

Solihull Drinker

Issue No: 55

Winter.2010

2010 Beer Festival



Solihull Mayor Cllr Ian Courts and Silhill Brewery owner Mark Gregory (photo courtesy of Seven Star Photography)

The 2-
d a y
1 2 t h
Solihull
& Dist-
rict
CAMRA
beer
festival
went

Punk IPA and the powerful 6.6% Ex-
moor Beast.

Featured was a new beer, Four Per
Cent, by the new Silhill Brewery and
owner Mark Gregory was on hand at
the opening to watch festival-goers'
reactions as they tasted it for the first
time.

This year's theme was Oktoberfest,
and the Warwick University Wind and
Brass Oompah Band serenaded drink-
ers on Saturday evening with a medley
of Bavarian tunes.

Saturday
lunchtime
saw our first
ever home-
brew competi-
tion, with
Perry Clarke
as the well-
deserved win-
ner. We hope



CAMRA's Regional Director Gary Timmins presents Perry Clarke with his prize

to run it again next year in a bigger
and better format, and we hope you'll
be there to see it.

Here's to the 13th festival in 2011!

bang and an oompah, as over 600
people visited the Royal British Legion
in Solihull town centre to sample the
40 real ales on offer at the beginning
of October. The festival was opened
by Solihull Mayor Cllr Ian Courts, with
Tom Lackey, local wingwalker, in at-
tendance.

The beers ranged from session ales
such as the CAMRA Champion Beer of
Great Britain 2010, Castle Rock Har-
vest Pale, which understandably sold
out in only two hours, through best
bitters Blackwater Darkness and North
Cotswold Sorachi, and strong old ales
Acorn Pacific Jade IPA and Salamander
Werewolf Porter, to the 6.0% Brewdog

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Winter in England—at best, the air crisp and clean—at worst, damp, dank and dismal. So lift your spirits in our bars with their real fires, where you can sup an excellent pint, or in our restaurant where your pint and the best seasonal food awaits you. We're looking forward to seeing you soon!

Beer is Beauty!!

Businesswoman and freelance journalist Marverine Cole has experienced one of those blinding revelations that come to us now and then—that Real Ale is a Good Thing!



Marverine Cole

Marverine was introduced to real ale by her fiancé and his brother earlier this year, and instantly realised that beer-drinking might be thought of as a man-thing, but it need not be! The fact that so many styles of real ale are now available to consumers—from the palest to the darkest—and that beer is far lower in calories than spirits, wine, and cider—means that it really ought to appeal to ladies far more than it does. Marverine promptly set out on a mission

to change the female opinion of beer, starting by organising a ladies-only Beer Beauty Evening.

Ladies were invited to come to The Studio in central Birmingham on September 8th for an evening which promised to teach the most beer-shy girl about real ale, with talks and tastings. Some 70 ladies from the West Midlands eagerly came along to be regaled with nine great real ales from three of the West Midland's breweries: Purity, Holdens and Marston's. Each explained a little about their brewery's history and brewing methods, then the ladies were invited to taste three ales from each brewery. Hints were also given about what food would go best with each ale. The evening was rounded off by a short speech from representatives from Solihull and Birmingham CAMRA branches on their forthcoming beer festivals.

The evening was a resounding success—it was clear that many attendees were surprised how much they liked the beers, and many said that they would order beer in pubs the future—some even said they would venture into a beer festival for the first time!



For more information about Beer Beauty and future events, visit www.beerbeauty.co.uk.

Happy sampling on the night

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

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

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

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Solihull CAMRA 2010 ©

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Copy deadline for advertising and contributions will be Wednesday 16th February, 2011.

For complaints about short measures, contact Solihull Trading Standards on 0121 704 6844

Hail to the Ale!

Local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

The White Lion, Hampton-in-Arden

The White Lion re-opened in late September under the new management of Chris Roach and Francoise Bude, with their able team led by Theresa Biss. The five handpumps, initially Brew XI, Purity Mad Goose, St Austell Tribute and Black Sheep, now joined by Sharp's Doombar are all well-kept ales and the restaurant is proving very popular, with a wide-ranging a la carte menu and roasts a speciality on Sundays. Bookings have been thick and fast so don't leave it till the last moment to decide to eat there!

