

The newsletter of the Solihull & District branch
of CAMRA - the Campaign for Real Ale

www.solihullcamra.org.uk



Solihull Drinker

Issue No: 39

Winter 2006

SOLIHULL & DISTRICT CAMRA'S MOST IMPROVED PUB OF THE YEAR 2006

16 members of Solihull & District CAMRA turned out on November 22nd to celebrate the awarding of the Branch's 'Most improved Pub of the Year' certificate to The Drawbridge Inn, on Haslucks Green Road.

The Drawbridge has a long history, being situated on the Grand Union Canal in a pleasant situation, with a beer garden and good views of the canal. Nowadays, landlady Karen Ayres, who has been there for two years, runs the pub. Her Assistant Manager, Andy Carrington, has been



there for a year now and has taken over cellar duties from previous Cellarman, Grant, who has been instrumental in improving the quality of the cask ales and justly deserves to share in the presentation of this award, and who has been responsible for showing Andy the ropes.

The pub is a managed house, belonging to the Spirit Group.

Barrelage is running at about 100 gallons per week. They have 5 real ales on at a time: 3 are regulars such as Marstons Pedigree, Charles Wells Bombardier and Moorlands Speckled Hen, and the other two are selected from Spirit Group's quarterly list; Black Sheep Bitter and Hydes Stormtrooper were the two guests on the date of our visit; with St Austell Tribute due to replace the Black Sheep when it finished.

They try to respond to what regulars request, and Young's Winter Warmer is to be featured soon, with Batemans Rosey Nosey around for the Xmas season. We congratulate Karen and her team on their achievement and are pleased to say they seemed delighted with the award!

Inside: Don't miss the Dates for your Diary

Message from the Editor

Our 8th branch Beer Festival took place successfully over the weekend of Friday 29th and Saturday 30th September. It's amazing: it takes months of planning for those involved, then it's over in a flash! I hope that those of you reading this who managed to attend had a really great time—we certainly received a lot of compliments this year, so this does seem to be the case. Our band on the Saturday evening, Time After Time, did us proud, and quite a few people asked for their details. We had a good range of beers, plus two ciders and a perry, and the Pictish Brewery garnered the Beer of the Festival vote with their 'Alchemists' Ale'.

We also raised over £200 for the Macmillan Cancer Relief charity, thanks to the generosity of those of you who chose not to ask for refunds on small amounts of leftover beer tokens. Thanks as always go to the Royal British Legion for providing the venue for the Festival, and their assistance with it over the weekend.

Here's to the 9th Festival - if you came, enjoyed yourself, and thought "I could help with that", you could play a part in pulling this together by being on next year's Festival Committee. - come to our branch meetings and make your interest known!

Julia

Pub, Beer & Brewery Watch

Have a look at this site for interesting stuff about Fullers and other beers:

<http://www.waitrose.com/christmas/drinks/beers/fullers.asp>

Festival Gets New Venue and Date

Redditch drinkers can breathe a sigh of relief: it was announced recently that **Redditch Beer Festival** would now go ahead in January 2007. The festival, which was held for the first time last year and is run by Redditch and Bromsgrove CAMRA branch, almost had to be cancelled due to a change of heart by the owners of the original venue. Branch chairman, Cy Day said, "It has been a manic few weeks looking for an alternative venue, but thanks to the hard work of our members scouting for suitable venues, we now have a bigger and better place to run Redditch Beer Festival, at '**Bridley Moor & Batchley Social Club**'."

Due to bookings at the club, the date of the festival has had to be changed to **26th & 27th January 2007**. The opening times will be 6 - 11 pm on the 26th, and 11 - 11 pm on the 27th. The good news is that the new larger venue will feature 34 real ales plus cider and perry. Entrance will be £2 plus a charge for a commemorative glass. Food and other drinks will be made available by the club. Bridley Moor & Batchley Social Club is located on Bridley Moor Road, Redditch, Worcestershire, B97 6HS and is less than a mile from Redditch bus and railway station.

For more information, please go to www.redditchwaf.org.uk

Community Pubs Week

National Pubs Week in February has been renamed but the intention is the same: to encourage people to make the most of their local pubs. Keep an eye out next year for details of events during February 2007 at *your* local .



