

Solihull

Issue No 71
Spring 2015



Drinker

Free
Please take one

500th Members And Counting!

On January 28th this year twenty branch members of Solihull & District CAMRA met up at the JD Wetherspoon White Swan in Station Road, Solihull to watch our 500th member, Mr John Amies being welcomed to the branch by chairman Carl Wright.

John was presented with a few goodies to mark the occasion, receiving vouchers for a gallon of beer and a certificate from Luke Field on behalf of the White Swan, plus from the branch, a signed copy of new CAMRA book "Beer Revolution" and a second certificate .

Those present celebrated the occasion with pints of Silhill Gold Star (3.9%) and Caledonian Brewing Company Great Scot (4.4%), both in excellent condition and just two among the seven real ales on offer that night.

With the Solihull & District CAMRA Branch membership increasing month on month, it might not be too long before we are back at the White Swan welcoming the 600th member to our Branch.

Dave Mckowen
Membership Secretary



L-R: Luke Field, JDW White Swan, 500th member John Amies & Carl Wright, Branch Chairman

THE BULL'S HEAD



Barston Lane, Barston Tel: 01675 442830

**Opening hours: Mon—Thurs: 11am—2.30pm & 5.00pm—11pm
Friday, Saturday and Sunday: 11.00am—11.00pm.**

*Brad, Joy & the team welcome you to their award-winning
15th century village inn (6-times winner of Solihull CAMRA's
Pub of the Year award)*

Listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide for over 20 years

Cask Marque accredited—3 real ales on at all times

Home-cooked meals available lunchtimes and evenings Mondays to Saturdays in the comfortable pub bars or separate intimate restaurant (Sundays: Lunch only: available from 12 noon to 3pm)

TELEPHONE RESERVATIONS WELCOME

*With Spring just around the corner, it's that time of year where the weather may be fair, or it may be foul—either way, wend your way here and there will be a warm welcome waiting for you, along with an excellent pint and a spot of food too if you fancy it.
We look forward very much to seeing you soon!*



www.TheBullsHeadBarston.co.uk



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Notice of Forthcoming EGM

Notice is hereby given that there will be an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of Solihull & District CAMRA at the Bulls Head, Earlswood on Monday 11th May at 8.30pm. The normal branch meeting will commence immediately after the EGM.

The purpose of the EGM is the adoption last year's accounts and to change the date of the branch's financial year and AGM from 2015 onwards.

All members are welcome and encouraged to attend.



Beers Around Here

The following were reported as being seen around the borough last Quarter:

Three Tuns, Henley: London Pride, Wye Valley Butty Bach, Sharps' Atlantic, Doom Bar and Hokey.

The Wharf, Hockley Heath: Backyard Brewery Wharf Blonde and Rob's Revenge, Silhill Brewery Dark Star, Otter Amber, St Austell Tribute and North Cotswold's Shagweaver.

Knowle & Dorrige Cricket Club: Oakham Inferno, Lemon Dream, Darwin's Origin. Trelawny, Dartmoor, Adnams Bitter, Ruddles County and Best, Henry's IPA, Boon Doggle and Black Sheep.

Lady Lane Wharf: Wye Valley HPA, Black Tor Brewery Resolution, Wychwood Hobgoblin Gold, Holdens' The Good, the Bad and the Dudley and Brains' The Rev. James; plus the changing mystery beer Landlord's Own Special.

Pump House: Sadlers' Sherlock Bones, Weatheroak St. Udley (plus bottled Sixpoint Bengali Tiger).



Hail to the Ale!

- local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

The Pump House, Parkgate, Shirley

The Pump House has been by all accounts packed out since opening on 9th December. The number of tables and chairs is somewhat limited, but the Parkgate shopping centre provides much of the clientele and the usual good-value JD Wetherspoon fare and the 12 real ales on handpump are doing their bit too—the full ale list after the grand opening was: Greene King Abbott Ale, Sharps Doom Bar, Adnams Broadside, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Wychwood Hobgoblin, Ruddles Best, Tetley's Christmas Cracker, Butcombe Christmas Steps, Weatheroak Redwood, Batemans Rosey Nosey, Byatts Big Cat and Byatts Phoenix Gold. There is also an interesting 'craft' beer on keg: Devils' Backbone American IPA. A huge array of fonts also means they offer 3 keg ciders, 11 lagers—including Brewdog This.Is.Lager and the rather more exotic Asahi Super Dry—and Erdinger wheat beer.

Solihull CAMRA will be noting how the pub gets on as the seasons progress and hopefully the initial keen interest in its food and drink will continue.

Winged Spur, Ullenhall

The Winged Spur is currently closed: during a recent recce it was noticed that there was a skip at the back, inside the pub porch was a large pile of post, and in the bar there were several large rolls of new carpet on the floor. It looks like at least some refurbishment is being done, and the bar is intact, so presumably it will reopen at some point in time when Enterprise Inns find a new tenant.

Fleur de Lys, Lowsonford

Management at the Fleur de Lys changed a while ago recently: Nick and Emma are the new managers. They have retained the skittle alley equipment and currently have three hand pumps on but are hoping to have a fourth installed soon. Nick is very keen on increasing the range of real ales so watch this space! They have also kept the interesting menu, including the pies (Kate & Sidney, Heidi, Deerstalker etc.). You can get a good idea of what's available from their revamped website www.fleurdelys-lowsonford.com/.

