

Solihull



Drinker

Issue No 75
Spring 2016

Free
Please take one



Branch Chairman Carl Wright presents the 2016 Most Improved Pub of the Year award certificate to Delia and Mike Scott of the Nag's Head, Henley-in-Arden—see Page 3

The Nag's Head, Henley-in-Arden: Solihull CAMRA Most Improved Pub of the Year 2016



Features in this issue include:

Most Improved Pub Award 2016	3
Pub, Club & Brewery News	4-5
Dates for the Diary & Beer Festivals	6-7
Spotlight Inn: The Pup & Duckling	8—9
Great British Beer Festival	10
Bath Long Weekend Away (Part 1)	13-14
Members Weekend & AGM	28
Membership Matters	31

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Solihull CAMRA Most Improved Pub of the Year 2016: The Nag's Head, Henley-in-Arden

It was with great pleasure that Solihull CAMRA branch members met at the Nag's Head in Henley-in-Arden on 29th January to watch as chairman Carl Wright presented an award certificate to licensee Delia Scott and husband Mike, who is the chef at the pub.

Delia and Mike, who also run The Roebuck in Warwick together with son Jordan, took over the Nag's Head just over a year previously and had it refurbished throughout with a traditional yet light, airy feel and new signage. A restaurant with a menu of excellent quality, reasonably priced pub food using locally-sourced ingredients has been added, together with a barista coffee bar with comfortable seating



which is winning praise from visitors. New toilets and a makeover of the pub's garden completed the major works; and there are now 4 real ales on at all times, with a mix of well-known nationals and LocAles including their own house beer, Nag's Head Ale.

Carl Wright said "It has not gone unnoticed by Solihull CAMRA that the beer range at the Nags Head is much greater than formerly, and the fact that their ales are now so well-kept was a strong factor in our members voting this lovely pub as our Most Improved Pub for 2016. Service is prompt, cheerful and with a smile, and it is certainly a pleasure to visit and drink here."

Left: Delia and Mike outside the Nag's Head, High Street

Find more information at www.facebook.com/The-Nags-Head-Henley-in-Arden

Bird's Brewery at Bromsgrove to close

Bromsgrove's Bird's Brewery and the shop will be closing their doors at the end of March. The decision has been taken as a firm which operates from the same site is moving to a newly-built yard and office elsewhere. The brewery's administrative work used to be done by the firm's staff but the transition means that will no longer be an option.

Owner Chris Bird said: "Although the brewery and shop have thrived recently it is not commercially viable to employ additional staff to handle the admin requirements. Additionally, we would need to move the shop to the back of the site where the brewery is based and the cost implications simply outweigh revenue potential. We have not taken this decision lightly and I'd like to thank everyone who has supported Bird's Brewery over the years."

Paul Richards, the chairman of Redditch and Bromsgrove CAMRA said "Bird's has helped to champion the cause of real ale in North Worcestershire, and Bromsgrove in particular. We've enjoyed some great beers from the brewing team such as Black Widow Stout and Naturally Blonde. We hope someone else is able to step up and fill the gap that the demise of Birds will inevitably leave."

Bird's Brewery has developed a strong and loyal following of fans since it was established nearly six years ago. A refurbishment of the brewery took place last winter and in January a schedule of brewery tours was launched. The date of the last tour will be March 19th and bookings will be subject to a maximum of 15 people.



Hail to the Ale!

Local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery News

The Pup & Duckling, Hatchford Brook

The first paying customers stepped across the threshold at the Pup and Duckling at 5.00pm on Friday 4th February. The opening, though delayed, was welcomed by visitors from both the local community and farther afield, and business was brisk over the weekend, with seven casks sold in total. With four real ales and two traditional ciders on offer along plus wines and soft drinks, there's something for everyone—except music, slot machines and TV!



More information about Solihull's first micropub can be found in the article on pages 8 and 9.

The Miller & Carter, Shirley Heath

The Miller and Carter on Tanworth Lane closed for refurbishment in January and reopened with two beers on hand-pump including Purity at the time of visiting.

Toby Carvery, Stonebridge Island

A recent inclusion in our Solihull & District CAMRA catchment area, it has three hand-pumps with, occasionally, one real ale "when we can be bothered" - not an attitude likely to gain real ale fans!

Beers Around Here

Beers reported around Solihull over the last Quarter

Boat Inn, Catherine-de-Barnes: Silhill Gold Star; Wells Bombardier; and Greene King IPA.

Bulls Head, Earlswood: Backyard Blonde and Shed Spotted Cock.

Flute & Flagon, Solihull: Timothy Taylor's Bolt Maker; Pedigree New World; Hop Flurry; Backyard Gold.

Knowle & Dorridge Cricket Club, Dorridge: Elland's Golden and Salopian Oracle.

Lady Lane Wharf, Earlswood: Wye Valley HPA; Holden's Black Country Mild; Jennings Cocker Hoop, Sneck Lifter & Cumberland Ale; Goff's Black Knight; Greene King Yardbird; Hardy & Hanson Kimberley Bitter; Ringwood Old Thumper and Forty Niner; and Wychwood Hobgoblin Gold & Snobelle; Belhaven's Robert Burns; Graftons' Winter Dream, and Holdens' Black Country Mild.

Malt Shovel, Barston: Fernandes' Under the Mistletoe and Sharp's Doom Bar.

Masons Arms: Timothy Taylor's Landlord; Fuller's London Pride.; Marstons' Pedigree; Sharp's Doom Bar; St Austell Proper Job; Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted; and Woodforde's Norfolk Hawker.

Pup & Duckling, Hatchford Brook: Sadler's Thin Ice; Shed Spotted Cock; Wye Valley Butty Bach; Byatt's XK Dark & Big Cat Ale; Purity UBU & Mad Goose; Fixed Wheel Brewery's Chain Reaction; and Angel Ales' Chocolate Chilli Stout.

Red Lion, Knowle: Broughton Ales' Hopopotamus

White Lion, Hampton-in-Arden: Robinsons Wizard; St Austell Proper Job; Hobsons Best Bitter; Castle Rock Harvest Pale; Sharp's Doom Bar; and M & B Brew XI.

The Lazy Cow, Solihull

The Lazy Cow has changed hands and has been rebranded as The Beech House. It closed in February for the installation of new open kitchens, and a large glass frontage. It should reopen soon with four real ales on and apparently the menu will feature as much local produce as possible.

The Assembly Rooms, Solihull

Stonegate Pubs, owner of the Flute & Flagon in the town centre, has bought the Assembly Rooms, which was rebranded and reopened on 11th February. It now offers the usual Stonegate fare of Wychwood Hobgoblin and Sharp's Doom Bar.

