



Issue No 63

Spring 2013

Welcome to our new-look Solihull Drinker magazine.

From this issue onwards you will find: Easier to read format
Larger text Larger photos Page numbered

We hope you enjoy reading it!!

Featured in this issue:



Christmas Crawl
is not so Jolly...

Report on the parliamentary lobby at the House Of Commons



Solihull pub, club and brewery news update



CAMRA at the
2012 Winter
Good Food Show

Strawberry Fields

Craig and Sharon welcome you to the newest Cask Marque accredited Real Ale bar in Shirley



Join us for our "MINI" Beer Festival
31st May to 1st June 2013

Finest Ales Available

Proud to support our local brewery

Whitworth's - Sobriety Blonde

£2.20 a pint

All day - Every Day



Also - Rotating Weekly



Plus - Real Ciders & a
Weekly Guest Ale

Opening Times

Sunday - Wednesday 12pm - 11pm

Thursday - Saturday 12pm - 12am

Food Served Daily

Pop in for a bite from our new menu

Deals available 12pm to 2pm
Monday to Thursday

Live Sport - Multi Screen Venue

sky SPORTS ESPN

Live Music & Entertainment



THE BULL'S HEAD



Barston Lane, Barston Tel: 01675 442830

Visit our award-winning 15th century village inn with its selection of real ales including regular guest beers.

Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 1998, 2000, 2002, 2009 , 2011 and 2012
Listed in the **CAMRA Good Beer Guide** for over 20 years

Cask Marque accredited

**HOME COOKED MEALS ARE AVAILABLE LUNCHTIMES AND EVENINGS
MONDAY TO SATURDAY IN THE PLEASANT SURROUNDINGS OF
THE PUB BARS OR IN OUR SEPARATE INTIMATE RESTAURANT**

(Sundays: 12 to 3pm for lunch - no evening meals)

TELEPHONE RESERVATIONS WELCOME



Spring is on its way—the daffodils are out, and it won't be long before there are leaves on the trees. Have a sup of the first Spring ales, and why not try our seasonal menu of home-cooked food while you're here? Raise your glasses to Spring, please!



www.TheBullsHeadBarston.co.uk

Most Improved Pub of the Year: Warwick Bear meets the Bluebell The Forest, Dorridge

The Forest Hotel at Dorridge won the branch's vote for the Most Improved Pub of the Year 2012, members having remarked on the regular and the additional guest beers being of consistently good quality. The pub stages two beer festivals a year, one of which also doubles as a real cider festival. These festivals now seem to aim at bringing in lesser known ales and are very well attended. The pub also has its own real ale supporters club who receive emails updating them of forthcoming beers and events. The branch started its first minibus campaigning event last July at the Forest, where a relaxed spell in the sunny garden was enjoyed by members over a very pleasant pint.

It was therefore an enjoyable time at the pub in early December when the award was presented, and an opportunity to sup a few of their ales at the same time. We wish the Forest all the best for 2013, and look forward to visiting again during its beer festivals!



Branch chairman Carl Wright presents the award to Regine Bruch-Allen at the Forest Hotel

The Shed Brewery's Warwick Bear (a 4.0% blonde, hoppy ale) has just gone on sale at the Bluebell, Henley-in-Arden. The pub sources all its beer within a 35-mile radius, making them one of our LocAle outlets.

Brewery co-owner Perry Clarke is pictured here on Saturday 16th February, as the first pint is pulled by the Bluebell's manager, Kirstey Viney.



Smooth,

Crisp,

Hand crafted,

And unmistakably English...

Coming to a pub near you soon!



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

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

Printed by Thistle Print Ltd, Leeds.

Solihull CAMRA 2013 ©

Hail to the Ale!

Local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

Strawberry Fields Bar, Shirley

Craig and Sharon, the landlords of the Strawberry Fields Bar in Shirley, are holding a mini-beer festival from Friday 31st May to Sunday 2nd June. 12 real ales are expected to be available.