THE BULL'S HEAD

Barston Lane, Barston

TEL: 01675 442830



VISIT OUR 15th CENTURY VILLAGE INN
WITH A SELECTION OF REAL ALES AND REGULAR GUEST BEERS
Most recently listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2006

Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 2000 and 2002
(Cask-Marque accredited)

HOME COOKED MEALS ARE AVAILABLE LUNCHTIMES AND
EVENINGS MONDAY TO SATURDAY IN THE PLEASANT SURROUNDINGS
OF THE PUB OR IN OUR SEPARATE NON-SMOKING RESTAURANT
(Sundays 12 to 3pm for lunch - no evening meals)
TELEPHONE RESERVATIONS WELCOME

*WINTER'S HERE, WITH JACK FROST FOLLOWING CLOSELY ON
ITS HEELS. JOIN US FOR CONVIVIAL COMPANY TO CHASE AWAY.
THOSE WINTER BLUES IN FRONT OF A COMFORTING FIRE WITH
A SUPERB PINT IN YOUR HAND.*

Ahh, bliss!

Nick and Gwen welcome you to The Vaults, Knowle

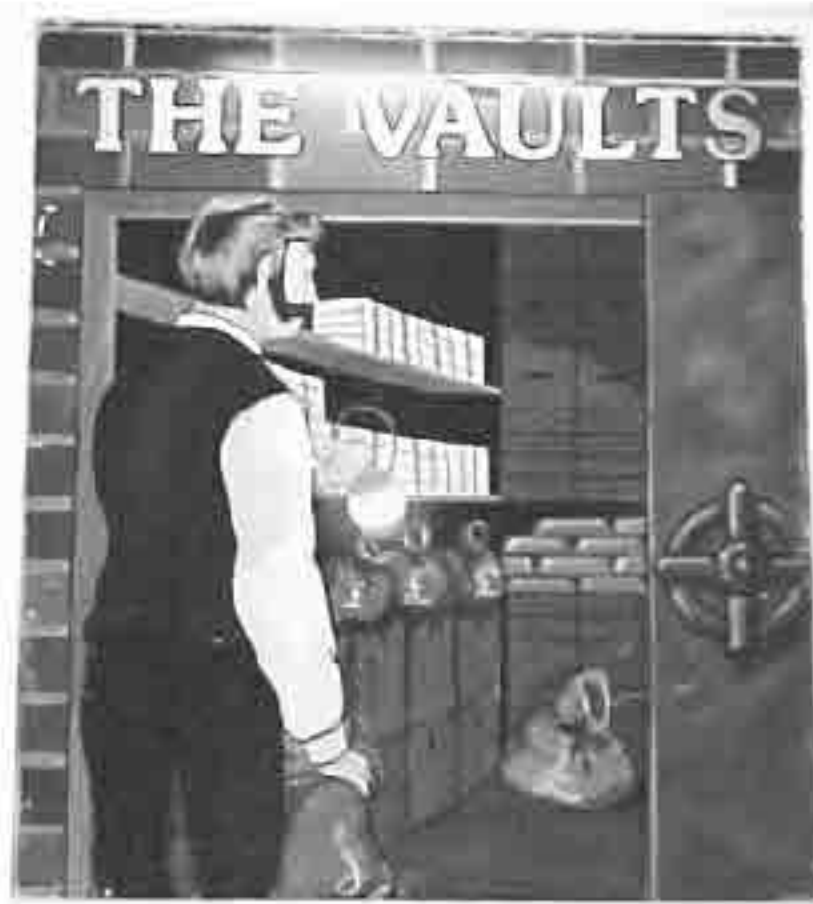
The Real Ale venue in Knowle with:

- ◆ **Six hand-pumped beers including regulars, Ansell's Mild, Greene King IPA, Burton Ale, Tetley Bitter and two guest beers**
- ◆ **Real cider from Weston's**
- ◆ **Food available lunchtimes Monday - Saturday**

Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year

2003, 2004 , 2005 and 2006

**Come and see for yourself what we have to offer and why
locals vote us a really great pub!**



CAMRA Good Beer Guide listed since 1993



The Vaults, St John's Close, Knowle.

Tel: 01564 773656

The 2006 Excursion

As you probably know, we organise a long weekend away for those of our Branch members who may be interested.

This year, the trip was to North Yorkshire, organised by Bob Bell.

Four Breweries and a Festival...