Nag's Head, Henley-in-Arden

The Nags Head recently had a complete makeover. Run by Marston's, there are four hand pumps, with Speckled Hen, Flying Scotsman, Golden XPA, and Nags Head Bitter.

Silhill Brewery, Catherine-de-Barnes

Silhill started a bottling programme in February ready for March, bottled conditioned beers will be first, with carbonated versions being available from June.

They have recently formed a partnership with the Malmaison group to make a unique product and training programme for the Hotel du Vin, and plans are afoot to roll one-day real ale management training courses out for local Solihull pub and club staff.

Their Christmas beer 'North Star' got some fantastic reviews and sold very well, and will now be a permanent fixture in the brewery's repertoire. Silhill

beers are now on at the Drum and Monkey, Bentley Heath, and the Wharf, Hockley Heath.

Silhill recently sponsored the Kings Heath & Moseley Beer Festival, at which Blonde Star was the first beer to sell out; and a day's brewing with Silhill was awarded to Paul Scrivens, the winner of the Home Brew Competition at the festival. They are also sponsoring the Knowle & Dorridge Round Table Beer Festival later this month.

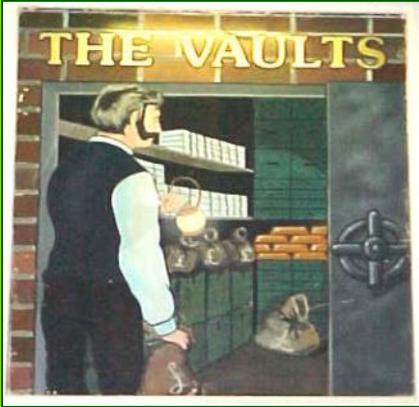
Purity Brewing Co

Purity have recently launched a new membership scheme for their fans—if you become a 'Puritan' you receive on joining: 10% on all online and brewery

shop orders, a free Purity T-Shirt , a free Puritan mixed case of beers (3 x Pure Gold, 3 x Pure UBU, 2 x Mad Goose and 2 x Saddle Black), and 2 x tickets for an exclusive Purity brewery tour or Puritan event per year. More information at www.puritybrewing.com/puritanmembership.



Nick, Gwen and staff welcome you to the Real Ale venue in Knowle



CAMRA Good Beer Guide listed since 1993

Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 2013 (& 7 times between 1992-2008)

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

NEW: Cocktail nights from 6.30pm Fridays & Saturdays



Food available lunchtimes from Monday - Saturday, 12.00-2.00pm

6 hand-pumped beers including Tetley Gold, Sharp's Doombar, Adnams Lighthouse and St Austell Tribute + 2 ever-changing guests, and a frequently changing **guest real cider**.

The Vaults, St John's Close, Knowle Tel: 01564 773656
Opening hours: Mon-Thurs 12.00-2.30pm and 5.00-11.30pm;
Fri & Sat: 12.00-11.30pm; Sun 12.00-11.00pm.

Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

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

Monday 13th April	Assembly Rooms, Solihull (preceded by Meet & Greet for new members @ 8pm)
Monday 11th May	Bulls Head, Earlswood (after a short EGM @ 8.30pm)
Monday 1st June	Blue Bell Cider House, Warings Green

Committee Meetings

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

Monday 16th March	Wilson's Arms, Knowle
Monday 18th May	Pump House, Parkgate, Shirley

Socials

Saturday 7th March	Coach trip to York (BF Thank-You & Social)
Saturday 25th April	Beer & Curry, Henley-in-Arden starting Black Swan
May	Bridgnorth Crawl: TBC: see website for further info.

For more details and contacts where appropriate, please call Secretary Allan Duffy on 01564 200 431 or visit our website: www.solihullcamra.org.uk

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

Midlands Area Beer Festivals

Fri 20—Sat 21st March: Knowle & Dorridge Beer Festival, Royal British Legion, Knowle. 30 beers, 5 ciders & 3 perries. Open: Fri 6.30-11pm; Sat. 12 noon—11pm. Entry £10 incl souvenir glass, programme & £5 beer tokens (£1 extra tokens for CAMRA members). Snacks available. Sat: Six Nations Rugby live; music PM + open mic Plug 'n' Play. More details at www.kandd.org.uk.

Thurs 26th—Sat 28th March: 36th Burton Beer & Cider Festival, B-upon-Trent Town Hall. Up to 140 beers/ciders. Open: Thurs 6-11pm Free entrance; Fri 11am-6pm £2, 6-11pm £6; Sat 11am-6pm £2, 6-11pm £3. CAMRA members free all sessions. More details on branch CAMRA website or contact BF Chair Dickie Allen on 07974 708132 or at dickie-mint@lineone.net.

Fri 24th—Sat 25th April: CAMRA Gloucester

ter Beer & Cider Festival, Blackfriars Priory, Ladybellegate Street, off Southgate Street, Gloucester. 100 beers + ciders/perries; foreign beers; cheese stall. Open: 11.30am—11pm both days. Admission £6 incl glass. Further details: www.gloucesterbeerfestival.co.uk.

Fri 24th—Sat 25th April: Coventry Beer Festival, Coventry Rugby Football Ground, the Butts Park Arena, Butts Road. 80+ beers incl special brews from local breweries; ciders/perries; country wines. Open: Fr/Sat 12 noon—4pm + 6-11pm. Card-carrying CAMRA members free except Fri eve, £2. All others £2, except Fri eve, £3; admission fee includes beer tokens & refundable glass. For further details contact info@covnwcama.org.uk.