At the time of visiting, Timothy Taylor Boltmaker was the guest. Live Sky Sports football has been removed from the F & F and installed here, with sound on the mezzanine level.

Greene King delists Beers

Greene King have apparently taken Sharp's Doom Bar, Fuller's London Pride and other leading brewery beers off the beer lists of the Spirit pubs that they took over last year.

This may affect several of our Solihull pubs (Drum and Monkey, Wharf Tavern, Greswolde Arms, Reservoir, Boat and Drawbridge). Hopefully their clientele will still be able to find a decent beer.

Nick, Gwen & staff welcome you to

The Vaults

St John's Close, Knowle

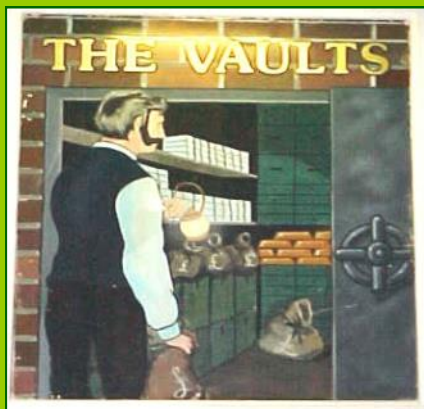
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the Real Ale venue in Knowle

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

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Opening hours:

Mon—Wed: 12.00-2.30pm & 5.00-11.30pm;

Thurs, Fri & Sat: 12.00-11.30pm

Sun 12.00-11.00pm

***Food available lunchtimes
Mondays - Saturdays
12.00-2.00pm***

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



Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

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

Monday 4th April

Wilson's Arms, Knowle

Monday 9th May

Navigation, Lapworth

Monday 6th June

Flute & Flagon, Solihull

Committee Meetings

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

Monday 23rd May

Malt Shovel, Barston

Socials

Saturday 16th April

Visit to the Albion Brewery, Northampton plus local GBG pubs (call Dave Mckowen on 01564 778955 for further information)

Saturday 30th April

Trip to Long Itchington Beer Festival (TBC)

Early May

2 nights (Fri & Sat) in Huddersfield (TBC—contact Steve Dyson on 0121 603 8994 for further details)

June

Coventry Trip part 2 (date & 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 Beer Festivals

Thurs 10th—Sat 12th March: Walsall CAMRA Beer & Cider Festival, Walsall Town Hall. 80+ real ales & 15+ ciders. Open Thurs 5pm-10pm; Fri & Sat 12 noon—11pm. Entry: £10 (incl refundable souvenir glass) + £5 beer tokens (extra £2 tokens for card-carrying CAMRA members). Sat entry £5. See www.walsallcamra.org.

Fri 11th—Sun 27th March: JD Wetherspoon Real Ale Festival, all JDW's. Up to 50 real ales from the UK and around the world. Try 3 x 1/3 festival ales for the price of a pint. Festival ales available as part of all food offers including a drink. More information at www.jdwetherspoon.com/real-ale-festival.

Thurs 17th—Sat 19th March: 37th Burton CAMRA Beer & Cider Festival, Town Hall, King Edward Place. 120 real ales, 30 ciders/perries plus fruit wines + drivers' bar. Open Thurs 6pm—11pm

(free to all); Fri lunch 11am—6pm CAMRA members free; non-members £2; Fri eve 6pm—11pm CAMRA members £2, non-members £6; Sat lunch 11am—6pm CAMRA members free, non-members £2; Sat eve 6pm—10pm CAMRA members £2, non-members £6. £2 refundable souvenir glass. See www.burtoncamra.wordpress.com/beer-festival/ for more details.

Fri 18th—Sat 19th March: 5th Knowle & Dorridge Round Table Beer Festival, Royal British Legion, Warwick Rd, Knowle. Open Fri from 6.30pm, Sat 12 noon, till late both nights. both nights. More info in the advert on page 25; find the beer list at www.acuicahost.com/kandd/portfolio/beerfes/.

Fri 15th—Sat 16th April: Coventry CAMRA Beer Festival, Coventry Rugby Football Ground, Butts Road. 80+ beers incl LocAles, plus ciders/perries & country wines. Open both days 12 noon—4pm and 6pm—11pm. Card-

carrying members free all sessions except Fri eve £2; non-members £2 all sessions except Fri eve £3. More info at www.coventry/camra.org.uk.

Wed 20th—Sat 23rd April: Stourbridge CAMRA Beer Festival, Town Hall, Crown Centre. 90+ real ales plus ciders/perries. Open Wed 7pm-10pm (card-carrying CAMRA members & VIPs only); Thurs 7pm-11pm; Fri 12 noon—11pm; Sat 12 noon—9pm or beer runs out! Refundable £1 souvenir glass available. £3 entry Thurs/Fri (£2 extra tokens CAMRA membs); free entry Sat. See www.stourbridgebeerfest.org.uk.

Sat 23rd April: St Thomas More's Real Ale, Cider & Perry Festival, Parish Centre, Horse Shoes Lane, Sheldon B26 3HU. 20+ real LocAles plus 7 ciders/3 perries. Open 12 noon—10.00pm. £5 entrance incl. £3 refundable glass hire & programme. Cash bar. More details available at www.facebook.com/StThomasMoresBeerFestival.

Fri 12th & Sat 15th May: 6th Shirley Beer & Cider Festival, Camp Hill Rugby Club. Open Fri 6pm –11pm, Sat 12 noon—11pm. See advert above and www.shirleybeerfestival.co.uk for more information.

Fri 29th April—Mon 2nd May: Long Itchington Beer Festival. Free entry to this pleasant village event held between its 6 pubs: The Duck on the Pond, The Buck & Bell, the Green Man, the Cuttle Inn, The Two Boats and the Harvester. Usually over 150 beers plus ciders. www.longitchingtonbeerfestival.co.uk

Thurs 26th—Sat 27th May: Kidderminster CAMRA Beer & Cider Festival, Kidderminster Town Hall. 50+ beers plus ciders/perries. Open Thurs 4pm-6pm (CAMRA members preview only); 6pm-11pm (open to all); Fri 11am—11pm; Sat 11am—11pm. Entry £2, £3 Friday after 5pm; card-carrying CAMRA members free all sessions. More details at www.wyreforest.camra.org.uk.

Spotlight Inn:



The Pup & Duckling, Hatchford Brook

The concept of the Pup & Duckling has been a long time in the making, brooding quietly in the mind of Jeff Berry.



The kernel of the idea first started with an abandoned beer engine that rekindled a long abandoned hobby of home-brew. Fast forward four years and just accept that there was a fishing trip, some home-brewed beer and the beer engine and you have the recipe for the beginnings of a microbrewery: not Jeff's microbrewery, but that of his oldest friend.

