



Solihull



Drinker

Issue No 87
Spring 2019

Free
Please take one

The Ale Rooms - 2019 Solihull CAMRA Pub Of The Year



New Branch Chair Martin Buck congratulates Mark Caldicott, the owner of the Ale Rooms team on winning the Solihull & District CAMRA Pub of The Year for the second time.

For the second year in succession the Ale Rooms, in Knowle, has been chosen by Solihull & District CAMRA members as our branch Pub of the Year. This is a remarkable achievement as the pub didn't open until December 2016 – and its owner, Mark Caldicott, had never pulled a pint until then!

Read more on page 3

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William Shakespeare

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Continued from page 1.

Testimony to what Mark, Callum, Cat and the team have accomplished was the news in August that the Ale Rooms had gone on to be named West Midlands County Pub of the Year, beating the finest pubs across Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton, and the Black Country. Until last year, this award had never been claimed by a Solihull & District pub.

Branch chair Martin Buck said: “In just two years the Ale Rooms has cemented itself as the cornerstone of the Knowle pub scene, and proved that there is a continuing appetite for a great selection of real ale. The Ale Rooms gets it right: an ever-changing selection of beer from a wide variety of breweries, plus real cider, alongside other drinks. A welcoming venue, with friendly, knowledgeable staff, fosters a great atmosphere. It’s no surprise that our branch members have again chosen the Ale Rooms as our Pub of the Year. Mark, Callum and Cat have shown what can be achieved in a small space if you focus on giving the customers what they want.”

Mark refused to take all the credit, explaining that Callum, Cat and the

team put in a lot of work to ensure the pub runs smoothly. He also thanked Silhill, Church End and Backyard breweries, as well as CAMRA for their continuing support.

“I can hardly believe that we’ve won this award again – I never dreamed we could achieve this. The credit really should go to all the team and our fantastic customers, who do so much to support us and give the Ale Rooms a great atmosphere. This award just proves all the hard work has been worth it.”

Mark is busy putting in yet more work. After some issues in finding the right location, the second Ale Rooms is nearing completion and is set to open in Warwickshire in the spring. If it follows the successful formula of the Knowle location, we think it’s sure to be another runaway success.

As winner of the Solihull and District Pub Of The Year, the Ale Rooms yet again goes forward for consideration as West Midlands County, and West Midlands Regional Pub Of The Year 2019. We wish them luck and hope that we will be visiting again in the near future to add to the growing wall of awards.

Features in this issue include:

Dates for the Diary & Midlands Area Events	4
Great British Beer Festival Winter 2020	6
Birmingham Pub Crawl by Canal	8
Brussels and Bruges	10
Economies of ale. Last orders for small pubs?	12
Hail To The Ale	14
A Look Into Solihull’s Past	16
A Surprising Find In Mexico	25



Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

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

Monday 1st April	Rowington Club, Rowington
Monday 13th May	Drum & Monkey, Dorridge
Monday 3rd June	Olton Tavern

Committee Meetings

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

Monday 18th March	The Red House, Solihull
Monday 20th May	Black Boy, Knowle

Socials

Saturday 30th March	Beer Festival Thank You Trip - Oxford
April (date to be confirmed)	Midweek crawl to Burton upon Trent
Saturday 25th May	Visit to Hinckley pubs

For more details and contacts for the above, please call Secretary Allan Duffy on 01564 200 431 or visit our website: www.solihull.camra.org.uk

Most, though not all, of our local pubs have disabled access. If you wish to come to a meeting and require assistance, contact us beforehand and we will do our best to help.

Upcoming Midlands Area Beer Festivals and Events

March 8-9 (Fri-Sat)

MOSELEY ROUND TABLE FESTIVAL

Kings Heath Cricket & Sports Club, 247 Alcester Road South, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 6DT. 25 ales and 15 ciders. Friday 5pm-11pm, Saturday 1pm-11pm. Food, live music, Six Nations Rugby, normal bar. Check Facebook for more.

March 13-16 (Wed-Sat):

LEICESTER BEER FEST

Haymarket Theatre, Leicester, LE1 3AF. 240 real ales including a Local Ale bar. Ciders/perries, Gin bar, and other stalls. Hot & cold food available. Open: Wed 5-11pm, Thu & Fri 11am-11pm Sat 11am-10pm. Admission £4 all sessions (CAMRA members £1 off). Card and contactless payments accepted. www.leicester.camra.org.uk for details.

March 15-16 (Fri-Sat):

KNOWLE & DORRIDGE ROUND TABLE BEER FESTIVAL

Royal British Legion, Warwick Rd, Knowle B93 9LF. Open Friday from 6pm, Saturday 12 noon, till late both nights. £10 entry incl. souvenir glass and £5 tokens for the 30 beers, cider, Prosecco, or gin. See the advert on page 7 for more information or visit the website www.kandd.org.uk

March 15-16 (Fri-Sat):

COVENTRY BEER FEST

Coventry Rugby Football Ground, Butts Park Arena, Butts Road, CV1 3GE. 15-20 mins walk from railway station, or no. 5, 6, 6A, 10 buses from city centre. Ample parking, coach parties welcome. 75+ beers (including special beers from local breweries), ciders, perries & country wines. Open: Fri & Sat 12noon-