Fri. 15th-Sat 16th May: Shirley Beer & Cider Festival, Camp Hill Rugby Club, Haslucks Green Road, Shirley. Entry £10 incl souvenir glass, programme & £5 beer tokens. See www.shirleybeerfestival.co.uk for further details as and when available.

THE WHITE LION

High Street, Hampton in Arden, Solihull B92 0AA

Tel: 01675 442833 www.thewhitelioninn.com

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

Sunday 12.00—10.30pm



Bars **Six real ales on at all times**

*(currently Brew XI, Sharps Doom Bar, Banks Sunbeam,
Banks' Mild, Wye Valley Butty Bach and Hobson's Best)*

Restaurant A la Carte menu; Sunday roasts from £9.50

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

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

Spotlight Inn:



The Bulls Head, Barston

Barston is a little country village to the east of Solihull lying in a large meander of the River Blythe. The main street, which runs east and west, contains most of the houses, many dating back to the 17th century. The Domesday Survey mentions a mill here worth 20*d* (old pence), and in the 1100's, the whole village was owned by the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, who acquired the land through both the Knights Templars and a local land-owner. It is recorded at the time that there were two millers and a potter in the village, and two watermills are mentioned in 1588 as attached to the manor.



Barston seen from the air

Were you travelling from Solihull through Barston by car, blink and you might miss its two pubs, firstly the Malt Shovel, then further west on the main road near the church the Bull's Head, which has stood at the heart of Barston since the 1490's. Originally a staging inn on the old main road between Coventry and Birmingham, the pub can also boast of Shakespearean links: in Henry IV Part ii, a traveller en route to Sutton Coldfield from Stratford-upon-Avon stays at the inn at Barston. The front-

age shows a modern face, but a wing behind shows antiquated square framing; while a central chimney-stack to the front block has reduced fire-places but above the roof it is of four old square shafts. The pub also houses a priest-hole from Cromwellian times. Rooms still have a comfortable rustic feel, and there are even some 1930's Bakelite light switches dotted around.

Current landlord Martin Bradley (AKA "Brad") and wife Joy have been very much a fixture in the pub for over 28 years. Brad can be found both behind the bar and front-of-house, where racing memorabilia, confirming his love of horse-racing and previous stint as a racehorse owner, is very much to the fore in all the rooms. Joy manages the kitchen and is in charge of the team producing the excellent home-cooked food and seasonal specials available every day with the exception of Sunday evenings (when you can dial up an Indian or Chinese takeaway, eat it in the pub and leave the staff to do the clearing and washing-up).

Brad and Joy entered the work scene in Solihull back in 1965, when Brad was



Old Barston, with the Bulls Head on the left

the landlord at the Wayfarer, Hockley Heath (now the Miller & Carter) for six years. Brad and Joy both then worked in relief pub management for the next twelve years, until Brad became the manager of the Wilsons Arms in Knowle, staying for four years until its conversion to a Toby Carvery. The opportunity to take over the Bulls Head then came: they arrived in 1987, and have never left!

Nowadays the pub attracts a variety of visitors, including locals from Barston and other nearby villages, Solihull townfolk who fancy a country pub for a change, ramblers and dog-walkers, and NEC attendees and tradespeople who come to the pub for their meals after the shows.

As well as regular Sunday quizzes, the pub organises events in support of two charities: Help for Heroes, which sees an annual cricket fixture between the pub and the White Lion at Hampton in Arden in the summer; and Riding for the Disabled, for which it holds a Race Night each year to raise funds (the next Race Night is coming up soon: read about it on page 11).

The Bulls Head is owned by Punch Taverns, which limits the choice of real



The frontage of the Bulls Head today

ales from which Brad can choose, but there are always four on tap: two regulars, Adnam's Southwold Bitter and Purity Mad Goose, plus two changing guests; and the pub has Cask Marque accreditation, meaning that it undergoes regular inspections to ensure that beers are kept and served in optimum condition

CAMRA believes in great beer and the best place for a pint being the pub, so good service is all-important. Some years ago this branch ran a competition to find our local pubs' best barman or woman—in effect, their PPP—(Perfect Pint Puller), the criteria for which was a warm welcome, efficient service with a smile, a full pint in a clean glass and advice on choice of drinks. This award was won twice by staff from the Bulls Head, which goes to show that they know how to put their customers first.

It is obviously no coincidence that the Bulls Head itself has won the branch's Pub of the Year competition no less than once jointly and six times outright in the years since the award began in 1987, and has been in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide for more than 20 years.

Don't visit the Bulls Head expecting a 'boutique' pub where more attention is paid to the soft furnishings than your experience there—instead, look for well-kept real ales, great home-cooked food, a comfortable atmosphere and a warm welcome, and you will not be disappointed.



Pubs Matter: CAMRA Campaign Update

Back in January, CAMRA contacted members to ask them to lobby their local MP ahead of the Parliamentary debate on the Infrastructure Bill at the beginning of February. 3,900 did just that in only three days: a fantastic achievement.

Together CAMRA and its members forced the Government to grant a major concession ahead of the vote, and as a result, the Government has promised to extend planning protection to pubs listed as Assets of Community Value (ACVs).

