

Solihull



Drinker

Issue No: 53

Summer 2010

Are ale drinkers too spoilt these days?

A colleague's husband is Business Development Manager for a major regional beer brand. Despite his best efforts he cannot understand why I am neutral, at best, about the large regionals. He extols the virtues of breweries such as Wychwood, Marston's and Banks's. I recognise and respect the role the regionals have played in promoting cask ales over the years, but prefer the diversity, individuality and personality (and of course the more crafted taste) of the micros. After my latest discussion with the BDM, it made me think whether we real ale aficionados are a bunch of ungrateful spoilt brats these days.

Let me explain. I grew up in the suburbs of London as a lager drinker (oh! the shame!). I underwent my Damascene conversion when working in the City of London at the age of 23, with the delights of Young's Special. Back in those days (early 80's), I could drink Young's, Fuller's, Theakstons Best, Bass, 6X, Landlord, or Tetley's in and around the City. Then I moved to North Essex for a couple of years and found myself deep in Greene King and Adnams country. Heaven! Or so I thought at the time.

Which brings me to my point. I would probably only drink those ales these days under sufferance (or, in the case of Tetley's, at gunpoint!), although Young's will always have a special place in my heart. Is it because they have become too ubiquitous? Back in the day you had to be in their 'home' region, or really search out pubs stocking real ale, in order to sample these brews. Nowadays you can go into any old Pubco outlet and the likelihood is they will have a national -regional on.

Compare that now with the range we can sample on our doorstep at venues such as Bernies, or the Wellington, or the Anchor. There are so many wonderful small brewery delights to choose from these days that I will often walk out of a pub if it only has a regional beer on offer. I am now a beer snob. It's getting so bad that I find myself fairly blasé if the best on offer is something like White Monk! It is a mark of just how far the ale market has come in 30 years. We really are spoilt for choice and availability of crafted ales full of quality and individual character, through many pubs adventurous and knowledgeable enough to expand the range on offer.

It may be me – I may just be a bit odd! But I do suspect that there are a lot of ale lovers out there who have been spoilt. Long may it last!

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Summer's finally here, and let's hope it's barbecue weather this year. But if you don't feel like doing the cooking, then come to the Bull's Head for seasonal, freshly -prepared food in the comfort of the restaurant, ambience of the bars, or outside in the beer garden —with a superb pint of course!!

Derbyshire Trip

There's still time to book for our trip to the Peak District on Saturday 26th June—a few minibus places are still available. The itinerary is: leave Solihull at 9.50am, additionally picking up at Knowle. First stop: Ashbourne, the Green Man and Black's Head Hotel with a visit to the Leatherbritches Brewery. Then onto the Charles Cotton Hotel at Hartington, then the Red Lion at Birchover, the Lathkil Hotel at Over Had-don, the Three Stags Heads at Wardlowe Mires, the Lamb at Holymoorside, the Old Poets Corner at Ashover, with a quick peek at the Ashover Brewery, the Barley Mow at Kirk Ireton, the Old Oak Inn at Horsley Woodhouse, finishing up in the John Thompson Inn at Ingleby. Some cracking pubs there, one of which is on CAMRA's inventory of unspoilt pubs, and no doubt some cracking beers to be had too! The trip is expected to cost £25 per head for return travel —to book, call our secretary Allan Duffy on 01564 200 431 —but be swift as we expect the final places to sell out soon!



The Old Poets
Corner

Sad news

It was with regret that we learned that Malcolm Field, an early members and co founder of Solihull CAMRA, its secretary for many years, and editor of this magazine in its previous incarnation as the Boro Banter, died peacefully on 26th April after a long illness. His funeral was held on Monday 10th May at Robin Hood. Several CAMRA — and pub -related people were there to mark the sad occasion. Malcolm used to help out at beer festivals, so his involvement in good beer was well represented. We send our condolences to his family and friends.

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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Solihull CAMRA 2010 ©

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Hail to the Ale!

