

Free

Solihull



Drinker

Free

Issue No 65 Autumn 2013

**Spotlight Inn:
Tom o' the Wood,
Rowington**



Featured in this issue:

**Solihull Pub,
Club & Brewery
News**



**Coming soon:
15th Solihull &
District CAMRA
Beer Festival**



**Social Trip to the
North Cotswold
Brewery and The
Falkland Arms**



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Thursday 17th to Saturday 19th October

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www.TheBullsHeadBarston.co.uk

Solihull & District Beer Festival

Mark the dates in your diary – Friday 4th and Saturday 5th October. Once again, it's time for the Solihull & District CAMRA Beer Festival, and we're aiming to make the 15th edition an even bigger success than last year. You drank us dry in 2012 and we've got the message: we're aiming to have more than 40 real ales available, with 2 or 3 ciders and perries.

For the second year, the Whitworth Brewing Company has kindly sponsored the festival. After their beers were among the first to sell out last October, we are intending to have all five of their beers – Sobriety, Sobriety Blonde, Sobriety MPH, Crooked Elbow and Doolally Tap – on offer. Our plan is to have three available on Friday, with the other two added on Saturday.

As usual we will be using a beer token system; the admission charge of £10 includes your entry fee, festival glass and programme, and £5.50 of beer tokens. CAMRA members also pay £10, but receive an extra £1 of beer tokens. Top-up tokens are available in the main hall; unused tokens can be

refunded or donated to this year's charity, Solihull SUSTAIN.

If you don't want to keep your festival glass, you can return it for a £2.50 refund. Even better: attend on Friday, come back on Saturday with your Friday entry slip and we will only charge £6 for entry, including glass and £3.50 beer tokens.

The entertainment for Saturday is still being finalised but we are delighted to announce that The Strumtroopers will take to the stage on Saturday evening for the third year in succession. The group has been a huge hit with festival-goers, and they play a variety of rock and pop classics on a variety of instruments including guitar, bongos, ukuleles and plastic trombone.

Hot food will be available until 9 pm each day with sandwiches and rolls available after that. Finally, many thanks to those without whom there would be no festival – the Festival Committee, our hard-working volunteer staff, our beer suppliers, advertisers, the Whitworth Brewing Company, the Solihull Royal British Legion for hosting us, and the Church End Brewery for providing the stillages and cooling equipment. A plethora of real ales, good company, great entertainment – what more could you ask for? We look forward to seeing you there – don't forget to bring your friends along too for a great experience.



**Festival-goers at
our 2012 festival**

**Martin Buck
Festival Organiser**

Hail to the Ale!

- local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

The Drum & Monkey, Bentley Heath



Branch Manager Barry has been promoted to Greene King Area Manager—his place is being taken by Louise, who has many year's experience with GK.

The Drum is one of six top performing GK pubs to move to a new brand aimed at promoting real ale, which requires a cellar restructure. Following this, they will be able to serve 7 real ales, nicely in time for our November Branch meeting & AGM.

The beers are expected to be: GK IPA; Speckled Hen & GK Abbot on rotation; two more will be from GK breweries such as Abbeydale & Black Sheep; while the remaining three will be obtained from the SIBA list at management discretion. They also have a real cider on which is selling very well.

The Saracen's Head, Shirley

The Saracen's Head closed for refurbishment last month; it is expected to reopen in early September.

The Oak, Hockley Heath

Plans are in hand for an hotel is to be built at the Oak. Wells' Bombardier was on the hand-pump at the time of visiting, however it now looks as if the pub is going to stick to only one real ale in future.

The Bulls Head, Earlswood

The Bulls Head has been refurbished and is now a community pub. It now has capacity for 7 real ales, will still sell Thwaite's, and there will be a seasonal real ale as well.

A welcome new scheme means you can try 3 x 1/3 pints for the price of a pint.



The Wilson Arms, Knowle

The Wilson has reopened with an extended carvery. It has 3 handpumps, although at the time of visiting only one beer was on.

Cock Horse, Rowington

The Cock Horse is still boarded up. Rumour has it that Punch Taverns have sold it to a small PubCo and it will reopen as a pub, but this cannot be verified.

The 66th edition of the Solihull Drinker will be published on Monday 2nd December, 2013.

Please note: the deadline for copy, advertising and contributions will be no later than Wednesday 13th November.

The Miller and Carter, Hockley Heath

This pub only one real ale on at the time of visiting: Purity's Mad Goose.

Blue Bell Cider House, Warings Green

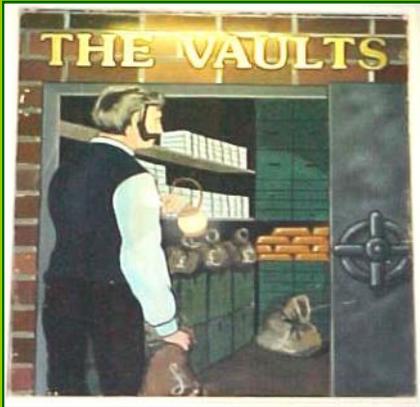
The Blue Bell is now back to normal after its recent refurbishment and has been very busy at times of visiting. There are now 3 real ales on hand-pump at all times, and all the traditional and the sparkling ciders are still available. Food service hours have also been extended (*see pg. 21 for details*).



The Boat, Catherine-de-Barnes

The Boat currently has 3 real ales on at most times, and the opportunity to try 3 x 1/3 pints of different beers for the price of a pint. They also have an appetising menu with plenty of choice and special offers, and meals are served both indoors and in the quiet and secluded beer garden.