This means that in future nationally permitted development rights for the change of use or demolition of a pub listed as an ACV will be removed, and any changes to that pub will need to go through a planning application first; providing an opportunity for local people to comment and enabling the local plan-

ning authority to make a decision on the application.

While of course this doesn't go as far as CAMRA would like and they want this protection granted to all pubs, it is a significant step in the right direction. CAMRA will be pressing Ministers to fulfil their promise to enact this change before the General Election.

There are around 600 pubs already listed as ACVs. To make the most of this opportunity, please act now to nominate your local pubs as ACVs so they will be granted this extra protection! Listing a pub with your Council is very simple and just needs you and 20 of your fellow pub goers to support the nomination. CAMRA has produced a wealth of guidance and support materials which is available on its website www.camra.org.uk/list-your-local-assets-of-community-value. You can also contact CAMRA's planning advisor Matt Brown via email at matt.brown@camra.org.uk.



Champion Winter Beer of Britain

CAMRA's Champion Winter Beer of Britain (CWBoB) 2015 competition was held on Wednesday, 11th February at the National Winter Ales Festival in Derby.

The overall winners were:

Gold - Elland Brewery – 1872 Porter, which also won Gold in the Porter Class;

Silver - Purple Moose – Darkside of the Moose; which also won Gold in the Old Ale/Strong Mild Class

Bronze - Dancing Duck – Dark Drake, which also won Gold in the Stout Class.

The full list of this year's class winners is viewable at www.camra.org.uk/champion-winter-beer-of-britain



The Railway Inn



Home-cooked food served daily
in pub and beer garden

Food service times:

Monday 12-2.00pm and 5.30-8.00pm

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

Friday-Saturday 12-2.00pm and 5.30-

Grange Road, Dorridge

Tel. 01564 773531

Opening Hours:

Mon—Fri: 11.00—3.00pm 4.30—
11.00pm

Saturday: 11.00—11.00pm



Secluded, peaceful beer garden & children's play

*The 2015 Centenary Celebrations continue
and so do the monthly special offers....*

Coming in April:

*Thursday 2nd—An Introduction to Craft
Beers: talk to a craft beer brewer & try free
samples Later in month (date TBC): "Meet
the Brewer"*



6 Real Ales (3 regulars + 3 guests)

www.railwaydorridge.com



Charity Race Night ready for the Off *All welcome to take part at the Bulls Head, Barston*

The Bulls Head at Barston is hosting a Charity Race Night commencing at 7.30pm on Sunday 8th March. All proceeds will go to Lowlands Farm RDA, a charity providing riding for the disabled based near Shrewley in Warwickshire.

No need to book a place: just turn up and be prepared to place your bet on a likely horse, or maybe splash the cash and 'buy' a possible champion!

Race-winners, whether as punters or 'owners', will benefit from the generosity of local businesses who have kindly donated a variety of prizes. There will also be a raffle to win a Bush 10.1" 16GB MY Android Tablet . The pub will also be offering free snacks during the evening.

Are YOU feeling lucky?? - then drop into the Bulls Head and get into the racing spirit!

A Hidden Treasure in Earlswood

LADY LANE WHARF

The Real Ale Bar and Eating House



Excellent quality hot and cold food served all day
Live Bands / Entertainment every Saturday Night
New: Cask Ale Club— exclusive to CAMRA members

"We may not be the biggest or the most fashionable drinking venue but we certainly know how to serve real ale and quality food. Over and above our 'resident' Wye Valley HPA, we offer 3 other casks which are constantly changing. Our Cellar Manager, Mr Neil Ford (a CAMRA member himself), strives to endure that we offer not only a wide range of tastes and flavours but also that every beer we serve is second to none in quality and presentation."

◆ Winner of Solihull CAMRA's Most Improved Pub / Club award 2014 ◆

Lady Lane Wharf
Lady Lane, Earlswood,
Solihull B94 6AH
T: 01564 703 821 or 01564 702 552
E: granthyland@hotmail.co.uk

 Lady Lane Wharf

www.ladylanewharf.co.uk

Opening hours:

Monday — Saturday:
11.00am — 11.00pm

Sunday: 11.00pm — 10.30pm

Food served: 9.30am — 9.00pm

Find us: From the crossroads by Earlswood Post Office turn NE onto Valley Road and continue for roughly 650 metres / half a mile then turn right onto Lady Lane, turning right into the pub car park just before the canal.

Moseley and Kings Heath Beer Festival

A Hall Green amateur brewer came top in a battle of the beers at the Moseley & Kings Heath Beer Festival last month when Paul Scrivens' Sparky IPA took the honours in its home-brew contest. Close second was Diablos Negra Leche, named best stout and brewed by Max Lanham of Solihull. Third spot went to Mariana Honey Porter, produced by Moseley Beer Company trio of Chris Murtagh, Matt Murtagh and Paul McNally. All three brews went down well amongst ale aficionados at the two-day festival, which boasted 39 ales all produced within a 15 mile radius of Moseley and Kings Heath, plus 12 ciders.

Winner Paul, who is looking to build on his success with the launch of his Thousand Trades Brewery Co., secured a day's insider brewing knowledge with festival co-sponsor Silhill Brewery, Solihull. Paul, who has only been brewing for two years, said: "I'm pleased to have won and that drinkers voted it the best of the home-brews. It's even more pleasing when you know it sold out quite early. I'm looking forward to the day with Silhill, it's just what I need for my future brewing."