Local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

The Vaults

The Vaults in Knowle were kind enough to accommodate our May branch meeting at short notice when the arranged venue fell through. Not only were we welcomed with open arms and given our own exclusive seating area, but the pub laid on chips for the meeting attendees! Well done and grateful thanks. Well done also to Sarah Worrell of the Vaults for completing the Three Peaks Challenge in April to raise money for Troop Aid. Sarah said that she was exhausted after her efforts but that the result was worth it! The pub is still raising money for Troop Aid, so if you are passing and fancy a pint don't forget to make a worthwhile donation.

The Miller and Carter

The Miller and Carter (formerly the Cheswick Green Inn) recently described itself to one of our members as “A restaurant with a bar for pre-dining” - so possibly no longer considers itself a pub? One wonders how long the real ale reported as being on in the last magazine will stay on.....

The Highwood

The Highwood at Olton no longer has real ale on, and apparently there are no plans to restore it. A real ale loss then.

The Saxon Inn



The Saxon in Cheswick Green has recently changed hands again. The new landlord is refurbishing the bar and intending to have two real ales on rotation. Initially they will be Timothy Taylor and Greene King Abbot ale. This will be a great improvement as it has been Bass previously for a long time, plus Banks's Original on electric pump (served far to cold according to reports).

The Drum and Monkey

The Drum and Monkey reopened a month ago after a full refurbishment, and is now selling 4 real ales —Green King IPA, Abbot, Morland Old Speckled Hen and Tolly Cobbold Phoenix were on at the time of visiting.

Discovery Brewery

Beer production at the Discovery Brewery is back in full swing after a broken wrist sustained by brewer Simon Sharp called a necessary halt to proceedings. At the time Simon was brewing a classic Discovery ale: Newton's Cream, with its Principia pump clip. He has also returned to an old favourite, Dynamite, also with an upgraded pump clip.



As they are a small -scale brewery, you will not find Discovery ales at many outlets, but you may be lucky to stumble across them at beer festivals in the West Midlands from time to time.

The Black Swan

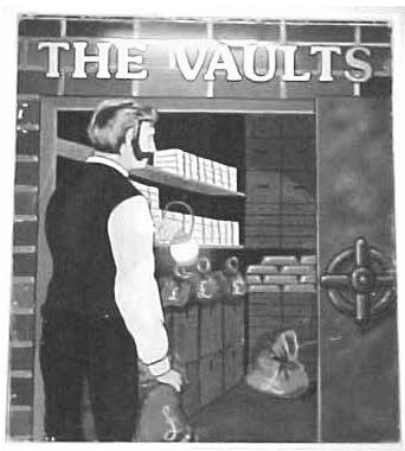
Just after Christmas the Black Swan at Henley -in-Arden acquired new landlords. Due to ill health Chris and Sue left and Ian (Jacko) and Lyn took over, moving up the High Street from The White Swan where they were the managers. The pub has just undergone a refurbishment including minor structural work, and decorated throughout. The choice of beers has improved with the addition of two new hand pumps. The two regular beers on sale are Batemans Bitter and Black Sheep Bitter which replaced Banks Original. The other two pumps are being used for guest beers and already beers from Purity & Adnams among several others have been seen in the weeks since their arrival.

The pub serves good food with a selection of homemade specials and the introduction of a carvery at Sunday lunchtime. The pub has retained its separate bar area which is now home to the Nomads domino team which followed 'Jacko' up from the White Swan. Other activities include a quiz night on Thursday and recently a folk group have started meeting there on the last Wednesday of the month. Friday night is Karaoke and curry night.

The Drawbridge

The Drawbridge has changed hands, now coming under the control of Jules and Dave, who have moved to the Solihull area from Worcester. The pub was refurbished in March this year to become one of Punch's Flaming Grill outlets. Disappointingly, the beers have reduced in number from five to three, but the beer quality is good, with Bombardier on at all times, and two guest ales, most recently from Davenport. The newcomers have already managed to achieve Cask Marque status for the pub as a result. There is live music and quiz nights, and food served both lunchtimes and evenings.