The Reservoir, Earlswood

Calling all sausage-lovers! The Reservoir is holding a Beer & Sausage festival from Friday 22nd—Sunday 24th March. There are expected to be 8 real ales, 2 ciders and 6 different sausages from which to choose.



The Red House

This pub was very quiet at the time of visiting, with only one real ale on, Thwaites Lancaster Bomber. A second beer is supposed to be added soon.

Whitworth Brewing Co.

Whitworth are really brewing up a storm!! As their reputation grows so do their outlets—they are currently selling to four Solihull pubs and Bernies off-licence, plus five Birmingham pubs, one club and a pub in Alvechurch, and they show no signs of stopping yet.

The Railway, Dorridge

Good news for lovers of Mild—the Railway at Dorridge now has Holdens' Mild on permanently. This is considered to be an excellent brew and well worth a special visit to try it as not many pubs serve Mild nowadays.

The Warwick, Hockley Heath



All change at the Warwick, which is under new management and is preparing to overhaul the tired format there. Meals are being substantially reduced in price, and real ales (down to 1 at the time of writing: Wye Valley HPA) will increase. The pub will be reverting back to its former name of The Oak, and Susie looks forward to welcoming the community to the new pleasant atmosphere.

Purity Brewery

Purity are on the hunt for Birmingham premises where they plan to set up an outlet in conjunction with Pure Craft Bars Ltd., selling Purity and special craft and imported keg beers (NB. 'keg' might sound unappetising to real ale lovers, but this beer is chilled and either filtered or unfiltered—not pasteurised!). There will also be a selection of interesting foods to match the drinks. Watch this space for further information!

Lady Lane Wharf, Earlswood

The Lady Lane Wharf now has two regular ales, St Austell Tribute and a Whitworth Brewing Co. beer plus two traditional ciders. The recent guest ale was from the Rock & Roll brewery. Visit www.ladylanewharf.co.uk for more information about the pub.



The White Lion

The White Lion in Hampton in Arden has dropped Jennings Cumberland Ale from their range and is now back to 5 real ales.

At the time of writing, these were: M & B Brew XI (3.6%); Hobsons Best Bitter (3.8%); Sharp's Doom Bar (4.0%); Banks's Sunbeam (4.2%) and Wychwood Hobgoblin (4.5%).

The Woodman's Rest

The new manager is making sure that the beers are well-kept and that stocks do not run out, readers will be pleased to hear.

On a recent visit, the bar was well staffed, and the five real ales on offer were Greene Kings Abbot and IPA, Inveralmond's Ossian

(4.1%), Itchin Valley's Dana (3.8%) and Skinners' Betty Stoggs (4.0%).

Right: The Woodman's Rest, Solihull



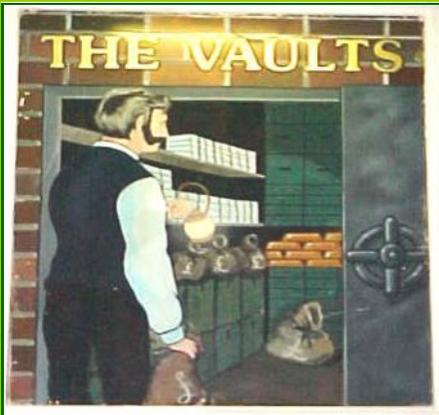
The Shed Brewery

The Shed has now gone to commercial operation, and you can expect to start seeing its real ales in Solihull pubs soon, starting with the Blue Bell Cider House, Warings Green.

The 64th edition of the Solihull Drinker will be published on Monday 3rd June, 2013.

Please note: copy deadline for advertising and contributions will be no later than Sunday 19th May.

