

# Solihull



# Drinker

Issue No 74  
Winter 2015

Free  
Please take one

## 17th Solihull Beer Festival

The 17th annual Solihull Beer Festival took place over the first weekend of October, and it broke new ground. We had more beers than ever, we had a new location, and it was our first ever festival held in a marquee. We had more room, which allowed us to have a much larger bar – a key factor in avoiding the crowding which had been an issue in previous years. Of course, all the changes presented us with some new challenges – but overall, the festival was yet another success.

and perries, there was something for everyone from session beers through to headache-inducing strong ales. Over the weekend there were numerous comments about the wide range on offer and the excellent condition of the beers – testament to the hard work of Kevin Sumner, who chose the beers and was in charge of them during the festival.

We added an extra session on Thursday evening, for CAMRA and cricket



*A panoramic view of the festival on Friday night*

The festival was held at the Knowle & Dorrige Cricket Club—after last year's festival we reluctantly concluded that it was time to move on; the Solihull British Legion had been a great venue for more than a decade, but the small size of the building meant we couldn't continue to grow. The marquee gave us more space, and the full-length bar and double row of barrels looked great. Once again we had an excellent selection of beer, including the Champion Beer of Britain: Cwtch, from Welsh brewery Tiny Rebel. With over 50 real ales on offer, plus ten ciders

club members only. This worked well, with the only issue being the temperature: on a chilly evening, the limited numbers meant the marquee wasn't the warmest place to be. On the flip side, it did mean the beers stayed in great condition throughout the festival! We are already considering what can be done to warm things up during opening hours next year.

Once again we opened at noon on Friday giving visitors a chance to try

*Continued on Page 8*

# THE BULL'S 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.**

Listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide for over 20 years  
& multiple 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)

**TELEPHONE RESERVATIONS WELCOME**

“A glass of bitter or pale ale, taken with the principal meal of the day,  
does more good and less harm than any medicine the physician can  
prescribe.”

*Dr. S. Carpenter, England, 1750*



***[www.TheBullsHeadBarston.co.uk](http://www.TheBullsHeadBarston.co.uk)***

## Christmas at the Bartons Arms

The Bartons Arms in Aston is one of the finest examples of Victorian pub architecture and one of the most beautiful pub interiors in the country. Built in 1901 at a cost of some £12,000 on the site of a former pub, it became the flagship of the Mitchell and Butler's brewery estate, with a striking exterior feature in the foursquare clock tower. The interior is the epitome of Victorian decorative grandeur, with a riot of original features: rich mahogany woodwork, stained and engraved windows and mirrors, snob-screens, sweeping wrought-iron staircase and what the pub is best known for, its wall-to-wall Minton-Hollins tiles, from shiny-glazed decorative patterns to huge painted scenes.

Purchased in 2002 by Oakham Ales, the Bartons Arms was returned to its former greatness. As the festive season fast approaches, the pub is getting into the Christmas spirit—everyone who books in advance and orders from the pub's Christmas menu will be entered into a Prize Draw to win a £100 gift voucher to spend at this popular venue in 2016. prices start at only £12.95 per person for the delicious buffet menu, whilst the truly tantalising three-course menu is just £21.95 per person.



The Bartons Arms was recognised by CAMRA as Birmingham's finest Victorian pub and one of 270 pubs in the UK with interiors of real historic significance in their 2013 publication "Britain's Best Real Heritage Pubs". If you want to learn more about this beautiful Victorian jewel, then why not book to take part in The Taste & Tour of the Bartons Arms, hosted by author and historian John Ullah? The evening, costing £19.95, consists of a guided tour of the venue including the cellar, a slideshow and a two-course Thai meal. To reserve a place, please call The Bartons Arms on 0121 333 5988 or email [manager@thebartonsarms.com](mailto:manager@thebartonsarms.com).

## Notice of the 2016 AGM

Notice is hereby given of the Solihull & District CAMRA AGM, which will take place at the Olton Tavern, Olton, on Monday 1st February 2016, starting at **8.30pm**.

If any current Committee member wishes to stand down, or anyone wishes to apply to take up a Committee post (all Committee posts are open to any Solihull & District branch member), in both instances it would be appreciated if you could please email your intentions to Chairman Carl Wright at [carl.wright@swisslog.com](mailto:carl.wright@swisslog.com) at least two weeks before the meeting.

(The position of editor of the Drinker magazine has already been advised to members at recent branch meetings as becoming vacant with effect from the AGM.)

The AGM will be preceded by a short Branch Meeting starting at **8.00pm**.

Members are reminded that with effect from this branch meeting in February 2016 they will be eligible to vote at meetings on our branch's entries in the Good Beer Guide, and for Pub of the Year, Club of the Year and Most Improved Pub/Club of the Year only if they have attended at least **THREE** meetings in the 12 months *before* the vote.

***(This requirement does not extend to nominating or seconding entries. Exemption from this rule will be at the Chairman's discretion. Meetings do not have to be consecutive to count towards the minimum of 3.)***



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

### Features in this issue include:

<b>Pub, Club &amp; Brewery News</b>	<b>4-5</b>
<b>Dates for the Diary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>A Stagger around Shrewsbury</b>	<b>10-12</b>
<b>Members Weekend &amp; AGM</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Lancaster Northern City of Ale Festival</b>	<b>24-25</b>
<b>Membership Matters</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>CAMRA Campaigns Update</b>	<b>28-29</b>

# Hail to the Ale!

## Local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

### The Pup & Duckling, Hatchford Brook

The Pup and Duckling, owned and run by local Jeff Berry, was running later than expected when the Drinker



went to press due to a last-minute hitch with the lease, but was finally expecting to open its doors around 3rd December, with beers on offer over the first few days to include Shed Brewery's Spotted Cock plus beers from Sadlers and Slaughterhouse breweries. Jeff plans more local brewery and microbrewery beers in the future. Bar snacks are available but visitors are welcome to bring their own food and there are three take-aways in Hatchford Brook, with many more in Solihull who will be willing to deliver. See [www.pupandduckling.co.uk](http://www.pupandduckling.co.uk) for further details, or their Facebook page for updates on beers.

### The Old Silhillians

The next Silhillians Beer Festival will be on Friday 5th, Saturday 6th & Sunday 7th February 2016. "Bigger & Better", with more beers and more choice, watch out for more information to be posted about the festival nearer the time at [www.silhillians.co.uk](http://www.silhillians.co.uk).

### The Vaults, Knowle

The Vaults has replaced 3 of its 4 regular real ales—see their advert opposite for details on beers now on. Looking to 2016: the pub will again be supporting Knowle Cancer Week at the beginning of March—watch out for further details in the pub next year.

### The Olton Tavern, Olton

The Olton Tavern reopened as an Ember Inn on Saturday 26th September after a refurbishment. Normally prices range from £3.05 to £3.60, although as with our other local Ember Inns, on Mondays a pint of real ale is £2.49, and at other times it offers 20p off the price of a pint on production of a CAMRA card. There is live entertainment during December including tribute acts. We will be holding our AGM there in February next year: landlord Adrian is looking forward to hosting us and promises some excellent real ales for the occasion.



### Station Café Bar, Dorridge

The Station Café Bar held a 4-day beer festival towards the end of October, featuring 8 real ales and 2 ciders: Holdens' Golden, Sarah Hughes' Ruby Mild, St Austell Tribute, Cornish Best and Proper Job, Black Tap Morning Glory, Weather-oak's Weatheroak Ale and Joules' Slumbering Monk. The selected ciders were Thatchers Heritage and Thistly Cross Whisky Cask.