11pm. Admission: card-carrying CAMRA members free all sessions except 6pm Fri evening onwards (£2 entry). Non-members £2, except 6pm Fri evening onwards (£3 entry). Food available at all sessions. More info at www.coventry.camra.org

March 27-April 7

WETHERSPOON REAL ALE AND CIDER FESTIVAL

Around 25 beers and 3 ciders. For information about the beers and ciders on offer visit www.jdwetherspoon.com/pubs/events/real-ale-and-cider-festival

March 28-30 (Thu-Sat):

40TH BURTON CAMRA BEER & CIDER FEST

Burton Town Hall, King Edward Place, Burton Upon Trent, DE14 2EB. CAMRA members get free or discounted entry depending on the session (must show card). Open: Thu 6pm-11pm; Fri 11am-11pm; Sat 11am-10pm. Entrance fees are now packaged to speed

entry. Details including prices and beer list available from

burtoncamra.wordpress.com

April 11-13 (Thu-Sat):

INN ON THE GREEN BEER FEST

2 Westley Road, Acocks Green, B27 7UH. 20 ales, 5 ciders. Music Friday and Saturday live and free.

May 11 (Sat):

WEST MIDLANDS CAMRA REGIONAL MILD TRAIL

Check westmidlands.camra.org.uk for details. Venue will be Shrewsbury.

June 6-8: (Thu-Sat)

SHIRLEY BEER & CIDER FEST

9th Shirley Beer & Cider Festival, Camp Hill Rugby Club. Open Thursday 6.30pm -11pm comedy night by advance ticket only. Friday 6pm-11pm, Saturday 12 noon-11pm including family day up to 6pm. Over 100 beers and 25 ciders. See advert on page 15 and www.shirleybeerfestival.co.uk for more information.

2019 CAMRA Members' Weekend and AGM - Dundee

The 2019 Members' Weekend will be taking part right in the heart of Dundee at Caird Hall, which is ideally placed close to local attractions, the station, pubs and more!

If you've not been to a Members' Weekend before, you'll be assured a warm welcome, discover new pubs and beers, and make new friends along the way. Keep an eye open for the West Midlands contingent in their matching Teal shirts!

Members' Weekend isn't just about AGM & Conference business! You can choose to

get involved with brewery trips, discussions and activities, and meet other beer lovers for a pint or two in the dedicated Members' Bar.

To register, simply log in to <https://agm.camra.org.uk> with your membership number and password.



Birmingham To Celebrate The Rich World Of Beer, Cider And Perry from 2020

Following on from three superb years in Norwich, it will be time in 2020 for the Great British Beer Festival Winter to once again set up in a new city, and we are excited to announce that it is Birmingham in the West Midlands that will host the festival from 2020 to 2022.

A region built on the trade and innovation of the industrial revolution, the festival will be taking on the theme of “A Festival of a Thousand Trades”, celebrating industry, diversity, and creativity throughout time. This theme will define the drinks on offer, which will include a range of spirits and non-alcoholic options to accompany over 400 beers, ciders and perries that will represent the region, the wider United Kingdom, and beyond.

Alongside the drinks, the festival will feature games and activities, musical entertainment throughout, a range of mouth-watering food stalls, and a selection of tastings and talks for those looking to expand their horizons further.

As always the Great British Beer Festival Winter will continue to host the finals of the winter beer categories in the Champion Beer of Britain Competition, with the winners going forwards to that year’s final at GBBF in August.

“This is an incredibly exciting opportunity for us to showcase the fantastic food and drinks that the region has to offer”, said West Midlands Regional Director Gary Timmins. “The region has a rich history in brewing and we’re looking for-



ward to working with local museums, charities and organisations to tell visitors a story that will go hand in hand with their drink of choice.”

Planning for the festival is already well underway, and details including dates and venue for the 2020 festival will be released soon on winter.gbbf.org.uk.

After the sad news that there will be no Stourbridge beer festival this year, having already lost Walsall and Birmingham, this is a great news for the region and an opportunity for CAMRA members to participate and volunteer for what is one of the major beer festivals in this country.

We will keep you informed on the planning and venue in future issues of the Drinker.

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Saturday 16th Fixtures
Italy v France 12:30
Wales v Ireland 14:45
England v Scotland 17:00



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KNOWLE & DORRIDGE
ROUNDTABLE

FACEBOOK.COM/KANDRT - @KANDRT - WWW.KANDD.ORG.UK

Proceeds from the event go to local good causes and charities including Ladies Circle's chosen charity St. Basils

Birmingham Pub Crawl by Canal

Birmingham city centre has many great pubs but with all the roadworks and footpath diversions I pondered over using the city's canal network to devise a canal/pub walk. So a party of 10 Solihull CAMRA members met at the Bulls Head in Bishopsgate Street near Five Ways to put this to test.

The Bulls Head was originally owned by Davenports Brewery and fell into disrepair for some years. It has been given a new lease of life and serves Davenports beers again, albeit under new ownership. A fine job has been made on restoration of this late Victorian pub and it has 5 handpumps, of which only 3 were in operation at the time of our visit. Davenports Original Stout together with Highgate Dark Mild were on offer. The latter was my choice and was OK to start the day.