It's with some trepidation and uncertainty that the branch embark on the Annual Weekend Away which begins on Thursday and finishes on Sunday. Confused? So are we by Sunday morning. It is not an undertaking to be taken lightly. Loins must be girded, vigorous training has to be entered into, and surprisingly, it is most enjoyable!

Each year a member of the branch organises the weekend looking over his shoulder at the success of the previous year. Last year Hull was incomparable! Bob Bell, this year's organiser was sweating from Day 1, fully aware that his reputation could be dented. Rest easy Bob: what a cracking weekend we all had... probably one of the best ever!

Our base this year was Knaresborough in North Yorkshire, a couple of miles west of the sedate spa town of Harrogate. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Rewind to Thursday lunchtime, when we begin the foray.

Our lunchtime stop was at the Brewers Pride in Ossett next door to Ossett Brewery. A free house at the end of a long cul-de-sac next to railway sidings, it's not possibly in the most picturesque of settings, but it is a superb Victorian style multi-roomed pub. Selling good value lunches and 8 real ales, it certainly proved a good choice to start the weekend, and such perfect timing. We all arrived there just at opening time, at 12 noon.



Looking around at the gathered throng, I felt some pity for Chris, and brothers Kevin and Gordon, who joined the group for the first time this year. Did they know what they were letting themselves in for?

Having had a bite and a good go at the beers we thought: OK, off to Knaresborough."

No", said Bob. " I phoned up Ossett Brewery yesterday and asked if we could visit as we were coming to the pub next door".

"Not a problem" they said. "We could be a little busy and not able to give a full tour but pop in at 1 pm". So we did just that to enjoy the first brewery tour of the weekend. The brewery is not traditional in appearance, being in a very large industrial unit. As we approached we could smell that familiar smell of malt and hops in the cooking pot. It is most unusual for us to visit a brewery for a tour whilst it is working. In fact, I think it must be a first.

.....(CONT.)

Four Breweries and a Festival...

(CONT.)

We were met by the Head Brewer Paul Spencer, a young chap in his late twenties I guess. Paul's history is as an amateur brewer with a chemistry degree. During the tour he had to keep dashing off as he was putting a brew through the brewery whilst showing us around.

The brewery can produce some 80 to 100 barrels a week and is well known for its clean, hoppy, sometimes wheat-flavoured beers. However Paul said that a change in demand had prompted them to try a more mellow beer called Big Red, a delicate, full bodied ruby-red ale with citrus/spicy characteristics. According to Paul, this was with a new hop variety called TA200, as yet so new as to be unnamed, but Paul felt that it would be called 'Sovereign'.

The beers they have brewed until now have 85% malt and 15% wheat, hence the lager-style taste to the beers. A bottling plant will come on-stream soon whereby they hope to bottle naturally-conditioned beers and may consider bottling some of their beer in a bright format.

No brewery trip is complete without a visit to the sample room, so miraculously we arrived there to try some Turning Leaves, a golden full-bodied mellow beer at 4.5%, which is their October seasonal beer.

Paul admitted that the beer was nearing the end of its life, but we all supped a pint and thanked Paul for his hospitality, well aware that it was time for us to move on to Knaresborough to sign in to our digs and hit the Knaresborough pubs.

An hours journey brought us to our accommodation, the Yorkshire Lass overlooking the bridge over the Nidd at the foot of the town. The pub looked much better on its website than in the flesh, having a tired look

about it. The beer range was not enough to keep us there long, being Daleside Bitter which was not in the best of condition, and Greene King Old Speckled Hen which suffice to say no one bothered with. The pub was serviceable and served our purpose well as a group, though if I were on my own I would probably have found alternative digs.

I gave the little town of Knaresborough a quick once-over and what a cracking little place it is. It reminded me a little of Ironbridge: perched steeply on the side of the River Nidd with alleyways and steps climbing up from the river to the town centre.

.....(CONT.)



It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale



Join CAMRA Today...

Just fill in the form below and send, with a cheque (payable to CAMRA Ltd) or for Three Months Free membership (for those renewing or joining by Direct Debit) complete the Direct Debit Form. All forms should be addressed to membership secretary, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW. Alternatively you can join online at www.camra.org.uk. Rates for single membership are £18 and joint £21. Concession rates are available on request.

