10 of them guest beers. Here we tried many of the guest beers on offer, including St Austell Ruck and Roll (4%), Nobby's Mavis Enderby (3.8%) and Oakham Bishop's Farewell (4.6%)

It was an interesting day out to a part of the brewing/pub landscape that Solihull CAMRA have rarely visited on their social outings before.

Dave Mckowen

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Shirley Beer Festival 2016

The 6th Shirley Beer Festival took place over the weekend of the 13th and 14th May, once again at the Camp Hill Rugby Club.

Learning from the excessive crowding last year, caused by its increasing popularity, the organisers took the somewhat ambitious step of massively increasing the number of beers to 96 with 20 ciders. The addition of a huge marquee on the car park and 4 bands providing live entertainment on Saturday night, after a family day with children's entertainment, led to all 2500 glasses being sold by early Saturday evening.

Beer was still available until the end of the evening and a good time was had by all who went. There were some issues with toilet capacity, but given the organising team's track record these should be sorted for next year.

Easily now the largest Beer Festival in Solihull, a big well done is due to the Shirley Round Table and Shirley Circle who have set a very high standard for other beer festivals to follow.





KNOWLE & DORRIDGE CRICKET CLUB ESTABLISHED 1896



Tel: 01564 774338

info@knowleand dorridgecc.co.uk

Knowle & Dorridge Cricket Club offers a warm & comfortable environment in which to enjoy your favourite ales. 3 guest beers on every week with varieties changing all the time - we have members' favourites Salopian, Oakham and St Austell on a regular basis and the bar manager is always open to suggestions for new ales.



The bar is open every day, featuring Sky TV with key sporting events such as Six Nations Rugby, Premiership Football and, naturally, Cricket being shown. Of course in the summer months you can just relax with your favourite ale while watching Birmingham Premier League Cricket with many past and present county players on view.

While the club is a private members club, and is popular on match days, there is no charge for admission and guests who are CAMRA members are welcome at any time on production of a CAMRA membership card. Social membership to the club is also available which comes with discount entitlement at the bar to make your favourite beers even better value.

Station Road Dorridge B93 8ET



Opening Hours:

Mon-Thurs 5.30pm - 10.30pm Fridays: 5.30pm - 11.00pm Saturdays 12.00noon - 11.00pm Sundays 12.00 noon - 10.30pm

K & D CC Membership enquiries should be made to fellow CAMRA member Jon Knibb at jknibb@virginmedia.com

Editorial: The Future of CAMRA

On March 31st CAMRA hit the national headlines when the Revitalisation project was announced by Michael Hardman, one of the four founder members of CAMRA 45 years ago. A press release with the provocative headline "Is this the end of the Campaign for Real Ale?" was released, Michael Hardman appeared on breakfast TV, and the national newspapers jumped on the story in droves. The approach definitely got the desired publicity, but what is the reality behind the headlines?

The Growth of Real Ale

In 1971 there were only 175 British breweries, many of which were owned by the "big six" national groups. The quality of traditional beers was generally poor which led to the rise in pasteurised "keg beers" which lasted longer and needed less care to handle. CAMRA was founded to protect traditional unpressurised beer and brewing methods. The group devised the term real ale to differentiate between beer served from the cask and beer served under pressure.

In 2016 there are now more than 1,500 breweries producing over 11,000 different regular beers according to CAMRA's What-Pub database. The 2014 Cask Ale report stated that 18,800 different beers had been brewed during that year, the difference between the numbers being the seasonal and special brews. To put that number into context if you tried two different beers a day it would take 25 years to try them all!

The Cask Report 2015 (Pete Brown) reported that cask ale is in sustained volume growth, outperforming the On Trade Beer Market by 3.7% in 2015, forecasting a

20% share of that market by 2020 (currently 17%). Cask (57%) also outsells keg ale (43%). More pubs are also stocking a greater number of cask ales; in 2007 only 10% of pubs stocked more than 3 cask ales compared with 35% today. However, the author of this report has stated that this will be his final cask report after a decade of producing them as "cask ale now sits within a wider craft beer category", illustrating one of the dilemmas facing CAMRA.