***Starting the day at the Bulls Head,
Bishopsgate Street***

Leaving the Bulls Head we turned left down Bishopsgate Street and got on the canal heading for the city centre. We left it at Granville Street, went down Commercial Street, cut through the residential flats to Upper Gough Street, turning left to our next pub, the Craven Arms. A Black Country Ales pub, it is well hidden from the usual pub crowd. The exterior is tiled and sports the name of its original owners, Holder's. The interior con-

sists of one large room. Founded in 1872 Holder's was subsequently taken over by Mitchells and Butlers in 1919. As in other Black Country Ale pubs there is always a good selection of guest beers. Alongside Black Country's Fireside, BFG, and Pig on the Wall, were Clun Solar, a sweetish bitter with an earthy flavour to it; VOG Portland Porter, clean and hoppy; Saltaire Stout No. 5, full flavoured and dry; Oakham Inferno, hoppy; Saltaire Galaxy, tropical fruit/hop flavour, and Newby Wyke Comet, a golden beer. Furthermore 2 ciders were on hand-pump; Hawkes Urban Orchard, and Celtic Marches Slack Alice.

We made our way back to the canal, and passing through Gas Street we popped into Canalside, easily missed but worth looking in to see what is on the 4 handpumps. From the outside Canalside look like a typical canal side cottage. Inside is tiny with every corner having tables and chairs squeezed in, giving a warm, intimate atmosphere. Sadlers Peaky Blinders Black IPA went down well reminding me more of a stout; Sharps Atlantic, quite hoppy; Wychwood Hobgoblin, a malty, ruby brew; Davenports Toffee Stout and Original.

After a quick pint we were now thinking of food and went out onto Gas Street, turning right to Broad Street where we headed for the Brasshouse. Deriving its name from the previous brass manufacturing building of 1781, it is now owned by Marstons with beers from their portfolio. Banks' Amber, Brakspear Bitter, 61 Deep, and unimaginative guests Sharps Doom Bar, Courage Best Bitter, and Black Sheep Baa Baa which proved undrinkable. The 61 Deep went down very well with most of us

though. However, food was our main concern here.

Back on the canal, passing Symphony Hall, and into the Malthouse next. Known for the visit made by Bill Clinton, this Greene King pub had 4 guests accompanying IPA and Abbott; Purity UBU; St Austell Tribute; Silhill Pure Star and a fine Silhill North Star. The pub caters for foodies and is large and a little soulless.

Just a short walk down the locks at Farmers brought us to Summer Row and the Shakespeare. A typical Victorian pub restored by the Nicholson's chain with a bar and back lounge/ snug serving food and beer... talking of which 5 handpumps propped up the bar. Siren Craft Cold Blooded, Here's Johnny Red IPA, Yulu, and Vienna Pale Ale, with Exmoor Mild and Nicholson's Pale Ale. It is unusual to see so many beers from the same brewery in Nicholson's pubs, however the Vienna Pale Ale and Cold Blooded Porter were excellent, though the Red IPA was not quite up to scratch.



And now as they say ... for something completely different. Back on the canal, descending the locks below the Post Office Tower to take a passage-way which brought us out on Ludgate Hill. Turning left here we made our way to the Rock and Roll Brewhouse in Regent Place. With restricted opening times we had planned our visit to suit its opening hours. Easy to walk

past, it was packed inside and had a real buzz of an atmosphere. Small and intimate is the best that I can describe this brewery tap. 3 beers were on handpump; Voodoo Mild; British Beer Power, a golden beer; and Joy Division, a pale ale. I tried the Joy Division and as with my past experience of Rock and Roll Brewery found it OK but lacking in wow factor for a microbrewery, though I love the pub!

The plan was to fit in another 6 pubs but we decided to leave those for another day. We headed instead into the city centre to try 2 new pubs recently opened in Birmingham.

First the Pint Shop, next door to the Wellington in Bennetts Hill. You might describe it as a youngsters bar, modern and stylish with an emphasis on craft keg beers. However, it does have 6 beers on handpump. Disconcertingly there are no pumpclips on either the handpulls or keg taps. Surely displaying them would enhance the presentation of the bar area, it looked very austere. To order our beer we quoted the number on a blackboard menu which meant everyone was crowding around it to select their beer. The 6 beers were Moor Beer Juicy Jones, Digbrew Bitter Lake, Bristol Beer Factory Fortitude, Nene Valley Simple Pleasures, a cloudy Twisted Barrel Azacca, and a very nice Beatnikz Republik Kentucky Riot, a Bourbon Stout from Manchester.

No seats were to be had here so we soon moved on to the Head of Steam in Temple Street. Under the wing of Cameron's Brewery the pub is multi-level, serves food and is very noisy. 10 handpumps on the bar but it was so packed I could not make a note of them, however I got myself a superb Oakham Scarlet Macaw. A great beer to finish the day off with.

Steve Dyson

Brussels and Bruges

Allan, Brenda, Bob and I, all Solihull CAMRA members have got into the habit of popping over to the continent to visit a country with a reputation for good beers, and worthy too of a little sightseeing.

Our latest sojourn was to the Belgian capital Brussels and the attractive town of Bruges. Flights from Birmingham are regular and a short train ride into Brussels brought us to our hotel, the Augustin at Avenue Stalingrad 25-31.