Nick, Gwen and staff welcome you to



the Real Ale venue in

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**Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 2013
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Wi-Fi now available for individuals or meetings:
ask at the bar for details.

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***Opening hours: Mon-Thurs 12.00-2.30pm and 5.00-11.30pm;
Fri & Sat: 12.00-11.30pm; Sun 12.00-11.00pm.***

Hail to the Ale! (continued)

The Saxon Inn, Cheswick Green

The Saxon now has only two changing real ales, recently reported as Purity Mad Goose and Timothy Taylor's Landlord at the beginning of the week, and Hobgoblin and Dorothy Goodbody's Golden Ale towards the end.

The Forest Hotel, Dorridge

The Forest is to hold another of its popular beer festivals from Thursday 17th to Saturday 19th November. On offer will be a wide and eclectic range of real ales from all over the country. There is a special VIP Wednesday night from 7pm for their real ale club card holders and CAMRA members where they can try all the ales before anyone else. For more details, visit their website: www.forest-hotel.com.

The Olton Tavern, Olton

The Olton Tavern has reopened after a refurbishment—substantially now an eating house under the 'Great British Carvery' banner, it has two real ales, Greene King Speckled Hen and Sharp's Doombar.

Lady Lane Wharf, Earlswood

The Lady Lane has launched a 'Beer of the Week' promotion—every week there will be a great cask ale on offer at £2.00 per pint.

The eclectic range on offer will depend on dates and turnover, so for details of which beers are available and when, find the Facebook page or go to their website www.ladylanewharf.co.uk for more information.

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The Acres 1st Beer Festival

The Acres in Damsonwood held their first beer festival at the beginning of July. Live music, face painting, bouncy castle and a hog roast made for a pleasant family weekend; although I was, as they say, "here for the beer".

I must admit that I was surprised at the excellent range of beers that were on offer, a list of which appears at the end of this article. The beers were supplied by Baby Bottles from Coventry who have supplied Solihull CAMRA festivals. Some beers were on handpump on the bar, whilst the rest were served from the barrel. It was a hot weekend and despite cooling equipment the beers were a little warmer than the ideal.

However, I visited the festival twice and thoroughly enjoyed myself and congratulate the Acres for an excellent beer festival. It was a shame that not many CAMRA members went along, particularly as there was a cash discount on the beer. As far as I am concerned I look forward to the next one with eager anticipation.

Steve Dyson

Beers at the festival:

Rat Rat Pack 4%
Elland Charity 4%
Wye Valley Bitter 3.7%
Acorn Gingernuts 4.2%
Hop Back Calypso 4.2%
Adnams Fat Sprat 3.8%
Abbeydale Dr Mortons Pocket 4.3%
Downton Ed's American Red 4.8%
Phoenix Midsummer Madness 4.5%
Dorothy Goodbody Golden Ale 4.2%
Dorothy Goodbody Ocean Waves 4.6%

(NB. Solihull CAMRA member Kevin Sumner provided the necessary equipment and set it up, and advised the Acres on the conditioning and management of the real ales.



Solihull & District CAMRA Club of the Year 2013

The Branch is proud to announce that the Rowington Club has won its first Club of the Year award. We have been awarding pubs with a similar accolade since the early 1990's, and felt it was time to turn our attention to the increasing number of good real ale clubs in our area.

There will be a full report and photographs of the event in the next Drinker in December.

Notice of forthcoming AGM

Notice is hereby given of the Solihull & District CAMRA AGM, which will take place at the Drum and Monkey, Bentley Heath, on Monday 4th November 2013, starting at **8.30pm**. The AGM will be preceded by a short Branch Meeting starting at **8.00pm**.

If any current Committee member wishes to stand down, or anyone wishes to apply to take up a Committee post (all Committee posts are open to any Solihull branch member), in both instances please email your intentions to Chairman Carl Wright before the meeting at carl.wright@swisslog.com.

EXPLORING CANADIAN CRAFT BEERS—Part 1

My husband Allan and I arrived in Vancouver on a Saturday afternoon, after a 9 hour flight, and by 4pm were settled into our hotel. We were too tired from the journey for sightseeing, but decided it would be a good idea to visit some craft beer bars.

We arrived at the Alibi Room on Alexander Street just as it was opening at 5pm. We sat at the bar and perused the beer list, which offered around 50 beers on tap and covered both sides of an A4 sheet, listing all the available beers by category. The IPAs alone covered half of one page! Moreover, they were proper IPAs with ABVs ranging from 6 to 9% but not sweet and bags of hoppy flavour (unlike the UK's best selling IPA!). The range of beers was impressive, and while the menu did not state where the beers came from, the knowledgeable bar staff were able to tell

us – many were from British Columbia, although there were also beers from other provinces of Canada, and from the North Western states of the USA.

It was also helpful that many of the beers had 1,2,3 or even 4 little hop symbols, denoting the "hoppiness" of the beer. We were pleased that the beer menu offered several sizes of glass, including small tasters, as this meant we could try more different beers. Altogether, we had 4 IPAs and 2 pale ales, all of which were very enjoyable. It was interesting to note, on a shelf behind the bar, a certificate awarded by the Vancouver branch of CAMRA!

The Alibi Room soon began to fill up, and is obviously a popular meeting place for the locals, so we decided to move on and explore further.