Nick, Gwen and staff welcome you to



the Real Ale venue in Knowle

CAMRA Good Beer Guide listed since 1993

Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 7 times between 1992 & 2008

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

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

6 hand-pumped beers including regulars Tetley Bitter, Wadworth 6X, Adnams Lighthouse and St Austell Tribute, plus 2 ever-changing guests, and featuring **real cider** from Westons

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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.***

Ludlow
Food
Spring Festival
Beer, Bangers & Bread

11 & 12
May 2013



- All in Ludlow Castle
- Over 160 real ales
 - Ciders, Perry & Wines
 - Live Music
 - Food Stalls
 - Over 200 Classic Cars
 - 'Hands-On' Demos

Like a
Beer Festival
but better!

For group bookings call 01584 873957:

www.ludlowspringfestival.co.uk

SIBA
local beer

50p OFF!
OUR TICKETS

Get money off your entry tickets with this advert – just bring it along when you pay on the door or use the code below when booking a ticket on our website.
Code: **SOLIHULL**

LUDLOW SPRING FESTIVAL...Celebrating great beers, bangers, bread, music and much more!

Ludlow Spring Festival is now in its fifth year: with over 160 real ales on draught from small breweries in Wales and the Marches, producers selling seriously good food, and a huge display of classic cars all washed down with fantastic music inside Ludlow Castle, who could be surprised at the success of Ludlow's newest festival!

Beer

Now this will be a real ale lover's paradise of over 160 different beers from local SIBA members alongside perry and cider with Marches wines and liqueurs for a bit of variety. The Wales and West Regional Competition will take place on Friday 10th May during the day and then the bar will be open from 5pm to 9pm for a 'Meet the Brewer'

experience where you'll be able to have 'first go' at the beers that have won the top prizes before they all sell out! The bar opens again Saturday and Sunday so you can make your way through the huge selection throughout the weekend.

Music

There will be top bands playing in the 'Festival Pub' marquee to entertain you from 11.30am right through to closing on Sunday, so you can enjoy a fantastic pint while listening to some of the region's top tunes.



Classic Cars

A quick walk outside the festival pub marquee and you'll find yourself amongst a dazzling array of fabulous classic cars – more than 200 will be present over the weekend with many of the larger cars (too big to fit through the castle gate) in the square on Sunday. Each has been lovingly restored, maintained and driven to the show by its enthusiastic owner, who will answer any questions you may have about it.

Bread, Bangers and more...

More than 60 passionate small producers are exhibiting this year, so as well as great food on the day you'll be able to take home some lovingly produced fare. The food on offer is diverse and includes artisan cheeses and breads



to goat sausages. Also, you'll find some treats... delicious home-made cakes, fudge, preserves and pickles.



Free 'hands-on' demonstrations will be running throughout the event on our talks and demonstrations stage so you can just turn up and watch, or maybe have a go yourself.

Finally, during the daytime do not miss out on the Pâté and Pudding Trails taking place around town over the weekend!

We look forward to welcoming you to our fifth Ludlow Spring Festival...

Tel: 01584 873957

www.ludlowspringfestival.co.uk



Our main aim is for The Warwickshire Lad to be a country pub with dining.

We have three regular real ales: Whitworth Brewing Co.'s The Lad (brewed specially for us) & Sobriety, and St Austell Tribute; plus a frequently changing guest.

Fantastic freshly prepared food by owner chef Anton—Lunchtime menu Mondays to Fridays from £4.95, plus a main menu and Sunday roasts

Restaurant and new orangery (seats 50+); large car park and garden plus decking

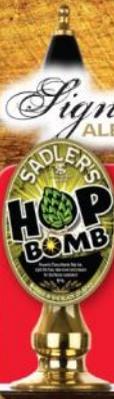
"The Lad" is deservedly popular for its real ales, food and ambience—come along and find out why!!

See our website
www.thewarwickshirelad.co.uk
for further details!!