.....
Title Surname Forename(s) Date of Birth
.....
P'tner Surname Forename(s) Date of Birth
.....
Address Postcode
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Tel. no.(s)

I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

I enclose a cheque for..... Signed..... Date

Applications will be processed within 21 days

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit		DIRECT Debit	
<p>Please fill in the form and send to: Campaign for Real Ale Ltd, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW</p> <p>Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society</p> <p>To The Manager Bank or Building Society</p> <p>Address</p> <p>Postcode</p> <p>Name (s) of Account Holder (s)</p> <p>Bank or Building Society account number</p> <p>Branch Sort Code</p> <p>Reference Number</p>		<p>Originator's Identification Number</p> <p>9 2 6 1 2 9</p> <p>FOR CAMRA OFFICIAL USE ONLY</p> <p>This is not part of the instruction to your Bank or Building Society</p> <p>Membership Number</p> <p>Name</p> <p>Postcode</p> <p>Instruction to your Bank or Building Society</p> <p>Please pay CAMRA Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards ensured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with CAMRA and it so, will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society</p> <p>Signature(s)</p> <p>Date</p>	
<p>Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account.</p>		<p>This Guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer.</p> <p>The Direct Debit Guarantee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.■ If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change, CAMRA will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.■ If an error is made by CAMRA or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.■ You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of your letter to us.	

Old Solihull Pub Names (part 6) T—U

Another episode in our occasional series concerning the origin of and changes to pub names in the Solihull and District area.

TALBOT Ullenhall
Long since disappeared

TAVERN Hockley Heath
This was the OLD ROYAL OAK which had a brief spell as a Greek restaurant bar before reverting back to its original name in 1996. The pub has recently closed and the site is now a French-style food shop & restaurant called ORO The Market Place.

THREE MAYPOLES Shirley
Known as the PICKWICK until being renamed the CHESWICK GREEN INN in 1996. The building dates back to 1935, when the original large house on the site known as the Cider Mill was demolished, and was replaced by a public house called the THREE MAYPOLES which opened in 1938.

TOM O'BEDLAM Chadwick End
A pub that no longer exists, though it was listed in a Warwickshire Directory of 1874.

One anecdote from the pub survives. A local man was drinking at the Tom O'Bedlam, a man who had previously been a patient in a Warwickshire asylum. Another drinker called him a lunatic. The former patient replied "No I am not and I have a certificate to prove it". Very few of us can do that, can we. The pub was used as an Ansells Brewery training centre for a time, before being re-invented as a bar called CUDDLES in 1985. After a short spell as GREGORY'S RESTAURANT & BAR, it became the LION ROCK before being demolished for housing in the 1990's.

TOM O'WOOD Rowington
The pub dates back to the 17th Century when it was named after a local corn mill. It became The Wood at Rowington in 2005.

TRAVELLERS REST Shirley
This was originally the GREEN MAN from 1842 to 1861 before becoming the TRAVELLERS REST. It was renamed the GEORGE & DRAGON in 1881. The pub closed in 1986, and was then demolished in 1987 to be replaced by an American theme bar called CALENDARS. It was renamed the DALLAS EXCHANGE in 1994, but has recently been demolished to make way for a retail development



UNION Shirley
A beer house on the corner of Stratford Road & Union Road. In 1936 the licence was surrendered in favour of the nearby THREE MAYPOLES. The UNION was demolished in the 1950's after a spell as a sweet factory and store.

Steve Wood

Four Breweries and a Festival...

(CONT.)

Knaresborough bred two historical characters: Mother Shipton, a well-known witch who it is said could prophesy the future (there is some connection with the Dropping Well; the museum opposite the bridge over the Nidd associates them together. The Dropping Well is a curiosity where objects suspended over a waterfall seemingly turn to stone. In fact salts in the water calcify the objects); and John Metcalf, of whom more later.

I sussed out all the pubs in the GBG and a local CAMRA branch's website's guide. There was a lot of John Smiths, Theakstons; a smattering of Ruddles, and some Black Sheep. Three pubs however stood out over and above the others, which formed the baseline of our evening crawl.

The Marquis of Granby is an architectural Victorian gem with Sam Smiths' Old Brewery Bitter. The pub was lovely but not the beer which we concluded was not well kept. We all then gravitated to the pub that we felt would be the best in town, Blind Jacks. We were not disappointed. It is a superb, timeless little pub, which surprisingly did not exist until the 1990's when two shops in the Market Square were knocked into one, and it feels like it has been there for eons.