Mark Gregory, owner of Silhill Brewery, praised the quality of all three entrants and also the festival for showcasing local ale. "I was more than happy to support this charity event, which illustrated the breadth and strength of local beers that are out there," he said.

The festival was organised by Moseley Round Table, with proceeds from the event supporting Birmingham Food Banks and Kings Heath-based charity All Saints Youth Project. RT chairman James Gregory said: "We wanted this year's event – our second one – to be bigger and better than last year. We increased the number of beers, had excellent sponsors and an amazing turnout, which has helped us raise somewhere in the region of £8,000. We wanted a local theme and I'm really proud of the fact we supported breweries within 15 miles of us. I know that CAMRA approved and I loved supporting the local economy. The home-brew competition, which was a new addition this year, was also a great success and I thank all involved."

L-R: Mark Gregory, Silhill Brewery; Paul McNally, Chris Murtagh & Matt Murtagh; Max Lanham; Paul Scrivens; and James Gregory, Moseley Round Table





THE FIELDHOUSE

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

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



Fieldhouse,
Solihull

Opening Hours:

Mon—Sat: 11.30am —12 midnight

Sun: 11.30am —11.30pm

Hot & cold meals served Monday to
Sunday all day till 10.00pm

Special Offers:

TUES: Burger Night

THURS: Steak Night

-see website for details

Weekly quiz: Sundays
and Tuesdays, 9.00pm start

5 Real Ales on at all times including 3
regularly changing guests. All
Cask Ales are £2.49 a pint every
Monday.



CAMRA members receive a 20p
discount off the price of any pint
of Cask Ale on other nights.

SHIRLEY BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL


KEEP
CALM
AND
SAVE
THE DATE



15TH & 16TH MAY 2015



ADRIAN AND THE COMMITTEE WARMLY WELCOME YOU TO

The Rowington Club



Rowington Green, Rowington, Warwickshire CV35 7DB

Telephone: 01564 782087

Featured in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide

Three regularly changing real ales

Solihull & District CAMRA Branch's Club of the Year 2014

Normal opening hours: Mon-Fri: 2.00 – 11pm;

Sat-Sun/Bank Hols: 12 noon – 11pm

Large car park.

Games available (dominoes, darts, snooker and pool)

Full membership: £20.00 per annum

Single visits for guests: £1.00

(free to card-carrying CAMRA members)

**There will be plenty of entertainment going on during Spring:
for full details of all events, please ring Adrian at the Club**

Sampling Beer with the Experts

Several Solihull CAMRA members helped at the CAMRA stand at last year's Winter BBC Good Food Show—here are reports from Ian Hunter and John Edwards.

"A valiant band of Solihull CAMRA members helped host CAMRA's Great British Beer Experience at the BBC Winter Good Food Show.

The Beer Experience showcased a variety of beers over a number of tutored tastings, not always the writer's choice but generally well received by the clientele. The idea was to provide visitors with an insight into the diversity of great British beer, and not a word was spared in detailing the importance of supporting our British heritage of pubs and real ale.

I worked on both Friday and Sunday sessions—Friday matched beers to cheese and was £7 a head, all other non-food linked sessions were £6 a head; while on Sunday, the excellent Brewer from Church End, Karl Graves, charmed visitors with his authentic brewery apparel (yellow wellies) and allowed them the chance to speak at length with this enthusiastic and knowledgeable head brewer—some wanted to learn about the art of brewing whilst others of course wanted large samples of some of his real ales.

The overall timetable of events ran as follows: Thursday—Roger Protz and Adrian Tierney Jones on Britain's Beer Revolution; Friday—Christine Cryne on Cheese & Beer; Saturday: Winter Warmers with Annabel Smith; and on Sunday: Meet a Local Brewer with Church End Brewery.

On both days I was there we had expert help with selling tickets from the marketing director of Birmingham Royal Ballet Kara Larson and her partner, Cathy Plourde, both New York ladies with marvellous soft US accents which wooed the unwary visitors into thinking that it was their civic duty to attend the CAMRA event!"

Ian Hunter



"I could only make 3 of the Sunday sessions of the CAMRA beer tasting stall at the BBC Winter Good Food Show this year so I only had to wash around 1,000 glasses; but it was fun as usual, especially as Ian Hunter, another Solihull member, was working at the same time. But that means that most of what follows is not 'first hand'

experience but a résumé of the NEC 4-day event of which this year CAMRA was the main and only sponsor. For those not in the know, you can purchase a £6 or £7 ticket for one of the tutored tastings which take place during the day and for this you get thirds of 4 or 5 specially chosen beers, sometimes with a little food, and a talk from an 'expert' on how the different styles are made and other first-hand information. CAMRA also has a presence at the show to sell merchandise and recruit new members. This year they gained 148; but for me helping at the tastings is the most fun.