The Sadler's Ales Experience

Signature
ALES



JPA 3.8%
Red House 4.1%
Mellow Yellow 4.1%
Worcester Sorcerer 4.3%
Thin Ice 4.5%
Hop Bomb 5.0%
Red IPA 5.2%
Mud City Stout 6.8%

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www.sadlersales.co.uk

A Pre-Christmas Solihull Town Centre Pub Crawl

The Christmas crawl on the 18th December gave us the opportunity to check out a few of the pubs in Solihull town centre to see how they were doing on the real ale front.

We met at the Masons Arms, and on entering the pub I noted that all 3 handpumps had their pump clips turned round. I asked at the bar about the real ale to which the barmaid seemed unsure and consulted a lady alongside the bar who in no way acknowledged my existence, which I felt was no way to treat a customer. Anyway, apparently the Marston's EPA was available and she started to pour me a pint without even asking me what I wanted! Meantime, after refusing the beer a customer told me to go round to the back bar where more beers were on tap. Off I go to find 4 handpumps with 3 beers on

which were Robinsons Double Hop, Adnams Topaz and the EPA. Ordering the Topaz I was told that it was not on, neither was the EPA. At last I got a drink of Robinsons. What can I say about this pub? The prices were very reasonable for Solihull town centre. On the tables was a menu of real ales which the pub group was promoting. I could not help but feel that considering it was Saturday night this pub just had not got its act together due to bad management. As we left Adnams Topaz and Wells Bom-



The Masons Arms

bardier appeared on the back bar, but did it really need my comments to galvanise the pub into action?

Our next stop was the Lazy Cow, which opened last week. Some members went to the preview opening and were impressed to see 4 hand-pumped beers on offer. Tonight there were only 2 beers on, Purity UBU and Hook Norton Old Hookey. The pub is now a bar/eatery but is very noisy as music is played and it bounces off the wooden floor. In fact I would be reluctant to dine there as conversation would be very difficult. The beers were all OK but it was a shame to see the beer range halved in under a week.



Across the road we went to the silent haven of the Grenville Club. Here conversation is the order of the day. It was here we had the best pint of the night, Salopian Firkin Freezin. We were reluctant to leave but other pubs were still to be visited. Some of the party popped into the Metro Bar which had Greene King IPA and Enville Ale but at £3.50 a pint some of us gave it a miss.

Passing the Saddlers Arms, originally on our itinerary, we decided to give it a miss as the music was so loud. Indeed, when I'd checked it



The Grenville Club

out a little earlier in the evening the music was deafening then, but it did have 4 beers from the Marston's stable on handpump.

Our last two pubs of the night were the two town centre JD Wetherspoons, starting with the Assembly Rooms. Here there was Greene King Abbott Ale, Ruddles Best Bitter, Orkney Clottie Dumpling and Banks and Taylors Santa Slayer. Considering they have 8 handpumps it was a little disappointing choice-wise. This was compounded by being served in plastic glasses. We noted that these had no government stamp on them which led us to wonder as to their legality. Being Saturday night it was noisy here too with the upstairs disco getting into full swing.



The Assembly Rooms

After a quick one here we popped round to our GBG listed JDW, The White Swan. Now, here I will say that what follows is purely my own opinion. 8 handpumps deck the bar but only 3 beers were on: Purity Gold, Ruddles Best Bitter and Greene King Abbott Ale. One of the pumps had a Titanic White Star pump clip partly turned round. On enquiring we found that indeed it was not on. This was a really disappointing show from the White Swan which I think is not worthy of a GBG entry and embarrasses me as a local CAMRA member to think that we recommend this pub to CAMRA members visiting Solihull.

So our evening drew to a close. We have always known that Solihull town centre is a disappointment beer-wise, however, it was saved by the Grenville Club and the good company.

Steve Dyson

THE BLUE BELL CIDER HOUSE

Warings Green Road,
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Warks. B94 6BP
Tel. 01564 702328



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

Home-made food with a wide variety of steaks served Mon—Sat 12-3.00pm & 5-8.00pm. Carvery served every Sunday 12-3.00pm.