### The Assembly Rooms, Solihull

It is believed that there has been an offer for the Assembly Rooms but it is not known by whom.

### Sharman's Cross, Solihull

The Shaman's Cross is closed for refurbishment, expected to reopen on 3rd December.

## Beers Around Here

Beers reported around Solihull over the last Quarter

*Should you taste any great and/or unusual beers at local pubs or beer festivals, please send details for the next issue to [editor@solihullcamra.org.uk](mailto:editor@solihullcamra.org.uk)*

**Black Boy, Heronfield:** Ab-beydale's Wellesley, Brampton Brewery's Buddy's Best Beer.

**Boat Inn, Catherine-de-Barnes:** Silhill Gold Star.

**Bulls Head, Earlswood:** Shed Brewery's Spotted Dick, Thwaites' Wainwright.

**Fieldhouse, Monkspath:** Moles' Mole Catcher, Oakham's Citra, Adnams' Ghost Ship, Black Sheep's Black Sheep, Fuller's London Pride,

Timothy Taylor's Landlord, St Austell Tribute and Purity UBU.

**Lady Lane Wharf:** Fuller's Oliver's Island, Sadler's Worcester Sorcerer

**Olton Tavern:** Marstons' Pedigree, Brakspear Bitter, Greene King's Old Speckled Hen, Adnams' Ghost Ship, Wadworth 6X and In-veralmond Tighthead.

**Station Café Bar, Dorridge:** Silhill Gold Star and Dark Star.

## Nick, Gwen & staff welcome you to

# *The Vaults*

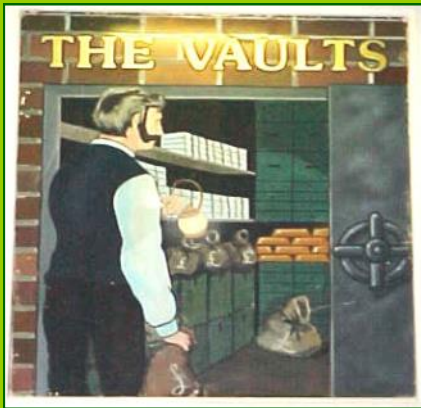
*St John's Close, Knowle*

*01564 773656*

*the* Real Ale venue in Knowle

Previous Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year award winner

*Continuously listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide since 1993*



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

**Opening hours:**

**Mon—Thurs 12.00-2.30pm and 5.00-11.30pm;**

**Fri & Sat: 12.00-11.30pm**

**Sun 12.00-11.00pm.**

- **Wi-Fi is now available for meetings or individuals - ask at the bar for details.**

**Food available lunchtimes from Mon - Sat, 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 11th January	Mason's Arms, Solihull
Monday 1st February	Olton Tavern, Olton ( <b>+ AGM—8.00pm start</b> )
Monday 7th March	Sharman's Cross, Solihull

## Committee Meetings

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

Monday 25th January	Hillfield Farm, Monkspath
Monday 21st March	Pup & Duckling, Hatchford Brook

## Socials

Saturday 5th December	Leamington Spa/Warwick pub crawl
Wednesday 16th December	Christmas Crawl around Digbeth
<b>2016</b>	
January:	GBG-pubs campaigning trip (date TBC)
Friday 19th February	Pin, Pie & Pint Night, Fleur de Lys, Lowsonford
March	Beer Festival Thank-you Trip (date TBC)
April	Visit to the Albion Brewery, Northampton plus local GBG pubs (date TBC)
May	2 nights (Fri & Sat) in Huddersfield (date 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](http://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

**Editor:** no information about any West Midlands CAMRA beer festivals taking place over the next quarter.

However, you may be interested in the following, which is some way from Solihull but easily reached by train:

**Wed 17th—Sat 20th February 2016:**

CAMRA's National Winter Ales Fest, The Roundhouse, Pride Park, Derby DE24 8JE. 400+ Real Ales, bottled world beers, ciders & perries + mead. Includes Mild, Bitters, Best Bitters, Strong Bitters, Golden Ales and Speciality Beers. Brewery bars include Blue Monkey, Brass Castle, Brunswick BC and North Star. Opening hours:

Thurs—Sat: 11am—11.00pm every day (Wed: 4.00pm—11.00pm). Live music & hot food available. Refundable souvenir glass £3 (will be added to admission cost). Under-18's allowed each day until 7pm.

Admission: Wed. 17th: £3.00 (free to card-carrying CAMRA members); Thurs 18th: 11am-5pm: £2.00 (free to ad-carrying CAMRA members) & 5pm-11pm: £5.00 (£2.00 to card-carrying CAMRA members); Fri. 19th: 11am-5pm: £3.00 (free to card-carrying members) & 5pm-11pm: £6.00 (2.00 to card-carrying CAMRA members); Sat. 20th: 11am-5pm: £3.00 (free to card-carrying CAMRA members); 5pm-11pm: £6.00 (£2.00 to card-carrying CAMRA members). For more information, see [www.nwaf.org.uk](http://www.nwaf.org.uk).

# THE WHITE LION

High Street, Hampton in Arden, Solihull B92 0AA

Tel: 01675 442833      [www.thewhitelioninn.com](http://www.thewhitelioninn.com)

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, Castle Rock Harvest Pale, Sharps Doom Bar, Robinson's Wizard, Brew XI & Hobson's Best)*

**Restaurant    A la Carte menu; Sunday roasts from £9.50**

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

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

## 2015 Beer Festival Report (continued from front page)



*L-R: Carl Wright, Branch chairman, Paul Scrivens, Home Brew competition winner, & Perry Clarke, head brewer, Shed Brewery.*

all the ales without being too crowded.

On Saturday, visitors before 3 pm received a voucher for a free pint, and there was more free beer on offer, with samples available from the popular Home Brew competition. The quality of entries in the competition was very high, but the clear winner was Paul Scrivens with an excellent wheat beer. We're grateful to The Shed Brewery, Hockley Heath, for sponsoring the Home Brew competition again – and Perry, head brewer at the Shed, ran the competition for us.

Saturday evening even brought a surprise performance from a local ukulele band—a couple who were visiting during the Saturday lunchtime rang round and brought their band over that night for an impromptu but welcome gig!

With more beers and ciders than ever before, we maintained a great choice right up until 11 pm on Saturday. With festival-goers voting for their Beer of the Festival, it was incredibly close; in the end, the winner was the Champion Beer of Britain, Cwtch from Tiny Rebel. It took festival honours by just a single vote, ahead of Snow Eater from Brass Castle. And there was a tie for third place between Dark Drake, from Dancing Duck, and Jester Ruby Ale, from our very own Shed brewery.

A big thank you to our local sponsors, whose generous support enabled us to freeze the beer prices for another year. The festival was sponsored by Silhill Brewery, and as mentioned earlier, The Shed sponsored the Home Brew competition. Special thanks to the Knowle & Dorrige Cricket Club, who made us feel very welcome.

Additional thanks to our programme advertisers: the Lady Lane Wharf, Earlswood, the Bull's Head, Barston, the Fieldhouse, Monkspath, the Vaults, Knowle, Bernie's Real Ale Off Licence, Shirley and the Flute & Flagon, Solihull.

Thanks also to our visitors who generously donated nearly £200 in tokens and cash to the Dorrige Scout Group and Darwin Explorer Scout Unit. Lastly, as always, our volunteers are the backbone of the event - without them, we simply couldn't hold a festival at all.



