

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

www.solihullcamra.org.uk

free

# Solihull Drinker

Issue No: 41

Summer 2007

## CYCLE YOUR WAY TO THE COACH AND HORSES

The Coach & Horses at the foot of Weatheroak Hill hosted their "Best of the Guest" beer festival at the end of April. With the clement weather rousing us out of hibernation it would have been churlish not to assemble a small team of slow cyclists and pay it a visit.

They had about twenty beers, the emphasis on pale ale and session bitter. Old favourites Exmoor Gold, Hop back Summer Lightening and Kelham Island Pale Rider were complemented by local and Black Country brews. The Coach and Horses is the home of Weatheroak Brewery and their fine ales were served from firkins racked up behind the bar alongside the others. All the beers were in excellent condition. Woods Hopping Mad (4.7%) was a biscuity beer of the Progress hops and crystal malt type. I have had grapefruit juice that does not taste as grapefruity as Millstone Grit (5%). Perhaps the most enjoyable beer I drank was my first one, Weatheroak Light Ale (3.6%), a moreish session bitter. There is nothing like a long cycle ride on a sunny day to make your beer delicious.



CAMRA optimistically calls May "Mild Month," but the drinkers at the Coach & Horses have not been listening. In a festival of this size the Coach could have varied the palette with a porter or stout. Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Ale, which is not even called Mild any more, could have replaced one of the other Black Country beers. In fairness, it was still only April.

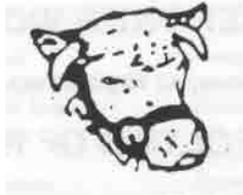
The Peacock is a short but steep distance away up Icknield Street. Of we three intrepid cyclists, the climb had the first of us off and pushing and the second defeated by a chain scraunched into an uncustomary low gear. All of which was most amusing to the third. The Romans would have built differently had they been on their bicycles.



The Peacock was worth the climb. Refurbished and rationalised, it has become more of an eaterie than a drinkery since the days when it used to sell Judges delectable ales from a quirkily shaped bar. However, it has remained faithful to Hobsons and Enville breweries and the beers are as well kept as ever.

Overly refreshed and refuelled, I pedalled my 27 miles home like bezoomny. What's it going to be then, eh? A long hot thirsty summer relieved only by trips to the pub. It's only nine miles from Solihull town centre to Weatheroak and no fun by public transport or car—get your bikes out! Harry Porter

**Inside: Don't miss the Dates for your Diary**



# THE BULL'S HEAD

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***Summer's here at last and the beer garden beckons, with a sunny or shady spot for you and a carefully crafted pint from the bar. If it's chilly, then come indoors for a warm welcome—whatever the weather.***

## Pub and Brewery Watch

### **The Bartons Arms, Aston**

- Beer Festival: June 21st—24th
- Sunday Afternoon Blues: every other Sunday at 3.00pm (free)
- Birmingham International Jazz Fest: July 6th—15th  
four bands on over period. Contact pub on 0121 333 5988

### **Adnams sees bottle benefits**

Southwold based brewery Adnams has cut CO2 emissions by redesigning its beer bottles, it claims. The new bottle design and manufacturing process reduces Adnams glass usage by 624 mt of glass per year, saving 415 mt/yr CO2. Under the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, the UK's Phase 2 National Allocation Plan lists 18 brewing and distillation installations, with an average allocation of approximately 30,000 EU Allowances per year.

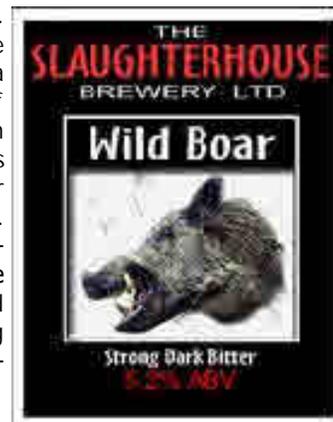
### **The Colebrook**

Another one of our patch's Ember Inn's has been awarded Cask Marque Accreditation. The Colebrook on Haslucks Green Road was listed in a recent edition of 'What's Brewing'. Well done—it's no mean feat for a pub to get Cask Marque listed!