Bernies Real Ale Off-Licence, Shirley

Great news for real ale lovers: Bernies re-opened on Friday 12th November. The beers on tap on opening night were Phoenix White Monk, Pictish Alchemy, Timothy Taylor Landlord and Thornbridge Jaipur. With two spare handpumps still in reserve this promises further delights to come. The bottled beer stocks are currently running at 170 varieties, so plenty of choice there, especially with Christmas coming up as there is a 10% discount being offered on purchases of 8 or more bottles.



Photo by Robert Cawte

The Lincoln Poacher, Olton

The Lincoln Poacher is apparently undergoing a £1/4million refurbishment, and the BrewCo is looking for a local couple to run it. Real ale is subsequently expected to be on offer. No date is known for the re-opening, but should anyone visit, please write or email your thoughts and opinions of the change to the Editor's address on page 3.

Wadworth Brewery

Wadworth beers are rolling into town—Wadworth 6X is now on tap at various pubs across the Solihull area. Go to page 18 for further details, and page 19 for a chance to win a case of Wadworth's 6X.

The Bull's Head, Barston

The one evening in the week that the Bull's Head doesn't supply meals from their own kitchen is on a Sunday. However, they have a new ace up their sleeve to offer diners. If you fancy a pint or two there on a Sunday evening and would also like to eat, they can provide you with an Indian or a Chinese takeaway menu, both from local firms, then will phone your order through, supply the crockery and cutlery, and do the washing up afterwards—you just pay the delivery person for your meal then lift your knife and fork. For further details, call the pub on 01675 442830.

The Saxon Inn, Cheswick Green

It is reported that the Saxon Inn, now under new management, now has 3 real ales on regularly at all times, although sources and quality vary from visit to visit. Still, a very good improvement on previous offerings and one to watch for the future. If anyone has any updates, please send to the usual email or postal addresses.

The Silhill Brewery

Solihull CAMRA is delighted to welcome the Silhill Brewery to our midst. This new brewery, co-owned by local man Mark Gregory, is the first brewery to be set up here, and although beer production is currently taking place near Hay-on-Wye Mark hopes to move the operation to the Solihull area in the very near future.

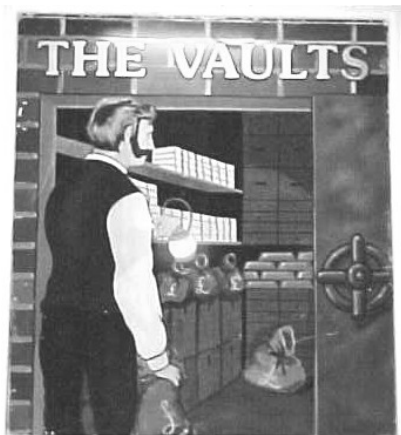
It has taken two years of planning and fund-raising to get Mark's first beer, 4.0 Per Cent, into production—it launched at the beginning of September and Mark is pleased that quite a few local pubs are now stocking it. It certainly went down well at Solihull CAMRA's beer festival at the beginning of October. His second brew, 3.7 Per Cent, is also available locally. This move from the usual way of naming beers is intended to blend traditional brewing techniques with innovative ideas for the future and to show a strong brand image.

Mark has plans to write a blog and invite responses as well as put smart chips on the pumps, which will allow smart phone users to scan them and be directed to his website.

For more information about Mark's beers and local outlets and his future plans, visit www.silhillbrewery.co.uk.



Nick and Gwen welcome you to



The Real Ale venue in Knowle

- ◆ Six hand-pumped beers including regulars Tetley Bitter and Wadworth 6X plus four guest beers
- ◆ Real cider from Westons
- ◆ Food available lunchtimes Monday - Saturday

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2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 & 2008**

Wi-Fi now available in the pub for your convenience whether on your own or at a meeting—ask at the bar for details.