On Thursday Roger Protz & Adrian Tierney-Jones took the floor to illustrate their new book, 'Britain's Beer Revolution', with 5 select bottled beers: Beowulf's Dark Raven, 4.5%, Fuller's Bengal Lancer, 5.3%, St Austell Proper Job, 4.5%, Titanic Stout, 4.5% and Chiltern Bodger's Barley Wine, 8.5%. Friday gave Christine Cryne a chance to pair cheese with beer: Blue Monkey Ape Ale, 5.4%, with Brie de Meaux; Lancaster Lancaster Red, 4.8%, with Snowdonia Cheese's Little Black Bomber; Dark Star Revelation, 5.7%, with Wodehill Blue; Redemption Fellowship Porter, 5.1%, with Snowdonia Cheese's Smoked Cheddar, and



Shepherd Neame Barley Wine, 10%, with Perl Las Blue. On Saturday it was "Winter Warmers" with Annabel Smith, Cask Marque Sommelier of the Year, whose 3 cask choices were Adnams Broadside, 4.7%, Purity Saddle Black, 5.1% and Theakstons Old Peculier, 5.6%, together with bottles of Robinsons Old Tom, 4.5% and Fuller's Vintage Ale 2013, 8.5%, the last of which was voted the favourite at every tasting session by the visitors.

Sunday gave Karl Graves, Brewmaster at Church End Brewery, chance to talk about his brewery and showcase four of his cask beers, starting with winner of CAMRA WM Best Bitter 2014, What the Foxes Hat, 4.2% - Karl got his audience to see if they could spot any of the flavours picked out by the judging panel (i.e. biscuity, spicy, vanilla). His second offering was Goat's Milk, 3.8%, (pale, straw, citrus...), followed by Fallen Angel, 5% (which won Champion Strong Bitter at the 2014 Great British Beer Festival), probably my favourite of the day. His session finished with an unusual choice: Gravediggers, 3.8%, dark black and red in colour, with a mix of chocolate & roast flavours and two different hops giving the beer a complex feel and smooth finish."

John Edwards



From Grain in Hall Green to Glass in Kings Heath



Paul's 'Sparky IPA', no 22, before the festival (left) and after (below right)

Where can you find 39 beers brewed within 15 miles of Moseley, a great atmosphere and a chance to see live bands and catch up with the Five Nations rugby? At the Moseley and Kings Heath beer festival at King's Heath Cricket Club. 15 brewers showcased their best along with 3 home-brew competition winners with a cask of their winning ale, mine included. This was a well-organised community beer festival, raising money for local charities. Having my own beer on meant that people wanted to drink it with me which necessitated going on Friday and Saturday - oh the hardship!

Friday night's first job was to try some of my own beer. I was nervous, having never 'casked' my ale before, and hoping that the thorough scrubbing that I had given the cask was sufficient (real breweries have cask washers....I had a Karcher, caustic soda and elbow grease—was it enough?. Thankfully it was). I tried my 'Sparky' American-style IPA and it came out a fairly clear, bronze colour. It had that 'hits the spot' taste that I was aiming for although I thought it was lacking in aroma. I was pleased, although I will be looking to make improvements such as dry hopping in the conditioning phase and more late hop additions

during the boil phase. Weighing in at a hefty 6.1%, a pint was sufficient to get the festival feeling underway.

Next, Green Duck: a dark brown coconut Porter which sounded interesting; I could definitely taste the coconut but I don't think it quite worked for me. Nicely brewed so don't let me put you off trying if you happen to come across it. Moving on: Purity Saddleback, my favourite beer of the weekend. Brewed with New World hops (Chinook and Cascade) with a dark and menacing appearance, surprisingly, it was an easy drinking ale one would have to watch in a session. Finally I tried the Backyard Centennial, a single hopped IPA—I was keen as from the tasting notes it sounded like this was the type of beer that I was aiming for with my Sparky. Colour: a bronze hue, nice and clear; and bags of big hoppy IPA taste and bitterness—I was impressed with amount of flavour packed into a 5% ABV.

The evening was rounded off by band 360 who played a cracking party set; and later on there was a bit more elbow room for glass to lips manoeuvres. I'd recommend this festival if you want to get a flavour of what the local brewers are up to—we certainly have some hidden gems in the West Midlands.

Paul Scrivens



Shed News

A message from co-owner Perry Clarke:

Dear All,

We started the Shed Brewery in November 2011 and for the last four years have made it into the CAMRA Good Beer Guide, along with winning and runner-up at several beer festivals. Our objective was to supply beer locally to Hockley Heath, however, due to the success of our vegan-friendly barrels, we have been supplying customers as far away as Manchester, Bedford and Scotland.

Your may not know that this was intended to be a part-time venture, but has become a full-time business, and as I already have a full-time job I have decided that I need to spend more time with my family. As such, we will be 'mothballing' The Shed in the late spring or early summer of 2015. I'd just like to thank everyone for all your support over the years, and to reassure you that we will be back to running at full capacity as soon as possible.

Cheers,

Perry Clarke



Many thanks to The Shed for bringing out a great range of real ales over the past few years—the Solihull Drinker looks forward to its return in the

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

Contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to the Editor, Solihull Drinker, c/o 4 Kendrick Close, Solihull B92 0QD; or via email to julia.hammonds@blueyonder.co.uk



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

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

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Pin, Pie & Pint Night—Part 1

Merriment was had and pies were consumed on Friday 20th February at the 3rd and now annual Pin, Pie & Pint evening at the Fleur de Lys, Lowsonford, ably organised by Ray Cooke.

The Fleur de Lys has an old-fashioned bowling alley and recent new managers Nick and Emma are not averse to its being used for an evening as long as the party concerned is large enough to occupy the tables nearby and supply them with custom.



