

Solihull Drinker

Issue No:

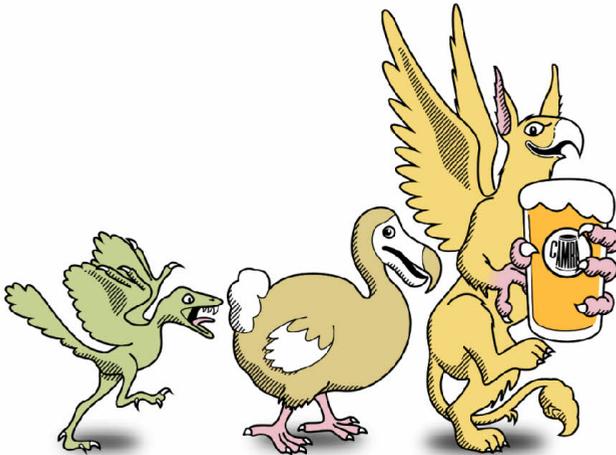


Autumn 2009

Solihull & District 11th Beer Festival

We are pleased to announce that the 11th Solihull & District Beer Festival will take place on Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd October, at The Royal British Legion, Union Road, Solihull. This year, due to unprecedented demand over the past two festivals, we are increasing our output to 40 beers, plus two ciders and a perry. The Friday session will run from 5.30pm - 11.00pm, and the two Saturday

sessions will run from 11.30am - 11.00pm, with the Silhill Morris Men performing this time, taking the 8.30pm slot of favourite B hits, available throughout the Royal British Legion sessions.



will run from 3.30pm, with Morris Men twice during and 5.30pm - with the Kotka Band stage at a variety of rock and R & Food will be from the Royal British Legion all the ses-

All the available of the first they sell

THE ASCENT OF ALE BY MEANS OF NATURAL INGREDIENTS

SOLIHULL BEER FESTIVAL 2009

so there will be something for everyone; and soft drinks can be bought at the Royal British Legion's own bar. Entry will be £10 including admission to the festival, hire of a refundable glass and beer tokens, with card-carrying CAMRA members receiving a discount in the form of additional tokens. Unused tokens can be refunded, or donated to this year's chosen charity.

beers will be from the start session —until out, that is —

We hope you enjoy yourselves, and look forward to seeing you there!

Inside: Don't miss the Dates for your Diary



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(Sundays 12 to 3pm for lunch - no evening meals)
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*The leaves will soon be changing colour and as Summer moves into Au-
tumn, don't forget the convivial welcome waiting for you at The Bulls Head.
Let the weather do what it will —the rain may fall and the wind may blow,
but the real ales are ready and the fire will glow. See you soon.*



It's our 50th issue!! Here's how it all started...

The Drinker began as an information sheet called the Boro Banter, distributed at meetings when the Branch was formed in 1982.

It started as single A4 sheets, increasing to folded A3 sheets after 11 editions in 1983. This was the format until issue 38 in April 1988.

After a year's break, issue 39 in May 1989 saw the Banter relaunched in the familiar A5 booklet style.

The last Banter was No 52 in Dec 1995 (12 pages).

It was relaunched as the Solihull Drinker (Issue 1) in Aug 1997 (16 pages). At that time it was only in plain black and white, but in 1998 it gained a single colour cover. This style continued until summer 2007, when it reverted to black and white but with glossy pages.

With issue 49 this summer, we branched out into lithographic printing and a colour cover and centrefold.

The editors to date have always striven to keep the magazine informative and entertaining, reflecting local pubs, events, and especially the views of its readers. We hope you have enjoyed reading it over the years and will continue to do so. Comments, articles and other beer -related information are always welcomed.

Here's to the next 50 issues!

Julia Hammonds, Editor

(with thanks to Steve Wood for the information.)

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

**All contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to Julia Hammonds:
The Editor, Solihull Drinker, c/o 4, Kendrick Close, Solihull, B92 0QD
or e-mail julia.hammonds@blueyonder.co.uk**

The Editor reserves the right to amend or shorten any contributions in the Solihull Drinker, but will always honour the spirit of the contribution.

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The 51st edition of *Solihull Drinker* will be published on Monday 7th December, 2009.