I was curious as to the name and it is here we revisit John Metcalf. He went blind at the age of 6 with smallpox and his nickname became "Blind Jack", hence the origin of the pub's name. He built hundreds of miles of roads and bridges in N. England and is rightly celebrated in Knaresborough.



The pub had a superb range of beers, most in beautiful condition. On tap were Village Brewer and White Bear, a light session beer brewed by Hambleton for the Village Brewer. Also available were Black Sheep Bitter; plus Best Bitters and strong ales: Goose Eye Goose Goldings; Timothy Taylor Landlord; Rudgate Ruby Mild; Cottage Golden Arrow; Archers Oyster Stout and two supposedly Roosters beers. A good range with a variety of flavours was our opinion, but food beckoned so off we went to another GBG pub.

The So Bar, which was just over the road. A bistro/café – type bar, it stocks two real ales, Black Sheep Bitter and Wilma Gold Tankard, served through unusual hand-pumps; but the quality left a lot to be desired. However, the food was superb. Some of us then went in search of our final pub of the night — not hard to find, being just around the corner on Briggate, the George and Dragon. Although not full of character it was one-roomed and comfortable and unassuming. It served a good beer range: Roosters Yankee; Elland Best Bitter; Daleside Blond; Anglo Dutch Autumn Again and John Smiths Cask.

I tried the Anglo Dutch, which was just a little wanting; however the Elland and Daleside were a couple of perfect beers to finish on. And so to bed at the Yorkshire Lass. Some tarried for a quick one but not I, as we had to present ourselves at the doors of the Coach and Horses, Harrogate promptly at 11 am next morning

Steve Dyson

Part 2 in the next Drinker... the pace quickens!!!

The November Social—report

**"Oh, dear, what can the matter be,
We got there on Friday and got served on Saterdee..."**

Well, that's what it felt like when 13 brave souls set out and met at the Church Inn, Great Hampton Street, Birmingham, for the November end-of month Social on Friday 24th November.

The Branch has a history of coming here — it was once a regular Social fixture named 'Steak and Bathams', as the Church Inn has stuck to Bathams ales as their regular tipple for many years. The portions are known to be enormous, with steak featuring heavily, hence the pub's popularity.

This was my first excursion to this establishment, together with my partner and two friends. I had prudently read up on the venue on the Web before venturing forth, and found a bag of mixed reviews: some favourable; some doubtful, although willing to be optimistic beforehand; and some downright critical in the extreme.

We arrived at 7.40 pm and met up with our other CAMRA colleagues in The Snug, a cosy room seating about 16 people and with its own little bar, full of movie paraphernalia on the walls, and bell to alert the staff to the need for service. We ordered drinks, followed by our food order, and said that we would like to be served together with our friends.

What then followed was somewhat bizarre. As the pub is very busy we did not expect to be served straight away, but as it was, we had to wait for an hour and forty minutes for the majority of us to be served. The last person to order got served first. The first person got served last.

The four people who had ordered steaks (two rare, two medium-rare) had to wait a further forty minutes before they got their food; by which time the rest of us had finished. The pub does warn that if wanting a well-done steak you have to be prepared to wait for it— but nobody had ordered well-done, and they still had to wait. On asking twice during that period, we were told, "It'll be 5 minutes". It wasn't—twice over. To add insult to injury, we could clearly hear the sound of other meals being prepared—just not ours.

Eventually, the steaks came. The rare ones were actually medium-rare. The medium-rare were well done. My partner's was a strange wedge shape—how the management thought they could cook it to the same consistency throughout is a mystery. Protests about the length of time between serving the main bulk of the food and the steaks fell on deaf ears, as did complaints about the degree of cooking of the steaks. I have to say that most of the food, despite that wait was good, and the beer drinkers pronounced the Bathams ale excellent. However the evening was let down by the strange serving order, resulting in us not all being able to eat together.

The Church Inn. Like the fabled curate's egg: good in parts. Go by all means, but be prepared to have a mixed reception—and ditto service.