Jenny Buck watches as Ray Cooke concentrates on a delicate manoeuvre

Those choosing to eat at the pub found a varied menu plus that day's specials, and of course the famed Fleur De Lys pies—previous licensee Mr Brookes began cooking and serving pies to his customers back in the 1950's, before pubs regularly served food. He was able to upgrade and distribute his pies countrywide before

finally selling the recipe and the business, which became what is now Pukka Pies. In memory of the original recipe, Kate and Sidney, Heidi, Deerstalker and 5 other varieties of the excellent modern version are available today.

An ongoing game of 5 rounds each of bowling ran throughout the night, interspersed with frequent visits to the bar for top-ups of the 3 real ale choices on the hand pumps. The previous two PP&P events had been won by a lady, so masculine honour, not to mention pride, was at stake.

Competition was certainly fierce: bowling ranged from cold and calculated to wild and desperate, with all shades in-between.



John grins while Ian seems apprehensive—a tense moment during the game

Sadly, lack of space prevents the revelation of the finale of the game and the eventual winner—until next issue!



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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.

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Choice which cannot be bettered

Membership Matters

I firmly believe now has never been a better time to be a real ale drinker with over 1,000 breweries producing many different styles of beer, giving the real ale consumer more choice when going to the pub.

With the General Election set for the 7th May, CAMRA has recently launched its manifesto for pubs and real ale, calling for all prospective parliamentary candidates to support well-run community pubs, real ale brewers and the consumer rights of drinkers.

If you choose to join CAMRA, your membership fee would be put to good use in helping to persuade all politicians to listen to and reflect the views of over 170,000 CAMRA members. You yourself can also aid the campaign by writing or emailing your local parliamentary candidate to see if they support CAMRA's manifesto.

Another way CAMRA uses the money raised from your membership fee is to help local communities get their much-loved local registered as an Asset of Community Value to help protect it from unwanted development.

So come on, what are you waiting for? - become a CAMRA member and join 170,000 other like-minded individuals with a liking for real ale and pubs by completing the membership form in this magazine; or go to CAMRA website www.camra.org.uk, where there is also a comprehensive list of other benefits you gain when becoming a member.

Dave Mckowen
Membership Secretary

Meet & Greet

Solihull & District CAMRA will be holding another of its Meet and Greet events at 8.00pm on 13th April in the Assembly Rooms in Solihull, just before the April branch meeting.

This gives the chance for new members who have joined between 1st December 2014 and 1st March 2015 to have a pint with fellow Solihull CAMRA members, find out more about what a friendly group we are, and as an added bonus, they will be a FREE pint provided by Solihull CAMRA for all qualifying members on production of a valid membership card. An even better incentive to come along—hope to see you there!

12
Hand
Pumps

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for new ales.

The bar is open every day, featuring Sky TV with key sporting events such as Six Nations Rugby, Premiership Football and, naturally, Cricket being shown. Of course in the summer months you can just relax with your favourite ale while watching Birmingham Premier League Cricket with many past and present county players on view.

While the club is a private members club, and is popular on match days, there is no charge for admission and guests who are CAMRA members are welcome at any time on production of a CAMRA membership card. Social membership to

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Fridays: 5.30pm - 11.00pm
Saturdays 12.00noon - 11.00pm
Sundays 12.00 noon - 10.30pm

K & D CC Membership enquiries should be made to fellow

Warwick Crawl Christmas Social —Who ate all the pies?

The weather was kind, cold but dry and the trains ran on time. We met up at Solihull station, enabling us to buy group tickets for a little over £3 return (cheaper than a bus to Brum, in fact cheaper than a bus anywhere). Arriving in Warwick, Steve Dyson, crawl organiser, took us on a long walk to avoid all the likely pubs (to prevent opportunist anarchic drinking) to the Old Fourpenny Shop, where I enjoyed RCH Pitchfork from the Somerset coast, not so often seen around here. Allan Duffy returned from the bar and addressed wife Brenda as "Top Totty", an accolade she was happy to accept. Banks's Sunbeam, Marston's Pedigree and Gun Dog Chilly Dog were tried. No one went for Greene King IPA!

From here we moved on to The Old Post Office near the main castle entrance, (take note for family days out) - which is what it says: the old counter at the back is used for the dishwasher and empty casks; this was a tight squeeze. Nearer the front of the small multi-level micro-pub was the bar with a few hand pumps and 2 rows of casks: wonderful. Steve, who is known for his careful and thorough research when planning a trip, had been a bit quiet about this, but what a find! On the bar were Salopian Hop Twister and Golden Thread; Slaughterhouse Saddleback and Black Saddle IPA; Slater's Haka; Hook Norton Greedy Goose and 12 Days; Wood Farm Mild and Youngs' Special. The plan went out of the win-

dow and we stayed for a second, or was it a 3rd? Black Saddle Black IPA was excellent and quite unusual, Hook Norton 12 days is seasonal, grab it while you can; and a local Slaughterhouse beer, all very different and all very good.

We moved on to the Market Place for the Tilted Wig, a good pint of Slaughterhouse Saddleback, but the staff seemed to find a crowd of drinkers standing around the bar to be a nuisance, so we left. Next door was Wetherspoon's Thomas Lloyd which was holding a US-themed promotion. Full Sail (of Oregon) offered a seasonal Wassail brewed to a different recipe each year which was pleasant, but no explanation of why it is called what it is (just marketing?). Again, nothing to inspire, so we moved on.