Homework beforehand found that CAMRA's new edition of "Good Beer Guide Belgium" was indispensable. If the Good Beer Guide (GBG) was as comprehensive as this it would be brilliant. However, it would triple its size. As in the GBG the maps are quite general and a quality street map such as Borch's Brussels is absolutely essential. For Bruges Robert Frosdick's "The Bruges Bar and Beer Guide" is useful. Mapwise Insight Guides Bruges flexi map proved more than adequate.

Our hotel was perfectly located as far as bars were concerned, with cafes close by to start the day with a hearty breakfast.

Our first bar of the holiday was almost opposite our hotel, Café Bebo with 10 taps. A good cross section of beers was on offer, Blondes, Fruit, Trappist, Pils, and Wheat. I went for Delerium Tremens Blonde, a common beer in Brussels, strong and very tasty.

A highlight of Brussels was our visit to l'Ermitage Brewery in Rue Lambert Crickx, just behind our hotel. The seating area was made up of



Brewing equipment at l'Ermitage

planking and palettes, but enthusiastic brewers and bar staff more than made up for the basic comforts. With 9 taps there was a lot to go at, with 6 being brewed on the premises. Lanterne Pale Ale 5.5%; Soleil, a beautiful 4.5% White IPA; Théorème de L'Empereur, a Jasmin Green tea beer at 6.4%; Noir Du Midi, a tasty 6.9% Porter; Laboratoire d'Alchimie 2, a new world Pilsner, although at 4.8% tastes a little thin to me; and Copint'je an American rye ale at 4.7%. Guests were Moor from Bristol and Kernal from London. We were able to wander around the brewery and noted beers being brewed in wooden barrels with the familiar wine makers air lock being used. Altogether an excellent afternoon was spent there.

Another of the many bars we visited, though a little out in the sticks, is Volle Pot at 141 Boulevard du Midi. With over 200 beers displayed on shelves you are able to drink them chilled or at room temperature: a very comfortable bar where we were made to feel very welcome.

CAMRA West Midlands County Pub Of The Year 2018



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We also took a day out to visit the bars of Bruges where Vlissinge on Blekersstraat was the most memorable. Bruges' oldest tavern dating back to the 16th century, its interior exuded character and atmosphere. It was a lovely day so we sat outside in the garden to enjoy a variety

of bottled beers; Brasserie De La Senne Stoutierik, a true stout at 4.5%; Brouwerij Maenhout Hoppa Hontas Amarillo, a Belgian IPA at 6.5%; and my favourite De Dochter van de Korenaar Belle-Fleur IPA, a 6% beer described as having the "pure taste of hops" which it certainly did.

We did many more bars in Brussels, enough to fill all our days. However, on our last day with rain forecast we took the opportunity to take a bus tour of the city to see the many sights of this city, one well worth visiting to sample beers and bars and to enjoy the sights.

Steve Dyson



Enjoying a beer in the garden of Vlissinghe in Bruges

The Good Beer Guide Belgium is available from the CAMRA bookshop priced £14.99 (£10.99 for members)

Economies of ale. Last orders for small pubs?

Between 2001-2018, the number of pubs across the West Midlands region has nearly halved, whilst the number of people working in pubs has fallen by more than a third.

So says the Office of National Statistics in its latest report: "Economies of ale: small pubs close as chains focus on big bars" (November 2018). The picture is little different at national level, where nearly a quarter of pubs have closed since 2008: falling from 50,000 in 2008 to some 39,000 in 2018. However, turnover in the pub industry is holding up and employment is on the rise.



The data also shows that the pubs which remain open tend to be bigger and employ more than 10 people, with stable turnover. Overall, there are now 6% more jobs in pubs than there were in 2008, with the largest increases being in pubs with 10 or more employees.

This rise in larger pubs is linked to a focus on food, creating more jobs, with the big pub companies making this shift following the ban on indoor smoking in 2007. In 2008, the average UK pub had just 5 employees; this had risen to 8 people per pub in 2018. This rise in employment has

been more pronounced in rural pubs, where employment was up 24%, whereas employment in urban pubs was up by only 4%.

In many ways, Solihull bucks the national trend. There are about the same number of pubs as in 2001, with some 90 pubs providing 2,500 jobs, an increase of 11%. Overall, Solihull has 4.2 pubs per 1,000 people, fewer than the national average (5.8/1000). In the Stratford-on-Avon area, there are 10 fewer pubs than in 2001 (-6%) leaving some 140 pubs providing around 1,750 jobs, an increase of nearly 17%. Stratford-on-Avon has 11.3 pubs per 1,000 people, much higher than the national average. These figures contrast markedly with Birmingham and the Black Country, where the number of pubs has fallen by over 40% since 2001.

Tom Stainer, CAMRA's spokesman, said "Pubs are struggling for several reasons. In part it's because of heavy taxes. For every pint you drink in a pub, a third of the cost is tax. Pubs are finding it difficult to keep their heads above water. The UK has one of the highest rates of alcohol duty in Europe. This has a knock-on effect on pubs, because they must raise prices to make ends meet. Pubs bring investment and employment, and they are community hubs. The way the system works is the more successful they are, the more pubs are punished for doing well. They're taxed on things like the size of the building, turnover and whether they have a car park – it penalises success".