*Just a few of our sterling volunteer staff—still smiling!*

If you enjoyed the festival, why not come along to one of our branch meetings or social events, and maybe even consider volunteering for next year's festival. All volunteers are entitled to buy discounted beer, and also get invited on a Thank You trip after the festival.

Martin Buck  
Festival Organiser



## Maris Otter turns 50

It may seem strange to note the anniversary of a cereal variety, but there's good reason to celebrate the half-century of one particular barley; particularly so given the tale of domination, decline, rescue and revival that spans its extraordinary 50 year history.

There are now more than 1,400 breweries in Britain, and three new ones are opening each week. With the revival of the craft beer sector, interest in ingredients is extending, and demand for quality malt and hop varieties is growing rapidly. While Maris Otter might not be a household name, it is legendary among a group of craft brewers and beer-lovers. Once malted, it becomes the ingredient by which loyalist brewers swear.

Despite reaching 50 and being the best known barley malt, Maris Otter remains a specialist variety. It is a low-nitrogen winter barley (sown in the autumn and harvested a few weeks before the spring varieties), cross-bred from Proctor and Pioneer in 1965 by the Plant Breeding Institute in Cambridge. Its popularity grew and it dominated the market in the 1970s. However, by the late '80s it had fallen out of favour with many of the larger breweries – and was taken off the NIAB (National Institute of Agricultural Botany) recommended list in 1989.

Despite this and the fall in volumes, a number of brewers remained loyal to the breed. They said the malt it produced performed excellently in the mash tun and the resulting beers had a depth of flavour unmatched by those made with other malts. This commitment from these brewers encouraged grain merchants H Banham and Robin Appel in their quest to save the variety. Between them, in 1992, the merchants bought the rights to it – and they are still the sole owners.



*Maris Otter malting barley*

There was a lot of work to do to re-establish the purity of the strain and the process of "re-selection" played a crucial role. It involved manually picking out the purest stock and using it to start a new breeding cycle.

Although less than 6% of British beer is produced with Maris Otter malt, nine of the most recent fourteen Champion Beers of Britain (ie. 64%) are made with Maris Otter—quite a record for an ingredient. Most cereal varieties are superseded within five or six years, so 50 years' continual production is truly exceptional. It is, as Mark Banham from grain merchants H Banham points out, "well worth commemorating."

So he joined forces with David Holliday from Norfolk Brewhouse to create a commemorative beer festival. 50 new beers were created especially for the national Maris Otter 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary festival in Norwich in September—brewers from 44 different counties of Britain—and 6 countries from across the world—each provided a birthday beer for the event. "This was the first beer festival to have all 50 beers brewed with a single malt variety," said Mark, "As far as we know, it's also the first birthday party ever to be held in honour of a grain!"



*Tom Rivett & Tim Walpole of H Banham checking the sowing of the 50th anniversary crop in November 2014*

## A Stagger around Shrewsbury

Having spent the weekend in Shrewsbury during the summer, I certainly thought the town and the pubs were worth another visit. So four of us assembled at Solihull station to catch the 10:54 Kidderminster train, changing at Smethwick and arriving in Shrewsbury at 12:19. In the GBG the town has 10 pubs listed; one is out of the town centre, two are owned by Joules and there is also a Wetherspoons. We decided to visit the other six.

The first port of call was The Salopian Bar. This is the current local CAMRA Pub of the Year and only a short walk along the river from the station.



*The Salopian Bar*

It is a proper pub also showing Sky Sports. We were greeted by a happy smiling barmaid and a line-up of eight beers, including Oakham Citra (4.2%), Salopian Oracle (4.0%), Scarlet Macau (4.4%), and Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby (6.0%). We each tried a different ale and they were all well-kept. The star was the Sarah Hughes, although it was a bit early in the day for a drink of 6.0% strength!

We were recommended by one of the locals to try The Kings Head, which was just round the corner. This is a beautiful half-timbered Tudor building, but the beers on offer were very average, so we moved on to the centre of town and The Three Fishes. This is another old building with just the one



*The Three Fishes*

bar area and we were told they serve good bar food, but it was a bit too early for us to eat. The beers on offer were Stonehouse Station Bitter (3.9%), Three Tuns Cleric Cure (5.0%), Three Tuns Stout (4.4%), and Dark Star Hophead (3.8%). I tried the Stonehouse which, for a beer of relatively low ABV, was excellent - a good session beer. Again we received a warm welcome from the bar staff and the beers on offer were extremely good. We got into conversation with one of the locals who said he lived in Shrewsbury but was moving to Bishops Castle - we assume so he could be near The Three Tuns brewery!

The next pub on our list was The Nags Head, which is situated just down the hill from The Three Fishes and is another building several hundred years



*The Coach & Horses*



Home-cooked food daily—service times:

Monday 12-2.00pm and 5.30-8.00pm

Tuesday-Thursday 12-2.00pm and 5.30-9.00pm

Friday-Saturday 12-2.00pm and 5.30-9.30pm

Sunday 12-9.00pm



**6 Real Ales on hand pump: 3 regulars  
+ 3 ever-changing guests**

# THE RAILWAY INN

**GRANGE ROAD, DORRIDGE**

Tel. 01564 773531

Opening Hours:

Mon—Fri: 11.00—3.00pm 4.30—11.00pm

Saturday: 11.00—11.00pm

Sunday: 12 noon—10.30pm

[www.railwaydorrige.com](http://www.railwaydorrige.com)



## Christmas Menu

*Our Christmas Menu is available from 1st to 22nd December. Bookings now being taken, ring for prices and further details.*

**December offer: Mulled Wine and Mince Pie £5.00**

old. For a pub in the GBG it was a disappointment, as they only had Landlord, Doom Bar and one other, so we decided to move on to The Coach and Horses. I had eaten at this pub the last time I was in Shrewsbury and found the food to be good, so we resolved to stay for lunch. From the outside The Coach and Horses does not look very big, but it is deceptive. You enter into a small bar area with an adjoining snug, but if you walk past the snug you come to another bar and a large dining area, where we sat and had an excellent meal. The beers they had were Slaters Top Totty (4.0%), Slaters Premium (4.4%), Salopian Oracle (4.0%) and Stonehouse Station Bitter (3.9%).

Just few doors away is another pub we intended to visit, The Admiral Benbow, but unfortunately this pub does not open at lunchtimes in the week so we walked back into the centre of town. We were on our way to The Vaults when we saw a pub called The Loggerheads. This is not in the GBG but it should be for its interior alone, which has probably not changed in the last 100 years! It has a tiny bar at the front, then a side passage leading to what (according to the sign) was until 1975 *Gents Only!* There is then what I would guess was the Smoke Room and round the corner another room which passes off as the Lounge. The pub had

*Continued on Page 13*



Solihull CAMRA Club of the Year 2015

# LADY LANE WHARF

Lady Lane • Earlswood • Solihull • B94 6AH



open:  
monday — saturday:  
11.00am — 11.00pm  
sunday: 11.00pm — 10.30pm

Lady Lane, Earlswood  
Solihull B94 6AH  
t: 01564 703 821/01564 702 552  
e: [granthyland@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:granthyland@hotmail.co.uk)  
[www.ladylanewharf.co.uk](http://www.ladylanewharf.co.uk)

- breakfast from 9.30am
  - hot and cold meals served all day
  - fresh, home cooked food to order
  - live entertainment every weekend
  - the finest cask ales - 1 regular and 3 guest
  - speciality ciders
- [www.ladylanewharf.co.uk](http://www.ladylanewharf.co.uk)  
Tel: 01564 702552

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

FOOD • REAL ALE • TRANQUILITY





## A Stagger around Shrewsbury (continued from Page 11)

a range of seven beers mainly from Marstons and our choice was Jennings' Snecklifter.