Nick and Gwen welcome you to



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On Our Patch

The Greswolde

The Greswolde in Knowle rarely gets a real ale look in. Hardly surprising when you have the Vaults and the Red Lion within easy strolling distance, and given the Greswolde's rather chequered real ale past - no signs on handpumps, handpumps far from obvious and definitely dubious beer quality. Well, I'm pleased to say things have changed. On a recent trip into Knowle we started as normal at the Red Lion and then on to the Vaults, but we fancied a change so ventured in to the 'Gres' where we found Deuchars IPA, Adnams Bitter and Broadside all in very good condition. And to top that they were advertising a mini beer festival. Not quite the sort we would normally expect - they were after feedback to decide what new beers to put on as guests rather than increasing their range. Nonetheless, a very pleasant surprise when compared to past forays into this venue. There is still a downside though - the beer is still not cheap.



The Greswolde

Ray Cooke

The Plume of Feathers

They really know how to pour beer at the Plume of Feathers in Shirley. It comes from one of those new -fangled high level swan necks and is poured carefully to give a full pint with just the right head. An unexpected skill from a pub that has only just begun to serve real ale after decades of keg -only. Tastes good as well. But it was mainly for the food that Margaret and I came. Knowing that the carvery cost only £3.59, it was too good to resist and we were not disappointed. Three splendid -looking roasts, beef, turkey and ham were freshly carved to order and as much vegetables as you chose to have: new potatoes and roast potatoes, cauliflower in white sauce, carrots, diced swede and peas completed the meal. For a fiver two courses can be had: main course and a sweet. The choice of eight sweets included old favourites such as lemon meringue pie and treacle sponge.



The Plume of Feathers

The quality of both food and drink was excellent, the Pedigree (£1.95 pint) justifying a 4 on the 'real ale reporter' scale. How nice it is to know that your roast meat has been cooked that morning on the premises. I feel that we should have told them that had it not been for the real ale we would never have gone in.

Bob Jackson

Beer Festival Thank - You Trip

It has become our branch's custom to thanks the members who work at our beer festival each Autumn by taking them out on a bit of a jolly. This time was no exception and at the end of March we went to Burton -on-Trent. 15 of us travelled by minibus, but stalwart Ken Jackson donned his cycling gear and put foot to pedal —20 miles there and 20 back, meeting up with us at the Burton



Bridge Inn. The pub takes its name from the Burton Bridge over the river Trent and is situated 20 yards from the end of the present bridge. Built in the late 17th century as the Fox and Goose Inn, the old bridge finished just outside its front door. Remains of the first two arches are still there but buried under the road.

We had a tour round the brewery, then went for lunch in the pub and a good selection of their ales —the Burton Bridge Bitter was very good indeed. Three choices of food had been selected for the group, and there was ample for everybody —some people even went for 4th helpings. We were seated on the upper floor beside the pub's skittle alley, and good use was made of this both before and after lunch.

Then our minibus took us to the town hall where the 31st Burton Beer Festival was being held, with a choice of over 100 beers. The town hall is an imposing building with painted metal framework in the roof and around the walls, and on the stage at the front of the main hall was an amazing Wurlitzer, which was played while we were there. There was still a great selection of beers available, and Blue Monkey's Blue Monkey Evolution, a citrusy bitter, was considered excellent. Batemans' XXXB was also rated very highly, but numerous ales were tried —too many in fact to mention!



The Devonshire Arms

After a couple of hours we moved on to the first of four pubs (though some people managed to fit a few more in during their stay), the Devonshire Arms, a Grade II listed 19th century building. Then onto the Coopers Tavern, which was previously the Bass brewery store, then their brewery tap. The beer here is served from the counter next to the stillage. Then onto the Oak and Ivy, a mid terraced two -room building back in the town centre. Lastly, the Old Cottage Tavern behind the town hall. By that time the pub was busy with people who had attended the beer festival and it was difficult to find seats. All in all a good day!