Copy deadline for advertising and contributions will be Saturday 13th November, 2009

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measures, contact Solihull
Trading Standards on
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Hail to the Ale! - local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

Perfect Pint Puller

Our now annual Perfect Pint Puller competition was run as part of Local Pubs Week 2009, in which pubs are encouraged to actively organise and promote events to attract more local people to visit community pubs. Our aim was to find the person behind the bar who best embodied the spirit of a warm welcome, efficient service with a smile, a full pint in a clean glass, and good knowledge of the range of drinks available at any time.



Judith being presented with her certificate

Local pub -goers were invited to vote for their recommended PPP, and a panel of judges from this branch then set out to visit the pubs anonymously and test the PPP nominees. After many beers and much deliberation (well, you can't rush these things), Judith Whiteman, who works at The Bulls Head, Barston, was the overall and worthy winner. Judith's attitude towards her customers was second to none and her friendly personality and willingness to help shone through. A presentation of a certificate naming her PPP for 2009 was handed over at a small ceremony involving CAMRA members and regulars at the pub,

together with a cheque for £50. to put towards a meal or other celebration. A draw of the voters for the PPP was also held, and the first name pulled out of the hat was that of Desmond Robinson, who receives the prize of two free pints the next time he visits his local, which turned out to be The Bulls Head —a double whammy!

The Cock Horse, Rowington

October is traditionally Cider Month, and this year we pay tribute to the tipples with a visit to the Cock Horse at Rowington, which from the arrival of its current landlord, Simon, has seen a great influx of ciders. A total of up to 20 can be found in the pub at any one time, including bottled as well as cask, and this rises on occasions such as cider festivals such as the one held last May over the early Bank Holiday. CAMRA members will be meeting up from lunchtime onwards on Saturday 24th October to sample what's on offer—you are welcome to join in and say hello.

O'Neills, Solihull

It has been reported that O'Neills, in the town centre, has stopped serving real ale. This was thought to be perhaps a temporary measure, but bar staff confirmed to one of our members that the cessation was permanent. So don't go in expecting real ale. Should the position change, we will let you know.

Solihull Royal British Legion Club

If you want a nice quiet pint and tasty snack away from the hustle and bustle of Solihull town centre, then pop along to the end of Union Road, behind the hospital. The Club House has a pleasant and comfortable lounge with a friendly and inviting atmosphere. Equally important though are the fine ales and good food served at very reasonable prices. In addition to a full range of spirits and wines, there are normally 2 or 3 of the best real ales on tap - with Church End and Wye Valley being regular visitors. Premium bitters such as Spitfire, Tribute, and London Pride are among the others also frequently available.

For those who want some entertainment, there is a Quiz night on Fridays, and our highly successful and well -attended lunchtime jazz sessions on alternate Sundays. These are complemented by a variety of regular evening events, often musical, with excellent large dance floor for the energetically minded! For sports enthusiasts, four top -quality snooker tables, and a superb bowls green are a constant feature of club life.

Whilst the club is naturally keen to increase its membership, there is an opportunity to try out the facilities without a financial commitment. CAMRA card -holders need only pay a nominal guest fee of 20p to enjoy the club's facilities. So come along and relax awhile! John Howlett, ex - of The Sump in Burton on Trent, and his wife Jane, together with their team, look forward to serving you.

(The Solihull Royal British Legion hosts our Beer Festival this coming October —an ideal opportunity for you to view the hall and its facilities. But don't forget the invitation to go under your own steam at a quieter, less frantically beer -related time! Ed.)

PubAid

PubAid has been set up by a team of four people frustrated at the lack of government support for our pubs and the lack of positive coverage in the media. They aim to change this by generating positive news stories that will be regularly sent to local, regional and national media, as well as government. They want licensees to spend a couple of minutes registering the charitable activities carried out in their pubs at www.pubaid.com. There is no charge to register. They would like to see 10,000 pubs registered and an estimated £20 million in charitable donations by 31 December 2009. If you're a pub that raises money for charity —or you visit a pub that does —have a look at their website and see what you can do to help.