We learnt in The Loggerheads that The Admiral Benbow opens at 5pm so we retraced our route across town, to find a pub that had an extensive range of bottled beers plus real ales. The draft beers consisted of Six Bells Cloud 9 (4.2%), Slaters Top Totty (4.0%), Longden Sawn Off (4.0%), Ludlow Gold (4.5%) and Salopian Lemon Dream (4.2%). The pub has a large bar area, with extensive seating and tables in an area at the back and to the side of the building - again, definitely a pub worth a visit.



*L—R: Lawrence, Geoff and John, loitering with intent*

We left The Admiral Benbow to walk to The Vaults, which is by the station. On our way we passed The Salopian Bar so thought we needed to say goodbye to the happy barmaid and have a final pint of Sarah Hughes.....we did not make it to The Vaults!

We can certainly recommend the historic town of Shrewsbury for a day out. There are some excellent pubs well worth a visit, and it is also relatively easy to get to by train from Solihull.

Cast :- John Byron (Director and Author); Geoff Hurst (Treasurer and note-taker!);

Keith Whitehouse (Photography, Editor and Transport arrangements); & Lawrence Loy (consumer!)



*Left: Geoff and John outside the Admiral Benbow*



*Above: The happy barmaid at the Salopian Bar*



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

The Solihull Drinker is the quarterly newsletter of the Solihull & District Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Views expressed in the Drinker are not necessarily those of the Branch or of CAMRA.

Contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to Solihull Drinker Editor, 4 Kendrick Close, Solihull B92 0QD; or via email to [julia.hammonds@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:julia.hammonds@blueyonder.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.

Printed by Thistle Print Ltd, Leeds

Solihull CAMRA 2015 ©

**Considering advertising with us? Get your pub, club or business in the public eye!!  
For advertising rates: call 0121 603 1621 or email [editor@solihullcamra.org.uk](mailto:editor@solihullcamra.org.uk)**

# Blakesley Hall Beer Festival

September 2015 was a good month for beer festivals in Yardley, as a second one was held at Blakesley Hall over the weekend of the 26th and 27th. This was the first time a beer festival has been staged here, and Jeannette and I visited on Saturday, the first day.



*Blakesley Hall*

The hall dates from the Tudor period and is one of the oldest buildings in Birmingham. The festival, therefore, had a Tudor theme with information on brewing in Tudor times displayed around the venue. Admission was £4 and included entry to the hall itself and a voucher for a free half pint of beer. All drinks were served in either pint or half-pint measures (no thirds).

The main beer supplier this time was Two Towers Brewery, who provided

five of their range, *Blakesley 1590* (4.3%), *Divorced*, *Beheaded*, *Survived* (8.0%), *Armada Ahoy!* (6.0%), *Bards Tittle* (4.3%), and *Mary Rose* (4.2%). Other beers were provided by Rock & Roll Brewhouse (1 beer), Angel Ales (1), Green Duck Brewing Co. (2), Merician Brewery (1), Fixed Wheel Brewery (1), Beowulf Brewery (1), Lionheart Brewery (1) and Sadlers Brewery (2). There were also 7 ciders. Hot food was available all day from a stall in the hall grounds and the cafe was open for tea, coffee and soft drinks, plus sandwiches and cakes.

I began with Rock & Roll Brewhouse's *Tenpole* (4.2%). This is a golden beer, pleasantly mellow. Jeannette started with Two Towers' *Blakesley 1590* (*Complete Muppetry* renamed, I suspect, judging by the tasting notes).



*Outdoor entertainment at the festival*

My next beer was Fixed Wheel Brewery's *Walter Raleigh* (4.3%), another golden beer, full bodied and with aromas of lemon, spice and marmalade finished with a clean, crisp bitterness. Jeannette also tried this one ("but it still tastes of beer" was her verdict). I give up!

I chose Lionheart Brewery's *Amber-Leyn* (4.8%) as my third ale. This is a medium-bodied amber ale, using Maris Otter and Munich malts. Next up was Green Duck Brewing Co. *Bosworth*



*The beer festival bar*

*Basher* (5.2%) which is a dark ruby stout with roast and slightly sweet flavours. My final beer of the day was Two Towers *Armada Ahoy*, a naturally hazy, sweet, syrupy ale with a subtle hoppy after-taste.

Whilst chatting to the two lads from the brewery, I cadged a taster of their *Di-vorced*, *Beheaded*, *Survived*. Again, this beer had been renamed specially for the festival and is actually their newest brew normally named *Rotunda Thunder*. It is a barley wine-style golden beer with a syrupy texture, having hints of banana in the background and is brewed using a continental yeast strain. At 8% ABV it is not a beer for glugging!



*Festival-goers enjoy the fine weather*

The weather helped to make this a most enjoyable festival, with great use made of the hall grounds to enable visitors to enjoy the beers and the entertainment in the sunshine. I spoke to the organiser, who hoped to stage another festival next year as numbers on the day were promising. Subsequent

information has revealed that Blakesley Hall may even consider two festivals next year, one in summer and one in winter. The Hall makes an excellent venue for a beer festival and if such events are held in the future, we sincerely hope to support them.

Chris Lloyd

## **Winner: 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](http://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

### **Music in December:**

Sat 12th King of Diamonds (Elvis Tribute act)

Sat 19th Hillfield's very own Soul Matters

New Year's Eve Party Night - DJ & late bar  
(entry by ticket only—must be obtained in advance; ring pub for further details)

*5 Real Ales on at all times including 3 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.*



ADRIAN AND THE COMMITTEE WARMLY WELCOME YOU TO

# The Rowington Club



## Featured in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide

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

## Three regularly changing real ales always on

**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)**

**Large car park**

**Games available: Snooker, Pool, Darts, Dominoes**

## ***Christmas and New Year opening:***

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

***Christmas Day: 12 midday—2.00pm***

***Boxing Day: 12 midday—8.00pm***

***New Year's Day: 2.00pm—8.00pm***

***New Year's Eve: 2pm till after Midnight (children welcome until 7pm)  
BLACK TIE from 8pm onwards—Canapés & Champagne, Buffet and Disco  
( Club Members Only )***

**HAPPY CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR TO ALL FROM THE COMMITTEE**



28-30 Station Parade

Solihull B92 3SB

Tel: 0121 711 3630

[www.fluteandflagonsolihull.co.uk](http://www.fluteandflagonsolihull.co.uk)



The Flute & Flagon



10% off food & drink for card-carrying CAMRA members \*

(\*not valid in conjunction with any other offer)

### Opening Hours

08.00—23.00 Sun—Wed

08.00—24.00 Thurs

08.00—01.00 Fri—Sat

6 hand pumps with 5 Real Ales & a Traditional Cider + 4 Craft Beers

Selected Sky Sports showings

Solihull

## THE FLUTE & FLAGON

*....serving up delicious food, great drinks, & unforgettable experiences*

### Hogan's Cider at the Birmingham Christmas Market

If you're a real cider lover visiting the Birmingham Christmas Market and feel in need of a bit of refreshment, then Hogan's Cider have the answer—a pop-up bar over the festive season outside the Birmingham Rep. The bar, run in conjunction with Marmalade of the Bitters n' Twisted Group, will be open every day until 1st January from 12 noon till 10.00pm, serving a selection of Hogan's real ciders including their hot Mulled Cider, Hogan's Draught Cider, Hazy Daisy and Picker's Passion.