What eventually led to the creation of the Pup and Duckling was a simple realisation from said friend that the most difficult part of starting a brewery is getting your first sale; and a desire to help him. "Someone really has to take a chance on you when you have no history and no product!"

Frustrated by the fact that Jeff found it difficult to get the sort of beer that one finds at beer festivals locally, he began to muse that he couldn't be the only person that had this vexation. He recalled an article he read some

years ago about parlour pubs, where beer was brewed in the kitchen and sold in the front parlour, and considered whether such a thing would work, or even be allowed today. This subsequently led him to the Micropub Association and the discovery of the entity which is the micropub.

Defined as 'a small free house which listens to its customers, mainly serves cask ales, promotes conversation, shuns all forms of electronic entertainment and dabbles in traditional pub snacks', the micropub appeared to tick all the boxes that he wanted from a pub. It seems all pubs these days are restaurants with a bar or televised



Solihull CAMRA branch Chair Carl Wright and Pubs Officer Martin Buck visiting on preview night

THIN ICE 4.5%	2.90 P
	1.40 H
	1.00 T
	10.50 A
BUTTY BACH 4.5%	3.00 P
	1.50 H
	1.00 T
	11.50 A
SPOTTED COCK 5.0	2.90 P
	1.40 H
	1.00 T
	10.50 A
XK DARK 3.5%	2.90 P
	1.40 H
	1.00 T
	10.50 A
GAME COCK (Sweet) 4.5%	2.73 P
	1.50 H
	1.00 T
SILLY EWE (Dry) 4.5%	1.00 P
	11.50 A

sports venues with a bar and these offer a great source of entertainment for a great number of people. But there are also people who just want beer and a chat – and Jeff was one.

And so, in a small two-roomed shop which had previously been a tailors, a gas fitters, a pet food shop and a tanning salon, the Pup and Duckling was born. Or rather, born and hatched. Offering real ales from many local microbreweries - the first three weekends have seen over twenty different ales -

The Berry family poised to serve their first customers: (from left) Jeff, Katrina, Sue, Emily and Sam.



the Pup and Duckling also features larger brewers in the mix but avoids the major brands; and there's no lager or alcopops.

The pub has had Gwatkins and Henney's cider, and always has a selection of red, white and rose wines plus Prosecco. It is also stocking the Fentimans range of 'botanically brewed' soft drinks for non-drinkers and drivers.

The pub is situated in a row of shops in Hatchford Brook at the junction of Old Lode Lane and Hatchford Brook Road (it's no. 1, Hatchford Brook Road in fact) - there is parking in the slip-roads in front of the shops, but for those who don't want to drive and are too far away to walk the number 957 and 73 buses stop right outside the pub.

Two comfortable rooms wait for the discerning drinker—as you come through the front door the bar ahead is more functional with tables and benches, while the snug, at the back and up a few steps, boasts carpet, a fire and comfy armchairs. You won't find noisy machines, but there are quiet games to hand in the back room such as dominoes, pub quiz books and a games compendium of chess and draughts. The premises are so small that entry may have to be limited at busy times to comply with fire regulations of a maxi-

mum of 60 occupants at any one time—however, having said that, even at their busiest, it hasn't happened yet!

The pub has certainly gone down a storm and continues to do so and visitors seem to relish the unusual peace and quiet. Comments in the Visitors Book are telling—*"Drove by, had a look; then we stopped! Two pints and a lovely warm welcome, instant friends!"* and *"Moved here recently and it's great to have a local pub with great ales within the community! Friendly owners and good atmosphere! Look forward to coming again...and again...and again!"* are typical of the plaudits that the pub has received since it opened on 5th February.

Current opening hours are Thursday: 5pm—9pm; Friday: 5pm—10pm; Saturday: 12 noon—10pm; and Sunday: 12 noon—3pm (closed Mondays to Wednesdays). However, these may be revised at some time in the future, so you are advised to check the pub's website www.pupandduckling.co.uk for further details, and their Facebook page for updates on forthcoming beers.

And the number one question? "Why is it called the Pup and Duckling?"

The answer is quite simple. It's too small to be the Dog and Duck!

(Please note: The Pup & Duckling regrets that under-18's are not allowed in the pub at any time.)



A busy evening at the Pup & Duckling

Great British Beer Festival 2016

The Great British Beer Festival provides a whole new experience to just having a pint with your friends, with 900 real ales, ciders, perries and international beers all under one roof.

Tickets for the festival are on sale now so why not secure your place at Olympia London between 9-13th August without delay. Remember, as a member of CAMRA you qualify for special discounted ticket prices on top of the advance booking savings available now! *(NB. A CAMRA membership number is required when purchasing member tickets.)*

Ticket Details

You could even be a VIP this year—the new and improved VIP package includes: fast track entry to one public festival session, a souvenir guide with complete beer list, a commemorative glass, £10 in beer tokens for use in the festival, and access to the exclusive VIP lounge. Member VIP, advance purchase only, £35 (non-Member).

Or why not consider buying a season ticket—a GBBF season ticket includes entry to all festival sessions including the official festival opening on Tuesday, the trade session on Tuesday afternoon, Hat Day on Thursday, the Pub Quiz on Saturday, plus all the great entertainment across the week. Member

Season, advance purchase only: £24 (non-Member £29).

Single Day tickets are also available—a ticket for entry to any one of the festival's public sessions will allow you to experience brewery and CAMRA bars, a huge range of food, daily entertainment, and much, much more! Member Single Day, advance purchase only: £9 (non-Member £11).

Group offers on six or more tickets purchased are also available (NB. terms and conditions apply: see www.gbbf.org.uk/tickets for details plus more information about each type of ticket.

Public opening times are: Tuesday 9th August: 5pm—10.30pm*

Wednesday 10th August, Thursday 11th August & Friday 12th August 12 noon—10.30pm*

Saturday 13th August: 11am—7.00pm

**Last admission: half an hour before closing.*

At the biggest beer festival in the UK you will find an unsurpassable selection of draught real

ales, ciders and perries and international beers; and the GBBF also hosts a fantastic range of informative stands, musical entertainment, street food stalls, and classic pub games to enjoy.

Book now for an experience like no other!



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

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)

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

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*2016 beer festival:
friday 17th—sunday
19th june*

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Bath Long Weekend Away—Part 1

Bath is a fine Georgian city, well worth visiting for its fine architecture. However, it is also a good base for visiting breweries and has a good selection of pubs to visit. So, in late November a small party of local CAMRA members headed south to enjoy 3 days of over indulgence.