### **The Slaughterhouse Brewery wins Champion Beer of Warwickshire 2007**

Wild Boar, a 5.2% rich dark vinous ale brewed by Warwick's Slaughterhouse Brewery, has received the accolade of Champion Beer of Warwickshire 2007. At the presentation ceremony held at the Newbold Comyn Arms in Leamington Spa, Wild Boar fought off stiff competition from the county's other microbreweries. Popular brewery Church End were runners up with 'Goats Milk' whilst the Atomic brewery of Rugby were the bronze medal winners.

For 5 weeks, from the 3rd of March 2007, CAMRA Heart of Warwickshire and The Newbold Comyn Arms hosted the "Grate" Warwickshire Beer Festival and competition to find the Champion Beer of Warwickshire 2007. All the county's breweries were invited to enter one of their regular beers. The show had two semi finals and a final comprising the six most popular beers. Beers were only identified by a letter and real ale lovers were invited to give marks out of 10 and to have fun by trying to guess the brewer of each beer. Receiving the award from the Newbold Comyn Arms landlord, Nick Wormald, brewers Steve Ridgway and Peter Knell expressed their delight at winning the competition. 'It's especially nice to win an award voted for by the drinking public', said Peter. 'Wild Boar is brewed using pale malt together with both light and dark crystal malts, and has a peppery hoppy finish. We are going to start bottling beer soon' added Steve 'starting with Wild Boar, so winning this competition is a great boost.'





## Four Breweries and a Festival...part 3

Every Autumn the Solihull branch of CAMRA take a long weekend away somewhere in the country sampling the delights and visiting breweries peculiar to that area.

Last October the Yorkshire Lass, Knaresborough was our home base from where our intrepid crew stood up well to three days of solid drinking. In the last edition of the Drinker I left you on Friday night having experienced a pub crawl of Harrogate, a visit to Roosters Brewery, topped off by a pub crawl of York.

Saturday was to be our "day out" including two brewery visits, an unusual beer festival and a pub crawl. Were we up to it ... you bet! We were all suitably breakfasted and opposite our digs awaiting the coach which promptly turned up at 10.30 ready to take us to our first brewery, Naylor's at Crosshills, just outside Keighley. In common with many other micro breweries Naylor's has a pub next door which serves the breweries beers. The pub opened its doors and as we arrived at 11am so a quick pint was called for before touring the brewery. The Old White Bear is a traditional pub with a history stretching back to 1735. It has a rambling multi-roomed interior with much space given over to food. However there is a comfortable lounge/bar with a games room where "Ring the Bull" can be played. Some locals showed us how this was done... we tried, but failed miserably! Whilst attempting to ring the bull we noted the bar propped up Naylor's Mothers Best; Wilkies Wobbler; Sparkey's Monday Night Mild and Hart Liberator, all at a very reasonable price. Adlestons Country Cider was also available on handpump. I tried the Monday Night Mild which at 3.4% was a nice light beer to start the day off with.

Brewing at the Old White Bear began in the 1990's and when the old brewer moved to Keighley the Naylor family took it over with Steve and Robert managing the brewery operation. It was Steve who showed us around the brewery which has been in operation since 2005. Steve told us that there are plans afoot to move the brewery to a nearby industrial estate as there is no room for expansion at the Bear. At present they have an eight barrel plant capable of brewing two and a half brews a week. We were intrigued by the names given to the beers to which Steve responded that they were all called after ex and present pub customers and looking at the number of customers in the pub they had they won't run short of names for their beers!



*Outside Naylor's...Steve Naylor is fifth from the left*

Our next port of call was luckily not too far away, being the Turkey Inn at Goose Eye. It is approached by steep twisting lanes and is in a secluded valley not far from Keighley. Home of the Turkey



*Bob, our leader first in the pub again!  
The Turkey Inn at Goose Eye*

Brewery, the pub is not particularly memorable inside consisting of one long room with alcoves. At the far end is a separate room sporting a pool table. Harry Brisland, the publican/brewer was behind the bar and having introduced ourselves we naturally set about charging our glasses. On handpump were Tetley Bitter; Greene King IPA and Abbott [no takers there then]; Turkey Bitter, Turkey Lost John's and Goose Eye Brewery's No Eye Deer. Naturally we all tried the Turkey brewery beers. The Bitter was OK, but alas the Lost John's was way past its best or maybe had never even reached it. Harry offered us all a free drink which we all thanked him for.

On enquiring what beer we all had chosen I found that we all had ordered the Goose Eye beer, which was in excellent condition.