The bar will also be serving Shipyard Pale Ale and other drinks, plus pork pies.

Hogan's ciders can also be found on a more permanent basis at newly-opened The Stable, in John Bright Street, Birmingham. This pizza, pie and cider bar chain has expanded rapidly over the last 12 months and can be found across the West Country and in the south of England, but the new Birmingham outlet is the most northerly so far. They have up to 80 ciders across the chain from producers such as Oliver's, Dunkertons and Robinsons, and a glance at the drinks menu reveals that cider aperitifs and brandies are also available.

For more information about The Stables in Birmingham, see [www.stablepizza.com/media/Menus-Birmingham-V2.pdf](http://www.stablepizza.com/media/Menus-Birmingham-V2.pdf)

## The Wharf Tavern

2390 Stratford Road  
Hockley Heath  
B94 6QT

Tel: 01564 782075

[www.wharftavern.co.uk](http://www.wharftavern.co.uk)



*Under New Management*

*Best Live Music—last  
Friday of every month*

*Great beer garden*

*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](http://www.facebook.com/wharftavern)*

Opening Hours:

Mondays—Sundays

12 noon till Late

Food Service:

12 noon—10.00pm



SUMMER IS ALMOST OVER...



**HOPE YOU'RE NOT SCARED OF THE DARK...**

**EXECUTIONER'S PORTER**

**ONLY WATER, MALT, HOPS AND YEAST.  
JUST HOW HE'D HAVE DRUNK IT!**

*For more information on this, or any of our beers, please contact  
Peny Clarke, Head Brewer at The Shed Brewery, No. 07742246455*

QUALITY ASSURED ENGLISH PRODUCE

**Call 07910 004041 to buy Shed bottle-  
conditioned beer direct from the mi-  
crobrewery in Hockley Heath.**

**Casks also available (as no finings are  
used, please allow 5 weeks for orders to  
be fulfilled to permit natural settlement).**

## Shed News

Over the last 3 months the Shed Brewery have had barrels of their real ales at Solihull, Nottingham and Birmingham CAMRA beer festivals, and smaller local beer festivals at the Lady Lane Wharf and the Bulls Head, Earlswood also featured one or more Shed ales. Their 'Jesters Ruby Ale' was voted joint second Beer of the Festival at Solihull BF.

The brewery is now only offering Spotted Cock (5%) and occasionally Jesters Ruby Ale (5.5%) in cask form; although they are still bottling 140 pints a week of all their current beers for the local trade.

They recently produced a limited edition boxed set of 50 to celebrate the life of a customer's partner who lost their battle against cancer.

The brewery regularly supplies a pub customer in Manchester, but local outlets are not forgotten—two barrels of Spotted Cock will be going to new micropub the Pup and Duckling on Hatchford Brook Road for its imminent opening, while the Bulls Head at Earlswood is now a regular customer.

The Shed had a presence at the Hockley Heath Christmas Festival on Saturday 28th November selling their Christmas bottle set.

Looking to the future, two casks will going to the Moseley Beer Festival on the 20th February next year.

## Yardley Beer Festival

On Saturday 5th September, Jeannette and I went to a beer festival at St. Edburgha's Church in Yardley, held in aid of the church restoration fund. This was not a CAMRA festival, although the organiser is also Press Officer for the Birmingham branch of CAMRA.



The festival featured 10 beers from Church End Brewery, plus two each from Sperrin, Weatheroak and Slaughterhouse breweries, and one each from Frothblowers and Two Towers. There were also 6 ciders and 3 perries. Food was available all day and, for the non-ale drinkers, red, white and rose wines plus soft drinks were also provided.

The Church End beers were: Nut Brown (6.5%), Fallen Angel (5.0%), Irish Coffee (4.6%), Stout Coffin (4.6%), Vicar's Ruin (4.4%), What The Fox's Hat (4.2%), Goats Milk (3.8%), Cuthbert's (3.8%), Grave Diggers Ale (3.8%) and Poachers Pocket (3.5%).

I began with Frothblowers brewery's Piffle Snonker (3.8%). This is a light blonde beer with a floral

nose and sweet start but bitter finish, an excellent session beer. Jeannette also started with this and, although not a beer drinker as such, actually liked it! She is, though, notorious for stating that all beer "tastes of beer" (which is logical, I suppose) but claims not to be able to detect the various other flavours in the different ales she tries. Next I turned to Slaughterhouse brewery and their Boar D'Eau (4.5%), another blonde beer, although brewed with 100% lager malt to produce a clean taste with a bright, very pale colour and a long hoppy finish, a great alternative to fizzy, mass-produced lagers - and much tastier!

I then went for Sperrin Brewery's Head Hunter (3.8%). This proved to be an easy drinking amber ale, triple hopped with slight fruity hints and a pleasantly dry, mellow finish.

After a break for food, I sampled Weatheroak Brewery's Victoria Works (4.3%), a straw coloured, full bodied hoppy beer. I then tried Weatheroak's other offering, Keystone Hops (5.0%). This is pale in colour and extremely hoppy. Jeannette, meanwhile, sam-





pled Two Towers' Complete Muppetry (4.3%), an aromatic beer produced in the IPA style. This is a well-balanced citrus ale characterised by fruity orange notes ("but it still tastes of beer", she said). Oh well, you can't win 'em all....

My final beer of the day was one of the two Church End brews that I have not previously tried, Nut Brown: a deep reddish-brown beer with rich warming flavours balanced with a soft hop finish.

If my memory serves me correctly, this was the third year that a festival has been held at St. Edburgha's, and it was well organised, with a good variety of ales from local breweries. In addition, Two Towers Brewery were selling gift packs of their bottled beers, and also their brewery-branded pint glasses. Two-pint carry-out containers were also available for those who wished to enjoy more of their festival favourites at home. A small festival maybe, but well worth a visit. Thanks go to Martin Collinge for organising this event—we'll be back next year.

Chris Lloyd



## THE BLUE BELL CIDER HOUSE

Warings Green Road  
Hockley Heath, Warks. B94 6BP  
Tel. 01564 702328



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

Homemade food with a wide variety of steaks now served Mon–Sat 12.00 noon - 8.30pm; Carvery served every Sunday 1200 - 5.00pm

Live music. Large car parking area  
Children & pets welcome  
Large beer garden with views of the canal

*Keep up to date with what's on and what's new at our website:*

[www.bluebellciderhouse.wix.com/blubellciderhouse](http://www.bluebellciderhouse.wix.com/blubellciderhouse)

**Opening hours:**

Mon.–Sat: 11.30am–11.00pm

Sunday: 12.00-10.30pm





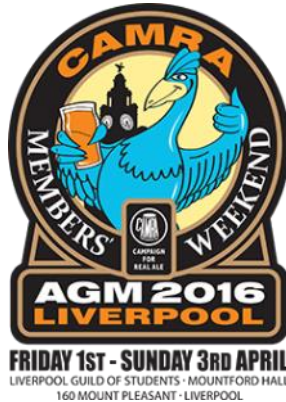
# Members' Weekend and AGM 2016

Members' Weekend 2016 will take place in the heart of Liverpool, a city rich in both real ale and fine pubs, from 1st—3rd April 2016.