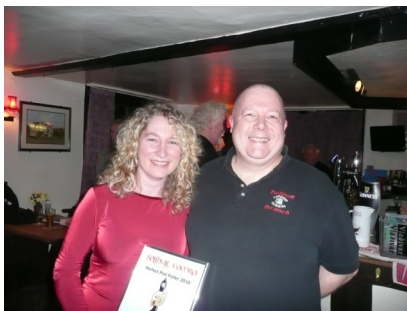
CAMRA Good Beer Guide listed since 1993



***The Vaults, St John's Close, Knowle.
Tel: 01564 773656***

Perfect Pint Puller 2010

After a lengthy competition, the winner of the 2010 Perfect Pint Puller competition was announced as Cathy Stacey from the Bulls Head, Barston. Cathy won the award for scoring highest over the criteria of a warm welcome, efficient service, a full pint in a clean glass, and good advice on drinks and new offers. A certificate and a cheque for £50 were presented to Cathy in November.



Cathy receives her award from Branch Chairman Carl Wright

Do you think the serving staff in your local can do better? If there is someone you would strongly vote for, then look out for PPP posters and further information in pubs and on our website early next year.

The White Swan, Solihull

When Dawn Lingley-Webster arrived at the White Swan in Solihull 3 years ago she was determined to go one better than simply uphold JD Wetherspoon's reputation for good real ale on the high street at a reasonable price. She has worked tirelessly to offer more real ales from a wider range of breweries, including local ones, than ever before.



Dawn proudly shows off the White Swan's beer choices

Service with a smile, good food and so on all help, but the choice and quality of real ale is what really matters. Whatever the marketing men say, one size does not fit all and variety is needed to keep everyone happy. Customers have certainly noticed the difference - one real ale was so popular the cask only lasted half a day.

Dawn goes one step further, not just with themed beer festivals but "Meet the Brewer" nights, where you find out what makes a beer special and what makes a brewer tick. If the brewer can't come to the pub, then customers can join a trip to visit the brewery, usually a local one.

Earlier this year when nominations were considered for the 2011 Good Beer Guide, it wasn't difficult to find wide support to vote the White Swan in for its first time. A well deserved place and long may it continue.

Robert Cawte and Gordon Clarke

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Choice which cannot be bettered



Pump Clip or no Pump Clip?

When you go into a pub, you hope to find a range of good real ales, ready to drink, and all of great quality. A row of pump clips invites you to take your pick and promises a good drink and a pleasant time ahead.

But what if you go in that pub and although there are pump clips staring you in the face, not all of them are in use? If a beer is connected in the cellar but not ready to serve, should the pump clip be showing as if it were on; should it be turned round, or should there be a label attached to the clip saying that it will be on soon?



Many real ale drinkers feel that having pump clips on view when the beer is not actually available is at the very least, disappointing, and at worst, possibly misleading or false advertising. CAMRA itself recommends that managers and landlords turn clips round when the beer has gone, and good practice would be to attach a note if a beer is going to be available shortly.

Do you know of any pubs in the Solihull area that regularly have clips showing but no beer being served from them, and does it annoy you? If so, send details to the editor at the addresses on page 3, or register your complaint on our real ale-scoring page (<http://www.solihullcamra.org.uk/reportbook.htm>) and we'll try to get the practice stopped.

Wye Valley News

September was a busy month with both the Ludlow and Abergavenny Food Festivals. At Ludlow nearly 1000 people enjoyed the ever-popular Real Ale Trail around the best real ale pubs in town. At Abergavenny they served a record number of pints (over 1,700)!).

October saw the brewery in the BBC Food and Farming Awards final. As a traditional family owned brewery, dedicated to producing the finest quality cask ales yet none the less passionate about exciting new recipes and ingredients, Wye Valley Brewery impressed the judges and were selected as just one of 3 national finalists.

At the awards on 24th November, the brewery were thrilled to be named Best Drinks Producer. They also scooped Best Drink Producer at the Flavours of Herefordshire Awards 2011 during the same month and being based in Herefordshire, were delighted to receive this award in their 25th Anniversary year.

For more information about Wye Valley Brewery's news, products and special offers (including a free jute bag for online orders over £10) see their website www.wyevalleybrewery.co.uk.

Visit to Bernies

The discerning beer drinkers of Solihull had a bleak 10 weeks this Autumn when Bernies Real Ale Off-licence in Cranmore Boulevard, Shirley, closed for a major refit. Thankfully, it re-opened on 12th November. As an ex co-owner of Bernies, I was keen to visit and inspect the changes. It now looks much bigger and smarter; the old fixtures and fittings have been replaced throughout with new fridges and shelves to hold their vast array of stock.