Our next port of call was the Railway Club

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on Dunsmuir Street, which hosts live music every night. Although officially a private club, we were able to go in on payment of a small (\$2) entrance fee. This was lively, after all it was Saturday night! There were several craft beers on tap, including a very tasty IPA (Driftwood Fat Tug) which we had already tried at the Alibi Room. We were able to find a table in a separate room away from the loud music, and also enjoyed a tasty and very reasonably priced meal.

We then moved on to Gastown, the main area of Vancouver for pubs and restaurants, which was very lively. We found an outside table at the six Acres pub, which also boasts an extensive beer list, although mostly bottled. From the available draught beers we chose Light-house Switch-back IPA, which we had already tried at the Alibi. By now our body clocks were protesting that it was bedtime, so we headed back to our hotel

Around Sunday lunchtime we were due aboard the cruise ship Celebrity Century on which we spent a week cruising around Alaska. We cannot really comment on Alaskan beer, as we had few opportunities to sample beer ashore, and the ship had only bottles. The cruise was wonderful, but left us keen to try more Canadian beers and bars back in Vancouver.

We disembarked just after breakfast, dropped off our luggage at our hotel, and ventured out once more. We decided to buy tickets for the hop-on hop-off sight-seeing bus, not least because the route

took us to the ferry landing for the short crossing to Granville Island, home of the Granville Island brewery. We arrived a r o u n d lunchtime, and found that the next brewery tour was full. However, the brewing equipment could be seen behind glass at the far end of the tasting room.



The Granville Island Brewery

The brewery tap does not have a pub licence, but is licensed as a "tasting room" which means there is a limit of one pint only per visit. However, this can be ordered as thirds, so we were able to taste 6 different beers between us. We were supplied with a "beer map" - basically a laminated sheet with all 8 available beers marked out.



The Brewery's Tasting Map

the Imperial IPA and the Cascadian Dark Ale. All were very tasty, especially the Imperial IPA and the Cascadian Dark Ale.



The G.I. brewing kit

Later that afternoon we visited the Steamworks Brewing Company brewpub. This is more centrally situated, almost next to the Cruise ship terminal and the main railway station. We tried a couple of the beers, and then returned in the evening for a meal and more samples. The Steamworks Mocca Porter was wonderful, but the wheat beer was very disappointing with little flavour and a strange orange colour.

Monday was our last day in Vancouver, and we took the bus again, this time stopping off for a walk through Stanley Park before heading back to the ferry and Granville Island. Back at the brewery tap, we each ordered a pint of our favourite:



The Brewery's beer taps

Imperial IPA for Allan and Cascadian Dark for me.

For our last evening in Vancouver, we decided to head back to the Alibi Room, as we had both been impressed by the beer choice, and looked forward to trying more. The bar is also close to Chinatown, and the plan was to have a few drinks, followed by a Chinese meal. However, arriving rather later than on our first visit, we had to wait for a seat (even just

to have a drink). We were eventually seated at the bar, where once again



Allan in the Alibi Room

we were able to benefit from the advice of the friendly staff. As time passed, we decided to stay and eat there rather than moving on to Chinatown. The Alibi Room is a popular place to eat, although we thought it seemed a little pricey. There was a pork dish on the specials menu which sounded tasty, but on enquiry we were told there was only one portion left. The barman assured us there would be enough for both of us. When the meal arrived, along with an extra plate, we discovered he was absolutely right, so the price seemed very reasonable! We tried more beers than on our earlier visit (though still in thirds) and although Allan didn't quite get to sample all the IPAs he had a good try! A brilliant end to our visit to this wonderful city.

Brenda Duffy

Did You Know...

A pub in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh, is named after Maggie Dickson, a fish hawker from Musselburgh, who was sentenced to hang in 1724 for hiding her pregnancy then allegedly murdering her own baby.

After the hanging, a doctor signed her death certificate and her body was taken away by horse and cart, bound for Musselburgh where she was to be buried. During the journey a knocking and bang-

ing came from her coffin and, when opened, Maggie sat up, very much alive.

The courts decided they could not hang someone who was legally dead, so she was released and lived for another 40 years, nicknamed 'Half-Hangit Maggie'.

Right: the Maggie Dickson pub



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Sunday: 11.00pm — 10.30pm

Food served: 9.00am — 9.00pm

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

North Cotswold Brewery & Falkland Arms Trip

The North Cotswold Brewery trip at the end of June was a great success and provided that element of surprise that everyone loves. 24 of us were picked up by the Hollywood Coaches' minibus at Shirley, Solihull & Knowle and were soon rattling down the track at Stretton on Fosse towards Ditchford Farm, where we were met by Guy and Sandra Holiday.



The brewery is contained in two buildings amongst a plethora of other businesses in the barns, and is being deep in the peaceful countryside, is a wonderful place and setting for the hard work of brewing beer. Straight away we were welcomed with pints of Windrush Ale (3.6%), Cotswold Best (4.0%) and Shagweaver (4.5%), plus tasters of their bottled Hung, Drawn 'n' Portered (5.0%), and while we were enjoying these early quaffs Guy recounted little of the history of the brewery. Having been set up in 1999 it was acquired by the Pilling family about 7 years previously and



A view inside one of the full mash tuns

around 18 months ago Jon was making about 30 different brews a year – fantastic for people who like to try new brews but not so good if a pub wanted to re-order a cask that had sold particularly well.

Around a year or so ago Guy had become a director to help put the brewery on a more sensible, commercial footing and it now boasts a corporate (Cotswold Green Man) image and brews just 4 staple brews, plus up to half a dozen seasonal beers, changes which have seen Jon Pilling move on to brew for the Warwickshire Beer Company at Cubbington.