The Weekend will be 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 over a pint in the Members' Bar, attend the official AGM and a series of campaigning workshops, visit recommended pubs and go on organised trips in the vibrant setting of Liverpool. The Weekend is open to all CAMRA members.

This year attendees will get the chance to learn much more about campaign activity, developments and best practice across the organisation with up to 19 workshops planned to take place across the weekend, with a host of experienced volunteers and experts coming to Liverpool to host them. The workshops will give practical advice and encourage attendees to make their views known on some of the issues vital to the success of the Campaign.

Subjects will range from making beer festivals more successful, to 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.

Make sure you secure your place on the workshops by registering online. CAMRA will then get in contact with all those who have pre-registered over the next few months to give them the chance to pre-book places on the workshops.

To register for the event online:

1. Please visit the Members' Weekend website [www.camragm.org.uk](http://www.camragm.org.uk).
2. Select the "Register" tab that is located in the top right hand side of the menu and log on to the site with your membership details.
3. Click the button provided to register for the 2016 event and wait for the on screen confirmation message to appear.

4. Registered attendees will receive a delegate pack and further information on activities taking place as part of the weekend ahead of the event.

Please note that joint members will need to log on and register individually.

**The closing date for registration is Friday 11th March 2016.**



# **BERNIES REAL ALE OFF LICENCE**

**The best of its kind there is!!!**

**An ever-changing range of exciting draught beers from season to season—you're welcome to try before you buy.**

**Now stocking a variety of Craft Ales!**



**A choice of 200 beers during the year, available in bottles or on draught.**

**Party barrels to order and supplied for any occasion.**

**Sale or return on sealed goods.**

**Listed in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide for over 30 years.**

**266 Cranmore Boulevard, Shirley, Solihull B90 4PX**

**Tel. 0121 744 2827**

**Opening Hours:**

**Mondays to Saturdays: 11.00am to 10.00pm**

**Sundays & Bank Holidays: 12 noon to 6.00pm**

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

**Now also stocking snacks and confectionery.**



**Choice which cannot be bettered**

# Lancaster Northern City of Ale Festival

It was decided that the September social this year would be to the Northern City of Ale Festival in Lancaster after one of our intrepid members picked up a leaflet about it whilst there earlier in the year. The festival involves all 29 pubs within ½ mile of the city centre having up to 177 beers available during the 4 days of the festival, and with a dedicated website having a downloadable map, everything was arranged for Saturday 12th September.

Now I know what you are thinking, this might seem a bit far to go to sample real ale, but after some research we managed to get a return train ticket with Virgin Trains for the princely sum of £15.00, which made the journey more palatable.

Six of us boarded the train at Birmingham International, with another two joining us at New Street, so eight of us arrived in Lancaster just after midday. It seemed the easiest option for the day was to do a circular route from the station taking in all of the pubs in the Good Beer guide, so we all duly set off to our first port of call.

After a 10 minute walk via the canal towpath we arrived at the White Cross, a converted warehouse, where we were greeted by the sight of 15 hand-pumps all in use. I sampled Moorhouse's Black Cat (3.4%) followed by Three B's Brewery's Honey Bee (3.7%), both in excellent condition. There was a Black IPA on offer but at 5.6% it seemed a bit early for that. It was agreed that this would be the lunch stop for the day and after an excellent lunch, we left for our next port of call.

The Borough was reached via a short

walk along the canal and then back into the city. It was an upmarket town-house built in 1824 and has a Victorian frontage, but is now a free house with a brewery in the cellar for all their house beers. It seemed fairly busy but all the bar staff kept the beer flowing, a sample of the Borough's own beers was done including Borough Pale at 3.7%: fairly light and hoppy as the name would suggest; followed by a tasting of the Borough Bitter (4.0%).



*The bar at the Borough*

From there we then had a 5 minute walk to the Tap House, a small 19th century street corner pub with a very clean and modern interior and some bare brickwork. Alongside the real ales on offer there were also some imported beers available on tap. After being welcomed by the very friendly and affable landlord, we drank Hawkshead Windermere Pale (3.5%, crisp and fruity) and Northern Monk True North (3.7%).

We then headed off to our next stop, the Yorkshire House, which from the outside did not look its best, but at least it was open and had 4 hand-pumps of different beers/styles. I opt-

ed for the Dark Star Redhead (3.7%), a very nice malty pint, and after Jägermeister shots we moved onto the next stop on our circular route.

The Bobbin is a fairly large 18th century open-plan pub with plenty of seating, but we made use of the courtyard as it was slightly quieter, once again spoilt for choice with 6 hand-pumps on. I opted for the Hawkshead Lakeland Gold (3.7%), a hoppy beer with a clean bitter aftertaste.

The Three Mariners was the next stopping point which we reached in fairly quick time. The pub is supposedly the oldest pub in Lancaster—it certainly had an olde-worlde feel to it both inside and out, but with a friendly and welcoming clientele who were only too happy to tell us some of the history of the pub including that the cellar is on the first floor, because it has been flooded more times than can be remembered. Six beers were available here—the first pint I tried was from Marble Brewery in Manchester and was the Manchester Bitter (4.2%), a yellow beer with a fruity and hoppy aroma.

After some of our party looked at the menu, it was decided food would be taken on board here. I was then persuaded to have another pint, it took me about 5 seconds to decide as I had seen that they had Coniston Bluebird Bitter (3.6%) on the bar and it did not disappoint—this beer is a former Champion beer of Brit-

*Outside the Borough: l—r: Allan Duffy, David Mckowen, John McDermott, Ian Hunter, Brenda Duffy, ??? and Jenny Buck*



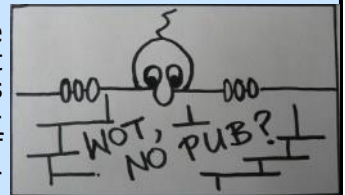
ain; it's also one of Roger Protz's 300 beers to 'try before you die'. At this point in our tour six of our party headed off to the next two stops on the tour, but two of us decided to stop at and savour our pints and discuss the finer points of the beers and pubs we had encountered during the day—so much so we forgot the time and had to make a frantic taxi ride back to the station! Here we met up again with the rest of the Solihull CAMRA gang for the train journey back to the Midlands.

The quality and choice of beers was excellent and with most of the pubs we visited doing a discount for CAMRA members, it made the day even more enjoyable, even to the point of planning a possible return journey next year.

Dave Mckowen

## Pubs Wanted

Readers of this magazine are most welcome to write an article about their own favourite Solihull & District pub, describing its real ales, special events that it puts on, what it does for the community and why you recommend it. Please send information (and a photo, if you have one) to [editor@solihullcamra.org.uk](mailto:editor@solihullcamra.org.uk). Publicans: don't be left out—if your pub doesn't appear in the Drinker, ask your regulars to tell the editor all about it and get it featured!





## Membership Matters

If you are reading this article, it's because you have picked up your copy of the Solihull Drinker from a pub, club or other drinking venue. Unfortunately your local British pub is fighting a battle, which the general public can help fight.

So what can we do?, it's a fairly easy answer—use them, visit them & drink in them. But what else can we do? Well, the government has given us the chance to save our pubs (yes, I know that's hard to believe). Briefly there is a new status called the Asset of Community Value (ACV) which means once a pub is placed on the list of ACV's by your local council, then it has a fighting chance of survival. CAMRA's "This Pub Matters" campaign aims to raise the profile of ACV pubs all across the UK and encourage more people to list their local, with a target of 3,000 pubs by the end of next year.