Readers of this magazine will be particularly pleased by the level of investment in the keeping and serving of real ale. There is a completely new cellar, new taps and beer lines and six gleaming new handpumps. Charlie and Dave are committed to continue selling many interesting beers from quality small breweries, the like of which are hardly ever seen elsewhere in the area. There is also Rich's Traditional Cider and a vast range of bottled English and foreign beers, so there are plenty of reasons to pop in and view all the changes, and make many interesting purchases!

Dave Queenborough

The Rise of the Micro-Brewery

No doubt to the delight of real ale drinkers everywhere, micro-breweries are arising at a phenomenal rate. The formation of the Campaign for Real Ale in 1971 helped educate people about the finer points of real ale and choice in regional diversity, and ever since then micro-breweries have continued to be on the up. It is not known how many are 'hobby' businesses, run by one or two people from a shed or a garage, but some larger micros are conspicuous by their success.

Castle Rock brewery in Nottingham recently opened a new plant, enabling it to triple production following its Harvest Pale being named as CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain 2010. Solihull CAMRA had difficulty in getting hold of a cask for the October beer festival, such was the sudden popularity of the beer. Castle Rock now owns 23 pubs, delivers to over 100 more, and has nearly 300 employees.



The number of breweries in England fell from 1,324 in 1900 to 141 in 1975. By 2004, numbers had increased to 480; and it is now thought that the figure stands close to 700.

Let us hope that the rise of the micro-brewery continues, and that they keep providing drinkers with interesting, well-flavoured real ales whose qualities can only get better.

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Full membership: £20.00 per annum; single visits for guests: £1.00 (free to card-carrying CAMRA members)

Christmas and New Year opening:

Christmas Eve: 2pm—12 midnight, featuring the Christmas Eve raffle draw;

Christmas Day: 12 midday—2pm; Boxing Day: 12 midday—8pm; Monday

27th—Thursday 30th December: 2pm—11pm

***New Year's Eve: 2pm—1am (children welcome but only up until 9pm): Disco
Picnic—recycle your Christmas leftovers and bring your own picnic to the
Club!! Entry free to Club members; £20 to non-members (limited tickets avail-
able so ring to book without delay)***

January 2011: look out for the "R'Oscars"!!! - ring the Club for further details

It's never too early to start growing for Marrow Sunday—get your marrow, onion, carrot, runner bean and parsnip seeds in the ground now to be in with a chance of winning!!

Luscious Lakeland

A late booking at a cottage in the grounds of Irton Hall in late August enabled us to sample the scenic and liquid delights of the western Lake District where, at the last count, there were 26 micro-breweries. For an interesting map of the breweries and their beers, see www.thedesignworks.co.uk/brewerymapfloodappeal.pdf

After an enjoyable football match, en route back to the cottage we stopped at arguably one of the most famous real ale pubs in the Lakes, the Prince of Wales at Foxfield, home of the Foxfield Brewery. Alas, due to driving we were unable to sample all their range—not only their own beers and those of companion brewery Tigertops from Wakefield, but many other beers, both UK and imported, and over 80 whiskies. We happily tasted Brewdog's 5am Saint (5%) and Boom's Kriek, both in top condition, leaving with a few bottles to sustain us back at the cottage.

Sunday saw us visiting Wastwater to admire Britain's favourite view and the Wasdale Head Inn, home of the Great Gable Brewing Company, although none of its ales were available due to relocation. We tried Ennerdale Bitter (3.6%) and Blonde (3.8%); then a tipple available to MPs at the House of Commons: Derwent's Carlisle State Bitter (3.7%), but found nothing special about this ale at all. Even worse was the Coniston Bluebird Bitter, normally an excellent pint, but so poor that Ian took it back and exchanged it for Cumbrian Legendary Langdale, which was idyllic. We then departed to view England's smallest church beside England's deepest lake (at the foot of England's highest mountain) then called it a day.



By the beck at Wasdale Head

On Monday, searching for a pub with a TV to watch a match, we spent the evening at the Gosforth Hall Inn. The pub is famous for its pies, and also had a great selection of LocAles, with Hawkeshead Bitter (3.7%) getting the nod as the best of the bunch. Burnmoor Pale Ale (4.2%) by the Great Gable Brewing Company was also in fine form. Even better, at the Gosforth village shop we were able to purchase bottled versions of more GBBC brews including Yewbarrow and Trail Ale.