"These shocking new figures show the huge loss that has been felt by communities up and down the country as beloved locals have closed down. By focusing on the stability of

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Sat: 12.00pm – 1.00am

turnover from pubs and bars since the recession, this study fails to measure the loss of benefits that pubs bring to their communities. Pubs play a unique role in offering a social environment to enjoy a drink with friends, they combat isolation and loneliness and help people feel connected with their community. With a quarter of pubs closing in the last decade, we need Government to act now to save our pubs from extinction. That's why CAMRA has launched a three-point plan to save the Great British Pub, calling for urgent reform to business rates, a full review of the Pubs Code and a lower rate of duty for beer sold in pubs".

However, craft beer has brought a new lease of life for pubs, and has got young people interested in beer again. The number of craft breweries is rising and there has been a growth in micro-pubs. Silhill Brewery set up

at Oak Farm, Catherine-de-Barnes, in 2014 and micro-pubs are cropping up in several places, including the Ale Rooms and Oktogon (Knowle), and the Pup & Duckling (Olton). Craft beer bottle shops are setting up (Bernie's and Craft Inn, Shirley) and others are rumoured. There are also pub landlords fighting back against the closures, and transforming pubs that might once have gone bust in the centre of their communities.



However, the message is clear: visit your local....regularly, because it may not be there when you next visit. Long live the local!

Steve James

Hail To The Ale

Local Beer, Pub, Club and Brewery News

Solihull continues to attract new businesses as openings continue. Since our last issue a new bar, **Skogen**, has opened in Dorridge on the site of the old Station Café Bar. It opened on the 9th December, following the addition of an extra floor on the old premises. It does not have cask ales, but does have a range of 10 craft keg beers.

The **Indian Brewery** are promising to open soon in the centre of Solihull at the time of going to press. The initial plan to open was last autumn, but this was delayed. It is not known at the moment whether they will have cask as well as craft keg beer, but during the recent expansion of their Snow Hill premises the cask pumps disappeared.

There are also plans to open another bar/ micropub in Shirley very soon, close to Asda. It is believed that cask and craft keg beers will be on offer once the necessary building work is complete.

Shirley also suffered a loss when the **Red Lion** closed in January, after the operating company went into liquidation. It isn't known at the moment what the future of the pub is, but hopefully it can be re-opened as a going concern.

The **White Lion** in Hampton In Arden is reported to now have Skinners Betty Stoggs and Bank's Mild as regular beers.

The **Lyndon** now has Adnams Ghost Ship and Black Sheep Monty Python's Holy Grail, replacing Sharp's Doom Bar and Atlantic.

Bernie's Real Ale Off Licence is now stocking a growing range of craft cans to supplement its bottled and cask beer range. At the last count there were around 35 different cans available.

Shirley British Legion has also improved its real ale offering with two ever changing ales from a variety of breweries.

Silhill Brewery were asked to produce a special beer in February for an event in Birmingham, to unveil a unique Black Sabbath bench in a Birmingham church. The Black Sabbath IPA was a 4% beer, but it is not known whether it will appear in our local pubs. This latest special beer follows another called "U Beer 4.0" produced to commemorate UB40 getting a star on the Walk of Stars on Broad street in December.

Further afield there was news in January that **Fullers** was selling its brewing business to Japan's Asahi in a deal worth £250m. Asahi has grown into Europe's third-biggest beer group. Fullers said that the brewing division has been "squeezed between big international brewers and the growth in microbrewers" and would focus on growing its pub and hotel business.

Jackie Parker, chairman of CAMRA, said: "We'd call on the new owners to pledge to continue brewing operations at the Chiswick site as well as show a commitment to not only continuing cask beer production, but to preserve the full range of Fuller's, Dark Star and Gale's beers."

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shirleybeerfestival.co.uk

A Look Into Solihull's Past

The article by Allan Duffy on our 1983 Solihull Guide in Solihull Drinker 86 (Winter 2018) prompted me to take a look at my old Good Beer Guides to remind me of how things have changed since the 70s and 80s.

The earliest edition I have in my collection is 1975 when it consisted of a mere 176 pages. It was the era of the Big Six; Allied, Bass Charrington, Courage, Scottish and Newcastle, Watney, Mann and Truman, and Whitbread. There were only 6 brew-pubs; The All Nations, Madeley; The Miners Arms, Priddy; The Old Swan [Ma Pardoes], Netherton; The Blue Anchor, Helston; The Three Tuns, Bishops Castle, and Traquair House, Innerleithen, Scotland.

Our branch was not formed until the mid-1980s so pub entries were probably decided on by the Coventry or Birmingham Branches. The Three Tuns, Henley-In Arden was the only Warwickshire entry, whilst in the West Midlands the only entry was The Railway, Dorridge which incidentally has been in the same family for many a year.

Moving forward to 1985 when our branch was in full swing, and I had been a member for about a year we had taken over pubs which were originally in Coventry and Birmingham's areas, and had upped the number of pubs in the Good Beer Guide representing our area.

In Warwickshire we voted in The Orange Tree, Chadwick End, which was one of the very few Whitbread pubs in our area selling Flowers beers from Stratford. The Navigation Inn in Lapworth was a branch

favourite run by Andrew Kimber the first publican in our area to embrace the Beer Orders* (who remembers them?). He had constant battles with M&B over bringing in a guest beer. The last Warwickshire



The Navigation Inn At Lapworth

entry was The Durham Ox in Shrewley, a large rambling local serving M&B beers.