Gathering us all together we followed Harry into the small brewery at the back of the pub, where he explained his brewing technique. Set up in 2000, he uses Styrian Golding and Goldings hops as his main hops but uses Challenger hops in the Lost John. I had the impression that he was very much an amateur brewer. The brewery was not as clean as I had seen others, with flies around the copper. Could this lack of cleanliness account for the poor quality beer in the bar we all wondered?

Probably very aware that we had all chosen the guest beer in preference to his own, Harry was keen to tap one of the casks in the brewery for us to try. In contrast to those in the pub it tasted really good, so Turkey's challenge would appear to be consistency. After having our pre-booked lunch we piled into the coach and were on our way to another star attraction of the weekend, The Worth Valley Railway and their annual beer festival.

We arrived at the railway station in Keighley just in time to board the steam train to take us to Oxenholme where the festival was taking place. A very reasonable £4 was charged for the rail fare and entrance fee to the festival and to top it all we didn't have to wait for a drink as the train served real ale. Disappointingly what met our eyes was Adnams Broadside; Everards Tiger and a more acceptable Hop Back Crop Circle. I investigated further whilst the others got in their Crop Circle. Tucked away at the other end of the train was a carriage with Old Spot Golden Wonder; Bank Top Volunteer Bitter and Timothy Taylor Havercake Ale. I quickly imparted this news to those who had not yet ordered a beer and an orderly scramble was made in that direction!



*Alighting at Oxenholme from our trusty steed*

We all sat back relaxed enjoying the Yorkshire countryside with a beer in our hand and in no time at all were alighting at Oxenholme ready and relatively fit to tackle the beer festival.



*Worth Valley Beer Festival at Oxenholme*

The festival takes place in the Engine Shed of the Worth Valley Railway. Whilst drinking your beer you can take a look at some of the locomotives and rolling stock housed therein. Meanwhile on stage there was live entertainment which was admirably supported by over one hundred beers, ciders, perrys and foreign beers. Which to try? We came to the conclusion that sharing beers might be a good idea, so amongst those I tried were Downton Quad Hop; Copper Dragon Black Gold; Mitchell Eastwood Eden Bitter and Watermill, Ings Collie Wobbles, all in superb condition. To ensure we fulfilled our schedule for the night, we boarded the bus and made our way up onto the moors to visit the Waggon and Horses, reputed to be the highest pub in West Yorkshire. The pub was heaving due to the festival and it was with difficulty that we found a seat. Turning to the beers on tap, there were five ales, Holden's Black Country Bitter; Millstone Autumn Leaves; Timothy Taylor Havercake Ale and the two I tried, Hawkshead Lakeland Gold and Newby Wyke Kingston Topaz, both in top form. Real cider was also available for those so inclined.

The pub itself has nothing noteworthy about it but both the staff and other drinkers were very friendly and conversation came easy. In fact it was with some reluctance that we gathered ourselves together to finish off the evening with a pub crawl of Skipton, which is a pleasant market town made more so by its castle and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

It also has a fair number of pubs of which three were on our list of must do's.

Our first port of call was the Narrowboat. It has a small bar over which is a balconied area, and since my last visit it had extended into the premises next door. Here we took the chance of a bite to eat and downed beers from an impressive list that included Copper Dragon Golden Pippin; Goose Eye K&WVS; Black Sheep Bitter; Abbeydale Matins; Thwaites Dark Mild; Caledonian Deuchar's IPA and Timothy Taylor Landlord. I tried the Copper Dragon and Abbeydale to find them in great form. We then tootled off to the Woolley Sheep hoping to give the Timmy Taylor range a good going over, only to find it heaving with young folk on the circuit and behind the bar only Golden Best, Best Bitter and Landlord. Some of the party had a beer but I went on to the grand finale. The Royal Shepherd is the brewery tap of Copper Dragon Brewery, based on the outskirts of Skipton. The pub was quite quiet after the noise in the Woolley Sheep, indeed it appealed to those wishing to imbibe their beers sedately. It is a multi-roomed pub and serves a range of Copper Dragon beers. On sale whilst we were there was Scott's 1816, Best Bitter, Black Gold and Golden Pippin all in good form. And so our weekend came to an end. Discussion on next year's trip was rife in the coach on the way back to Knaresborough, so much so that Kevin and Gordon offered to organise one in the Exeter area. A roar of approval was quickly followed by gentle snoring and in no time at all we were back in Knaresborough where some dropped off at Blind Jacks to finish off the night whilst others thought it best to hit the hay for Sunday was to see us head our separate ways home and no doubt, as in my case, slip into one or two pubs on the way.