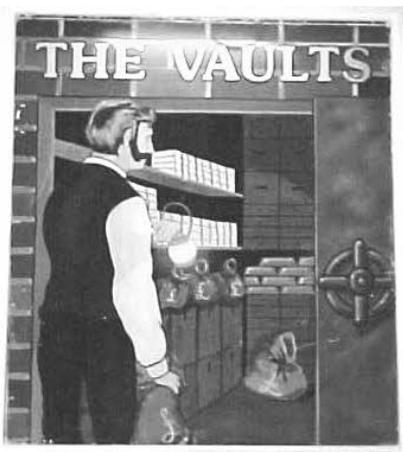
Tom o' the Wood

It looks as if the Tom o' the Wood has closed yet again as reports came in of its impending closure recently. It is not known at the time of going to press whether it will reopen, or when, although Enterprise Inns are apparently saying that it is not closing. So maybe this is only a temporary measure. The situation will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

The Lodge, Solihull Lodge

Due to a temporary manager taking over, one real ale appeared recently. However this may not be a permanent fixture as next visit it was off again.

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* Beer Festival 30th October —8th November —ring for further details *

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Cheers for The Bulls Head!

As you may have read in the last issue, The Bulls Head at Barston was the winner of the Solihull and District CAMRA Pub of the Year award for 2009. The pub, which has been run by Martin (aka Brad) and Joy Bradley for over 25 years, beat off stiff competition from other past winners and received the award for a third time. The judges were fulsome in their praise for the well-kept real ales, including an ever-changing selection of guest beers. Martin prides himself on providing an interesting beer choice for pub-goers at all times, and having achieved Cask Marque accreditation a few years ago, this affirms that their beers are always in great condition.

Carl Wright, Solihull & District Branch Chairman, said "The Bulls Head always offers a warm welcome to all-comers, has wonderful seasonal food, and most importantly, has a range of excellently-kept real ales. Local CAMRA members have certainly noticed this and it has resulted in this well-deserved award."

Several CAMRA members along with local attendees were present when the award was presented to Martin for the third time, the pub having previously won it in 2000 and 2002. After the presentation, a celebratory buffet was held to mark the occasion. To find out more about The Bulls Head, its beers and menus, go to www.thebullsheadbarston.co.uk



Carl, presenting the award certificate to Martin Bradley (left), landlord of The Bulls Head, Barston

Plastic Fantastic?

The Home Office has commissioned a new design of glass, in an attempt to stop them being used as weapons. Official figures show 5,500 people are attacked with glasses and bottles every year in England and Wales. The British Beer and Pub Association said it did not want the new plastic glasses to be made compulsory as the industry fears extra costs at a time when many pubs are struggling in the recession.

Nick Verebelyi, the designer in charge of delivering the new pint, said they were looking at two approaches. "One is to coat the glass with a substance that will make sure the glass doesn't shatter into pieces when it is broken - that could be a plastic material for example. But it would have to feel like an existing pint glass to the consumer." Mr Verebelyi said his company, Design Bridge, was also looking at changing the pint altogether. "We could do something more radical, by looking at the whole shape and substance of the pint - we could come up with something that is completely different to glass. Remember that years ago people used to drink out of pewter tankards. It could be quite a significant paradigm shift." Mr Verebelyi said he accepted that drinkers are attached to the traditional glass pint. "You make a change and there is often opposition, we've got to make it appealing to them. We've got to make it desirable and acceptable and cool. "

Cider in Spain



Exterior of the sideria

Cider in Spain? Not a country one would normally associate with cider but we're not talking about the usual Costas but Northern Spain, known as Green Spain. Its position on the north-west coast means that the climate is cooler and wetter than elsewhere in Spain and very suitable for growing apples.

Cider or "Sidra" has been brewed in Northern Spain since medieval times especially in the Asturias region. Siderias are the establishments to find it. The traditional way to serve it is to pour it from high above head into a glass held near the waist, without spilling it of course.

Villaviciosa, a small town on the coast, is the sidra capital of Asturias with many siderias and surrounded by apple orchards. There's a cider museum, the Museo de la Sidra, in Nava, and a sidra festival is held in the town in the second week of July.



Ken Jackson opts out (you're letting the sidra down Ken!)