The Old Cottage Tavern

Burton-on-Trent is certainly a good place to visit for an excellent array of pubs and some exceedingly good ales.

2009 Beer Festival Organiser

Edinburgh

On a recent trip to Kirkwall in the Orkney Islands, the return leg was via Edinburgh airport. At Edinburgh airport there is a Wetherspoons pub called the “Sir Walter Scott”. Here there were several familiar beers on tap, including Caledonian’s Deuchar’s IPA – which I would have normally opted for until “Sir Walter Scott Ale” (4.1%) caught my eye. According to the barman, the beer is specifically brewed by Caledonian for the Sir Walter Scott pub. It is similar in character to Caledonian’s 80/-, being a creamy, malty ale with a russet colour. It went extremely well with the food, and would be recommended to anyone travelling to or via Edinburgh via air.

Paul Smith

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The Viking Visit

We are a group of guys from Norway who have been travelling to a different country every year for 13 years and this year's trip was without doubt the best.

It was so lucky for us to make contact with the Burton CAMRA Branch Chair, May Arthur. May made a lot of arrangements for us and ensured that our stay was exceptional. She is just a lovely lady. The staff at the festival hall worked hard and definitely played their part in creating a successful event. The guys were invited to serve behind the bars and this only enriched the experience, we tried hard to test as many of the beers on offer as possible but there were a few that unfortunately there was just not time for. The venue was superb and very well supported. Many people made a point of talking to the guys and the kindness was fantastic.

We also visited many off-site venues and all offered something different which is what makes a difference to the type of trip that we crave. The highlight of the tour was the trip around the Burton Bridge Brewery, this was both informative and entertaining. Not forgetting the testing process afterwards in the bar.

All in all this was a very special tour and we met some very special people, I just hope we can do it again and not too far into the future.

Tim Mattimoe

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pleased to talk to you about a wonderful time out.

Long Itchington Beer Festival

On Saturday 1st May a party of 21 Solihull people took a trip to the third Long Itchington Beer Festival, via train to Leamington Spa and minibus from there to the village. Long Itchington is a pretty place in South Warwickshire, with a church, a village duck pond, and six pubs. The Grand Union canal runs through the south of the village and one of the pubs, the Two Boats, has a much-envied position right on the canal towpath, whilst the Cuttle Inn overlooks it from a slightly higher vantage point. All six pubs participate in the beer festival and a stunning choice of over 100 real ales was on offer between them during the four days of the festival. We had a total of six hours to spend there: an average of an hour per pub.



The Cuttle Inn

We started at the Cuttle Inn, where Lady of the Lake, Old Dalby and Spring Beer were sampled. The first two went down very well but it was felt that the Spring Beer was too oaky. The weather forecast had been for rain, but although the sky was cloudy it was still possible to sit outside —although with coats on.

We then moved on to the Two Boats Inn, which was very busy with big queues at the bar. Its canal-side position made it very popular but we did manage to get seats outside. Food was being served but thinking there would be a long wait for this we opted for the quicker option of filled baps. Beers sampled were Thornbridge Kipling, Dark Tribe Spruce Goose and Church End Wrector.



The Two Boats Inn



The Duck on the Pond

Next came The Duck on the Pond. Very little seating is available outside so we found a table and chairs indoors. The pub has a quirky interior with a wattle ceiling and the atmosphere is rustic but friendly. Potbelly Pigs Do Fly and Elland Beyond the Pale were the choices of tipple here. By now our large party had split into smaller groups, as some

were only having a couple of beers then moving on whilst others preferred to linger longer.