*The Royal Shepherd, Skipton.  
Copper Dragon's brewery tap*

Steve Dyson (Photos by Gordon Clarke)



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### Partner's Details (if Joint Membership)

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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 .....

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## The Enforcer

Local councils will be duty-bound to enforce the new anti-smoking law which comes into effect in England on 1 July. But how are authorities in Scotland ensuring their own ban, passed a year earlier, is obeyed? John Rafferty is undercover. Plain-clothed and incognito behind his pint of Belhaven Best, he quietly scans the revellers in a packed Edinburgh pub. But the 50-year-old former policeman is no Inspector Rebus, hunting out vice and corruption at the dark heart of affluent Auld Reekie. Nor are his targets the junkies and thieves made notorious by Irvine Welsh's portrayals of the city. Instead, he is on the lookout for Scotland's newest breed of outlaws: smokers.

John is an enforcement officer for the City of Edinburgh Council, charged with making sure the ban on smoking in enclosed public spaces is observed. "Recently, in one pub the barman lit up," he chuckles. "I had a phone call about it and sent someone in to have a word within the hour."

On 1 July, smoking in enclosed public places will be banned across the UK. Scotland and Wales already have such a ban; Northern Ireland will do soon; England's ban starts 1 July.

"But in general, we're not a blue-light service. Our approach is softly-softly. If there's a problem we try to talk it through." His carefully-balanced carrot-and-stick approach has paid dividends in an area where it was widely predicted the ban would create havoc. Perhaps more than any other city in the UK, Edinburgh's identity is closely bound up with its dark, gloomy drinking dens - a fug of smoke always having hung inside them alongside the smell of hops and a murmur of Caledonian accents.

The Scottish press predicted that the ban would be impossible to enforce, that 5,000 bar staff would lose their jobs, that violence would soar as drinkers refused to put out their cigarettes. But in defiance of all the scare stories, the ban has proved an unqualified success since it came into effect in March 2006. In a city where it is estimated that 23-25% of the population are smokers, the air of every pub and nightclub is tar-free. Only nine fixed-penalty notices have been issued by the council for breaches of the new law. Just one of these was given to a licensed premise - and even that was a pub which put up an outdoor shelter incorrectly.

With a gaggle of smokers dutifully congregating outside the doorway of every watering hole, John believes that it has only been because the public have policed themselves that the law has been so broadly upheld. John Rafferty says "The fact is that pub regulars don't want to see their local closed down," "If anyone starts smoking, the landlord or landlady stands up and says: 'Right, the bar's closed.' The regulars then make sure it doesn't stay closed for long. In one pub in Leith, I heard about a bloke who was flung out the door by all the other drinkers when he lit up."

Indeed, many bar owners have found trade has risen as customers enjoy the novelty of smoke-free drinking. At the Hampton Hotel near Murrayfield stadium, supervisor Marta Krupa, 27, greets John warmly when he drops by for a quick check-up. "Not only have more people been coming in, it's great for me not having to go home stinking of smoke," she says.

He is pragmatic about the need to keep the local licensed trade onside but John is a passionate supporter of the ban and the impact it has made on public health in Scotland. His own father died aged 54 after a lifetime of heavy smoking, and he tells of an acquaintance who lost both her legs as a result, he believes, of passive smoking.

Only on a couple of occasions have there been drawbacks. For a while he was forced to start his working days at dawn after receiving a tip-off that some of Edinburgh's dockside bars, which open at 0600 hours, were flouting the ban because they assumed no-one would get up early enough to check on them.

With his face having become well-known around the city, there are few places he can go without being jokingly asked by revellers if he fancies a ciggie or whether he's got a light.

"Doesn't bother me in the slightest," John smiles. "As long as they know I'm out there, that's my job done."

*How will (has) the ban effect you?, comments to the editor please.*

## The History of Solihull CAMRA

2007 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Solihull & District Branch of CAMRA. In this, the first of two articles, we look at the years before the Branch came into being.