Large beer garden with views of the canal-plus live music.
Large car parking area.
Children & pets welcome.

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



Membership Matters

Every month I receive a list of new members from the CAMRA HQ in St Albans so that I can send them a welcome letter. This month I noticed that of the 8 new members, 4 of them had subscribed at the recent BBC Good Food Show at the NEC. From a campaigning point of view this is a very good result and I wondered how many new members had signed up for other branches. John Cotterell from HQ informed me that there were 150 in total and sent me a list of the top 20 branches. Top came Birmingham with 8 and last was Peterborough with 2. A surprise was that in third place Wakefield with 7. Most of the numbers came, unsurprisingly, from the Midlands and the furthest from Blackpool, with 3. There are other BBC Good Food Shows in Glasgow and London and presumably these venues also do well.

Bob Jackson
Membership Secretary



Should you wish to visit then the next Winter Good Food Show is planned for Wed. 27th November—Sun. 1st December 2013.

How The Case is Altered got it's name

The Case was originally built as a drinking hostelry, probably for local farm workers. Trade proved very good and the owners decided to apply for a liquor licence. However, the application was turned down by the local magistrate on the grounds that the premises was not big enough. The owners were later able to buy the next-door one-up one-down cottage and increase the size of the establishment, so reapplied for the licence, and this time it was granted. In triumphant mood they changed the name to "The Case is Altered", and the rest is history!! The additional cottage is now the snug, and interestingly, the pub name came first; when the track that the pub was on became a road it was called Case Lane.

See page 20 for details of their first ever beer festival!



**To complain about short measures
or other beer-related problems,
contact Solihull Trading Standards
on 0121 704 6844**

It made a splash last year... It's back this year!

**EXTRA
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BEER TOKENS**
for CAMRA, Tablers
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Members



We've sourced
brand new ales,
some old favourites
and some rare
brews to get your
taste buds tingling

Date
6:30pm Friday 8th
midday **Saturday 9th**
March 2013

Venue
**The Royal
British Legion
Knowle**

Cost
£10 entry
includes souvenir glass,
programme and
£5 beer tokens

Plus
**Cheese Tasting
and Open Mic
plug 'n' play
sessions on
Saturday Night**

The Knowle & Dorridge Round Table
BEER FESTIVAL

www.facebook.com/KandDRT @KandDRT www.kandd.org.uk

Community Pubs Month

One of the aims of CAMRA is to support well-run pubs as the centres of community life, whether in rural or urban areas, their continued existence in playing a critical social role in UK culture, and the one place in which to consume real ale and to try one of over 5,500 different styles now produced across the UK

This April, pubs are encouraged to put on events to get more people into their pubs, and CAMRA have set up a website to assist landlords in promoting their events, www.communitypubsmonth.org.uk/register, where they can register. Landlords will then be given log in details which will enable them to publicise events free of charge.

2013 Good Beer Guide pubs can look forward to automatically receiving packs including posters publicising CPM with the heading "Where would we be without the local?".



Solihull & District branch members will then be dropping leaflets into our local pubs which are not in the 2013 Good Beer Guide together with copies of this magazine.

In July there will be another promotion based around charity fund raising by pubs, followed by further promotions in October and then January 2014, about which details will be given in future Drinkers.

For more information about the promotions, see the main CAMRA website:

www.camra.org.uk



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Licensed mobile bar hire



For any celebration where there is no existing Bar or Draught Beers. Ideal for indoor or outdoor events such as weddings, birthdays, Spring and Summer fairs, BBQs and garden fetes, plus village hall & private venues.

Or just hire the pumps/taps and equipment from just £30 per night.

Temporary Event Notices applied for on your behalf if required! (T&Cs apply)



All delivered and set up to your needs.

Real ales sourced from local brewers (or supply your own favorites)

(10% reduction for CAMRA members).