Then onto the Buck and Bell, in the centre of the village. This time we managed to get a table outside and the weather had improved to the extent the sun had come out. It was very pleasant sipping Skinners Heligan Honey, Kelham Island Bob's Your Uncle and The Warwickshire Beer Company Darling Buds. (



The Buck and Bell

Continued overleaf)

The pub had a stall outside serving hot food so we put in an order to help soak the beer up. We were entertained by the dray pulled by two shire horses which does the rounds of the village giving rides. Although all the six pubs are within walking distance, if you want you can hitch a lift between the on the dray.



The Green Man

nix were the ales of choice here.

By now time was getting on and we still had two pubs to visit so it was onto the next, the Green Man. This is at the top left of the village and was very busy. Luckily we were able to sit outside as the weather was still proving kind.

Beartown Bear Ass, , Exmoor Stag and Tolly Cobbold Phoenix were the ales of choice here.

So onto the last pub on our return journey to the pickup spot, The Harvester. There wasn't time for more than a swift half before we had to leave but Hook Norton IDM, Wadworth Lilly the Pink and Wolf Lupus Lupus were all sampled and pronounced good. It was time to go and find our minibus for the return trip to Solihull so we bade farewell to Long Itchington.



The Harvester

So to conclude: the trip was well -organised thanks to Robert Cawte, the weather stayed fine, the village is certainly a pleasant place to walk round and the chance to visit six pubs in six hours, and sample their amazing choice of real ales, was not to be missed. Now in its third year, this festival has become a permanent fixture in the Solihull CAMRA calendar and long may it continue to be so. I am already looking forward to the village's 2011 festival!

Julia Hammonds



Some of the many merry revellers from our party at three of the Long Itchington village pubs



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Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

Monday 7th June	The Boat, Catherine -de -Barnes
Monday 5th July	The Drawbridge, Haslucks Green
Monday 2nd August	The Black Boy, Heronfield
Monday 6th Sept	The Lyndon, Olton
Monday 11th October	The White Swan, Henley -in-Arden

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

Committee Meetings

Monday 21st June	The Vaults, Knowle
Monday 16th August	The Drum and Monkey
Monday 18th October	The Crown, Claverdon

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

Socials

Saturday 26th June	Derbyshire minibus trip
Wednesday 7th July	Informal drink, The Winged Spur, Ullenhall: meet up at 8.30pm
Saturday 17th July	Bromsgrove beer festival (meet in the afternoon)
Saturday 28th August	Rowington Club beer festival (“ “)
Saturday 21st Sept	Banbury pub crawl (tbc)
Fri. 1st & Sat. 2nd Oct	Solihull Beer Festival, Solihull Royal British Legion
November (date tbc)	Skittles at the Arden Club (tbc)

For more details, contact Secretary Allan Duffy on

01564 200 431 and visit our website : www.solihullcamra.org.uk

NB. Many, though not all, of our local pubs are accessible to disabled people.

If you would like to come to one of our meetings and would need assistance getting inside, please let us know ahead of time and we will do our best to help.

Perry Clarke lives in Hockley Heath, and cycles down to Lapworth each Sunday with a group of friends. They visit the Navigation where they drink Timothy Taylor's and tribute, then move onto the Boot where they have London Pride, Purity and Old Speckled Hen. The ride back is sometimes a bit wobbly! Anyone is welcome to join them —if you would like to do so, drop an email to the editor with your details and she will pass it onto Perry so he can contact you.

Pubs must Go!!

Mitchell and Butler, the owners of Harvester, Toby Carvery and All Bar One chains, are looking to sell off hundreds of pubs to raise £500 million. M & B has put the matter in the hands of Sapient Corporate Finance, who are charged with finding buyers for at least 300 drinks -led pubs so that the pub -co can focus on food-type establishments instead. Pubs in the It's a Scream brand and it's Community Pubs and Town Pubs are targeted for sale.