The story starts in 1971. During a holiday in Ireland, four friends from the North West of England were so disappointed in beer quality that they decided action was required. Three were journalists (Michael Hardman, Graham Lees, Bill Mellor) the fourth a brewery employee (Jim Makin). Their concerns were a result of the dominance at that time of six brewers in Britain (Bass, Allied Breweries, Courage, Scottish & Newcastle, Whitbread and Watney). Because these giants of the industry were responsible for over 80% of beer production and controlled more than half of the pubs in which beer was sold, they were able to replace cask ale in many pubs with the inferior but more profitable pressurised keg beer. As a result many beers were too fizzy, with no character and no taste, so the decision was taken in March 1971 to form a Campaign for the Revitalisation of Ale.

The first Annual General Meeting was held at the Rose Inn, Nuneaton, in 1972, and 20 people turned up. By the time of the second AGM in 1973 there were more than 1,000 members on the books, and the name of the organisation was changed to the more pronounceable Campaign for Real Ale. As a result, membership grew rapidly and soon branches were starting up around the country.

One of the earliest branches to be formed was in Coventry, in August 1974, which at that time struggled to cover an enormous area of the Midlands. At about this time local Solihull resident Clive Deacon joined the Campaign. He was soon to become a familiar face around the Midlands, spending time on the Committees of Tamworth and Stourbridge Branches.

1974 also saw the launch of the Good Beer Guide, CAMRA's flagship publication. Solihull area selections were put forward by the then over-stretched Coventry Branch, so perhaps understandably local entries for the initial editions tended to be in villages within easy reach of Coventry and Warwick, such as Shrewley, Hampton, Henley & Dorridge.

Surprisingly, it was not until the late 1970's that Birmingham Branch was formed, though the Solihull area still remained under the jurisdiction of what was by then the Coventry & Mid Warwickshire Branch.

By the early 1980's, increasing membership had led to the possibility of a Solihull Branch. Clive Deacon had been joined by Malcolm Glass and Andy Lyndon, and between them they set about trying to make this happen. An important supporter in those early days was Mike Fox. The initial Chairman of Birmingham Branch, he agreed to hold one of their Branch meetings in May 1982 at the Golden Lion (now the Town House), Solihull in order to test local support, followed by a Committee Meeting a week later. 4 Solihull members attended the first meeting, 6 attended the second. It wasn't an auspicious start. Indeed, Colin Smart, the Area Organiser for Midlands Branches at the time was heard to say "nice try, but it ain't gonna happen". He was of the opinion that Branch status for Solihull probably wasn't feasible at that time, and that a sub-Branch of Coventry was more likely.

What a cliff-hanger! Is this the end of Solihull CAMRA? Will the Area Organiser's comments inspire local members to succeed against all the odds?. See Part Two in the next Solihull Drinker for the thrilling conclusion to this story.

Steve Wood

### Walsall brew in Threshers

Walsall's Highgate Brewery unveiled a new distribution agreement with off-licence giant Thresher which saw its range of bottled beers sold in Midlands branches of the store from April 18th. Thresher has rolled out a range of local beers in its 1,800 stores delivered from breweries within 40 miles of the shop. The beers are accompanied by a leaflet from the Society of Independent Brewers offering tasting notes on each store's range. John Bartley of Highgate Brewery said "Consumers are increasingly on the lookout for individual food and drink products by local producers". Thresher CE Roger Whiteside added that there was a huge demand for local produce at Thresher stores.



# Dates For Your Diary

## Socials

30th June	Black Country Pub-crawl by Tram
29th July	Knowle Ramble
18th August	Worcestershire Beer Festival
6th—9th September	Exeter: long weekend away
13th October	Branch Silver Jubilee party: Red Lion, Knowle

## Branch Meetings

Monday 4th June	The Boat, Catherine De Barnes
Monday 2nd July	The White Swan, Henley in Arden (TBC)
Monday 6th August	Fleur-de-Lys, Lowsonford (TBC)
Monday 3rd September	British Legion, Solihull town centre (TBC)
Monday 1st October	Drawbridge, Haslucks Green (TBC)

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

## Special Events

Thursday 14th June Fieldhouse, Monkspath—Pub of the Year presentation

*For meetings/socials yet to be confirmed or if more details are needed, visit our website: [www.SolihullCamra.org.uk](http://www.SolihullCamra.org.uk), or contact Branch Secretary Steve Wood on 0121 704 5258.*

## Forthcoming Beer Festivals

12-15 July	Bromsgrove Branch
7-11 August	Great British Beer Festival, London
25-27 August	Rowington Club
5-6 October	Solihull & District

## Membership Matters

It's That time of year again—**Fathers' Day** on Sunday 17th June, and what do you buy your Dad?