The famous pick-and-mix!

Tuesday saw us at Muncaster Castle, a good day out but poor on beer with only bottled Jennings Cumberland Ale available in their café. We ended up at The Bitter End in Cockermouth, where you are supposed to be able to sup while viewing Britain's smallest brewery through a glazed partition. Alas, the Good Beer Guide is out on this one as the brewery moved in November 2009 to another part of the town. Fortunately most of their beers were still available so the Lakeland Indian Pale Ale (5.5%) was quaffed—the beery best of the holiday so far! The pick-and-mix carry-outs were much to our liking so we made

off with a few choices.

Wednesday was the beer highlight of the week so far—after looking round the pretty village of Ravenglass and the nearby Roman Bath House remains, we purchased tick

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(continued from previous page)

ets for La'al Ratty: the 15" gauge Ravensglass and Eskdale Steam Railway. The Brook House Inn at Boot is near the near the end of the line at Dalesgarth and it had a great range of beers.



The Victoria Indian Pale Ale (5.5%) by local brewery The Brook House Inn at Boot Stingers was

so good that we had to buy extra carry-outs. A trek up the road took us to The Woolpack Inn, the home of the Hardknott Brewery—or should have been, the pub having been sold and the brewery having moved to Millom. However they still had one Hardknott ale, Light Cascade (3.4%) which was of very good hoppy character. The second real discovery of the day was an ale by Bank Top

Brewery in Bolton,



Port 'O Call (5.5%) - so good was this porter with added port that another 2-pint carry-out had to be purchased for later consumption!

Our last day was another glorious day weather-wise so we decided to view the scenery over the Hardknott and Honister Passes. In doing so we reluctantly passed many a famous watering-hole: the Old Dungeon Ghyll and Wainwrights Inn in Langdale, Bank

Tavern and the great Cornerwise off-licence in Keswick, the Fish at Buttermere, and the Kirkstile Inn at Loweswater, before ending up at the Strands Inn and Brewery at Nether Wasdale—and at last there **was** a micro-brewery round the back of the pub! We got a quick look at their set-up and sampled halves of 'Errmmm' (3.8%), 'Red Screens' (4.5%) and 'Zingeer' (3.3%) with a hint of ginger. Ian's favourite was 'Daffyd-Ale' (4.2%) which was the most bitter of those sampled. Sadly the next batches of 'T'Errmmm-inator' (4.9%) and 'Corr'sBerg' (4.1%) ('probably the best bitter in the world') were being brewed at the time so were not available.



England's finest view?

So ended an excellent week, with hopefully enough memories to tide Ian through his final session of chemotherapy—a long 3-4 weeks just after the Solihull Beer Festival.

John and Ian Edwards (Driver and Chief Taster respectively)

Ian is now out of hospital and is doing well. Editor.

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I enclose a cheque for

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Applications will be processed within 21 days



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Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

2011

Monday 10th Jan The Mason's Arms, Solihull

Monday 7th Feb The Wharf, Hockley Heath

Monday 7th March The Bull's Head, Barston

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

Committee Meetings

Monday 13th Dec The Punchbowl, Lapworth

2011

Monday 21st Feb The Bulls Head, Earlswood

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

Socials

Saturday 11th Dec Christmas pub crawl: meet at 4.00pm at The White Swan, Solihull

2011: To be confirmed—see website for further details.

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

Many, though not all, of our local pubs are accessible to disabled people. If you would like to come to one of our meetings and would need assistance getting inside, please let us know ahead of time and we will do our best to help.

.....

Membership Matters

It's that time of year when you're scratching your head for Christmas present ideas for that special person. A year's CAMRA membership won't break the bank (£20—see page 15 for further details) and you may even create a lifelong CAMRA member. For this they get a monthly copy of "What's Brewing", quarterly, the very stylish "Beer", and reduced or free entry to many beer festivals. Don't exhaust yourself traipsing the high street; just fill the form in. For those of you who are already members but do not attend our monthly meetings, you might try coming along to see what goes on. We always visit a pub on our patch which keeps good real ale and this may help you to see a wider range of the best pubs in the Solihull area.