Julia Hammonds





Dates For Your Diary

Socials

Sunday 10 th December	Xmas pub crawl, Solihull
Saturday 20 th January	Warwick pub crawl (6.30 pm train from Solihull)
Saturday 17 th —24 th February	Community Pubs Week (formerly known as National Pubs Week), main participating pubs to be confirmed.
March	Coventry Beer Festival (date to be confirmed but expected to be a Saturday lunchtime)
April	Spring pub Walk (date to be confirmed)

Branch Meetings

Monday 8 th January	Field House, Monkspath (tbc)
Monday 5 th February	Harvester, Olton (tbc)
Monday 5 th March	Rowington Club, Rowington (tbc)
Monday 2 nd April	Reservoir, Earlswood (tbc)

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

Special Events

February 2007	Community Pubs Week: details & venue(s) (tbc)
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**For meetings/socials yet to be confirmed or if more details are needed please contact
Branch Secretary Steve Wood on 0121 704 5258.**

Membership Matters

Stuck for ideas for Christmas presents?

CAMRA membership is a really great idea for a loved one who likes their real ale! Single membership is £18 and Joint membership £21 per annum. Use the membership form on page 7 of this magazine, or visit the CAMRA website at **www.camra.org.uk** which has details of other gifts you can purchase—there is a wide selection of items, including books—the traveller might appreciate a copy of The Good Beer Guide, which lists all those pubs voted into the Guide by local members right across the UK. Have a browse and reduce your shopping list!

Carl Wright

The logo for Purity Brewing Co. features the word "Purity" in a large, stylized, handwritten-style font. A small five-pointed star is positioned above the letter 'i'. Below the word "Purity" is the text "BREWING CO" in a smaller, clean, sans-serif, all-caps font.

BREWING CO

Brewers of **Pure Gold** 3.8% and
Pure UBU (oo-boo) 4.5% - **Silver Award**
Champion Beer of Warwickshire 2006

Exclusive importers of Veltins Pilsner and Maisels Weisse from Germany.
Also Dunkertons Organic Ciders & Milliat Juices and Nectars

Visitors centre is available for pre-booked brewery tours.

Please contact us for more details.

Collect your beers directly from the brewery.

BREWERY SHOP OPEN:

Monday-Friday 10am-5pm. Saturday 10am-1pm

The Brewery, Upper Sperrall Farm, Gt Alne. B49 6JF

Tel: 01789 488 007

sales@puritybrewing.com

www.puritybrewing.com

10% DISCOUNT on all products for CAMRA members.

Purity Brewery's 1st Anniversary

The Purity Brewery recently celebrated its first anniversary by inviting representatives from its four local CAMRA branches, owners and landlords of local pubs, and members of the press to an evening at its premises. On offer was a talk from founder member Paul Halsey about the brewery, its founding, past year, and their plans for its future; a tour round the brewery with new head brewer Florian 'Flo' Vialan, plenty of their wonderful beers UBU and Pure Gold (plus a choice of organic ciders), and a heart-warming winter stew with crusty bread which to mop up the beer.



Purity has had a terrific 1st year and has won several awards including "Silver Medal Champion Beer of Warwickshire", and "Fastest Selling Beer" at the Harbury Beer Festival for Pure UBU, its distinctive 4.5% ABV premium amber coloured beer.

Watch out for the new bottled version of UBU which is officially being launched at the St Nicholas Night Street Market, Alcester on Wed 6th Dec at 5.30 pm and will soon be available from quality outlets including a special deal with Harvey Nichols that had only been signed the day we visited!



In line with Purity's culture "to continually do better in everything they do" we were offered the first sampling of a "new improved recipe" version of Gold. Created by 'Flo', it's a very pale and extremely hoppy beer; though it was still a little young, having come straight of the "press", it went down very well indeed and shows that Purity are not content to rest on their laurels.

Looking forwards to next year, Paul said expect "More of the same, with us developing and fine tuning our ales, the launch of 'Pure Gold' in bottles, the creation of a dedicated Brewery Shop and continued work on developing support for local community events.

We all wished Paul and the team at Purity all the best of luck for next year and Paul promised to invite us back for an update on events next Summer.

Carl Wright

ALISON AND ADRIAN WELCOME YOU TO

The Rowington Club

On Rowington Green, Rowington, Warwickshire CV35 7BD

Telephone: 01564 782087

Opening hours: Weekdays: 2.00 pm – 11.00 pm

Weekends and Bank Holidays: 12 noon – 11.00 pm

Large car park

Come and relax playing dominoes, cards, snooker and pool

Three real ales available

(With your support we can even increase the range of ales!)