CAMRA membership, of course—£22 for a single person for one year, or £20 if paying by direct debit. Joint memberships are also available for not much more than the cost of a single, and concessionary rates are also purchasable—for info, visit [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk) or phone on 01727 867201.

Membership will bring the CAMRA HQ monthly newsletter with details of ongoing campaigns, plus pub and brewery news, including details of local meetings and discounts at CAMRA beer festivals.

Sign your Dad up from the web-site or fill in the form on page 7 of this magazine—and then encourage him to make the most of his local pubs and brews!

Carl Wright

## Gloucestershire and Cotswold Brewery Trip

*We do like our Socials!! This time on Saturday 19th May we were bound for several breweries in the Gloucestershire and Cotswolds areas. Here's how the day went.*

Something most CAMRA members come to know is that no two breweries are quite the same. They all have their own distinctive way of doing things - a major factor in the fabulous diversity of British beers. Consequently, you never know quite what to expect from a brewery trip. No doubt with this in mind, Robert Cawte, our organiser for this trip, suggested a way for the trip report to reflect this unpredictability: by having it written on the move, with a different author for each section.

Our first stop was the Uley Brewery, deep in rural Gloucestershire. According to head brewer Ken Lush, breweries fall into two categories: heritage centres and working premises. Despite its honey-coloured stone exterior, Uley falls firmly into the second category. It was purpose-built in 1833, when the village of Uley boasted around a dozen pubs compared with its present complement of one. After a long period of dereliction it was reopened by its present owner, Chas Wright. It is a traditional Victorian tower brewery, which means that the brewing process works downwards from the top of the brewery, assisted by gravity. Our genial and laid-back host Ken explained the process.

On the top level, a liquor tank holds the untreated spring water with which everything begins. To protect its purity, locals are forbidden from using any chemicals on their land. The liquor (the term used inexplicably but universally by brewers for water) is piped down into the mash tun, where it is mixed with malted barley to extract the natural sugars. Uley use two malts: Maris Otter and Crystal, which they get from Tuckers Maltings in Devon. After infusing for an hour and a half the sugary liquid - called wort - is drained from the mash tun (bought second-hand from Mendip Brewery) into the huge, slightly rusty (on the outside - it gleams on the inside where it counts) copper, essentially a two-storey-high industrial kettle, where it is boiled for about two hours and the hops added.

Uley generally double-hop their beers, adding Fuggles or Goldings a quarter of an hour into the boil for bitterness and Challenger at the end for aroma. The exception to this is their Gilt Edge (4.5% ABV), which is triple-hopped. Most Uley beers have pig-related names: Old Spot, Hogshead etc. (a gilt is a sow which has not yet had its first litter).

From the copper, the wort is piped through a heat-exchanger - cooling the wort and simultaneously heating the next batch of brewing liquor - and into the fermenting vessel. Although the fermenting room was off-limits, being a small space with open vessels, Ken explained what went on inside. Uley uses its own yeast, stored off-site by specialists BRI. Each batch used nine times before being replaced.

After a fascinating tour we traversed into the vaulted cellar where casks of Uley Bitter, Old Spot, Pig's Ear and (my personal favourite) Gilt Edge had been tapped for us to sample. A beautifully cool underground cellar, full of excellent beer - mind your head and help yourself! It doesn't get much better than that.



**This is Kevin Clarke, Uley, handing over to Chris Ryan for the next leg of the trip...**

The second stop of the day was at the Woolpack in Slad. Here we were quickly reacquainted with the Old Spot, Pigs Ear and Uley Bitter. St.Austell Tribute and Bulmers cider were also available. The Uley beers were certainly in good form, tasting as good as they did half an hour ago in the Uley brewery. The Woolpack's claim to fame is that it was Laurie Lee's local and features in his book 'Cider with Rosie'. There are wonderful views across open countryside and a sizable outdoor deck



area from which to enjoy them. The pub dates back to the 16th century and with the exception of the modern food service and preparation area its interior has many original features - a cosy bar and a more slightly more generously proportioned end room. We received a warm welcome from the friendly, if somewhat overwhelmed staff. The food was good, local produce, which was somewhat erratically priced - The Steak sandwich at £5.50 was considered good value, however £2.50 for a few radishes, a tomato

and a bit of lettuce seemed a bit on the high side.