Instead, M & B will concentrate on six core brands, including the Sizzling Pub Company and Crown Carveries. The move follows a shake -up after the chairman was replaced and a strategic review completed. M & B are also hoping to develop versions of Harvester and Toby Carvery for placement in shopping centres and retail parks. It is not yet known whether any of the M & B owned pubs in the Solihull area will be affected.

Could you rename our magazine?

We are thinking of renaming the Drinker magazine and upgrading the masthead. Could you suggest an up to date, modern, yet sensible name for it?

If chosen, there would be a beery prize for the proposer of the winning name.

Send your suggestion to the Editor at either the postal address or the email address below, by August 10th, together with your name, address and a contact telephone number.

The Branch Committee will study all the entries and if one is chosen, the winner will be informed soon after the closing date. (The Editor's decision is final).

Membership Matters

The CAMRA membership, both national and of our own group, continues to grow. The total figure now stands at 112,728: it was only last year that the organisation celebrated passing the 100,000 mark! By joining CAMRA you can help by providing the funds we need to promote not just real ale but to assist with campaigns such as prevention of pub closures and against unfair beer tax. During the recent election campaigns many candidates offered support for pubs and real ale in their manifestos and it will fall to CAMRA to see that promises are implemented. It all costs money and your assistance would be of great value. Membership can be as little £20 a year and there's a form in this magazine or you can enrol easily via the CAMRA website: www.camra.org.uk

Bob Jackson, Membership Secretary

The Green Acres

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

A real community
and family pub

Three guest ales
plus a regularly
changing
traditional cider



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

The Boars Head Beer Festival

Just out of our area, near the National Trust house of Charlecote, is the attractive village of Hampton Lucy with its excellent pub, the Boars Head. A week after Easter they held their annual beer festival, which is known as the 'Firkin and Boarfest'! It was too and we spent a very enjoyable Friday afternoon there. Fifteen ales were on sale in total, some from the bar and others from a special stillage on the rear terrace, where one could soak up the beautiful warm sunshine.



The Boars Head

The beer was all in good condition and most of it was from small independent breweries. Elland, Sarah Hughes, College Green, Windsor Castle, Kelham Island, Church End, Celt, Evan Evans, Abbeydale and Hopback were just some of the breweries represented. There was also Blackwater, which is exclusive to the Black Country wholesaler The Brewers Wholesale, who supplied most of the beer. Their range is excellent, which is why we source so many of our own festival beers from them.

Why not go along to next year's event at the Boars Head or pop in anytime – they are in the 2010 Good Beer Guide and always have about six interesting ale choices on sale.

Dave and Brian Queenborough

Wye Valley Brewery news

Wye Valley Brewery's chosen charity for 2010 is Riding for the Disabled, Hereford. The RDA was founded as a national organisation in 1969 and there are now 500 member groups in the country. Through the commitment of volunteers, RDA enables people with disabilities to ride or carriage drive to benefit their health and wellbeing and to achieve their goals. Wye Valley Brewery aims to assist Hereford RDA with fundraising and hopes create additional opportunities for them to increase their profile. If you would like to find out how to donate, speak to Lizzie at the brewery.

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Brewery, Head Brewer Jimmy Swan has crafted a unique new beer: Dorothy Goodbody's Imperial Stout. This limited edition, bottle-conditioned Imperial Stout is brewed with Herefordshire's finest hops and Herefordshire malted barley, making it a truly local beer! Dorothy Goodbody's Imperial Stout is the brewery's first beer to contain all Herefordshire hops and Herefordshire barley. This 7.0% dark silky beer has sweet vanilla and toffee flavours, which give way to a delicate lingering hoppy character. The result is a warming, rich, full-bodied stout that will improve with age. Only 6,000 bottles have been produced and every bottle of Dorothy Goodbody's Imperial Stout should be slowly savoured, to celebrate 25 years of brewing quality beers.

The Griffin Inn Brewery

In April a small group of Solihull CAMRA members visited the Griffin Inn Brewery in the North Warwickshire village of Shustoke, near Coleshill.