Some of the membership fee you would pay upon joining CAMRA would go towards this campaign to help communities list their much loved local as an ACV and hopefully protect it from demolition and/or change of use. CAMRA is no longer just about real ale—though the interest in real ale continues to grow, reflected by an ever-increasing choice of real ale in pubs—it also supports the brewing industry, publicans and consumers' rights.

So why don't you consider joining, or even better, at this time of year save yourself the hassle of what to buy the relative/friend/loved one for Christmas—a year's membership of CAMRA won't break the bank and at prices starting from as little as £24 (46p per week) I think it represents very good value for money.

You can also save yourself the hassle of traipsing up and down the high street: either fill in the membership form in this magazine, or go online and visit [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk) where you will find various types of gift membership.

So what would they get if they were to become members as a Christmas present, I hear you ask? Firstly: a monthly newsletter called "What's Brewing" a very informative quarterly magazine entitled "Beer", free or reduced-entry to the many beer festivals organised by local CAMRA branches all over the country, and lastly they get £20's worth of J.D. Wetherspoon real ale/cider vouchers as well as other great money-saving deals. Full details of these and all the other membership benefits can be found on the website.

Solihull & District branch of CAMRA hold monthly meetings at a local pub with good real ale, but if you don't fancy that, try coming along to one of our social events—we are a friendly bunch and will make you more than wel-



**JD WETHERSPOON proudly presents**

### ***The Pump House***

Unit 1A, Parkgate, Stratford Road, Shirley

0121 701 5460

**Open: Sun—Wed: 7.00am—12.00 midnight  
& Thurs—Sat: 7.00—1.00am**

**12  
hand  
pumps for  
the best  
choice of  
real ales**

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



**Alcohol served  
from 10.00am  
Food available from  
7.00am to 11.00pm daily**

come—someone might even buy you a pint!!!. Please see the Dates for your Diary on page 6 or visit [www.solihullcamra.org.uk](http://www.solihullcamra.org.uk) to see a full list of our upcoming social events.

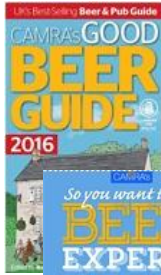
Finally I would like to wish all of you

reading this publication a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and enjoy whatever ale you try over the festive season.

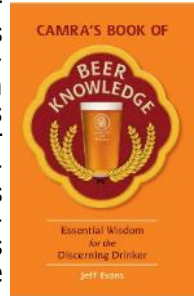
Dave Mckowen  
Membership Secretary

## CAMRA Books: A Christmas Gift Guide

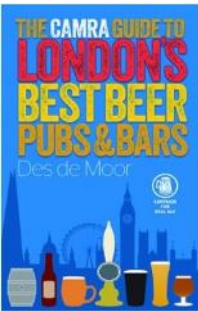
Why not extend your CAMRA Gift Membership to include a bit of light reading for the festive holidays? For an additional sum, you can add a CAMRA book to your gift, starting at £33 to include either 'So You Want to be a Beer Expert?' or '101 Beer Days Out', or from £36 including the 2016 Good Beer Guide.



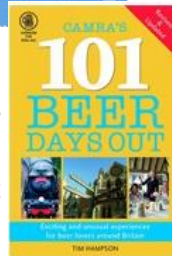
'CAMRA's Book of Beer Knowledge' by Jeff Evans is an excellent and comprehensive compendium of beer facts, statistics and trivia perfect for the pocket. An informative read in its own right, it is invaluable for all facts beery and will be worth its weight in gold for pub quizzes! (£7.99)



Also available from the CAMRA Shop is the new edition of Des de Moor's 'London's Best Beer, Pubs & Bars'.



An essential guide to beer drinking in London, it's packed with detailed maps, easy-to-use listings of the best places to enjoy perfect pints in the capital and brewery locations, laid out by area. (£12.99)



CAMRA's *Christmas Books Bundle* would be a great present for anyone interested in pubs as buildings: 'Britain's Best Real Heritage Pubs' and CAMRA's Great British Pubs' are available to purchase as a double-pack for only £15.00. 'Britain's Best Real Heritage Pubs' is a wonderful guide for the devotee of historic pub interiors. The guide

lists 270 pubs that have interiors of historic significance—some over 100 years old. 'Great British Pubs' presents a selection of the nation's finest pubs, arranged by category. Looking for an idyllic rural inn, an inner-city gen or a modern brewpub? This book has the right recommendations, together with special features and articles.



'Britain's Beer Revolution' by Roger Protz & Adrian Tierney-Jones traces the growth of brewing in the UK over the last decade, and speaks to key figures in British brewing to shine a spotlight on what makes British beer so good. The juxtaposition of the new craft brewers and the rise of the microbrewery sits comfortably alongside old traditions practiced for generations, all explained here with fascinating interviews with craftsmen from all walks of the brewing process. (£14.99)



To purchase, go to the CAMRA Bookshop at [www.camra.org.uk/camra-books](http://www.camra.org.uk/camra-books), logging in using your membership number.

**NB. Book prices quoted are at membership rates throughout.**

## CAMRA Campaigns Update

CAMRA currently has four key campaigns moving forward—here is an overview of where they stand as at the end of this year:

### **This Pub Matters (listing Pubs as Assets of Community Value)**

With 29 pubs closing across England every single week, it is more important than ever for branches to be proactive in promoting and protecting our valued pubs.

Earlier this year the Government extended planning protection to pubs registered as Assets of Community Value (ACV). This means that any pub registered as an ACV will now require planning permission before it can be demolished or converted into an alternative use. This gives CAMRA branches in the UK a real opportunity to protect pubs in their local area by nominating them to be registered by their local Council as Assets of Community Value.

Solihull CAMRA members are welcome to add nominations to the shortlist already drawn up by the branch committee, who will report back to the branch in due course as each nomination progresses with Solihull Council. Individuals are also free to download the paperwork from CAMRA's website at [www.camra.org.uk/list-your-local](http://www.camra.org.uk/list-your-local) then complete and send off the form to CAMRA, who will undertake the necessary land registry checks on their behalf

### **Promoting Pubs and Pub-Going**

CAMRA announces a list of over 200 Local Pubs of the Year to help launch Community Pubs Month in April. This follows CAMRA volunteers across the UK judging the pubs in their area to find their Branch's Pub of the Year, looking at decor, value for money, customer service, and of

course, the quality of their real ale. The local branch winners then battle it out in the regional heats in their quest to become National Pub of the Year,

CAMRA research shows that 75% of pub-goers believe a well-run community pub is as important to community life as a post office, local shop or community centre. Pubs play an essential role and are clearly very highly valued, but despite this are still being lost at an alarming rate across the UK. The best way you can protect your local's future is by drinking there and supporting it, including voting for it if you feel it deserves to be the branch's pub of the year.

Nominations for Solihull CAMRA's Pub of the Year award will take place at December and January's branch meetings, with voting at the branch meeting in February.

### **Encouraging People to try a range of Real Ales, Ciders & Perries**

From time to time CAMRA will promote a certain type of beer or cider—for example, Mild in May and Real Cider in October. Local branches will help to support these promotions as best they can, but you don't have to wait to try a new real ale or cider—there are frequent real ale and cider & perry festivals in the West Midlands area which your local CAMRA branch will help to publicise in this magazine, on our Facebook page and in direct emails to members. Of course, CAMRA members also receive advance notice of beer festivals across the country in CAMRA's newsletter 'What's Brewing'. Look out for real ale and cider festivals at pubs and clubs near you, and try to go along and support them—you might find your favourite beer there!