Guy and Sandra Holiday explaining the history of the North Cotswold Brewery



Empty casks waiting to be filled

We split into 2 groups to view the spotless, horizontal-flow stainless steel plant that is very

(continued overleaf)

'green' when it comes to energy conservation. Guy explained the process they use, the source of their liquor & other ingredients and also their business strategy of trying to grow but not outgrowing their roots, eg. not wanting to supply the big supermarkets to the detriment of their loyal local supporters; something we could all empathise with. They brew twice a week on consecutive days, sometimes in double strength batches to meet demand, and almost 50% of their sales are now their medal-winning Windrush Ale. Last year this lower strength but complex brew picked up the Warwickshire Beer of the Year Award, something that reflects the fact that many of their customers have to drive to their local watering holes. We also heard that they now brew 4 times a year for bottling which is done for them up at Nick Stafford's Hambleton plant.



Above: clockwise from L: Lawrence, Keith, Piers, Kevin S, Richard and Geoff; below: clockwise from L: Dave, Ian, Paul, Andy, Ray, Kevin S and Martin, enjoying their beers at the Falkland Arms



The group enjoying a buffet and yet more beer in the brewery's sunny courtyard

After some beer, some delicious sandwiches and more beer several of our group purchased some of their bottled ales, including their unlabelled 10.5% Monarch IPA, and we then headed east to The Falkland Arms at Great Tew. This picturesque pub was packed as there was a wedding due to take place at the nearby St Michael's church at 4pm and several guests were slaking their thirst before the



main event. We were able to sample a range of Wadsworth beers: 6X (4.3%), Henry's Original IPA (3.6%), St George & The Dragon (4.5%), Old Timer (5.8%) ? , plus Titanic 'Iceberg'(4.1%) and Island Brewery 'Nipper Bitter' (3.8%).



L-R: Allan and Brenda, Carl, and Harry

The pub garden was a very pleasant, sunny place to while away an hour or two, while some found seats with a good view of the comings and goings of the other visitors at the front of the pub.



At the front of the Falkland Arms, clockwise from front L: Steve, Piers, John, Richard, Geoff, Lawrence and Keith

I was delighted to find there was actually a geocache (one of my hobbies) in the grounds of the pub – a rare occurrence! Even more pleasing was the fact that it contained a mystery brass item from Germany and many members spent some time trying to work out what its purpose could have been; investigation revealed that it could actually serve as a beer dispenser, albeit in very miniscule quantities.

It was while we were sitting drinking in the sunshine at the front of the pub that a local happened to mention that one of the region's biggest beer festivals was going on just down the road. A quick consultation (*you mean the organiser's arm was twisted, John!*) and it seemed too good an opportunity to lose, so it was that 20 minutes later we were paying our £10 entry to the 16th Annual Charlbury Beer Festival. There was no discount for CAMRA members or large groups such as ours and it wasn't long before several of us had the feeling that we had been rather 'mugged' when we realized that our entry entitled

us to a half pint glass (left over from the 2012 festival) and just two ½ pint beer tokens! Ah well, as the festival tasting notes said: it's 'all in a good cause' as the money they raise all goes to institutions like the local primary school, the elderly daycare centre and a health programme in Malawi.

It was a shame we didn't have longer than 90 minutes or so as the range of beers available to us was extensive and unusual and there were lots of music and other events to amuse the crowds, plus it wasn't too expensive to buy more beer tokens. Soon we found ourselves heading back through Knowle, 24 happy drinkers who had enjoyed an excellent day out thanks to the hard work put in by Julia, the trip organiser. A big thank you must also go to Guy & Sandra, owners of the brewery, for their generous hospitality – look out for a North Cotswold brew at our beer festival on 4th and 5th October.

John Edwards

NB. John heard back from the German guy who set the mystery brass object "Das Ding" (the thing) circulating round the world. It turned out to be a gunpowder dispenser for an old flintlock or other similar type of gun: press down the nozzle and a small amount of the powder it is filled with is dispensed in a controlled way.

John exchanged it for a copy of our branch magazine, and maybe that will be seen by an overseas visitor and in its turn travel far afield.



Jon Edwards and 'Das Ding'

ADRIAN AND THE COMMITTEE WARMLY WELCOME YOU TO

The Rowington Club



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Featured in 2011, 2012 and 2013 CAMRA Good Beer Guides

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Opening hours: Mon-Fri: 2.00 – 11.00 pm; Sat-Sun Bank Hols: 12 noon – 11.00 pm

Large car park. Games available (dominoes, darts, snooker and pool)

Three regularly changing real ales

Full membership: £20.00 per annum.

Single visits for guests: £1.00 (free to card-carrying CAMRA members)

Forthcoming Events:

Sunday 15th September—Game Fair commencing at 12.00 noon: featuring country pursuits, stalls and produce and home-cooked country food throughout the day.

Sunday 6th October—Marrow Sunday from 12.00 noon, featuring various events: Heaviest Marrow, Longest Carrot, Longest Runner Bean, Longest Parsnip and Heaviest Onion, plus cake and jam classes. Entry only £1 per person regardless of number of entries! Proceeds to charity. Plus competitions, Tombola, stalls and wacky games including welly-whanging.

Saturday evening events a speciality: phone the Club for details of who's on.