Bob Jackson, Membership Secretary

New Beer festival for Wythall

On Friday 15th and Saturday 16th of October this year the Wythall Community Club held its first beer festival. There were twelve beers and two ciders housed in a modern annexe, of good size and well suited to its purpose. The beers were in good condition and just the right temperature. The cooling system, on hire from The Weighbridge at Alvechurch, was of particular interest because of Solihull CAMRA's hopes to move away from the "wet towel" system



that we've used hitherto, so the system was inspected with interest. Water cooled copper pipes were fashioned to fit over the top of the casks and then covered with insulated matting—on initial inspection it seemed to work fine.

The clubhouse is a splendid Georgian building set in a spacious and well maintained park. They are no strangers to real ale: London Pride and Weatheroak plus two guests feature on the bars.



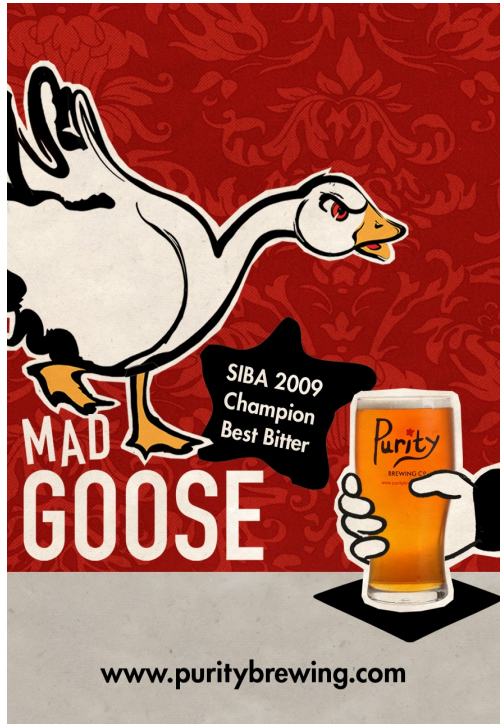
L-R: Club Manager Alan Griffin plus two helpers from Redditch & Bromsgrove CAMRA

Alan Griffin, the club manager (and cellar man), said that they decided to have a festival at the club because of the high degree of local interest including from their local brewery, Weatheroak. Most of the other beers were from local breweries too; Weatheroak, Malvern Hills, Cannon Royal, Teme Valley, Griffin, Tunnel, Church End and Warwickshire.

The beers had sold really well on the Friday evening and although there were only a dozen or so drinkers on Saturday lunchtime, Alan said they were well on their way to profit.

Hopefully we can look forward to another festival next year.

Bob Jackson



www.puritybrewing.com



The Thoroughly Decent Pint

We're pleased to announce new stockists of our classic 6X ale: at the following pubs:

Boat, Catherine de Barnes
Golden Acres, Damsonwood
Red Lion, Earlswood
Greville Arms, Solihull
Colebrook, Shirley
Black Swan, Henley in Arden
Heron's Nest, Knowle
Wharf Tavern, Hockley Heath
Wilsons Arms, Knowle
Vaults, Knowle
Fieldhouse, Monkspath
Red Lion, Shirley
Woodmans Rest, Shirley
Hogshead, Solihull
Masons Arms, Solihull
Plough Beefeater, Shirley.

A Taste of Wadworthshire

Interested in stocking 6X?

Please contact your local Wadworth
NAM Frank Butler on 07766 252142

Simply stated...

PREMIUM BITTER
ABV 4.3%

BITTER ● ○ ○ ○ ○
SWEET ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

👁️ DARK COPPER
👃 MALTY, FRUITY
🍷 FULL BODIED/NUTTY



www.6xale.co.uk

Real Ale on the Up

According to The Cask Report, published towards the end of September, sales of cask ale increased by 5% to £1.4 billion, compared with a 2% fall for the wider UK beer market, as an extra 100,000 people turned to real ale. Real ale now accounts for 1 in every 6 pints of beer sold in pubs, with more than 8.6 million people now drinking cask beers.