## Cutting Tax on Beer and Cider

Thanks to members' support, in its Budget 2015 the Government announced an historic third cut in beer duty and a 2% reduction in cider duty. This is another huge success and a testament to all of those who supported the fight to further reduce the tax on beer.

Despite this win for beer and cider drinkers, small cider producers are under a new threat from the European Union (EU), which has demanded the UK Government remove its tax exemption for small producers. This exemption supports very small cider producers, such as hobbyists or farm-gate producers, for whom such small scale production is an integral part of rural culture.

CAMRA fully supports real cider and perries and are concerned that the proposed action will see small producers landed with a bill of up to £2,700 every year, making production uneconomical and lead to widespread closures. They are now working hard to persuade the Government to reject this request and have launched a petition which has so far secured almost 20,000 signatures. To add yours, just sign into your own membership account at [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk), then click on 'Campaigns', 'Stop Tax Killing Beer & Pubs' then 'Sign the Petition'. *(NB. The petition is run by 38 Degrees—please be aware that if you provide your details to them they may contact you about other campaigns. To opt out, simply click 'unsubscribe' on their e-mail.)*

## Draft Pubs Code: News

Following extensive lobbying by CAMRA last year, the Government finally agreed to tackle the problem of unfair practices by PubCo's. and at the beginning of November, published the first part of a new draft Pubs Code designed to ensure that pub tenants get a fair deal.

The first stage set out how the

'market rent only' option will work. It implements the principle that a tenant tied to a business owning 500 or more tied pubs should be no worse off than a free-of-tie tenant.

However it was seen as deeply flawed by the Save the Pub group, as it did not include Parallel Rent Assessments (PRAs are a breakdown of rents and earnings under tied and free-of-tie models, designed to show tenants whether they would be better off staying tied or taking the market rent-only (MRO) option). PubCo reformers promptly launched a battle to get PRAs reinserted back into the Code.

Following debate by both Houses of Parliament, the Government reversed its decision to cut the Parallel Rent Assessments from the draft Pubs Code after a backlash from the trade, and business minister Anna Soubry revealed that PRA would be added back into the code at the next consultation. 'It is important that we strike the balance fairly between both sides of the argument, and that we understand and accept that there has been a great deal of movement to the betterment of tenants over the past few years,' said Soubry. 'I know from my own constituency work that pub companies such as Punch and Greene King have hugely changed their views to the benefit of tenants, and that must be welcomed.'

Read part. 1 of the draft pubs code and the revised update in full at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-pubs-code](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-pubs-code).

The second stage of the consultation, to be published soon, will cover the remaining elements of the code.





## Walsall Pub Crawl, November 2015

Following our successful crawl of Stourbridge in the summer, the branch decided to continue these mid-week crawls with a visit to Walsall. As such nine of us had a most enjoyable lunchtime session, not all of us retirees. Luckily it was arranged for a Walsall CAMRA member to point us in the right direction to the six pubs we wished to visit.



*Outside the Pretty Bricks: L-R: Walsall member Andrew Irvine, together with Solihull members David Frost, Don Green, Bob Bell, Kevin Sheldrick, Steve Myatt and Marilyn & Dave Frost.*

A good fifteen minute walk from the station took us to the Pretty Bricks, a pub that has had ups and downs over the last few years but our visit showed it to be a very comfortable, unspoilt pub owned by Black Country Ales. The interior has not changed much since a refurb in 1924, having a bar to the right and a corridor left through to the lounge. It boasted Coastal Skull Monster; Goff Tournament; Loddon Forbury Lion IPA; Beowulf Dragon Smoke and Black Country Ales Pig on the Wall; BFG and Fireside on the bar. I had a most enjoyable half of Coastal: a clean, hoppy beer.

Our next port of call took us to the Fountain, the brewery tap house for Backyard. Well-hidden, it is well worth looking out this pub: built in the mid

Victorian period, it has a bar and a lounge with a central serving area. Seven beers from Backyard were available: Blonde, Hoard, Hell Bound, Penda Black IPA, Oatmeal Stout, and a guest beer, Holden's Mild. I tried Blonde; Penda Black; Gold and Oatmeal Stout and they were very good, particularly the Gold and Stout. When this brewery first set up I was not too keen on their

beers but this last year or so has seen them become really fine beers. Maybe a branch tour of the brewery should be on the agenda?

Sadly, we had to make tracks to our next pub, The Lyndon House Hotel, which I felt had a not-too-imaginative range of beers staying firmly with regional breweries.

Beers were from Theakstons; Deuchars; Bathams;

Holdens Burton Bridge and Greene King Abbott Ale. I tried four of the beers to find they were in the main nothing special on the taste buds so we decided to move on.

Now to a pub where you can be guaranteed some good beer, The Black Country Arms. We were not disappointed as twelve hand-pumps greeted us as we approached the bar. Apart from Black Country Ales' Pig on the Wall; BFG and Fireside, the rest were guests and what a list! Autumn Bank Pale Ale, Mallinsons Back to Back, Belleville Dye Rye, Alchemy Starlaw, Rock the Boat Mussel Wreck Golden Bitter, Thomas Guest Puddlers (a Black Country Ales seasonal), Shiny Affinity 431, Beartown Black Bear, Squawk & Beanbrothers' Espresso Stout, and last but maybe not

least, Brew X1. The pub also has cider and does food until 4pm. Tucking into the food and beers left us well-oiled with only two pubs left to go. The pub itself is at the top of the Market Square near the church and consists of two storeys, hence there is plenty of seating. It's also a Grade 2-listed building dating back to the seventeenth century.

The Wheatsheaf on the Birmingham Road is but a ten-minute walk from the Black Country Arms behind the church. It has been a hostelry since the early 1800's and was restored in 2007 to become a comfortable pub albeit with few original features. Here the bar sported seven hand-pumps: Fownes Prophets of Doom and Goatrider, Dorothy Goodbody Golden Ale, Holdens Golden Glow, Wye Valley Butty Bach, India Brewery IPA and Oakham Citra. I plumped for the Citra, one of my favourite beers.

Time was pressing, so onto our last pub of the day, the Walsall Arms in Bank Street.

This pub is a relatively new one on the Walsall scene, having been a Marstons house in the past. Four hand-pumps on the bar had Ludlow Gold, Bathams Best Bitter, Wye Valley Bitter and Holdens Golden Glow which were all sampled by everyone in attendance, agreeing that the beers were in good condition.

So that was our day in Walsall, six pubs and over 40 different beers—it makes Solihull town centre look like a beer desert!

A tired bunch boarded the train for home but talk soon turned to other towns that we could visit. It looks like these weekday crawls may become an institution.

Steve Dyson



*Enjoying a pint in the Black Country Arms: clockwise from bottom left: Steve Myatt, Kevin Sheldrick, Don Green, Bob Jackson, Bob Bell, Marilyn Frost, Mike Joy and David Frost.*

## Solihull Drinker Issue No. 75

The 75th edition of the Solihull Drinker will be published on Monday 7th March 2016.

Please note that the deadline for copy, advertising and any other contributions is Sunday 14th February.

Solihull CAMRA 2015 ©

Printed by Thistle Print Ltd, Leeds.

## Useful Contact Numbers

### Chairman

Carl Wright 0121 603 1621

### Secretary

Allan Duffy 01564 200431

### Membership

Dave Mckowen 01564 778955

### Press & Publicity

Paul Wigley 07402 312457

### Pubs Campaigning/ Beer Festival (general enquiries)

Martin Buck 01564 770708