### **Chris Ryan in Slad, handing over to Alan Duffy...**

Arriving at Wychwood Brewery we were greeted in the souvenir shop by our guide offering us some beer (always a good start especially as the Cup Final was just starting and the footie fans amongst us needed some form of distraction). This visit was probably a first for Solihull CAMRA as it is now 2 breweries in 1 since they have taken over the brewing of Brakspears using their original recipes.

Wychwood was originally established in the 1830s by the Clinch family and was known as Eagle Brewery, operating with its own maltings—more common in that era. They ceased trading in 1963 and remained closed until the early 80s when Glenny started brewing under the name Glenny Wychwood. The Glenny was dropped in the early 1990s.

They brew up to 1000 barrels a week on weekdays with 8 of the 80 employees involved in the process. Their main range consists of Brakspears Bitter & Special, Wychwood Best Bitter, & Hobgoblin (think of the brilliant "lager boy" adverts.) but they also brew organic beers – Circlemaster from Wychwood and Organic Honey beer from Brakspears.; plus organic ale for Prince Charles' Duchy Originals range.

Most beers are made using crystal or chocolate malt, Burtonised Thames water and pelletised hops (shame, they don't smell nearly as good as the fresh ones). Separate yeast strains are maintained for Brakspears, and the old Copper and Fermenting vessels have been transported from the old Henley on Thames Brewery. They also continue to use the unique Brakspear's "Double Drop" method where the liquor is fermented in a high level vessel and then dropped down into a low level vessel to complete the fermentation process. This method oxygenates the liquor. In this way, Wychwood hope to recreate the original Brakspear's taste.

After the tour, we ended up in the sampling room (as you do). We were then offered rather small samples of their range of bottled beers. Whilst they were interesting, I personally would rather have gone back to the draught ales we sampled on arrival. In any event, we had to make a hasty departure to try and make up some lost time.

One final thing. If you do visit Wychwood, do look out for pictures of "male model" Chris who, we are assured, is a genuine employee in the brew house.



*(Continued on page 16)*

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Saturday 21st July: Live Music with The Temptation

August 25th, 26th and 27th: 2nd Annual Beer Festival: live music each day, plus BBQs, pig roasts, raffles, competitions: in fact plenty to keep everyone amused all day long and much, much more!!

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

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(Continued from page 13)

And now, from Alan Duffy to Gordon Clarke for an account of our next port of call.

We approached the final brewery of the day with some trepidation. A bus-load of ale drinkers on our way to a lager factory. Surely this was against CAMRA's constitution, wasn't it?



The setting was delightful. The village of Foscot lies deep in the heart of the countryside, quite close to... well nothing, actually. The brewery is housed in a large barn, on a farm right at the southern edge of the village. Richard Keene, our host, started the Cotswold Brewing Company ([www.CotswoldBrewingCompany.co.uk](http://www.CotswoldBrewingCompany.co.uk)) in 2005 with equipment bought from the USA. The inside of the brewery is unlike any other brewery we've visited before. Although it has the usual mash tun and copper (actually a lauter tun and kettle, in lager brewing terms), long lines of conical-based fermenting vessels

take up most of the floor space.

Richard, a graduate of Heriot-Watt University, talked knowledgeably about the brewing process. He invited us to sample a Cotswold Premium lager (5% ABV) while he explained both the similarities and differences between lager and ale brewing, and also the difference between mass-produced lagers and his own product. Until yeast is added to the wort, it could easily be an ale. From that point the story changes. Ale uses top-fermenting yeast that produces a barm (a foamy yellow head) on the wort. Lager uses bottom-fermenting yeast that produces no barm. The fermenting vessels are sealed at the top and fresh yeast for the next brew is cropped from the bottom of the conical base of the vessel. Fermentation occurs at a lower temperature than ales, typically around 11°C rather than the 23°C required for ales. Once fermented, Cotswold lager is then stored for 4-6 weeks ("lager" is the German word for "store") where it slowly develops a natural carbonation and the taste evolves.