After checking into our hotel we headed out to the Old Green Tree a small three roomed, panelled pub hidden off one of the main streets near the Podium Shopping Centre. Over 300 hundred years old, unspoilt and a quiet pub other than conversation. There were 4 beers on the bar, Blindmans Old Green Tree Ale and Icarus Ale; Plain Ales Incognito and Butcombe Bitter. I really enjoyed the stout; the others apart from the Icarus were all in good condition. The only downside for me was the strong smell of smoking somewhere on another side of the bar.

Our next port of call was to be found in one of the alleys of Bath, the Coeur De Lion, an ex-Devenish pub. On Northumberland Place it has a superb stained glass frontage. Like the Old Green Tree it is an ancient pub dated to the middle of the 18th century. Now owned by Bath Ales, who incidentally have a strong hold on pubs in Bath there were 3 beers available, XT8 Dark Roast and Abbey Ales White and Bell Ringer all in good condition. Food was available in the pub so we took advantage of it.

We then moved on to a pub with theatrical connections, the Garrick's Head. Situated next to the Theatre Royal apparently it was once the home of Beau Nash, the Georgian dandy. Spacious inside, it had 4 pumps on handpump, Twisted Pirate Ale, Flying Monk Elmes, Otter Head and Garrick's Head. I tried the XT8 and the Flying Monk, both in good condition.

Those 3 pubs satisfied our initial thirst so we made our way back to the hotel to meet up with the late arrivals ready to head off to our first brewery tour.

The Box Steam Brewery was set up in 2004 at Box, then a need to expand saw it move to Holt in 2011. Redundant kit from Sharps was acquired and has since been supplemented by new kit thus production was vastly increased. In 2011 Master Brewer Philip Downes joined the brewery and it was he who gave us the tour. Philip has been in the brewing industry for 30 years, serving his apprenticeship at Davenports in Birmingham.



Phil Downes, host of the Box Steam brewery tour

The Tap Room was our first port of call where we enjoyed Piston Broke, Going Conkers and Tunnel Vision. Whilst imbibed we watched an interesting film of the brewing industry as it was in the 1950s. We then enjoyed a brewery tour. Phil's knowledge of the beer process was phenomenal and of great interest to us. He clearly loves his work and was quite prepared to chat with us over drinks in the bar for as long as we wished. We thought however we might like to visit one of the pubs in the village so we made our way to the Tollgate Inn, a free house in the village. A one roomed local unfortunately with little character it was however quite busy. The beers were a little unimaginative: Fullers London Pride and Sharps Doom Bar, with Butcombe Adam Henson's Rare Breeds the only beer of any interest. Quite hoppy, it was my

Continued overleaf

choice and was thoroughly enjoyable, a saviour from the other two boring beers. Having had a most enjoyable day we headed home to our hotel for a good night's sleep and to recover sufficiently for the day ahead.

The plan for Friday was to head off to the Electric Bear Brewing Company on the outskirts of Bath with a pub stop off on the way there. We planned to visit the GBG pub the Hop Pole on the way to the brewery only to find it was closed so we went on a little to find the Victoria Kitchen and Bar open. Very much in the style of a wine bar/bistro pub it had 3 beers on the bar. They were Exmoor Gold, Butcombe Bitter and Sharps Doom Bar. Granted all in good condition but given the vast choice of beers available in the UK, a most unimaginative range.

After crossing the river and negotiating the walls surrounding the industrial estate we found ourselves at the Electric Bear Brewing Company. We arrived a little earlier than expected to find our guide still at lunch. Whilst we awaited his return we were invited to a drink from the brewery bar. Persuasion at 3.8% was a beautifully hoppy beer; Elemental 4.4%, hoppy but a little cloudy, and Live Wire a hoppy 5.4% brew. One or two tried the 8% Cherry Blackout: a late night snifter,



Brewing equipment at the Electric Bear Brewery

maybe not an ideal lunchtime drink! A quick phone call ahead brought back our guide Guillermo Alvarez to show us around. The brewhouse consists of brand new equipment and considering that this is a new brewery they certainly have started off with a bang. This is no microbrewery: it's more like a small regional. It is a high tech set-up as reflected by brewer Guillermo's history. By profession he is a bio chemist and has studied business. He learnt his brewing craft at St Austell Brewery and at Rebel Brewery both based in Cornwall. After a technical tour of the brewery we settled to another sample in the bar and reviewed our itinerary for the rest of the day.

We had originally planned an afternoon tour of Milk Street Brewery in Frome but on contacting the brewery we found that timings were not going to work, so we made our way back to the Hop Pole a Bath Ales pub where I enjoyed a hoppy Dark Star APA whilst others sampled Bath Ales Cobblestone, Special and Gem. It was also a convenient place for us to have a spot of lunch. The pub itself is modern in character and concentrates heavily on food.

Steve Dyson

Part 2 continues in the next issue of the Drinker in June.



Guillermo pulling the pints at the Electric Bear Brewery

Winner of the Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year award 2015



THE FIELDHOUSE

10 Knightcote Drive,
Solihull B91 3JU
Tel: 0121 703 9209



www.emberinns.co.uk/the-fieldhouse-solihull



Opening Hours:

Mon—Sat: 11.30am —12 midnight
Sun: 11.30am —11.30pm

Hot & cold meals served Monday to Sunday all day till 10.00pm
(Card-carrying CAMRA members receive 20% off all food)

Live Music

Sat 26 March The Fabulous Tina Turner show
Sat 16th April The Unforgettable David Bowie Tribute show
Sat 4th June The Robbie Williams show

*6 Real Ales on at all times including 4 regularly changing guests. All Cask Ales are £2.49 a pint on Mondays
CAMRA members receive a 20p discount off the price of any pint of Cask Ale on other nights.*

Norwich City of Ale

Norwich City of Ale 2016 runs from 26th May – 5th June. Now in its sixth year, City of Ale celebrates Britain's national drink in the city renowned for its fantastic farmers, brewers, and publicans. It's a great chance to visit the city, as more than 40 Norwich pubs take part in City of Ale, many of them historic beauties, all of them offering ales from local breweries and running their own events and promotions. As you delve your way through the picturesque streets of the city, you'll struggle to be much more than a stone's throw away from a participating pub - and a terrific beer that's new to you.

City of Ale is all about beers from Norfolk and close surrounds. The fantastic array of breweries from within a 40-mile radius of Norwich provide rich pickings in terms of beer choice for the participating pubs. Different styles and flavours abound. Extraordinary when you think how at one point Norfolk was a veritable brewing de-

sert! Many of the breweries offer tours – so you might like to build time into your trip for a jaunt out to see them.