The Griffin Inn is situated just opposite the church and the brewery is located in the former coffin maker's workshop at the rear of the pub. Church End Brewery originally occupied these premises from 1994 until 2001 before relocating to their present home at Ridge Lane, Atherstone.

The building has now found a new lease of life as a brewery once more. Father and son team Mike and Oliver Pugh started brewing again in 2008, using a 2.5 barrel plant. Mike runs the pub and his son Oliver is in charge of the brewery. Oliver is currently studying for his Masters degree in brewing at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh and brewing is, of necessity, carried out weekly (usually on Thursdays) at present. Once his studies are completed, he hopes to increase production and brewing frequency.

So what made Oliver take up brewing? "I was out with my parents one day", he explains, "and we wanted to find a way of keeping beer prices down behind the bar. I've always been interested in brewing and we decided to try brewing our own beer and selling direct in the pub. It started as a hobby, really, and has grown from there." Oliver has also picked up some tips from other local brewers, such as Discovery and Tunnel, who have helped him with advice on various aspects of brewing. The water used in the brewing process at the Griffin Inn is tap water supplied by Welsh Water, which is relatively soft and only requires a very small amount of gypsum to be added.

The brewery is using dried yeast at present as brewing does not take place more than once a week but once production is stepped up Oliver intends to introduce



live yeast. All malts used at the brewery are obtained from Warminster; Maris Otter is the most often used but some Crystal and Chocolate malts also find their way into some of the Griffin Inn Brewery's beers. Hops are obtained from Charles Faram & Co. Ltd of Newland, Worcestershire. Last summer, the equipment was upgraded from the original plastic fermenting vessels to new stainless steel kit manufactured by Lan-

cashire-based Porter Brewing Co. Ltd. One innovation that has been introduced is to mount the fermenting vessels on stilts so that the casks can be filled by gravity, dispensing with the need for a pump. Oliver has also built his own one barrel capacity conditioning tank, which he is experimenting with.

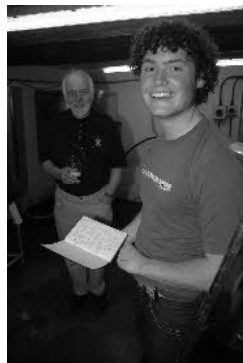
Apart from the Griffin Inn itself, the brewery has one other regular outlet, this being the Anchor Inn in Digbeth, Birmingham. Other pubs have taken occasional casks and Oliver has supplied beer festivals, too. He does not own any casks of his own but uses some of the empty casks which have been supplied to the pub. These are steam cleaned before being filled and sent out to his customers. He also rents a few casks from Rent -a-Cask. With these, he tells the rental company where the casks are going and they collect them from the outlet when empty.

The first brew to come from Griffin Inn Brewery was *Ere It Is*, a light, hoppy bitter with an ABV of 4.5%, which was well received. Several other beers have since been produced and one of these was *Terry the Tent*, a best bitter also at 4.5% ABV and which featured at the Leicester Beer Festival in March this year. Oliver has been experimenting with different recipes and hops, so he does not have a 'theme' beer-wise at present, either in terms of beer style or name. At the time of writing, the beer on offer in the pub was *Gorgeous George*, which was in very good condition. The next one to go on was a new brew called *Golden Griffin*, a 4.9% ABV strong, malty bitter which was already in the cellar. Atlas and Aurora hops have been used in this beer. Oliver kindly allowed us a sample of this, which had a distinctive flavour and was very well received by the group.

What are the plans for the future? "Ideally, I want to get some sound recipes behind me" says Oliver, "and then I'd like to expand the brewery if possible." Oliver keeps a notebook handy to record his recipes, so that if he brews a particularly successful beer he can reproduce it faithfully again.

Judging by the quality of the beers tasted during our visit, the Griffin Inn Brewery has a bright future ahead of it and we wish Oliver every success with this venture.