Santillana del Mar, in Cantabria, but not far from Asturias, provided us with our chance to visit a sideria; our drinks were served, (rather disappointingly) in conventional style, into glasses resembling straight pints, but very much shorter. They were delicate and thin and wouldn't have lasted five minutes in your average pub. The excellent quality of the cider told us that it was non-pasteurised but lack of language deterred us from asking. Infinitely better than the national brands in UK that's for sure. Only an inch or two was to be sampled but well before lunch it was quite enough. Its strength was fairly modest, 5%, and a 750ml bottle could be bought from a shop for about €1.80, surely worthy of serious consideration by students.



The interior

Bob Jackson

Landmark numbers reached

The Campaign for Real Ale was thrilled to announce a landmark moment in their 38 year history as their numbers swelled to 100,000 members. The beer consumer group was delighted to confirm this milestone on the opening day of the Great British Beer Festival, at Earls Court, London, in August. Despite many campaigning successes over its 38 year history, CAMRA is pledging to push middle-age to one side as it steps up its campaigns to **save Britain's pubs and get a fair deal for beer drinkers.** As the UK heads for a general election next spring, CAMRA is pushing for reform of the beer tie, fair taxes on beer, minimum pricing regulations to stamp out loss-leaders in supermarkets, zero duty rate on low strength beers, planning law reforms to protect pubs and for a central Government policy framework to protect and promote well-run community pubs.



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Long Itchington Beer Festival

This year's festival proved to be to be even more popular than last. Moreover, an international flavour prevailed, and people from all over the world were there. With such a lot of beers on hand there was bound to be a wide range of opinions and also some controversy and much effort was need to prove each other wrong. Hook Norton made a fine presence by having their Shire horse propelled dray going between the pubs and it was delightful to see the draymen enjoy themselves as much as everyone else.



The Cuttle, as promised, was indeed much improved over 2008 by new management. Normally at this stage one sticks to a half and moves on, but Castle Rock Hemlock vs. Belvoir Castle Oatmeal Stout was a difficult choice and resulted in the inevitable “both”.

The most famous and popular beers always run out first. Jaipur IPA from Thornbridge was one of those and must have been the first to go at the Two Boats. The latter is still a cramped place to get a drink, but the canal -side tables in the sun solve that. It is probably just as well that the Jaipur had run out, or we might have stayed all day. Off to the Duck on the Pond which last year had really not played the game and offered just one beer. Not this time. Still a fairly conventional range but they had a couple of heavyweights from Rugby, including Cement at 6.8%.

Next the Buck and Bell, last year's favourite and still is. Food more pricey, but still a good selection of rolls and pork pies at a modest price; this was just as well as we needed to do their beer list justice.

Hobson's Twisted Spire, Sarah Hughes Pale Amber and Enville Porter all very good.



The Harvester was still very much the locals' choice it seemed, although we timed it wrong again for an interesting beer. Onwards to the Green Man where there was a charity stall or two and a pig roast. Moles 4.5% Landlord's Choice went down a treat.

It is a long (400 yards) walk back to the pond, so we hitched a ride on the Hook Norton Express, which was very sociable. There was a delayed departure as the drayman had been given too many free pints and had to ask for our help. Naturally it would be rude to refuse to help him out. So, back to the Buck and Bell, for some Hop Back Crop Circle and a Skinner's Ginger Tossler. At this stage of the proceedings, after so many good beers, it takes a really good one to stand out – and the Ginger one did; an excellent pint on which to end the day. We ambled back to the village pond to meet up and head for home

Dissent reigned as to the best beers, so I suspect a return visit in 2010 will be needed.

Bob Jackson

Holiday Cottage in Tintagel, North Cornwall Coast



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Bromsgrove Beer Festival

On Saturday 11th July, a party of four (Steve, Paul, Phil and myself) set off to sample the delights of the James Bond-themed 007th Bromsgrove Beer Festival. The weather was wet when we set off - not a great start to the day - and it was still raining when we arrived at Bromsgrove Rugby Club.

In the marquee the beers were arranged in two rows, back to back, down the centre. The festival glasses were half pint mugs marked in one-third and half pint measures and featuring a James Bond-type logo, which also appeared on the festival T-shirts. This particularly appealed to Steve (00Steven), who is something of a self-confessed Bond geek!

With over 100 real ales plus a wide choice of cider, perry and fruit wines to choose from, there was something to satisfy everyone's taste.