This is not a festival tied to a single venue, rather an experience extending across a whole city. Since it began in 2011 other towns and cities have followed suit and create terrific beer events of their own, but Norwich City of Ale remains the inspiration and showpiece of ale celebration.



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**

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**Single visits for guests: £1.00
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**There will be plenty of entertainment going on during Spring!
For full details of all events, please ring Adrian at the Club**

How the Craft Beer Revolution Started

There is doubt in some people's minds as to the meaning, even the very existence, of "craft beer". But allowing that it's a movement, it's gaining popularity, and in Britain there has been a recent explosion of it. There are now said to be 1,500 small breweries in the UK.

To find out why it happened here you probably have to go back 50 years, back to another era of local brews and breweries. Then came a first wave of efficiency-led beer company mergers, and the rise of imported continental lagers that were lighter and fizzier than traditional British beer. In reaction to the growing uniformity of beer sold in Britain, a group of enthusiastic drinkers got together in 1971 to form CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale; and as many readers will know, this small group had enormous impact. They were successful because they were single-minded in their antipathy to one thing - fizzy mass produced beer. CAMRA raised consciousness about a deeply historic heritage that was under threat by the efficiency drives led by those who rose to management prominence in British companies in the 1960s and '70s. This chimed with the revolution in taste that was breaking out all over the UK - Brits were travelling, trying out foreign food and drink and impatient with what was foisted on them at home.

Add the remarkable talents of one man, the late British beer writer Michael Jackson, who started writing about beer. He produced *The World Guide to Beer*, celebrating the differences of beer all over the world. As "The Beerhunter", Michael Jackson did widen the appreciation of the tastes of beer, via television. Mr Jackson's writing also fed the revival of beer in the US: hundreds of local entrepreneurs microbreweries and

brewpubs all across America. And then, sadly mostly after his death in 2007, the reinvention of beer flashed all the way back across the Atlantic, back to Britain.

It started in kitchens and garages. People who learnt how to brew their own beer got ambitious. They found premises such as railway arches, and scraped the money together to buy the brewing equipment. It was mostly intensely local. It was driven by individual experimenting. The craft brewing revolution was under way. Although they are small, craft brewers seem confident. They love the taste of what they make. They relish the story of it. And many of them are astonishingly unbusinesslike. They don't mind being small; they cluster, and don't mind the competition. Indeed, they say they help each other out over distribution and occasional supply shortages.

Nevertheless, some highly successful early-start artisan brewers have already sold themselves to the big groups - Sharps Brewery, from Cornwall, is now part of the giant MolsonCoors, and the bottled version of its wildly successful Doom Bar ale now comes out of a great big brewery in Burton on Trent, though draught ale is still brewed in Rock. And Meantime Brewing Company of Greenwich sold itself to SABMiller last year. Despite the feeling that the real ale, and now the craft ale, movements were driven by a growing consumer suspicion of big corporate behaviour, lots of keen craft beer drinkers don't know much about what, why, and how, their tipple is made. It maybe doesn't matter—it's the taste that counts. But how much craft beer will be damaged by becoming big, we will have to wait and see.

From BBC Business News, 30th December 2015

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Food Service:
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Shed News

The Shed Brewery continues to supply casks to local beer festivals: they were available at Redditch CAMRA Winter Ales Festival at the beginning of February and Moseley & King's Heath Beer Festival on the 20th; and will be at Leicester CAMRA Beer Festival from 7th -12 March and Knowle & Dorridge Round Table Beer Festival in May.

Shed 'Spotted Cock' also featured on opening night at the Pup and Duckling in Hatchford Brook Road (Solihull's first micropub which opened on Friday 6th February), two casks of which sold during its first three days of trading.



Spotted Cock is also available direct from the brewery, and like all Shed beers is suitable for both vegans and vegetarians as no finings are used. Other bottle-conditioned beers available include award-winning Executioners Porter, and Warwick Bear, Archers Ale and Shed Gold, to name but a few.

To purchase, just give the brewery a call and pop over to Hockley Heath.



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Castle Rock Brewery Creates Hybrid Beer

Castle Rock combines tradition with innovation, and its Traffic Street Specials get right into the new beer diversity which has taken off recently. Last year the brewery created a pale ale / white wine hybrid – to their knowledge, the first of its kind to be produced in cask.

The beer, entitled New Era, clocks in at 7.7% and tastes unlike anything tried before. Brewed with pure Pinot Grigio grape juice which was fermented within a US-style pale ale with champagne yeast, the beer is opulent and demands respect. A lot of people asked "How on earth is that flavour combination going to work?" but the brewery says that it re-

ally does, with the crisp citrus notes of Centennial and Cascade hops from West Coast US combined with the dry gooseberry tartness of the Pinot Grigio grapes, with a pleasant pale malt background. The beer is fruity and full of body with a hint of sweetness and a lasting dry finish.

Dan Gilliland, head brewer, said: "It's come out really well and we can't wait to see what people think.

It's not a style of beer that people have a frame of reference for so they will be going in blind and it should be quite provocative in its approach".

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Win a Microbrewery

Have you always dreamed of starting your own microbrewery? To help raise money for Swindon Women's Aid, Elite stainless Fabrications (ESF) has donated a complete 100-litre microbrewery worth £3,000 to the charity's raffle, and it could be yours for the purchase of a £5 ticket.

"This is a unique opportunity for the enthusiast to try their hand at brewing with a good quality microbrewery. We know it can also be used by bigger breweries as a pilot plant for new and small batch beers. No matter who wins, it will bring a lot of fun" said ESF's Karen Jacklin.

ESF is a family-run business which wanted to give something back to the community. "I do voluntary work for Swindon Women's Aid as well as working for elite. Working with all the people at the refuge has highlighted the hard work and dedication these women give to each individual" added Karen.

Tickets can be purchased from www.swindonwomensaid.org— from the menu at the top, click on 'About Us', then scroll down and click on 'Swindon Womens Aid Raffle'. The draw date is 8th April.

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.



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to Solihull Drinker Editor, 2 Dunton Hall Road, Shirley B90 2RA; or via email to: davidcove@hotmail.co.uk

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

Solihull CAMRA 2016 ©

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The next issue of the Solihull Drinker will be published on Monday 6th June. Please note that contributions and artwork must be received by

Sunday 8th May.

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Opening hours:

Mon.–Sat: 11.30am–11.00pm

Sunday: 12.00-10.30pm



Chair's Report: 2014-2016 AGM

For those of you who were not at the AGM last month, here is an abridged version of the report on our branch by chairman Carl Wright.