**We also have a private function room available -
please phone for rates and more information.**

Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

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

Monday 14th Oct The Wharf, Hockley Heath
Monday 4th Nov Drum & Monkey, Bentley Heath

(BM and AGM—To note: above meeting starts at 8.00pm)

Monday 2nd December The Black Boy, Heronfield

Committee Meetings

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

Monday 16th Sept Blue Bell Cider House, Warings Green

Socials

Fri. 6th September Tamworth Beer Festival
Fri 4th & Sat 5th October Solihull Beer Festival, Sol. R. Br. Legion
Saturday 16th November Campaigning Crawl (itinerary TBC)
December (TBA) Christmas Crawl

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

NB. Most, though not all, of our local pubs are accessible to disabled people. If you would like to come to one of our meetings and wish assistance to get inside, please let us know beforehand and we will do our best to help.

Local Beer Festivals

Thurs 5th—Sat 7th Sept: Tamworth BF: Assembly Rooms, Corporation Street, Tamworth. Over 90 ales + ciders & perries, UK and foreign beers. Open 11-11pm each day; admission £4 all sessions except Fri 5-11 (£5), Sat 5-11 (£3); £3 discount on all prices for CAMRA members. More at www.lstcamra.org.uk/beerfestival

Fri 6th-Sat 7th Sept: 1st WM Reg. Cider & Perry Fest: West Bromwich Town Hall. 120+ ciders & perries, 10 ales inc LocAle. Open Fri 12-10.30pm; Sat 12-10.30pm; all sessions £2.50 (£1.50 CAMRA members). www.westmidlandsciderandperryfestival.co.uk

Fri 4th-Sat 5th Oct: our own 15th Solihull & District BF: RB Legion, Union Rd, Solihull. 44 real ales + ciders and a perry. Open Fri 5.30-11pm; Sat 12.00-11pm. Admission £10 to include programme, refundable glass hire & beer tokens (discounted for CAMRA members). For more details see www.solihullcamra.org.uk

Wed 30th Oct-Sat 2nd Nov: Birmingham BF: Second City Suite, 100 Sherlock St, B'ham. 250+ real ales, 80+ ciders/perries, foreign beers. Open Wed 6-10pm (CAMRA members only), Thurs-Sat 11-10.30pm. Admission on door: Thurs £3, Fri £5, Sat £4 (CAMRA members £2 extra tokens). Advance tickets/3-day passes available online: discounts possible. See more at www.birminghambeerfestival.org.uk

Thurs 28th-Sat 30th Nov: Dudley Winter Ales Fayre: Dudley Town Hall. 70+ real ales plus cider, wines & foreign beers. Admission: Thurs/Fri: non-membs £3, membs £1, no charge Sat. Refundable glass £2. Entry packs Thurs & Fri £15 incl. beer tokens; Sat £13 (extra tokens for CAMRA members). More details at: www.dudleyCAMRA.org.uk

Shed News

The Shed Brewery provided a barrel of ale to both the beer festival at the Forest Hotel, Dorridge, at the end of June and the Bromsgrove Beer Festival at the beginning of July.

A new beer has recently emerged from the Shed's mysterious interior: 'Executioner's Porter' (4.6% ABV): a smooth dark ale, for drinkers who have never tried porter before.

More outlets across the Solihull area plus a little farther afield are also being planned—look out for more local pubs stocking Shed beers soon.

NO FININGS IN OUR BEER - IT MAY BE CLOUDY BUT HEY, NO FISH DIED IN THE PROCESS!!

THE SHED



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Smooth,

Crisp,

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And unmistakably English...

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A Word from our new Webmaster



I'm Paul, an ale-loving, married father of three. I live in Shirley not far from where I grew up although I have lived and worked in a number of other countries, including a few years in Prague where the choice of quality beer was large and inexpensive. I'm always on the lookout for new beers to try and enjoy most styles apart from the really high strength stuff so I'm always pleased when I walk into a pub and see an interesting choice on the pumps. Apart from beer I have a lifelong love of music and I like combining the two at festivals, supping ale outside listening to a good band or DJ. I have a long-term goal of founding my own microbrewery though currently I'm struggling with homebrew!

I joined CAMRA a few months ago and recently attended my first branch meeting. I was keen to get involved so when a vacancy on the committee came up for someone to run the website, as I had a background in IT I thought "that job has my name on it". I think the website is very impressive and packed with useful information so in the short term I will just be keeping it ticking over. Some of the content is quite dated, so if anyone out there has updates then please get in touch at one of the addresses below. In the longer term it may be possible to add more interactivity or content directly from members via Twitter, blogs or other social media.

**Paul Scrivens
Webmaster**

The Solihull CAMRA branch website is at <http://www.solihullcamra.org.uk>

Please send new content or suggestions for the branch website to inter-net@solihullcamra.org.uk

Win a 4 pint poly pin of fantastic real ale in our
Free Draw!!

a **real ale** obsession

September Beer Festival
Friday 27th - Sunday 29th

Sample over **20 Ales**,
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September Beer Festival



Campaigning for real ale, pubs & drinkers' rights since 1971

Help CAMRA make its publications better by taking 10-15 minutes to complete a survey on its publications, and you could win a special prize! As a thank you, prizes include a case of bottle-conditioned beer from specialist beer shop Ales by Mail (www.alesbymail.co.uk), three limited edition prints of previous BEER covers and five copies of the Good Beer Guide 2014 for randomly selected members who complete the survey in full. To qualify for the prize draw, you'll need to give us your name and details and you'll be asked which prize you'd like at the end of the survey.

Please be assured your information will be treated completely confidentially and no data will be linked directly with names. If you wish you can opt to remain anonymous, but we're afraid you won't qualify for the prize draw.