Chris Lloyd (with thanks to Robert Cawte for the photographs)



Dictionary Corner

As a verb, lant means to mix urine with ale to make it stronger. As a noun, it means urine, especially stale urine used for various industrial purposes, such as beefing up beer. The Romans used to collect urine in tanks in the streets for use as starch, and Tudor washerwomen had a piss -pot and used to add urine to wash -tubs to help clean the clothes. Literary references to lant include M.W., *The Marriage Broker*, 1662: "My Hostess taking will be very small, Although her lanted ale be ne'er so strong." And Glapthorne, *Wit in Constable*, 1640: "Your nose by its complexion does betray/Your frequent drinking Country ale with lant in't." It is to be hoped that this practice of beefing up beer with pee has fallen into disuse in these days of obsessive hygiene! (Source: The Times, 2010)

The Dodford Inn

Members of CAMRA in the West Midlands region presented the Dodford Inn, Whinfield Road, Dodford, with a special award on Friday April 23rd in light of the pub celebrating its first birthday of re-opening that weekend.

The Dodford Inn is a special local pub, having gone through several years of uncertainty at the hands of property developers, only to be re-opened under the ownership of successful licensees Richard and Mini Scott in April 2009 after relentless campaigning by local action groups and members of CAMRA.

One year later, the Dodford is a thriving community local, having recently won a CAMRA local pub of the season award, and providing a vital outlet for local brewers, with four dedicated hand pumps for locally produced beer.

Mark Haslam, CAMRA's Real Ale Campaigner of the Year for 2010 and leading individual in the 'Save the Dodford' campaign, which helped rescue the pub from redevelopment, presented the award. Mark said: "Much is said about the lack of commercial viability by those who threaten our rural communities by seeking to convert village pubs into private homes. The Dodford Inn is now living testimony of how a pub can be transformed under new ownership. It was a long hard fight for the Dodford Inn to be given that chance. Today, it is a beacon to other communities threatened by the loss of their pubs what can be achieved if you are prepared to stand up and be counted. I wish licensees Richard and Mini well for the next year, and for that matter, another ten years after that."



The Dodford Inn

Brett Laniosh, CAMRA national director and resident of nearby Bromsgrove, said: "This is a fantastic double celebration for the great British pub...as due to these efforts, the surrounding community still has this vital social hub."

CAMRA Members Investment Club

CAMRA members are invited to join the CAMRA Members' Investment Club. You can invest any amount from £5 to £83 per month with an annual maximum of £1,000. The funds are invested in a wide range of breweries and pub chains, making the investors shareholders. The fund and the investments are managed by an elected, ten-strong Committee who meet on a regular basis to discuss the Club's portfolio, future investments and any other matters which may affect the Club. The Club has its own web site, www.CMIC.uk.com where you can find more details, including planned brewery trips and other events, reports on past visits and the AGM which is normally held in June each year, usually in Beeston, Nottingham.

J.D. Wetherspoon

Solihull Town Centre now boasts two pubs, serving breakfast daily until noon. Plus Steak Club on Tuesdays, Curry Club on Thursdays & not forgetting a roast at our Sunday Club.

Both pubs are **'Cask Marque'** and **'Best Bar None'** accredited.

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



Offering a total of 15 hand pulls featuring a range of regular and guest ales.

Live SKY sporting events screened weekly. Live Tribute acts last Friday of every month.

Winner of 'Solihull & District CAMRA Most Improved Pub of the Year 2008'
New entry in the CAMRA 'Good Beer Guide'.2010

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

Offering 2 regular and 5 guest ales daily.

A music-free venue screening live Freeview sporting events.



Both pubs will be screening the forthcoming WORLD CUP and other major sporting events throughout the year.

Watch out for our Meet the Brewer nights.

J.D. Wetherspoon Beer Festival

7th —12th April 2010

20 different ales will feature daily between both pubs.

Try 3 ales for the price of a pint
Ask staff for details



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