This report covers 15 months due to moving our AGM from November to February. This period has been a busy time for the branch: membership now stands at over 560; we continue to support our local pubs and clubs with visits and other initiatives; and to assist with campaigning towards CAMRA's aims. We also held our 17th beer festival at a new venue last October.

All our Committee members remained in post, although we do need some 'new blood' from time to time otherwise in the future there is a strong possibility that we not have enough roles filled for the branch to survive. We still lack a Young Members' Contact who must be a Solihull CAMRA member aged between 18 and 35.

Pub-wise, there have been quite a lot of changes, including refurbishments and 3 new pubs opening with a 4th imminent. Re breweries: The Shed – briefly closed due to pressure of other work - reopened and recommence brewing with renewed enthusiasm. They continue to supply bottle-conditioned vegetarian- and vegan-friendly beers to the local area, plus casks to various Solihull outlets and beer festivals, including our own, where Perry Clarke compered the home-brew competition for us. Silhill Brewery, now at Catherine-de-Barnes, added another beer to its range and started to offer one-day beer brewing and management courses to local bar staff; plus brewery tours, which one of our socials took advantage of last year. Silhill was also the overall sponsor of our beer festival. The Blue Bell Brewhouse, based at the Blue Bell Cider House, continued to brew real ales for the pub. Whitworth Brewing Co. sadly ceased brewing; but as its brewing plant and kit was bought by the Forest Hotel at Dorridge we have hopes that another micro-brewery will arise from its ashes.

The 2015 beer festival, our 17th, underwent a move from the Royal British Legion in Solihull after many years, and we ended up in a marquee in the grounds of the Knowle & Dorridge Cricket Club at Dorridge. Another first: we opened on the Thursday evening to take advantage of the extra evening afforded us, then as usual on the Friday and Saturday. Numbers were down on 2014 due to the short notice and less publicity than we would have liked. The homebrew competition ran again, won by Paul Scrivens. We were able to offer 55 beers and 8 ciders along one long bar, which cut down considerably on waiting time. No entertainment was planned but an impromptu performance by a local ukulele band was very welcome. Thanks are due to all who helped in any way.

The Most Improved Pub/Club of the Year 2014 award was won by the Lady Lane Wharf in autumn 2014. The Rowington Club continued to hold its place as a West Midlands entry in the 2015 GBG and was a contender for our Club of the Year 2015 award for the third time, although in the end this was won by the Lady Lane Wharf. The Pub of the Year Award 2015 was won by the Fieldhouse, Monkspath. The Most Improved Pub/Club of the Year 2015 was won by the Nag's Head, Henley-in-Arden only a couple of weeks ago.

Active members continued to offer suggestions for socials and to organise outings over the last 15 months, which included our traditional Christmas pub crawls; a Beer & Balti night; the now annual Pin, Pie & Pint night at the Fleur de Lys, Lowsonford; pub, brewery and beer festival trips and crawls and a couple of campaigning trips to survey our outlying pubs and clubs; plus a long weekend away in Bath and North Somerset last November. Suggestions for outings will be welcome for the remainder of our 2016 calendar.

Carl Wright, Chairman

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A Day Out In Bath

Yet another pub crawl with my former colleagues brought us to Bath, with the meeting point being the King of Wessex, a large, new-built Wetherspoon's pub on James Street West. The King of Wessex was very busy when I arrived, so I decided to order a pint of Acorn Old Moor Porter (4.4%) first but unable to find the others, I quickly finished my pint and moved on to the next pub on the list, the Bath Brew House, home to James Street Brewery.

Opened in September 2013 following extensive refurbishment, it had formerly been known as the Metropolitan and, before that, the Midland Hotel. Most of the others were already here and I settled for one of the 'house' beers, James Street Pesky Jammer (4.4%) which turned out to be a bit hazy but, nevertheless, was good—it is brewed with Chinook and Citra hops and has a ginger and lemongrass hit.

The brewery vessels can be seen behind a glass screen to the rear of the L-shaped bar. Other James Street beers available were their two regulars, the malty Gladiator and citrusy Emperor, plus Ostiarus, a seasonal brew. Also available was Celt Experience Chieftain plus two ciders.

Our next port of call was the Raven, which was to be our lunch stop. This GBG-listed 18th-century pub is fashioned from two Georgian town houses and sits in a quiet cobbled street near the centre of Bath. Up to six real ales are available from two bars (one upstairs). I opted for Blindmans Raven's Gold (4.0%), a pale gold bitter brewed, as the name suggests, specially for the



Left: The Raven

pub. This is one of two regular Blindmans ales on sale here, and was found to be very good. Up to four guest ales are also available. With food duly provided, I then opted to try Clearwater Proper 'Ansome

(4.2%), a dark, malty bitter. This was also in very good condition.

After lunch, we moved on to the Old Green Tree, a lovely 300-year old building with three oak-panelled rooms; a snug at the front of the pub, a northern-style drinking lobby and a smallish but comfortable back bar. This pub is on the CAMRA National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors and is well worth a visit. The Old Green Tree stocks Old Green Tree Bitter as a regular offering, brewed specially for the pub by Blindmans Brewery. There are also two other regular ales, plus a guest, which I chose: Prescott Summer Season's Best (4.5%). This is, as the name suggests, a seasonal ale and is brewed with Calypso, Chinook, Centennial and Cascade hops, complemented by a

blend of pale malts to give a zesty, refreshing American-style IPA. This was a most enjoyable beer and served in excellent condition and was my last beer of the day, as I said my goodbyes and with two friends also leaving then, headed for the station.



Above: The Bath Brew House



Above: The Old Green Tree

Chris Lloyd

The 2015 Christmas Crawl

For our branch Christmas social we decided to visit the pubs in Digbeth, Birmingham. An afternoon contingent started at the Woodman near Millennium Point with a view to having a meal there before the night's festivities. However the chef was off sick so we had to be happy with pork pies and some excellent beer. Kinver Noble; Castle Rock Black Gold; Rat Red Nosed Rodent; Welbeck Abbey Ernest George; Ilkley Tribus; Navigation Eclipse and Gwynt y Ddraig Dog Dancer were all on the bar.



L—R in the Woodman: Pete Cherry, Martin Buck, Paul Wigley, Marilyn Frost, Steve Evans, Pat Ellis, and David Frost

Our next port of call was the Wellington, a well-known pub on the Birmingham circuit now owned by Black Country Ales. With 13 beers available there is something for everyone and with a new second floor there is a better chance of finding a seat in this very popular pub. As to the beers, the range is not so imaginative as it used to be but still well worth seeking out. Wye Valley HPA, Black Country Ales

Pig on the Wall and Fireside, Purity Mad Goose and Oakham Citra were supplemented by the more interesting Froth Blowers Piffle Snonker, Burton Bridge Hearty Ale, Bank Top Port O' Call, Downton Port Stout, Abbeydale Abbey Christmas, Cottage Darth Malt and Metropolitan, Green Duck Dark Treacle Stout and Derby Excalibur.