This year for the first time, LocAle beers were highlighted. These are beers brewed within 30 miles of Bromsgrove and numbered 41 beers from 23 breweries. In keeping with the theme of the festival, the names of a number of these ales had a 007 connection.



(continued overleaf)

Cap'n Grumpy's Best, a 3.9% bitter from Wissey Valley brewery, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, was described as a late -hopped, full flavoured amber coloured session bitter. *Dark Side of the Moon*, a 4.3% garnet coloured Mild from Spire brewery, Chesterfield, was not so good, the "sweet toffee overtones" seemed to be overshadowed by a rather harsh sharpness.

Pucks Folly, from Farmers Ales of Maldon, Essex. turned out to be a pale golden ale, described as having "spicy notes and sweet fruit, biscuity malt in the taste fading and the finish is dominated by bitterness". Absolutely great.

Next, a 'Bond' connection: Windsor Castle's *Russy Galore*. This was one of the LocAles, originating from Lye, West Midlands. It is a dry -hopped, Indian Pale Ale type, flavoured with fennel. At 4.5%, it was not a classic IPA but, nevertheless, very enjoyable. The fennel flavouring was noticeable but not overpowering and I found this ale quite refreshing.

Suitably reinforced with a pork bap and a burger, I tried another East Anglian ale, this time *Boadicea Chariot* from Icen brewery in Ickburgh, Norfolk. This is another session bitter and, at 3.8% is the original Icen brew. Next on my list was the delightfully named *Dishy Debbie* from Hart brewery in Little Eccleston, Preston. This was a light golden, citrus fruity brew weighing in at 4%. Again, I found this to be a very enjoyable beer.

Having now sampled six beers I decided to try another of the Bond -themed ones.

Weatheroak Hill brewery's *Golden Eye PA* was described at 4% as "an uncomplicated golden ale with a distinctive aroma gained from Styrian hops. It leaves a bitter finish thanks to the Worcestershire hedgerow bittering hop". Another really enjoyable beer.

My next sample, which was from Great Heck brewery in Goole, Yorkshire. It was a smooth, dark, velvety 3.8% session beer called *Dave*. Odd name for a beer.. Paul went for *Gunners Daughter* (from Old Cannon, the 'other' brewery in Bury St. Edmunds), and Phil and I decided to try the strongest ale on offer next, which was *9X* from Buffy's brewery in Tivetshall St. Mary, Norfolk. This comes in at a hefty 9%: a robust smooth ale overflowing with malt and fruit", golden in colour and almost treacly in texture.



Another Essex brew, a 5.4% ale named *Lord Essex* from Felstar brewery, Felsted, was rather darker than the previous beer and quite different in flavour, and, in my view, more of a winter brew. *Old Rodney*, a 4% bitter from Brandon brewery in Suffolk, was a copper -coloured spicy and aromatic ale with "a satisfying finish. Lastly, *Chatsworth Gold*, an aptly -named 4.6% brew from Peak Ales Brewery in Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

Monday 17th Sept	White Swan, Solihull
Monday 5th Oct	White Swan, Henley -in-Arden
Monday 2nd Nov	Red Lion, Shirley (NB. + AGM—8.00pm start)
Monday 7th Dec	The Railway, Dorridge

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

Committee Meetings

Monday 26th Oct	The Wharf, Hockley Heath
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(8.30pm start. Members may attend Committee meetings but only participate if invited to do so by the Committee)

Socials

Thurs -Sun 24 -27 Sept	Weekend away, London
Friday 9th October	Rowington Club, 8.30pm for 9.00pm
Saturday 24th Oct	Cock Horse, Rowington —celebration of Cider Month, lunchtime onwards
November	Trip to Slaters Brewery, Stafford - date and details TBC
December	Christmas Pub Crawl, Solihull area - date and details TBC

For more details, contact Secretary Allan Duffy on 01564 200 431 or visit our website : www.solihullcamra.org.uk

Membership Matters

There are many advantages to being a CAMRA member, including the monthly "What's Brewing". In it you can see lists of CAMRA beer festivals, both local and nationwide. There are, for instance seventeen listed in October alone, including our own Solihull festival, which I expect you already know. Locations vary from Ayrshire to Poole. Independent festivals are also advertised, the Anchor, Digbeth, being a regular. Membership only costs from £14 so why not indulge yourself and join the throng.