Live music most Saturdays and Quiz Nights every month

Being a club, we charge £1.00 per visit (free to card-carrying
CAMRA members)

(full membership: £10.00 per annum)

Forthcoming Events

From now until the beginning of March 2007:

Bingo: alternate Tuesdays

Live music (60's, 70's and 80's): alternate Saturdays

Plus a host of events in the period leading up to Christmas and New
Year!

**For full details of all events, please ring Adrian or Alison at The
Rowington Club, and they will be only too please to welcome
you to a wonderful night out.**

The Golden Acres

**Rowood Drive
Damsonwood, Solihull
Tel. 0121 704 9002**

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

Three guest
real ales
plus a
regularly-
changing
traditional
cider



Sports
coverage
a regular
feature

Children
welcome

Traditional Sunday Lunches 12.00 - 4.00pm

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

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

To smoke, or not to smoke, that is the question

I am sure most people are aware that, in England, smoking in pubs and other places will be banned in summer 2007 and this has already happened in Scotland earlier in 2006.

What difference does this make to us - the beer drinker & pub goer?

CAMRA has campaigned on this issue for some time - essentially wanting to ensure choice and a level playing field between different sorts of pub, bar or club.

Our cherished traditional pub usually had several rooms - the lounge, the bar, the snug and the smoke room - and this would have been ideal, providing space for those who choose to smoke and clean air for those who prefer that with their pint. Personally I fit into the latter group. CAMRA has also campaigned for the protection of these old multi-roomed pubs and some of the best examples are now protected, or at least listed on a national inventory.

Sadly due to a combination of refurbishments, clever ideas from head office, the need for more space or perhaps fire escape reasons, many of these have now been spoilt leaving us with just one large space. Even with good ventilation the smoke still drifts. Whatever choice there was for different smoking/non-smoking rooms has now vanished with the government's decision to ban smoking in pubs.

The majority should be happy that they will soon be able to go to the pub without returning home smelling of smoke, but what of the pubs that have to enforce this? What will it do to their business?

Evidence shows that there is a downturn in non-food pubs, but an upturn in places that serve food. Food and beer go well together, but we don't always want to eat and so it is important that the real pubs survive and prosper.

Smokers make up less than 30% of the population whereas in pubs it is often 40% or more and in some cases as high as 60%. Why is this? Is it that smokers make a concerted effort to go to the pub? Possibly (smokers, do tell us). Is it that non-smokers are discouraged from going to the pub by the smoke? In some cases, yes. I avoid them if the smoke is noticeable and recently a group of friends (in the pub) commented that they do too.

When the smoking ban arrives, take advantage - go to the pub and support your local. The landlord should be pleased to see you and relieved that you more than make up for the few smokers who may choose to stay away. Take your friends - especially the ones who have given up on pubs because of the smoke. Actions speak louder than words - so here is the invitation to my immediate friends: when the ban arrives, call me, we'll meet at the pub and I'll buy you a pint. If you have forgotten where it is, I can lend you my Good Beer Guide (available from CAMRA and all good book shops)

Robert Cawte

NB. As at the time of going to press, it was reported that the Red Lion, Earlswood, had become a no-smoking pub.

(Comments on this topic are welcome—my contact details are on the back page of this magazine. Editor.)

Wetherspoons and others gauge the true impact of Scottish legislation

Pub group Wetherspoon recently announced its profits but what should be most interesting is to hear how the Scottish smoking ban is going, because it arrives in England next year and nobody seems to understand how big an effect it will have on the leisure industry. Wetherspoon has around 650 sites including many in the Midlands. Its most recent trading statement revealed that the stronger trading performance of its Scottish pubs following the ban has faded. The group, which has about 50 pubs in Scotland, used lessons learned to convert 49 of its English outlets to non smoking.

But how will those converted pubs fare? It could be a big pointer for others. Punch Taverns – Britain's biggest operator – told shareholders that its Scottish pubs had held steady despite the introduction of a smoking ban. But can it last? Two other companies reported that Scotland's five-month smoking ban is hurting. Greene King and Rank Group said sales had suffered from the ban, but claimed that it was too early to say to what extent smokers would to light up outside pubs and clubs – or stay at home during the winter. Scotland banned smoking in enclosed public places from March 26th. Pub operator and brewer, Greene King, said drink sales had dropped 2.4% in May, June and July from the same period a year earlier, though this had been partly offset as the new smoke free environment boosted food sales.