*The beer menu at
The Old Post Office*

Around the corner to the Punch Bowl, which was deserted but would apparently fill up later; a local CAMRA award winner. Bank Top's Old Slapper was a good classic beer, nothing pretentious, although one can imagine it could cause upset if not ordered carefully. Others in the crew went for Maypole Major Oak; Mayflower Lancashire Stout; Adnam's Bitter and Dunscair Bridge True North.

And finally, the Wild Boar near the station—the ideal waiting room. This is also home to the Slaughterhouse's microbrewery (not to be confused with their

main one in an old slaughterhouse). So: Slaughterhouse Alt, excellent, and an English take on a German "old beer" which is the nearest I have found in Germany to an English bitter; Sperrin 3rd Party from this local Nuneaton brewer; and a pint of Everard's Tiger to finish the day off. And there were still another five to try! This is a fine example of an inspired brewery-owned chain who allow landlords to have other beers - they are not afraid of competition and can be proud of an excellent pub. The staff were also enthusiastic and knowledgeable.

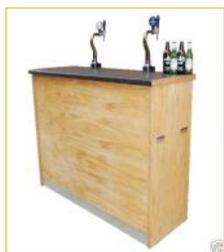
*The usual suspects in the Old Post Office,
Warwick*



Some of our party vanished early and went for a curry somewhere, but many of us stayed in the Wild Boar to eat. They have some excellent pies (such as venison) and between us we finished them off (this may explain the curry splinter group). This set us reminiscing about a Nottingham trip a couple of years ago that ended in a pub with excellent pork

pies. We noticed them on today's blackboard and asked the Wild Boar staff, who said they were very popular and in fact they only had one left. Malcolm Harry promptly ordered it and kindly shared it round. Yes it was very good and now you have the answer to the question: "Who ate all the pies?" We did.

Robert Cawte



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A Weekend Break in the Cotswolds

My wife and I decided to treat ourselves to a short break in the Cotswolds over the August Bank Holiday and booked a room at the Kings Arms Hotel in Stow on the Wold.



The Kings Arms, Stow-on-the-Wold

The Kings Arms is a 500-year old coaching inn, full of historical character, and our room, which was on the top floor reached by a steep and narrow staircase, overlooked the Market Square.

After checking in, we went to explore this lovely old town to find somewhere for a meal that evening. We began with the Queens Head Inn, on the Market Square. This is a delightful 17th-century pub with well kept, low-priced Donnington ales, good wines by the glass and good value basic pub meals. There is a bustling, stripped-stone front lounge, heavily beamed and flagstoned back bar with high-backed settles, horse prints and some interesting bric-a-brac. Children and dogs are welcome and there are tables in an attractive sunny back courtyard. On this occasion, though, the land-

lord told us he had a large party booked in and could not accommodate us for a meal that evening, but we stayed for a drink and enjoyed a pint of Donnington Gold (4.0%), a golden coloured ale with citrus flavours followed by a rounded malty finish.

Having looked at a number of other pubs and restaurants, we settled on the Old Stocks Hotel, opposite the Queens Head, for our meal. Disappointingly, this did not serve real ale but the food was very good and reasonably priced. Suitably replete, we returned to the Kings Arms for a drink before retiring for the night. On the pumps were Greene King Old Golden Hen and Hook Norton Hooky Bitter. A third pump had a Greene King Sun Dance clip turned round. I opted for a pint of Hooky Bitter, which was in average condition but not a great end, beer-wise, to the evening.

Next morning, after a superb breakfast in the first floor restaurant, we set off to visit Sudeley Castle, spending several hours at this fascinating stately home, then travelled back to Toddington to visit the Gloucestershire — Warwickshire railway. After the obligatory train and back, we then



The Queens Head Inn, Stow

(Continued from previous page)

visited the Pheasant Inn, a few hundred yards down the road. This pub has recently undergone an internal refurbishment, sympathetically carried out. Two real ales were on offer here, Stanway Brewery's Artists Ale (3.9%) and Stanney Bitter (4.5%). I sampled the Artists Ale, which was in excellent condition. The menu had a good selection of food at more competitive prices than Stow so we decided to make a return trip for our evening meal. On our return, I went for the Stanney Bitter, which was also very well kept. The meal was also excellent so, if you like steam trains, good food and good beer, this pub comes highly recommended.

Upon returning to Stow we again chose to have a last drink in the hotel before



The Pheasant Inn, Toddington

turning in and this time I tried the Greene King Sun Dance (4.0%) as it was back on. Again, it was drinkable but not inspiring. It is a pity that such a lovely old hotel, with comfortable rooms, helpful, friendly staff and superb breakfasts cannot manage to keep its beers in better condition.

Monday morning, and time to depart. After checking out, we visited the very interesting Cricket Museum in Stow; then it was time to hit the road. We stopped for lunch at the attractive-looking Halford Bridge Inn, in Halford, near Shipston-on-Stour. This is a Grade II listed coaching inn dating from 1567, which has suffered the standard pub make-over of pale grey paint and chunky, hard wooden furniture. Two real ales were available: Hook Norton Hooky Bitter and Purity Mad Goose. I opted for the Mad Goose. This turned out to be the worst-kept beer of the entire weekend! It was drinkable, but with considerable resentment. Someone else complained about its condition and the beer was taken off immediately, but I gather from the conversation that followed with the bar staff that the Hooky Bitter was not much better, so we abandoned our lunch plans and opted instead to head for home.

Chris Lloyd

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