Bob Jackson, Membership Secretary

ADRIAN AND THE COMMITTEE WARMLY WELCOME YOU TO

The Rowington Club

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(full membership: £10.00 per annum)

Autumn Events:

October **Marrow Day** (open day, everyone welcome!)

Various events: Heaviest Marrow, Longest Carrot, Longest Runner Bean, Longest Parsnip, and Heaviest Onion, Plus cake and jam classes. Entry fee only £1.00 per person regardless of number of entries! Proceeds to charity Plus competitions, Tombola, stalls and whacky games —plenty of fun for everyone!!! Ring for details of opening times.

Saturday evening events a speciality:
phone the Club for details of who's on
all who come will be welcome.

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

The Golden Acres

Joint Solihull & District CAMRA Most Improved Pub of the Year 2005

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Karaoke: Every Thursday

Regular entertainment Saturdays

Big screen sports regularly featured

Why not join one of our sports teams?

Further information from the pub on
0121 704 9002

Try our authentic Chinese food
Eat in and/or Take -away

0121 711 8130

Mondays - Saturdays (except Tuesdays) 5.00 - 11.30pm
Sundays: Eat -in 5.00 - 10.30pm Take -away 5.00 - 11.30pm

Off Our Patch

Woodhouse Eaves is a pretty little village some 4 miles south of Loughborough, Leicestershire. A very informative and interesting record of its history can be found at the website: <http://www.leicestershirevillages.cpm/woodhouseeaves/villagehistory>

One of its claims to fame is the pub The Wheatsheaf Inn, which was built in 1800 by local miners from the Swithland slate mines as a place to meet up after work. There are three real ales on at all times, changing regularly, currently Adnams' Broadside, Greene King IPA and Timothy Taylors' Landlord. There being a wine cave and a wine cellar dating from the time the pub was built, should you not be a beer -drinker, the pub can recommend exactly the right wine to compliment your meal from either the specials or the bistro menus.

The pub also offers very reasonably priced AA 3 -star accommodation in the form of a pretty cottage containing two very comfortable double/twin en -suite rooms, and additional kitchen and lounge -diner. Breakfast is amply supplied in the form of a help -yourself buffet, and you can linger over this as long as you like.

If your idea of a village pub is good beers, good food, genial welcoming hosts, an old stone building crammed full of memorabilia and a wonderfully relaxing atmosphere, then you will find all of this and more at The Wheatsheaf, currently listed in the 2009 Good Beer Guide.

Railway enthusiasts should head to the nearby Grand Central Railway, where steam trains are run on a regular basis, along the unique double track via four stations to Leicester; each station is themed and it's not unusual to find a bunch of squaddies going on leave, or an RAF officer taking his girl for an outing. Lunch can be had on many of the trains, and you can break your journey as many times as you like there and back.

For walkers, nearby Beacon Hill beckons: a country park and Leicestershire's second-highest point, bearing a Bronze Age hill fort, it is a wonderful place for rambles, and open all year round. Enjoy the views and the wildlife, and don't be surprised if you spot four-horned Manx Loghton sheep and Alpacas on your travels.

Other visitor attractions just a few miles away include the John Taylor Bellfoundry Bell Museum in Loughborough; the National Space Centre, Leicester; Charnwood Forest; Bradgate House, birthplace of Lady Jane Grey; and Sileby Mill, situated on the Grand Union Canal and home to Sileby Mill Boatyard, where you can hire a narrowboat for a day.

For a great break then head for Woodhouse Eaves and The Wheatsheaf Inn in a wonderful part of the country for an experience you'll never forget. Find more information about the pub, accommodation and tariffs on <http://www.wheatsheafinn.net/index.htm>



'Meet the Brewer' nights at JD Wetherspools

Solihull ale enthusiasts had an opportunity to meet the brewer when James Sullivan, licensee of the town centre's Assembly Rooms, invited Springhead brewery to give a presentation and tasting.



Steve Reynolds, marketing manager for Springhead, introduced the head brewer to us - his wife Shirley. She told us about the origins of the brewery at Sutton-on-Trent, formed in 1990 and officially the smallest brewery in the country —it was named after a nearby bend in the river. The reputation of this tiny brewery caught on and its beers were so popular that within 3 years they were moving to larger premises and increasing capacity from 2.5 to 10 barrels. A decade later and this was increased again with a 50 barrel plant being commissioned in 2004.