In the West Midlands section we voted in The Wharf, Hockley Heath, which served Manns Bitter and Marstons Bitter. The Tipperary at Meer End was another entry with Davenports beers. However, it was a pub lost to us when we renegotiated branch borders with the Coventry Branch.

In Olton, The Lyndon was another branch favourite where Ansells Mild and Bitter and Gibbs Mew Wiltshire Bitter were the brews available. The best pint of Ansells Mild in our area was served here by an enthusiastic publican whose first name is all I can remember, Dave.

In the centre of Solihull the Golden Lion, now The Beech House, was the only Solihull town centre entry. Run by Chris (another surname I cannot recall), a beer enthusiast, he looked after his Courage beers well. The pub was very popular with the posties from the local sorting office

Ember Inns Pub Of The Year 2018



Open from 11.30am Weekdays
Close : 11.30 Sunday –Thursday
Midnight Friday –Saturday

Hot & cold meals served all week from
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Brunch now from 10 am weekends

THE FIELDHOUSE

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Solihull B91 3JU
Tel: 0121 703 9209



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



Fieldhouse,
Solihull

Live Music

Sat 16 March - Vinyl Revival (Irish Party Night)
Sat 30 March - The Fabulous Meatloaf Show
Sat 13 April - Vinyl Revival
Sat 27 April - David Bowie Tribute Night
Sat 25 May - The Space Monkey Band

Special Offers for CAMRA members.
(membership cards must be shown)

- 20p discount off a pint of Cask Ale
- 20% off food with a food discount card
- Mother's day 20% off for pre-bookings (must advise you are a member at time of booking)

*7 Real Ales on at all times
Ember Pale Ale, Proper Job,
plus 5 regularly changing guests.
All Cask Ales £2.49 a pint on Mondays*

and consisted of three rooms, a large front bar, lounge and a small snug, often used by the Branch for meetings and AGMs.

Our final entry was Bernies Real Ale Off Licence on Cranmore Boulevard in Shirley with seven beers on tap. Owned by Bernie, she also had a branch in Acocks Green. It was eventually sold to two Solihull branch members, Brian and Dave Queenborough, and it went from strength to strength introducing a whole new range of beers to Solihull drinkers from all over the country.

So there we are. Interesting to note

that advertised in the '85 edition was the 1983 Solihull guide mentioned by Allan. We were not to publish another guide until 2003.

Steve Dyson

** Editor's Note. The Beer Orders restricted the number of tied pubs that could be owned by large breweries in the United Kingdom to 2,000, and required large brewer landlords to allow a guest ale to be sourced by tenants from someone other than their landlord. The industry responded by spinning off purely pub-owning companies ("pubcos"), such as Punch Taverns, Enterprise Inns, and Admiral Taverns from the older brewing-and-owning companies (notably Allied Lyons, Bass, and Scottish & Newcastle).*

Editorial

You can read about the changes to the branch following our AGM below. In addition to Martin's words about Carl Wright, our outgoing Chair, I would like to add some of my own. Carl has been extremely supportive since I joined the committee a couple of years ago. He has always handled himself with dignity, and dealt with others fairly and with compassion. It is not an easy job to do and he will be missed. If you see him around buy him a pint, he deserves it!

On page 12 of this magazine you will find an article about the pressures that local pubs are under. Unfortunately one of our pubs, the Red Lion, succumbed in January, but many were under pressure, especially during "Dry January". Please support your local pubs by using them. CAMRA is doing what it can through lobbying MPs and other campaigns to reduce the tax and rate burden on pub businesses, but they still need our regular patronage to survive.

Solihull and District CAMRA AGM

The Annual General Meeting saw a number of changes within the people running the branch.

Most notably, Carl Wright, our Chair for ten years stepped down prompting a reshuffle of responsibilities.

Our new Chair is Martin Buck, and if you are not sure what he looks like you can find his picture on page 1.

Martin said "Carl Wright served as chairman of our branch for a decade, until standing down at the February AGM.

As the incoming chairman, I hope that's something to be congratulated rather than commiserated over! It is definitely a notable achievement: that's a huge number of branch and committee meetings presided over, with good humour and tolerance. Juggling that with the demands of a job, that often sees him working long hours under significant stress, is testimony to Carl's dedication to CAMRA, and to the smooth running of the branch.

Some people may think he was only doing it for the fame – having his photo on the front cover of almost every Drinker magazine for the past few years!

When he stood down at the AGM, we presented him with a dozen bottles of beer, a small token of our appreciation for all his hard work. Not that he's disappearing – Carl still intends to come along to branch meetings, work permitting."

Other committee changes included the welcoming of a Vice Chair, Ray Cooke, who also took over as the Cider and Perry Officer. Paul Wigley was confirmed as the Pubs Officer, the role that he picked up during the year, and we also welcome Lawrence Loy whose job it is to look after our finances as Treasurer.

We still have some vacancies including a Press and Publicity Officer and a Young Members Coordinator. If you are interested please contact any committee member (page 27).