So, has the battle for real ale been won? Should the focus for CAMRA shift, and what is the relevance of the organisation in a vastly changed world since 1971, that CAMRA itself was instrumental in creating. What are the implications of the "craft beer revolution" as intimated by Pete Brown and others?

"When we founded the Campaign the most important thing was choice and combatting poor quality beer. Now our members need to tell us what is important to them. We need to hear from as many CAMRA members as possible to tell us what they think the organisation should look like in the future." (Michael Hardman)

The Revitalisation Consultation

On the 20th April 65 members of the West Midlands region squeezed into a room upstairs in Cherry Red's for the Birmingham consultation meeting. Following an introduction by Gary Timmins, the Regional Director, and a very illuminating talk by Michael Hardman there was an interactive

session led by Tom Stainer, the Head of Communications.

Over the next year the CAMRA membership will be deciding on key questions for the organisation. Who should CAMRA represent? In what way? To what end? "Voting" was carried out during the session using a "Clikapad" which gave instantaneous results to a number of questions asked. The questions asked were used to gauge opinions of the group, of which 43% had been CAMRA members for over 20 years and 83% were active in CAMRA. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) was presented and discussed, and many of the subsequent questions were based around this analysis.

"Why did you join CAMRA" was one of the questions posed, with 63% of the group answering "to campaign for real ale" and

23% "supporting pubs". When asked whether the fight for cask ale had been won, 40% thought "no" with beer quality being one of the main reasons for this. "Changes in society" 37% and "cost of drinks" 29% were seen as the biggest factor in pub closures, and the anti-alcohol lobby a threat to beers and pubs.

While it was felt that the CAMRA statements of purpose were still appropriate, the question of who CAMRA should represent was less clear cut with a 33% vote for drinkers of "real ale, cider and perry", and 21% for "all beer, cider and perry"

The Craft Beer Revolution

Craft beer was described by one of the participants as "the elephant in the room" and it offers both opportunities and threats to real ale.

In America where the "craft revolution" started (see the Drinker Spring 2016), craft brewers are defined clearly as Small, Independent, and Traditional. In the UK the big multinational brewers see this as a growing market, especially among young people (incidentally where CAMRA struggles to find members). A recent announcement by Carlsberg of a "craft beer" which is an "American IPA brewed in Sweden" is typical of the big brewers moving in on the market, which could make it harder for true independent craft brewers to sell their beer to pubs.

The opportunity lies with young people drinking craft beer because it tastes good, and maybe being tempted into trying cask ales as well. The risk is that the consumer is confused by what craft beer is, and their perception is unduly influenced by the marketing budgets of the big players. Craft beers also tend to be very hoppy in taste, so some of the cask ales on sale may not appeal to craft beer drinkers.

Should CAMRA embrace craft beer as well? At the recent Stourbridge CAMRA beer festival 10 KeyKeg beers were on sale, so it has already started. The important step is to define what we mean by craft beer, in the same way that the Americans have. Unfortunately it may be too late to make a difference with the big brewers already on the scene shaping the market.

Beer Quality

The main reason that CAMRA was formed in the first place was to fight for good quality beer. An interesting thought is that if there had been good keg beer around in 1971 would CAMRA have been formed? At that time the original CAMRA members "did not know what real ale was".

While getting new drinkers interested in beers that have a good taste is an opportunity, if those drinkers' first experience of cask ale is a poor quality beer then that opportunity could be lost. Would you want to go to a pub that offers you poor quality beer over one that gives consistently good quality, just because they have cask ale?

Cask Marque recently published their first "Beer Quality Report 2016" and it makes interesting reading. 95% of consumers would stop visiting a pub if the beer quality is consistently poor. Younger drinkers prioritise taste (41%) and quality (32%) when selecting alcoholic drinks, so the

challenge to cask ale is to provide a good tasting beer at a consistently high quality.

Pubs have a number of quality problems to address. The report states that a third of beer is poured through dirty beer lines, 33% of glasses are dirty and 25% of glasswashers are unhygienic. Cellars are running too warm on average 4 days a month as are cask coolers, and one in ten pubs have had an issue with beer being served too warm in the past year. All this can lead to dissatisfied and lost customers, so there is still a lot of work to do in promoting the need to improve quality to pub landlords.