Leisure companies have looked at the example of Ireland, which imposed the World's first nationwide smoking ban in 2004. According the Vintners Federation of Ireland, representing more than 5,500 publicans, drinks sales declined, jobs were lost and pubs closed in the twelve to eighteen months after the introduction of the ban.

Pub firm to spend £20m on smokers

Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries took over rival Jennings last year. It said recently that providing somewhere for smokers to go would counter any impact the change in the law may have on its business. The group, which has bought Burtonwood, Jennings Brothers and Celtic Inns in the past 18 months said it was "well positioned" for deals after predicting more consolidation in the pub industry, and it said food-serving pubs with gardens would be high on its target list as landlords braced themselves for the ban on smoking in English pubs.

W&D will have spent £8m on smoking zones, which also include garden areas, by the end of October and a further £12m in the year to October 2007. In the pubs it manages about 30% of its profits come from food, and it said this was likely to increase when the smoking ban was introduced.

"Food has become more and more important in our estate," chief executive Ralph Findlay said. "In those pubs where you take smoking out it is very clear that if you have a food-based business removing smoking is not an issue. He added: "Acquiring more pubs, we would look at the suitability with the smoking ban in mind. "That means we are more interested in pubs where food is more important, so that is community pubs which have outside trading areas."

The company runs breweries in Wolverhampton, Burton-on-Trent and Cockermouth, Cumbria producing ales including Marston's Pedigree, Jennings, and Mansfield Bitter.

The Word on the Street...

"Don't Drink & Drive"

The 20th Great Grampian Beer Festival at the beginning of November showed that a glass could be raised to road safety— beer connoisseurs and Grampian Police brewed up a safety message in the countdown to an annual celebration. The Aberdeen event, held at the McClymont Halls in Holburn Street, is the most northern in the CAMRA calendar.

The local members of CAMRA wanted to get across the message of responsible drinking, and information, particularly about alcohol and road safety, was printed on each of the festival's commemorative glasses, along with the warning 'Don't Drink and Drive'.

Festival organiser Richard Jones said, "Although one of our most important campaigns is to highlight the variety of real ales available for consumers, we are also dedicated to promoting responsible drinking. We're delighted the police have thrown their support behind our campaign". Head of the police roads department Chief Inspector Tom Forrester said: "This approach by CAMRA shows people that, with a little thought and planning, there's no reason why they can't enjoy a drink without getting behind the wheel."

Around 75 cask beers from around Britain were available, and the festival also offered soft drinks for those who opted to drive.

It's a Funny Old World

The theory is that beer contains female hormones and that by drinking enough beer, men could turn into women.

To test the theory, 100 men were given 8 pints of beer each to consume. Within a one hour period, it was then observed that 100% of the test subjects...

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) Gained weight; | 2) Talked excessively without making sense |
| 3) Became overly emotional | 4) Couldn't drive |
| 5) Failed to think rationally | 6) Argued over nothing |
| 7) Refused to apologize when obviously wrong | |

No further testing was considered necessary!!!!

~~~~~

### Why is beer froth always white?

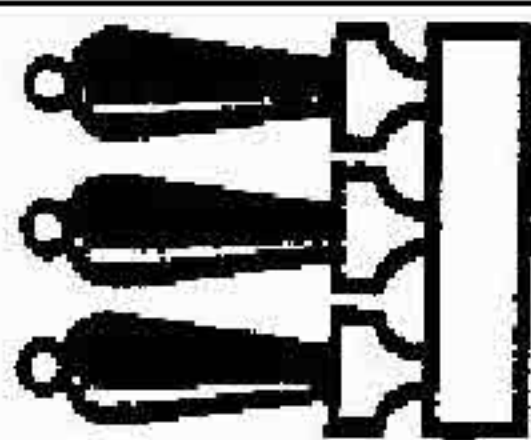
Beer foam consists of tiny bubbles of carbon dioxide, the walls of which are made up of various proteins and carbohydrates produced during the brewing process.

A colour is created because light of a certain wavelength is reflected.

Absorbent blond beer takes in all the light except light with the frequencies that give the blond colour. Beer froth is white because the walls of the tiny bubbles reflect all the light. Sometimes you can see some brown flecks in the foam: these probably from the iron compounds sometimes present in the beer that are pushed to the top by the bubbles.

**Source: Beer & Health**





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The Solihull Drinker is the newsletter of the Solihull & District  
Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign of 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](mailto: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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