Shirley, having spent some years in quality control, joined the brewery part-time to ease her way back into work and help to pay for a new boat she and Steve had bought. She took to the business so well that she rapidly became a head brewer in 2001 and invested in the company. The boat has been sold long ago as the long brewing days don't lend themselves to messing around on the river!

We were given an insight into their brewing process and talked through a tasting of four of their range of ales. All of Springhead's beers have a common theme to their names - the English Civil War. Roaring Meg, for instance, was a large mortar with a 15.5 inch diameter barrel, used during the capture of Goodrich Castle.



Beers on offer at the tasting were Liberty (3.8%), Puritan's Porter (4.0%), Charlie's Angel (4.5%) and Roaring Meg (5.5%). A number of other Springhead beers were also available behind the bar, including Goodrich Castle (4.4%) and The Leveller (4.8%).

The event was popular with both CAMRA members and others who joined in and enjoyed both the samples and some welcome refreshments.



More recently, Dawn Lingley -Webster, licensee at the White Swan on Station Road, contacted Solihull CAMRA with details of a visit by Steve Brooks, head brewer of Highgate Brewery in Walsall.

Steve brought a laptop presentation with him showing how beers are brewed at Highgate. He talked as through a complex process rarely have I come across so many gadgets used to brew the beer, ranging from the 1899 malt screen (for removing large and small impurities from the grain), and 1922 grist mill

for cracking the malt into smaller pieces to release the sugars more easily, through the mash mixer, where the grist is mixed with hot liquor, into the mashtun (finally some standard kit!) through an underback and into the copper, out through the hopback to a hop sieve, into the coolship (originally for cooling the wort, in the days before a heat exchanger, now just a temporary storage vessel), on through the heat exchanger and a pipe where yeast is added to the wort by venturi effect (liquid yeast is drawn from a vessel by suction caused by wort running through the pipe at speed) to the fermenting vessels. Even after fermentation, the gadgetry continues with a jackback, a tube used during the racking process. *(Blimey!! Ed.)*



We were invited to sample some of the ingredients used at the brewery - a range of

malts, from Pale and Crystal through to Chocolate and Black, along with Fuggles and Cascade hops. The differences can be quite alarming - Pale malt tastes rather like Horlicks and is quite pleasant to eat while Black malt is unpleasantly like eating the contents of a coffee filter; Cascade hops provide only a gentle bitter taste but strong aroma while Fuggles has little aroma but huge bitterness.

Dawn provided all of us with samples of the finished product - Dav-enports (part of the Highgate brand) IPA (4.0%) and Fox's Nob (4.4%) - while the bar also had a good range of other Highgate ales available. As more beers were sampled, the inevitable hunger was perfectly filled with a selection of refreshments from the menu.



Our thanks to Steve and Shirley from Springhead, Steve from Highgate, and to James and Dawn from Solihull's JD Wetherspoons pubs for hosting the events.

Gordon Clarke

An introduction to the Discovery Brewery

"Right, now pay attention boys and girls! Today's lesson is all about Discovery Brewery - Solihull's first." This is the only brewery in the Solihull CAMRA area, so I have no idea why it took so long to get round to visiting it; still better late than never, on a pleasant Friday spring evening a few of us paid it a visit to view our local gem.

The Discovery brewery is based on a farm in the north east of our patch and was set up in September 2007 by Simon, a physics teacher (more of that later). First of all why? A long standing love for real ale, it was as simple as that. He had some savings and an idea and decided to do it - investing in a 2.5 barrel plant from Porter Brewing Co Ltd - Discovery is built on some serious experience.

2.5 barrels is about as small as a real system can be, but that can still make 10 firkins (the 9 gallon casks you see at most pubs) of whatever you want in a single go. Now it is widely understood that to make a small fortune in brewing you need to start with a large one, so was this a wise investment? In view of the state of the banking industry a year later and the losses many people suffered, one can only

(continued overleaf)

admire Simon's foresight; besides, making beer is more fun and you can drink the results.