The prize draw is only open to CAMRA members and we'll be drawing names from the virtual hat at 9am, 1 November, 2013.

To complete the survey, go to www.surveymonkey.com/s/emailoutsurvey2013 and answer the questions online.



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For more information & bookings please call Kevin on 07715 584067 or email SumnerBarServices@BTinternet.com

Membership Matters

Solihull CAMRA member Dave Mckowen has recently taken on the post of Membership Secretary, and will be reporting regularly on our own branch and about CAMRA campaigns and special offers for CAMRA members.

CAMRA membership both nationally and locally continues to grow at a steady rate, with our own branch membership now standing at 443 members.

By joining CAMRA you can help by providing the funds it uses, not just to promote real ale, but also to assist in campaigning against pub closures and other unfair practices against pubs and pub-goers, such as the abolition of the beer duty escalator - which I hasten to add was removed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer only after a long national campaign by all CAMRA members.

With the current cost of a year's membership at £23.00 for a single person, this roughly equates to about 44p per week, which is pretty good value in this current economic climate to my mind!

If you would like to join CAMRA and support its campaigns please use the form in this magazine or visit the CAMRA website <http://www.camra.org.uk>

Dave Mckowen
Membership Secretary

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

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



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

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

Printed by Thistle Print Ltd, Leeds.

Solihull CAMRA 2013 ©

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3 real ales at all times plus 4 traditional & 3 sparkling ciders

Home-made food with a wide variety of steaks now served Mon-Sat
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Keep up to date with what's new and what's on at our website
www.thebluebellciderhouse.co.uk

Opening hours:

Mon.-Sat: 11.30am-11.00pm
Sunday: 12.00-10.30pm



Spotlight Inn:



The Tom o' The Wood, Rowington,

You would be hard put to it to find the 'village' of Rowington, being as it is a place of scattered hamlets close to the border with Solihull. Originally established by Anglo Saxon settlers and known as 'Hrocingatun', meaning 'homestead of Hroca's people', by the time of the Domesday Book had become 'Rochintone'. The area was covered by woodland (part of what was later known as the Forest of Arden, which covered almost the whole of Warwickshire north of the River Avon).

Around 1133, the manor of Rowington was acquired by Reading Abbey, but during the Reformation in 1538 ownership of Rowington manor passed to the Crown. Henry VIII gifted it to Catherine Howard in January 1540, though the manor reverted to the Crown when she was beheaded in 1542. In 1543 Rowington manor was given to Henry's new queen, Catherine



1886 map of Rowington

Parr, who outlived the king and held it for the rest of her life. In 1553 Edward VI gave the manor to the Duke of Northumberland and by 1564 it was held by his son, the Earl of Warwick. Charles I gave it

to his bride who held it (save for a short period during the Commonwealth) until her death in 1669.

Parts of Rowington are on sandstone and at one time the Rowington quarries (none of which remain) supplied the stone for several important buildings including St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham, Baddesley Clinton and the Church of St Laurence in the village.

Rowington is built on high ground and a number of windmills, all of which had unusual names, are known to have been in operation in the village.



'Grinning Jenny' is believed to have been a wooden post mill located close to Windmill House on Finwood Road and 'Tom O' The Wood' and 'Bouncing Bessie' were nearby.

The industrial revolution resulted in the building of two canals through the parish in the early 19th century, both of which transported raw materials and goods to and from Birmingham. Later in the century, the railway arrived and stations were built in the neighbouring villages of Lapworth and Hatton.

Rowington remains very much part of the Green Belt, with the inhabitants drawn from all walks of life, including commuters to the 'stockbroker belt'.



The Tom O' The Wood pub, named after the old windmill of the same name in 1975, is one of four in the parish which serves the inhabitants of Rowington and its many visitors; it is especially popular with ramblers

on the countryside walks and along the two canals nearby.

It is a late 1700's building, and has had various changes of name throughout the years. 'The Old New Inn' was one, 'The Wood' another, but now has reverted back to the original name of 'Tom o' the Wood'.

It has chopped and changed many times in the past 20 or so years, being very popular when they had the Stones restaurant upstairs where you could cook your food from stones at the table!! In the past 10 years the pub has also had many different owners trying to make the place work but never succeeding; but in October 2011 the place was taken over by Charlie (Charlotte) & Chris. Chris is a chef

who has worked in many different restaurants and pubs and concentrates on fresh, homemade, locally sourced food; while Charlie runs the front, concentrating on a small but well-chosen selection of ales and hand-pulled cloudy scrumpy cider. Charlie and Chris are the longest lasting tenants in the last 10 years and are getting a good reputation for good beers and fresh homemade food.

The resident ale is Greene King IPA, however there is always a LocAle guest ale from a local brewery. The restaurant is dog-free, but visitors with dogs and walking groups are welcome to dine in the bar—the pub is perfectly



situated for a stroll along the Grand Union canal and a stop-off for lunch or a snack. Currently running is the 'Stratford & Warwick Real Ale trail': you can collect an 'ale passport' at the bar, get it stamped at a selection of pubs in the Warwick and Stratford areas when you buy a pint, and earn yourself a Ale Trail T-shirt.

From the Rowington crossroads, turn into Finwood Road and follow it down towards the canal. There is a large car park just before the pub.

For opening times and further information, see the pub's website:

www.tomothewood.co.uk.

The pub. looking north from the canal bridge



Beer Street or Gin Lane?