After sampling a few we decided it would be foolish to miss out the Post Office Vaults close by. Fighting our way downstairs we were delighted when Julian Lloyd Webber and his friend vacated a table enabling us to park ourselves down to enjoy Salopian Oracle; Hobsons Mild [beers that are always on here]; Blue Monkey Infinity; Animal Hedgehog; Elland Ebenezer; XT6; Welbeck Ernest George and Abbeydale Thaw.

Looking at the clock, it was time to make our way to Digbeth for the "official" social. The Anchor to my mind is a variable pub in terms of choice and quality. Once a bastion of real ale in Birmingham's beer desert, I wonder if maybe the competition is hitting the Anchor. Still, it is a superb Victorian local. Hand-pumped beers available were Ratmans Pudding Spiced Star, Bravo Amber Ale and Wild Weather NW3—a disappointing number of beers so close to Christmas.

Our last pub of the night is one I had not been to for some years; it came recommended by the local CAMRA branch and is in the Good Beer Guide. The Spotted Dog is

very much a locals' pub, tucked away on a side road of the Coventry Road, closer to Bordesley than Digbeth. Castle Rock Harvest Pale Ale, XT6; Holden's Mild; Salsopian Catatonic and Jennings Cumberland finished us off for the night as we made our way back to Solihull via train and bus.

Steve Dyson

In the Spotted Dog: L—R: Martin Buck, Paul Wigley, Andrew Guy, Marilyn Frost, David Frost and (front) David Cove.



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Beer's been around since a handful of Sumerians tried to make their grain more palatable by soaking it in water and then forgetting all about it. Fermentation set in, and they stumbled upon a deliciously inebriating mash. The effect was so good the Sumerians even had a hymn to Ninkasi, beer goddess, that included the recipe. Beer and civilisation go hand in hand.

More recently, beer's what made early intercontinental travel possible because

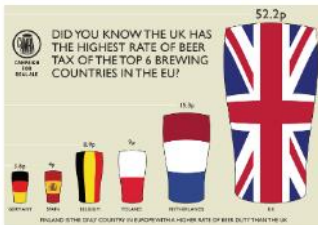
regular old water was often contaminated after long periods of storage. Beer, a much waterier version than we consume today, was part of the rations for people making the transatlantic crossing. In fact, the Mayflower landed at Plymouth, USA, largely because they were nearly out of beer. It has fans including Plato, Wilhelm II, Benjamin Franklin, Winston Churchill, and the inestimable Homer Simpson.

A warning: the internet is frothing with myths about the amazing cure-all powers of beer: fertilise your grass, insulate your walls, loosen rusty bolts. All half-true at best. Give them a try, but please be judicious with your beer. The most usual use is often the best one, so drink it before wasting it on your nuts.

CAMRA Campaigns Update

Cut Tax on Beer & Cider

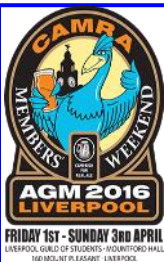
CAMRA has joined forces with brewing trade associates to call for a cut in beer tax in this year's Budget. The coalition of consumers, brewers and pub operators is urging MPs to sign an Early Day Motion (EDM) calling for the Chancellor to cut a penny off a pint in his 16th March Budget. EDM 919 highlights the 19,000 boost in employment generated by three 1p cuts in beer duty in the Chancellor's recent Budgets, which according to CAMRA CE Tim Page, have kept pubs open, and the price of a pint down and saved more than 1,000 pubs from closure, benefitting pub-goers and communities throughout the UK. CAMRA members are urged to ask their MPs to support pub goers



and beer drinkers by asking for a further cut in beer duty—you can find a submittable form to fill in online on your member dashboard once you've logged in to the CAMRA website at www.camra.org.

May is Mild Month

CAMRA promotes Mild throughout May. What is Mild? Milds are black to dark brown to pale amber in colour and come in a variety of styles, from warming, roasty ales to light refreshing lunchtime thirst-quenchers. Malty and possibly sweet tones dominate the flavour profile but there may be a light hop flavour or aroma. Slight diacetyl (toffee/butterscotch) flavours are not inappropriate. Alcohol levels are typically low, less than 4.3%. This year, why not see if a pub in your area is stocking Mild, and try something a bit different?



2016 Members' Weekend & AGM

There's still time to put your name down for the 2016 Members' Weekend & AGM, but you'll have to hurry, as registration closes on 11th March.

The Weekend, open to all CAMRA members, runs from 1st—3rd April, and is being held at the Liverpool Guild of Students, Mountford Hall, where members will discuss all aspects of CAMRA campaigning and share their experience and knowledge with one another. It offers the opportunity to socialise with members from across the UK, attend the official AGM and campaigning workshops, visit recommended pubs and go on organised trips in the vibrant setting of Liverpool.



Workshops hosted by experienced volunteers and experts will give members the chance to learn much more about campaign activity, developments and best practice across the organisation, provided practical advice, and encourage attendees to make their views known on issues vital to the success of CAMRA's campaigns. Subjects will range from making beer

festivals more successful and mounting successful campaigns to save pubs, to running branch websites. You can find more about the workshops and their content in the Members section of the main CAMRA website.

To register for the event online, visit the Members' Weekend & AGM website www.camraagm.org.uk, select the 'Register' tab, log in with your membership details and follow instructions to receive your delegate pack.

A Couple of Local Beer Festival Visits

Inn on the Green

For some time I have meant to visit the Inn On The Green in Acocks Green, so when I noted it was to have a beer festival I was determined to visit. Fellow CAMRA Solihull members Allan, Brenda and Bob decided they too wouldn't mind giving it a try.



Allan and Brenda were already there when Bob and I arrived and over in the opposite side of the pub was a contingent of the Birmingham Branch. The pub is a typical large ex Mitchells and Butlers building overlooking the traffic island in the centre of Acocks Green. There is one large room which does lack atmosphere. However, the publican Brendan, who came over to chat to us is a keen CAMRA man and one look at the bar and the festival beer list showed us that this was going to be a great afternoon. There were 6 beers on handpump and others on gravity in a side room. The list was pretty impressive: Wylam Jakehead IPA, Nene Valley Big Bang Theory, Vibrant Forest Simcoe, Ossett Snake Mocha Stout, Rat Raspberry Ripple, Summerwine Teleporter, Neptune Riptide, Wingtip Autopilot, Atom Blonde, Fernandes Wheat and Juniper, Littleover Crest, Seven Brothers Session, Tres Bien 484, Windsor and Newton Mandarine and Kew Pagoda No.1 Pale. We also tried keykeg Magic Rock Custard Pie, an excellent 6.7% craft beer. Of the fifteen beers available I gave six of them 4 out of 5; seven, 3 out of 5. My personal favourite was the Seven Brothers Session, a beautiful clean, hoppy beer at 3.8%. I was not too keen on the Fernandes or the Rat, whose beers I usually love. However we had a good afternoon, too such

an extent that both Bob and I were a little bit the worse for wear when we left. In fact I cannot remember arriving home, where I promptly fell asleep until 1am in the morning. I must have had a good time!