To get started Simon has attended courses and of course had done his homework on brewing, recipes and sampled the competition. Being a small business, he brews 2 times a month to supply local pubs and beer festivals. The Solihull CAMRA 2008 beer festival had two of his beers, and they did not last long. Beer can also be obtained through a couple of distributors: Dowbridge Distributors (near Tamworth in the West Midlands) and Cask Baron in Yorkshire. His beers are also available in a few local pubs, such as the Red Lion in Baddesley Ensor and The Merchant's Inn (Rugby)

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Expansions and the environment: to save transporting empty casks around the country (it is enough of a struggle to get the firkins back) a novel idea is to use other breweries casks with his beer – back -filling they call it – so that it is returned to its own neighbourhood with beer in it for sale and then only needs a local return trip.

So what next? Simon is happy with the basics – the brewery is scrupulously clean and popular brews are repeated reliably and others are tweaked to refine them. He uses the finest ingredients – Maris Otter malted barley for example. Hops are the other important ingredient in his recipes and he likes to experiment. He's still searching for that extra something that makes a light -strength brew taste like a heavyweight. This means the beer is cheaper and you can drink a little more of it, while still getting all the taste of a falling-down water.

The pioneers of his subject (physics) are responsible for some of the great discoveries of this world, hence the beer names.



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City & Guilds
NPTC



Dynamite 5% A copper coloured beer with a lovely aroma and flavour ; **Columbus 4.7%** A balanced beer, copper in colour, pleasant mouth feel with smooth bitterness; **Newton's Cream 4.8%** A pale ale made using only pale malt and singly hopped with First Gold; **Albert's Pale 4.2%** A refreshing Golden ale made using pale malt and wheat, bittered with Challenger and finished with First Gold; **Eddie's Sun 4.0%** A gluggable ale with plenty of hop character and nicely bittered.; **Nobel's Pride 4.3%** A classic pale, Triple hopped to perfection with all English grown hops; **Marle's Cure 5.0%** A dark brown beauty, strong, smooth and almost sweet made with Chocolate, Crystal and pale malt; **Archie's Screw 4.0%** A most satisfying pale with a good deal of body and balanced bitterness; **Lightening Frank 4.5%** Light brown in colour with a gently sharp bitterness and clean finish with Pioneer and Green Bullet hops; **Davy's Glow 4.2%** A distinctive and hoppy pale ale (with Green Bullet); **Joule's Best 4.0%** A great session beer, gently bitter and light on the palate.

If you would like to try Simon's beers then why not ask your local pub to stock one as its guest ale ? Robert Cawte

J.D. Wetherspoon

Solihull Town Centre now boasts two Wetherspoon pubs offering you a choice of casual drinking, wining and dining.

Both pubs are **'Cask Marque'** accredited and just recently both achieved the **'Best Bar None'** accreditation.

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

Phone: 0121 711 6990

Opening times :

Sun — Wed: 8.00am — 1.00am

Thurs — Sat: 8.00am — 2.00am

The winner of **'Solihull & District CAMRA Most Improved Pub of the Year 2008' Award**

Offering a total of 15 hand pulls with a range of regular and guest ales, this pub also screens SKY / national / international sporting events with sound.

Offering a general background music tempo and featuring live DJs at weekends.

James and his team extend a warm welcome to all.

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

Phone: 0121 711 5180

Opening times :

Sun — Wed: 8.30am — 12.00am

Thurs — Sat: 8.30am — 12.30am

This pub has recently improved its ale range by increasing from 5 hand pulls to 8, offering 3 regular ales and a minimum of 4 guest ales daily.

Screening free view sporting events and boasts no music, the leave you free to chat.

Dawn and her team extend a warm welcome to all.

Both pubs offer breakfast daily 'til 12 noon. The main menu is available until 10pm daily and offers a wide range of dishes to suit all tastes and occasions.

Why not visit on one of our club nights/days...

Tuesday is Steak Club offering a choice from our grill menu, Thursday is Curry Club offering authentic dishes, and on Sunday Club choose from chicken, beef and pork roast (vegetarian option available). All meals include a selected drink and all regular and guest ales are available in the offer.

Next JDW Beer Festival: 28th October —15th November



Wye Valley Brewery
Herefordshire

www.wyevalleybrewery.co.uk