The report, backed by bodies such as the Campaign for Real Ale and the Society of Independent Brewers, says that cask ale has increased its share of beer sold in pubs and clubs for three years in a row, with an extra 3,000 pubs starting to sell it. Given the current economic climate, with thousands of pubs closing and consumers increasingly switching to home consumption, it appears that people are becoming more thoughtful about purchases in their food and drink choices, looking for tradition, provenance and wholesomeness.

The report highlights a shift away from multinational brewers, who have suffered an 11% fall in cask ale volumes as they focused on lager, towards regional and local brewers, both of whom increased volumes.

With celebrity drinkers such as Madonna and Gwyneth Paltrow helping to popularise real ale, it is also becoming trendy for celebs to brew their own, with Neil Morrissey, the Men Behaving actor, co-founding the Morrissey Fox brewery in East Yorkshire, while Tony Hadley, Spandau Ballet frontman, part owns the Red Rat brewery in Suffolk.

Let's hope this trend continues for the foreseeable future and helps stem the tide of pub closures before it's too late.

(First reported in The Sunday Times on 27th September)

Keep Calm—Drink Ale

Remain calm by sticking to British real ale, says a scientist. Hops in our pints have a calming effect rather than German-style lager which can heighten nervousness, said Dr. Ian Hornsey of the Royal Society of Chemistry.

(From the Daily Express)



Fancy winning a case of Wadworth 6X??

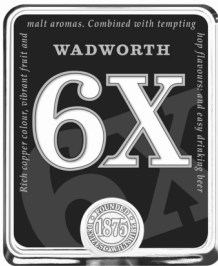
Frank Butler, Wadworth National Account Manager, lives in Solihull and is well known in many of the area's pubs, where his local is the Golden Acres. To be in with a chance of winning a case of Wadworth 6X, email the price of a pint of Wadworth 6X at the Golden Acres to frankbutler@wadworth.co.uk. A winner will be drawn at random by Frank from all entries received. The closing date is 31 December 2010.

The Golden Acres

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

A real community
and family pub

Three guest ales
plus a regularly
changing tradi-
tional cider



Children welcome
Beer garden with
play frames

Rowood Drive

Damsonwood, Solihull

Tel. 0121 704 9002

Entertainment for all....

**Dominoes & Nuts Poker League
(newcomers welcome!): Mondays**

Darts: Tuesdays and Thursdays

Karaoke: Every Thursday

Regular entertainment: Saturdays

Big screen sports regularly featured

Why not join one of our sports teams?

**Further information from the pub
on 0121 704 9002**

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

0121 711 8130

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

Anyone for Golf and Ale?

We are all fairly committed to drinking real ale but I am sure many of us have other hobbies which take up some of our spare time. Some, like rugby or football, will complement the ale hobby but others, like fishing, will prove more challenging to achieve a suitable mix.

My other hobby is golf and I am a member at Robin Hood Golf Club in Olton. Thanks to a Bar Manager who is committed to supplying good quality real ales to a demanding and thirsty membership, I am able to indulge myself a little after a round of golf (never before or during as I don't drink and "drive"). There are always 2 ales available and in the main golfing season there are usually 3: Wye Valley HPA & Butty Bach are current favourites plus a changing guest beer from a wide choice of breweries. Playing as much as I do (wife and work permitting) I tend to visit plenty of other clubs in the area. It is very much the exception if a club bar does not stock at least one real ale.

So this is a message to all real ale-loving golfers out there. If your club has any interesting ales let me know so I can come and try them. If you play golf but do



not belong to a club, I am more than happy to take you over to Robin Hood to test out the course and follow up with a pint or two. In fact, if you are interested in joining as a full member there are currently vacancies and I could arrange for you to be introduced. Solihull CAMRA are also looking for more new members so why not do the double?

If you think golf and ale are for you, why not get in touch? My contact details are on page 16 of this magazine.

Allan Duffy

Birmingham's Best Pubs?

Recently several Solihull CAMRA members met for lunch at the Barton's Arms, Aston, a CAMRA Heritage-listed building, followed by an evening pub crawl in Birmingham. Here are a few photos from the day.