The White Swan



Opening Hours
Sunday to Thursday 07.00 - midnight
Friday & Saturday 07.00 - 01.30
Food served until 11pm each day



8 cask Handpulls on at all times including 5 guest ales from a range of local & national breweries

Wide range of craft beers

2 guest ciders also available

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B91 3SB
0121 711 5180**

The Pump House



Opening Times:
Sun - Wed:
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Thurs - Sat:
7.00am - 1.00am

**Alcohol served from
10.00 am**

**Food available from
7.00am to 11.00pm
daily**



Best choice of real ales on 10 hand pumps

**Up to 5 guest cask ales from premium
local and national breweries £2.15 a pint
5 draught beers off our Craft barrel
2 real ciders on hand pump**



**Unit 1A, Parkgate,
Stratford Road,
Shirley
0121 701 5460**



Pup and Duckling Nominated For Solihull and District CAMRA Cider Pub Of The Year

The Pup and Duckling has been nominated as the best pub in our branch for real cider during the past year, and goes forward into the regional Cider Pub Of The Year competition, and we wish them luck in the regional judging.

As well as the 350 different beers from 135 breweries, Jeff serves up 6 different real ciders at any time, and around 20 in all during 2018.

The number of pubs in the region now serving real cider, not the fizzy

Strongbow kind, is growing with handpumps springing up all over.

There are also plans to develop a West Midlands cider trail, which would visit pubs in the region which serve up good real cider.



Solihull Pubs & Clubs CAMRA Member Discounts

Ember Inns (**Fieldhouse, Colebrook, Woodmans Rest, Olton Tavern, Red Lion Knowle**) - 20p/ pint except Mondays where all cask ales are £2.49.

Fieldhouse additionally gives 20% off food with a discount card available from the bar. For other offers see the advert on page 15.

Flute and Flagon gives 10% off real ales (may not applicable when other low price promotions are taking place).

The Lyndon give 20p/pint except Thursdays when a pint is £2.70. Also 5% off food for card carrying members.

Drum and Monkey, Wharf Tavern, Drawbridge Inn, Boat Inn, Greswolde Arms, give 10% off real ales.

Vintage Inns (**Red Lion Earlswood**) 20p/ pint

The **Ale Rooms, Knowle** 40p/pint or 20p/ half pint

Tap and Tandoor, Solihull 10% off a pint of selected Craft Beers.

Please note that discounts given to CAMRA members are at the discretion of the licensee, and these may be withdrawn or amended at any time. They are a privilege given to **card carrying CAMRA members** as a gesture of goodwill.

CAMRA believes that no CAMRA member or Branch should ask for, or expect, a discount from any pub or brewery.

Trading Standards contacts:

Solihull - www.solihull.gov.uk/tradingstandards

Warwickshire - www.warwickshire.gov.uk/contactustradingstandards

Citizens Advice Consumer Service phone 03454 040506

THE BLUE BELL CIDER HOUSE

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

Opening hours:

Monday—Saturday: 11.30am—11.00pm
Sunday: 12.00-10.30pm



5 real ales at all times including beers
brewed on site.

Plus 7 ciders, 4 sparkling & 3 traditional still

Home cooked food with a wide
variety of daily specials served

Monday - Saturday

12.00 - 8.30pm for main meals

Sunday Carvery 12 - 5.00pm

Midweek Carvery (Wednesday)
12 - 7.00pm



Breakfast served from 9 am Monday - Saturday until 8.30pm

Sunday Breakfast from 9 am until 5pm



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

<http://www.bluebellciderhouse.org/>

Monday - Jam Session (Live Music)
Tuesday, Thursday & Sunday - Poker
Wednesday Quiz Night

Large car parking area
Children & pets welcome
Large beer garden with canal views



A Drinker's Tale

After a long voyage from Jaipur to the Port of St Austell in his Ghost Ship, a Schooner with 12 Guns, Captain Morgan, or Old Hooky as he was known, accompanied by his aptly named companion Dorothy Goodbody, the Black Sheep of the family, negotiated the Doom Bar by the light of the Blue Moon and docked at the Shipyard.

At 8 Bells, a diminutive Hobgoblin and his Punk Dog, Ubu, disembarked and went into the local pub, whereupon Manns best friend did a Big Job right in the middle of the floor. The Landlord, a former Bombardier and London Porter, went Pale, issued a Titanic Broadside, and was seen to Spitfire as his London Pride had been dented.

Fresh from a nearby religious convention, the Reverend James, lacking Purity of thought, swore like a Trooper, and the Bishops Finger was pointed

accusingly at the Pedigree dog's Old Peculier owner. The Abbot, after a quick prayer to St Miguel, said hey Bud, Weiser men than you know you don't bring animals into pubs; use your Brains, Butty Bach.

The Bitter Hobgoblin said he didn't give a Wadworth 6X, as he'd brought an Otter, a Badger and a Speckled Hen in before without any problem. The Stout but Mild-mannered landlady, Stella, told him that was no Speckled Hen, that was a Mad Goose, and wondered whether he was taking his Pils.

Eventually, with the inducement that his Palm would be greased with Exmoor Gold, the Hobgoblin cleared up the mess. The Landlord gave the Tiny Rebel a Guinness and paid Tribute to him for doing a Proper Job.

Lindsey Butler

Solihull **THE FLUTE & FLAGON**

28-30 Station Parade

Solihull B91 3SB

Tel: 0121 711 3630

www.fluteandflagonsolihull.co.uk



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unforgettable experiences*



**10% off real ales for
card-carrying CAMRA
members ***

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

**6 hand pumps with
5 Real Ales &
a Traditional
Cider**

3 Craft Beers

Opening Hours

09.00—23.00 Sun—Thur

09.00—24.00 Fri

09.00—01.00 Sat

Broomfields Hall

Solihull British Legion Club

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West Midlands,
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rblclubsec@aol.com**



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**Suitable for weddings, birthday parties,
or any occasion.**

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**Further details from the
Club Secretary Ben Brannigan**



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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 350 beers and ciders during the year, available in bottles or on draught.