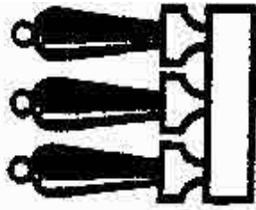
We were encouraged to sample the other beers at various stages of fermentation; some still sweet, cloudy and low in alcohol; some clearer but lacking the typical lager fizz. You feel rather silly filling a pint glass from a 12-foot high lagering tank, but these things have to be done. What became apparent to us was that the hop aroma, imparted by hop pellets added during the boil, was slowly reduced during the long lagering. We also tasted Cotswold Three Point Eight and a Weissbier (brewed from malted wheat rather than barley). We noticed that one of the vessels was labelled a little differently to the others, and Richard let us try the bitter he was brewing for Ridgeway Brewing (a "cuckoo" brewer that has no brewing premises of its own).



This was a fascinating insight into areas of brewing we were not familiar with and a very enjoyable way to spend a sunny Saturday afternoon. Unconstitutional? No. This is lager made with care and attention, not chemicals and gas.

Gordon Clarke, signing off.

*Ed's comment: It was great to have 3 new faces with us who are hopefully going to become members!! Well done to Robert for a great trip. If this report whets your appetite, please contact one of the Branch officials—we would be only too pleased to see you on another occasion!*



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## The Word on the Street...

### **CAMRA LAUNCHES BEER CLUB TO INCREASE KNOWLEDGE OF BEER STYLES**

CAMRA is delighted to announce the launch of the CAMRA Beer Club - a new scheme that will deliver a case of 20-top quality bottled real ales direct to your door for just £39.99 a month plus postage and packing. This new initiative is a major step forward in their promotion of real ale in a bottle and in offering greater benefits to CAMRA members. As a member of the CAMRA Beer Club you will discover and enjoy a whole range of specialist beers that are currently not widely available in supermarkets or pubs. Every British beer is bottle-conditioned and some collections will feature authentic 'World Explorer' beers. It's a great way to expand on your knowledge of beer!

Every three months the CAMRA Beer Club will put together a collection of five different beers (four bottles of each). You will also receive tasting notes written by their resident guest experts. All those chosen will be high-quality examples of their type, will have distinctive character, and will come from brewers who are committed to diversity and quality.

CAMRA Chief Executive Mike Benner said: "CAMRA would always prefer that people enjoy a cask ale at the pub. However we also accept there are many occasions when people do drink at home. In these instances we would prefer that people drink real ale in a bottle rather than canned beer products. CAMRA's policy is also to promote real ale in a bottle (British bottle-conditioned products). We believe that this is the next best thing to cask ale that you enjoy at the pub. The club aims to make available beers that might have not previously or easily been available to CAMRA Beer Club members in bottle form. By increasing people's knowledge, and by widening their awareness of different beer styles, we hope that they may also have the confidence to try different styles of cask ales at the pub."

*There is a joining fee. For more information, visit CAMRA HQ's websites [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk), [www.camrabeerclub.co.uk](http://www.camrabeerclub.co.uk) or ring them on 01727 798434*

### **RESPONSE TO OUR 'OLD SOLHIHULL PUB NAMES' FEATURES**

David Roberts of Dorridge writes: 'I enjoy reading your magazine and was interested in Steve Wood's articles about the changed names of local public houses, in particular the White Lion in Bentley Heath, now the Drum and Monkey. Can I offer another suggestion which my granddad used to when as kids 50 years ago we used to come out from Moseley in his Austin for a ride in the country. As we drove past the Drum and Monkey, he used to say the pub was once the White Lion and that the gable end had been un-whitewashed for many years when weather streaks on the gable made the shape of a monkey apparently playing a drum. The interpretation of the weathering led to the renaming of the pub about 1930.'

*An interesting interpretation from David—thanks for getting in touch. Any more out there folks?*

## It's a Funny Old World

### **WHOSE JOB**

This is a story about four people

Named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.

There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it.

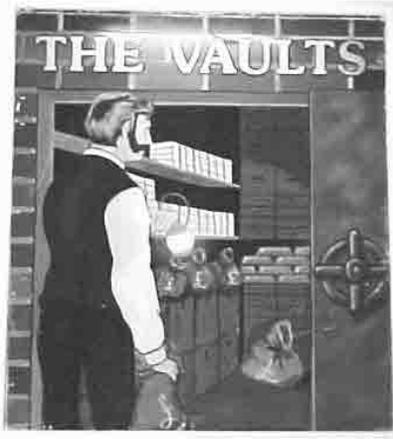
Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it.

Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job.

Everybody thought could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it.

It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done!

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All contributions, comments and enquiries should  
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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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