A Pub “Tour” of St. Albans

On Friday 22nd October, I visited St. Albans with a group of former colleagues from the travel industry – 22 of us in all. We started our “tour” at the Waterend Barn in St. Peters Street, a Wetherspoon’s pub conveniently situated near the centre of the City. This is one of the largest bars in St. Albans and was converted from a centuries-old barn by Wetherspoon’s in 2005. The bar is vast, with a choice of over 50 bottled beers and lagers from around the world, together with an extensive wine list and every spirit you can think of. There are nine handpumps on the bar and hopes were high among the group that a good selection of real ales would be available. We were greeted by a choice of either Greene King Abbot or Fullers London Pride – and that was all, apart from Biddenden Bushells Kentish Cider, which had just been put on. Two pump clips were showing but there was no beer on—why is it that the pump clip was not removed or turned round if the beer was not available? There was also an issue with short measures and several of the group had to request a top-up.

We continued on to our next pub, the Farmer’s Boy in London Road. This is a family-run pub and hosts St. Albans’ only micro-brewery. The brewery’s own Clipper IPA and Farmers Joy ales are normally regulars on the bar but today they were not available as the brewery was undergoing a refurbishment and would not be back in production for another week or so. However, there were a couple of superb ales available from Red Squirrel brewery, these being RSX (3.9% ABV) and Columbo (5.1%ABV). Also available were Fullers London Pride and Timothy Taylor Landlord. I tried the RSX, a light hoppy, flowery beer brewed with crystal hops, and was fortunate indeed to be one of the first to get served as this ran out after about five pints of it had been pulled. Despite being at the end of the barrel, the beer was still in good condition.

It was agreed that we would make the Farmer’s Boy our lunch venue. The food here is cooked to order and very well priced. Much of it is home-cooked (e.g. the pies) and the chips are hand-made. With our group suddenly descending on the pub, the staff were soon hard at work catering for 22 hungry and thirsty people! Whilst waiting for the food to be served, I decided to try the Red Squirrel Columbo, which is a strong ale, distinctively hoppy and in good condition.

Our next venue was the White Lion, a few minutes’ walk away. This pub has two bars and a number of small rooms decked with wooden beams. It has been fortunate in not having undergone a refurbishment and, therefore, still feels like a classic, timeless pub that you would want to visit time after time. Good food is also served here, along with an excellent selection of real ales. The real ales available on this occasion were Black Sheep Best Bitter, Youngs Special Bitter, St. Austell Tribute, Hook Norton Old Hooky, Purity Mad Goose, Wadworth Henry’s Original IPA, Sadlers Celtic Trap and Fox Brewery Mr. Tod. I opted to try the Fox’s Mr. Tod and, although it was undoubtedly in good condition, I found it not quite to my personal taste. Ah well, these things happen.

By now, time was getting on and I made my departure, along with the Yorkshire contingent, leaving the others to consider whether to stay where they were or move on to another pub. Despite one or two disappointments, especially at the Wetherspoon’s, all in all, it was a very enjoyable day.

Chris Lloyd

J.D. Wetherspoon

The White Swan and The Assembly Rooms (both in the CAMRA 2011 Good Beer Guide) each offer two regular ales and a good selection of guest ales from both regional and UK breweries. Both pubs continue to receive consistent 'Cask Marque' and 'Best Bar None' accreditations and recently both received a 4-star accreditation on the Scores on the Doors, Food Hygiene Standards awards.

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

Phone: 0121 711 5180

Opening times:

Sun — Wed: 8.00am — 12.00am
Thurs — Sat: 8.00am — 12.30am

Offering 5 guest ales daily.

A music-free venue screening live Freeview sporting events.

Winner of Solihull Best Bar None Best Town Centre Pub and Overall Best Bar None Winner 2010



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

Phone: 0121 711 6990

Opening times:

Sun — Wed: 8.00am — 1.00am
Thurs — Sat: 8.00am — 2.00am

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

Live SKY sporting events screened weekly.

DJ's from Thurs-Sat, plus come and sing your heart out at our Karaoke every Sunday.



Our Christmas bookings diary still has some dates available until 23rd December with traditional fare buffet options available; but be quick - places are selling out fast!!

Coming up in 2011: Meet the Brewer nights every 2 months; Mini Beer Festivals; Vote for your favourite ale which will feature in a week-long beer festival—and watch out for the JDW Spring Ale Festival!!

For further information, please contact Dawn at The White Swan.



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