For many years, beer was considered safe to drink when water was not—knowledge of germs and how they spread was not understood for centuries, but people knew that if you drank beer you stayed well, but if you drank water you fell ill.

At one time, cheap gin imports threatened the health and happiness of its citizens, and certain campaigners promoted beer as a healthy, wholesome drink.



Hogarth engraved *Beer Street* to show a happy city drinking the 'good' beverage of English beer, versus *Gin Lane* which showed the effects of drinking gin which, as a harder liquor, caused more problems for society.

People are shown as healthy, happy and prosperous in *Beer Street*, to the left of the tower, where the buildings are neat and tidy and the pawnbroker's sign is sagging due to lack of business.

In contrast, in *Gin Lane*, to the right of the tower, they are scrawny, lazy and

careless. The pawnbroker's proud signifies that business is brisk, while the buildings are decaying for lack of commerce and work on the part of the gin-drinking populace. The woman on the stairs at the front of *Gin Lane* who lets her baby fall to its death echoes the tale of Judith Dufour who strangled her baby in order to sell its clothes for gin money.

The prints were published in support of what would become the Gin Act 1751.

Nicky Day

The curious-minded can find further information on these engravings at
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beer_Street_and_Gin_Lane

The White Swan, Solihull

The White Swan is again holding a LocAle real ale festival, with a selection of local breweries, including the previous winner Purity, going up against each other in another 'Battle of the Brewers' contest. As previously, the prize for the brewer with the most votes will be a 6-month residency at the White Swan.

There will again be a tasting event on Saturday 28th September, with the brewers bringing samples of their finest ales for guests to try whilst their representatives provide the opportunity to discuss each

beer and their brewing processes.

The local festival will continue on to Sunday 6th October, when the ballots will be counted and the winning brewery announced. A prize of a gallon of beer will also be awarded to the first ticket drawn from all the completed ballot entries.

For the period of the event the pub will also be charging the low price of £1.99 for a pint of any ale on sale from one of the competing breweries!!

The pub looks forward to welcoming visitors at the tasting event - drop in and cast your vote for your favourite brewery!

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The best of its kind there is!!!

An ever-changing range of exciting draught beers from season to season—you're welcome to try before you buy.

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Opening hours:

Mon to Thurs: 11.30am-2pm & 4.00pm-10.00pm

Friday & Saturday: 11.30am-10.00pm

(Sunday: Closed)

266 Cranmore Boulevard, Shirley,
Solihull B90 4PX Tel. 0121 744 2827

Wines, aperitifs, and other alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks are also available for your day or evening get-togethers and parties—please come in and talk to us about your requirements and we will always be glad to help.



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An Earlswood Ramble

July's social saw five of us meet up at Dorridge railway station: myself, Allan and Ian, plus Hayley and Steph. The plan was to combine a pleasant walk in the country with a variety of pubs. Our first stop was the Drum and Monkey, in Bentley Heath, where Robert met us. With only Greene King IPA, Old Speckled Hen and Black Sheep on offer, the Yorkshire beer was an almost universal choice. The weather was so good that not only did we sit out in the garden, sun screen was also applied.

From there we headed across the road and past the Four Ashes Golf driving range, across to Gate Lane. Over the Stratford Road and M42, we headed through the Blythe Valley Business Park and on across the fields to the Lady Lane Wharf for our lunch stop. Robert was getting rather more exercise than the rest of us, as he had his bike with him, manfully hauling it over the various stiles and gates we encountered. Much to the amusement of the barmaid at the Lady Lane Wharf, our drink of choice was Piddle – from the brewery of the same name in Piddlehinton, Dorset, rather than Wyre Piddle.

After our lunch (good value, tasty) we headed south along the canal; we knew when we were getting near the Blue Bell Cider House, because we could hear the live duo playing in the beer garden. A cider festival was taking place, with a good range available, but we stuck to the real ales – with more variety of choices this time, I opted for Holdens' Golden Glow. We left Robert at the pub, as he persuaded his family to join him there.

Continuing along the canal, on reaching the Wharf in Hockley Heath we got involved in a bizarre discussion about socks with some drinkers; apparently one of

them had paid £17 for some green and white striped ones, and his 'friends' were intent on making fun of this. On the subject of expense, our next stop was the Miller & Carter; only one real ale available, and at £3.54 for a pint of Purity Mad Goose not exactly a bargain! It did have some admirably comfy seats however.

For a time it looked like our luck with the weather had run out when a brief shower descended as we crossed the fields on our way to the penultimate stop, the Railway; it didn't last long but bushes hanging over the footpath gave us impromptu dousings. We sat out on the patio, but the rain returned in earnest; fortunately, the Railway has large electrically-powered awnings, so we stayed dry. Finally we headed through Dorridge park and over the railway to the Forest Hotel, where our final pint, Grafton Mardi Gras, was excellent.

In total, we covered around ten miles, and visited seven pubs – a very pleasant way to spend a (mostly) sunny Saturday. Bad news for some: the rain arrived with a vengeance after we were in the Forest, and I had a rather wet walk home!

Martin Buck



The merry Ramblers at the Blue Bell Cider House, Warings Green

J.D. Wetherspoon

The two Solihull JDW pubs each offer two regular ales and a good selection of guest ales from both regional UK breweries. Both pubs are pleased to announce consistent 'Cask Marque' and 'Best Bar None' accreditations and both hold 5-star accreditations for Food Hygiene Standards.

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 4 guest ales daily + Ruddles & a cider.

A music-free venue screening live Freeview sporting events.