Beer Choice

While CAMRA members rate a good choice of beer highly in determining a good pub, there are some downsides to stocking too many different beers.

The Beer Quality Report identifies that 30% of cask handpulls are dispensing less than 20 pints a week, which leads to beers being on too long with a consequent loss in quali-

ty. Furthermore, 87% of handpulls are dispensing what Cask Marque would classify as low throughput.

Looking at normal pub customers, 49% of consumers look for well-known beer brands. While CAMRA members enjoy having a wide and interesting range of beers to try, they must support pubs that put them on (by drinking there), otherwise beer quality and pub revenue will suffer until the range reduces to a sustainable level based on the tastes of regular local customers.

Growth of Micropubs

Anecdotally, micropubs are acting as a catalyst for interest in real ale. During the meeting an example was given of a Wolverhampton micropub that has stimulated interest in real ales in surrounding pubs that had previously not sold any real ale. In Solihull, we have seen that the Pup & Duckling opening has increased interest in real ales at the Olton Tavern. How do we encourage and build on this success?

How Do I Get Involved?

All members have been posted a consultation booklet and invited to complete a survey and/or attend one of almost 50 consultation meetings across the country this summer. The survey has now closed so emailing the steering group directly at revitalisation.project@camra.org.uk will ensure your thoughts and opinions become part of its research.

Between now and November the survey and meetings will be used to develop proposals for the way forward. In December these proposals will go to the National Executive for consideration. Between January and March 2017 the proposals will be put forward to the membership, with a final decision at the Members Weekend AGM in April.

More information about the Revitalisation Project can be found at www.camra.org.uk/revitalisation.

You can also help to report on beer quality using https://whatpub.com/. Some branches already use it to do initial shortlists for Pub of The Year so you can help them by filling in your scores. Producing rankings based on Whatpub scores was discussed at the consultation meeting as an opportunity to drive beer quality up. Non-members can find details of pubs using Whatpub, but only members can score.

If you are a non-CAMRA member, or a lapsed member, who is interested in the issues identified here, and want to be involved in the project, you can join online or using the form on the back of this magazine. Financially your membership fee pays for itself in benefits, but your input is priceless! Help us set the direction for the next 45 years.

David Cove , Editor

Membership Matters

With the growth in numbers of CAMRA members both locally and at a national level and the now unprecedented number of breweries and real ales available some people may argue that CAMRA has served its purpose.

As discussed in the editorial, since CAMRA was formed 45 years ago in 1971 the pub and brewing landscape has changed significantly, The founders were solely concerned about beer choice and quality, but along the way CAMRA has picked up fellow travellers who share our passion, whether cider drinkers, foreign beer enthusiasts or pub heritage fans.

CAMRA as a campaign has recently launched a large scale consultation amongst its members as to where/how the campaign goes forward for the next 40 years. Please read the editorial in this magazine for more information.

So why not become a CAMRA member and join 178,000 other like minded individuals with a liking for real ale and pubs by completing the membership form in this magazine or go to the CAMRA website www.camra.org.uk, where there is also a comprehensive list of other benefits you get by becom-

ing a member, while helping the brewing and pub landscape for the next 40 years.

Your membership fee goes to help the campaign in all sorts of ways. For example helping a CAMRA branch keep a much loved pub from closure/demolition/change of use or helping a local brewery to be listed in the good beer guide

Membership starts from as little as £24 per year. That works out at about 46p per week. How about giving membership as a gift for Father's Day on 19th June.

All new members who join and live in the Solihull & District CAMRA branch boundary will receive a voucher for a FREE PINT contained within their welcome pack which is redeemable in conjunction with a valid membership card when attending their first Branch meeting, courtesy of Solihull & District CAMRA Branch. For details of the next branch meeting see the Dates for your Diary section.

Dave Mckowen Membership Secretary

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Please note that the deadline for copy, advertising and any other contributions is Friday 7th August.

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