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Tel. 0121 744 2827

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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

A Surprising Find In Mexico

A recent holiday to Puerto Vallarta resulted in a delightful discovery. The choice of beer at our hotel was Dos Equis lager or “amber lager”, but a visit to the main town of Puerto Vallarta revealed more about up and coming Mexican brewers.

After a bit of shopping we headed for the beach and found the El Solar bar right on the beach for a drink. We were just expecting a local lager but at the bar I noticed beers by “El Terrible” brewing company. They had a pilsner, pale ale, wheat beer, and a stout on draught, and others including a porter in bottles. Pleasantly surprised we had a taste of them all, and a pint of the pale ale and the stout which were really good. We wanted to try the El Terrible porter but there was none left, so had a Mexican Ticus porter instead. At 50 pesos a pint (£2) it was good value indeed.

We were told that the brewer is Mexican, but travelled to Canada to learn his craft. The barman told us

about Murphy’s on El Malacon, which had 8 of their beers on tap.

It was a fair walk in the direction of the old town, but finally found it on the second floor of a 3 story building. The entrance was just to the side of “Mister Baiters” (you couldn’t make it up!).

What we actually found were 14 beers on tap, plus other bottled beers including an Imperial Stout. There were actually 7 El Terrible beers, plus 7 from Colima. We

tried the El Terrible Red Ale and the Colima White IPA. This looked like a lager, but as a 6.5% IPA it was a lovely pint. We finished with a Negra Modela Amber beer from Colima, having found that the “Abizmal” Imperial Stout was out of stock.

Beers here were 75 pesos apart from the Imperial Stout at 110. With real chips as well this one is worth a visit. This definitely was the “fun side of the wall”. *David Cove*

**el terrible
BREWING**
Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, México

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

davidcove@hotmail.co.uk

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

Advertise Your Business Here With Us

We distribute nearly 3,000 copies of the well read Drinker out to pubs, around Solihull, Warwickshire, and parts of Birmingham.

This gives you the opportunity to put your business in front of people who are in the habit of visiting pubs and restaurants.

You don’t have to be a pub or restaurant to advertise.

For details on rates, and help in producing your advert, please contact the Editor.



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Membership Matters

We have recently seen a quite few new members of Solihull & District CAMRA branch attending their first meeting or social, and taking advantage of the free pint incentive we offer to all new members. The free pint ticket is redeemable at their first branch meeting.

There is no time limit, so if you come along this month or in 12 months time the free pint voucher is still valid. All new Solihull CAMRA members are sent a welcome letter from myself which contains the free pint voucher.

We would still like to see more new faces, so I'm calling on all new members or members who have never been to a meeting or social event to come along and see for yourself. I believe that we as a branch are a friendly group and you will be made most welcome whilst enjoying a pint with other like minded real ale or cider drinkers. A list of our branch events is on page 4, or go to www.solihull.camra.org.uk.

Recently some of our branch have been out and about visiting local pubs which have been nominated for inclusion in the next issue of the GBG (Good Beer Guide). As a branch we would like to see more members rating our real ale pubs, so that we can put the best real ale pubs that Solihull & District has to offer into the GBG. Why not join CAMRA and help us out next year in the really pleasant job of go-

ing to our local pubs, trying their real ale, and then rating our pubs using our new online voting system. All of the pubs included in the guide have been voted in by CAMRA members actually visiting the pubs. Join the Campaign, and have your chance to vote for the best real ales pubs and clubs in and around the Solihull area.

CAMRA members receive a monthly newsletter called "What's Brewing", with articles on what's happening within CAMRA and the real ale scene nationally, a very nice quarterly informative magazine titled "Beer", which has many interesting articles with colour photographs covering a wide range of topics from breweries to bottled beers. Both of these are available to download to your devices so you are able to read them at a time or place to suit yourself. You can also opt in to receive paper copies.

You will also get free or reduced entry to the many beer festivals organised by local CAMRA branches all over the country, £20 worth of J.D. Wetherspoon Real Ale/Cider vouchers, as well as many other great money saving deals. Visit www.camra.org.uk for details of the different types of memberships available.

So come on, what are you waiting for. Join up, Join in, Join the Campaign

Dave Mckowen, Membership Secretary

Useful Contact Numbers

Chair/ Beer Festival

Martin Buck 01564 770708

Secretary

Allan Duffy 01564 200431

Membership

Dave Mckowen 01564 778955

Cider and Perry/ Vice Chair

Ray Cooke 01564 777890

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Join up, join in, join the campaign



From
as little as
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a year. That's less
than a pint a
month!

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Become part of the CAMRA community today – enjoy discounted entry to beer festivals and exclusive member offers. Learn about brewing and beer and join like-minded people supporting our campaigns to save pubs, clubs, your pint and more.

Join the campaign today at
www.camra.org.uk/joinup

*Price for paying by Direct Debit and correct at Jan 2018. Under 26 concessionary rates available. Please visit camra.org.uk/membership-rates



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REAL ALE**