2010 Solihull 'Best Bar None' Best Town Centre Pub & Overall Winner of 2010 'Best Bar Non'



Now in the 2013 CAMRA Good Beer Guide

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

Phone: 0121 711 6990

Opening times:

Sun — Wed: 7.00am — 1.00am

Thurs — Sat: 7.00am — 2.00am

2 regular ales, 3 guest ales and 2 real ciders on hand-pull.

Live sporting events screened weekly
DJ's and dancing Thursday-Saturday.

Having a party? Our atmospheric upstairs bar with seating for 70 is available for hire and can include music arrangements as well as food and drink, all chosen by you and tailored to your needs. Ask at bar for further details.



New Pricing!!

The White Swan has now lowered its ale prices to make it a more competitive and value for money destination for the discerning drinker.

The new maximum price point for a pint of ale is £2.30 and this will include Abbot Reserve, Jaipur, Kelham Island Pale Rider and Marstons Old Empire, to name but a few; all are subject to availability.

www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk

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Pub Reform— Lobby your MP!

CAMRA is asking people to take part in the next stage of their campaign calling for reform of the big pub companies to help save the nation's pubs. These big PubCos are making life difficult for hard working licensees by taking excessive profits from pubs – so licensees and pub-goers alike suffer.

The Government has now launched a consultation and is proposing:

- A powerful new Code and Watchdog to ensure fair dealing by big pub companies;
- A new choice for licensees to opt out of restrictive tied agreements and just pay a fair market rent to their PubCo;
- Fair rents and beer prices charged to tied publicans, allowing them to thrive.

To ensure the Government sees through this package of reform, CAMRA needs to secure the support of as many MPs as possible.

Please take two minutes to **Lobby your MP now** and ask them to sign EDM 57 (a Parliamentary petition) and lobby Business Department Ministers on your behalf. You can email them, or send your own written submission—we have provided draft text on the website which you can use if you wish. Also, take a minute to complete the Government's survey for PubCo reform. For further details and draft wording, visit www.fairdealforyourlocal.com.



Dewsbury Beer Festival

Back in May, my son Kevin and I set off to visit the Dewsbury Beer Festival, held in Dewsbury Town Hall. My wife, Jeannette, agreed (somewhat reluctantly) to accompany us. We were staying in West Yorkshire for the weekend so this was an opportunity not to be missed!



Dewsbury's BF's Theme Bar

Dewsbury's Victorian, Grade 2-listed Town Hall stands in the old market

place and is an architectural delight, with original stained glass windows and wood panelling. It also features an ornate ceiling supported by marble columns and makes a superb venue for the festival.

With around 85 real ales, a good selection of foreign bottled beers plus 14 ciders and perries to choose from, there was something to satisfy everyone's taste. The drinks were split between four distinct bars: the **Yorkshire Bar**, showcasing ales from Yorkshire, many of them Locale beers brewed within a radius of 30 miles of the branch area; the **Spotters' Bar**, featuring beers from around the UK which are not normally found in Yorkshire; the **Theme Bar**, with a different theme each

(Continued overleaf)

(Continued from previous page)

year, this year's being the Rugby Bar celebrating the 40th anniversary of Dewsbury winning the Rugby League Championship in 1973; and the **Cider & Perry Bar**. Foreign bottled beers were on sale next to the Cider Bar.

Beers we tried from the Yorkshire Bar were Partners Brewery's *Mungo Mild*

(4.4%), a traditional style dark mild brewed with very few hops resulting in a smooth, rich, velvety ale; Hexhamshire Brewery's *Blackhall English Stout* (4.0%);



The Spotters Bar

York Brewery's *Gold* (3.9%); *Market Porter* (4.6%) from Portobello Brewery in Kensington, London, a rich, smooth porter, typical of the style for which London is noted; and *V2 Schneider*, a Dunkel-style 6.0% brew from Five Towns Brewery in Wakefield.

The Rugby Bar provided Sheffield-based White Rose Brewery's *Two Stevo's Stout*, brewed with dark chocolate malts and "having a long, bitter finish"; and a bottle of Belgian Lindemans Cassis (3.5%).

Then back to the Yorkshire Bar to try York Brewery's *Centurion's Ghost* (5.4%). This dark ruby ale has "mellow roast malt balanced by a light bitterness"; Quantock

Wills Neck (4.3%) from Wellington, Somerset and Pheasantry *Best Bitter* (3.8%) from East Markham, Nottinghamshire.

Final beers of the day were *Enigma Black I.P.A.*, a 5.5% highly hopped dark ale from Kent Brewery in West Malling; with a soft malty body and a balanced finish; and *Rapture*, a 4.6% best bitter from Magic Rock Brewery, Huddersfield.

Time was passing and we needed to eat before heading to Huddersfield for a theatre date. Our first thought was to go to the renowned West Riding Licensed Refreshment Rooms on Dewsbury station but with our train due within a few minutes we opted to go straight to Huddersfield instead.

This was the fourth beer festival organised by the Heavy Woollen branch of CAMRA and was very busy. Being the final day, many beers very quickly sold out as, indeed, did festival T-shirts. One of the volunteers told me they were on a steep learning curve. On this showing, this branch is learning fast. This was a well run beer festival, staffed by extremely friendly and helpful people, and I would like to record my thanks to the Heavy Woollen branch for a most enjoyable festival - may Dewsbury host many more!

Chris Lloyd



The Yorkshire Bar

A Campaign

of Two Halves

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I enclose a cheque for _____

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Applications will be processed within 21 days

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