Old Silhillians

It was absolutely throwing it down when four CAMRA members arrived sodden at the Old Silhillians Sports Club at the M42 island near Knowle. Twelve beers were advertised, although not all of them were available at the same time. The listing stated 12 beers but I counted 15, so I wondered if there had been a last minute change of beers. The range on the bar on the day of our visit was not very imaginative being M&B Brew X1; Silhill Gold Star; Theakstons Best Bitter and St Austell Cornish Best.

These were, however, supplemented by the more interesting Slaughterhouse Space Trotter; Moorhouse's Black Cat, Rebellion Smuggler and Roasted Nuts. Other beers advertised but not on were Church End Cuthberts; Deuchars IPA; Castle Rock Harvest Pale; Caledonian Over the Bar; Sadlers Peaky Blinder; Weatheroak Oak Ale and Moorhouse's White Witch. The best beer for me was the Rebellion Smuggler at 4.2% which I felt was a very full flavoured beer.

My general impression of the festival was that the range represented all those breweries and beers that we have all tried before, some many years ago. Apart from the Rebellion, I thought it a lost opportunity to showcase beers from the plethora of new small breweries springing up throughout the country. It is only fair to say however, that the festival was not necessarily aimed at CAMRA members but more at the Club members.

Steve Dyson



Pin, Pie & Pint Night

If it's February, it's back to the Fleur de Lys in Lowsonford for our annual pin, pie and pint night. We are not exactly blessed with traditional pub skittles in our area, so it's always a welcome and interesting night out at this lovely old pub.

I must say I was pleasantly surprised at how busy they were as the last three years we've been there have been few others there. This time the pub was packed. I looked round and at one stage there were no tables free at all. Clearly Nick and Emma and their team are doing something very right. It's certainly a very welcoming venue with friendly and helpful staff; the food is always good and we were not disappointed this time either; so well done to all involved.

OK, it's a Greene King pub and I know some of our members consider GK beers a little boring but the choice on the night was not bad. As well as GK IPA and Abbott Ale, they had Belhaven Grand Slam (4.0%) and Nottingham Extra Pale Ale (4.2%) - unfortunately when I went up for a pint they'd run out of the latter, but it had been replaced with York Brewery Guzzler (3.6%), so not your traditional Greene King fare at all.

Oh, I suppose I ought to mention the skittles—that was why we were there after all.



Well we had another good turnout with around 25 of us making the journey and as before it was good to see some new faces and better halves there too. There were definitely some interesting techniques on display and quite a few people seemed intent on taking out the back wall as well as the back board of the alley (*note: must undertake a risk assessment before next year and sort out what personal protective equipment is needed for the skittle re-setters!*), while others took a more measured approach, though it wasn't clear which worked best. All I know is that I was consistent with last year and the years before – consistently rubbish.

I may not have done well but at least I was nowhere near the bottom. Not going to mention names (Robert and Paul) but you know who you are. At the other end of the table things were tight at the top, with only single figures between the top three. Tony Fitzgerald won with 55 points, with Jenny Buck on 54 and husband Martin Buck on 53. I don't think Jenny minded coming second as beating Martin was probably more important! And Jenny must get a another special mention as the highest individual score in any one round, scoring a grand total of 26 out of a possible maximum of 27 from only three balls (or are we supposed to call them cheeses?).

Overall, a very enjoyable night out with good company, good food and good beer. We hope to see you next year, but do come along to our other forthcoming social events and meetings as we'd love to see you there too.

Ray Cooke



Top - bottom: Tony Fitzgerald, Jenny and Martin Buck. Photos courtesy of Seven Star Photography.

Membership Matters

According to a recent report called "Friends on Tap" written by Professor Robin Dunbar of Oxford University, it was found that people with a pub nearby are "significantly" happier, have more friends, better life satisfaction and drink less.

This should come as no surprise to CAMRA members both locally and nationally—pubs offer a social environment in which to enjoy a drink with friends in a responsible, supervised community setting. They also allow us to engage in conversation with other members of our communities, which in turn means we meet a wider range of community members and interact with a greater diversity of classes and cultures than would otherwise be the case if our world is confined to work and home.

Currently one of CAMRA's key campaigns is to help keep well-run community pubs open rather than being closed, by making a pub an Asset of Community Value (ACV) to protect them from unwanted development. By joining CAMRA, part of your membership fee would be used to help provide funds to campaign against pub closures, and you will also be in good company with over 175,000 other like-minded real ale

and traditional cider lovers.

A year's membership will not break the bank, and currently at £24.00 per year (concessions for Under-26 and Over-60): this roughly equals to 46p per week.

So why not join CAMRA by completing the application form overleaf and sending it off, or by visiting the CAMRA website www.camra.org.uk where a full list of membership benefits can also be found.

We hold monthly meetings at a local pub with good real ale, but if you don't fancy that, why not join us on one of our many socials—we are a friendly bunch and we will make you more than welcome.....someone might even buy you a pint!!! We organise a varied programme of informal outings, including pub crawls, meals, brewery visits, beer festival trips and activities like our February Pin, Pie & Pint bowling night. See the Dates for your Diary section on page 6 of this publication for further information.

And finally: think about it, you could make yourself even happier than you are by visiting your local pub to enjoy a pint real ale.

Dave Mckowen
Membership Secretary

Useful Contact Numbers

Chairman	
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Secretary	
Allan Duffy	01564 200431
Membership	
Dave Mckowen	01564 778955
Press & Publicity / Socials	
Paul Wigley	07402 312457
Pubs Campaigning/ Beer Festival (general enquiries)	
Martin Buck	01564 770708

EDITOR'S NOTE:

After more than 10 years as Solihull & District branch newsletter Editor, I have now finished my last magazine and handed over to David Cove, who takes over the role of magazine Editor from me. I should like to thank everyone who has submitted articles and photos, and to all of you out there who have read the magazines, whether branch members or not: please keep submitting, supporting and reading!

All the best, Julia.