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

THE WHITE LION

High Street, Hampton in Arden, Solihull B92 0AA

Tel: 01675 442833 www.thewhitelioninn.com

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

Sunday 12.00—10.30pm



Solihull CAMRA Most Improved Pub of the Year 2011

Bars Six real ales on at all times

Restaurant A la Carte menu; Sunday roasts from £9.50

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

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

ADRIAN AND THE COMMITTEE WARMLY WELCOME YOU TO

The Rowington Club



Rowington Green, Rowington, Warwickshire CV35 7DB Tel. 01564 782087

Featured in 2011, 2012 and 2013 CAMRA Good Beer Guides

Recipient of Solihull & District Branch award for GBG newcomer in 2010

Opening hours: Mon-Fri: 2.00 – 11.00 pm; Sat-Sun Bank holidays: 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)

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

Forthcoming Events:

Saturday 9th March Rowington Quiz—trophy for winning team (call the club for full entry details)

Rugby: Follow England's progress in the Six Nations Championship at the club:

Sunday 10th March England v Italy (3.00pm) } with food at half-time

Saturday 16th March Wales v England (5.00pm) } during both games

Saturday 20th April Elvis tribute: live music (approx. 9.00pm)

Not forgetting the Junior cricket season at the cricket pitch next door which begins in April—feel free to visit and enrol your children.

Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

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

Monday 8th April	West Warks. Sports Club, 28 Grange Road, Solihull
Monday 13th May	Saxon Inn, Cheswick Green
Monday 3rd June	The Boat, Catherine de Barnes

Committee Meetings

Monday 18th March	Knowle & Dorridge Cricket Club
Monday 20th May	Blossomfield Club

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

Socials

Saturday 9th March	Beer festival workers' Thank-you Trip: Black Country pub crawl.
Saturday 20th April	Pubs Survey & Campaigning trip; Solihull & District pubs
Saturday 18th May	Mild pub crawl trip (for details see website)
June: (date to be confirmed)	Provisional: Trip to the North Cotswold Brewery

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

Most 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 help.

Local Beer Festivals

Thurs 14th—Sat 16th Mar. **43th Burton CAMRA BF**, Burton on Trent Town Hall—60+ local & national real ales + real ciders, perries.& fruit wines. See www.burtoncamra.org.uk for more details.

Fri 22nd—Sat 23rd March **1st CAMRA Gloucester BF**, Blackfriars Priory, Gloucester—35 real ales + ciders, perries & foreign beers + Gloucs. cheese stall. For further details see www.gloucesterbeerfestival.org.uk

Thurs. 4th—Sat. 6th April **Walsall BF**, Town Hall, Walsall; 100+ ales, at least 25 ciders plus bottled beers & food. For further information, see www.walsallcamra.org

Fri. 26th—Sat. 27th April **Coventry BF**, Coventry Rugby Football Ground. 80+

real ales including local beers + ciders, perries & country wines. Further details available from info@covnwcamra.org.uk.

Fri. 3rd—Mon. 6th May **Long Itchington beer festival**—the six village pubs combine to offer over 150 beers together with food and entertainment in a convivial atmosphere. Well worth a visit—public transport is: train to Leamington Spa then bus (63/64) or taxi to Long Itchington.

For more beer festivals and further details, see our website

www.solihullcamra.org.uk



The Lazy Cow

Back in November a few Solihull CAMRA members ventured out to test the real ales and ambience of the Lazy Cow in the town centre. This could be a momentous day for quality real ales in a great environment in Solihull: a restaurant, with a lounge bar with great real ales in a trendy and stylish environment!

The interior had been changed and the bar now an island with facilities relocated within the building. The owner, Urban & Country Leisure (UCL) a Midlands-based company run by former Bar Room Bar owner Ross Sanders, said it planned to "redirect and increase" funding originally destined for the pubs to its "The Lazy Cow" hotel and restaurant blueprint. It now plans to invest £20m in other sites in major cities and market towns throughout the UK.

The Camra tipplers really enjoyed the Purity Mad Goose, Warwickshire's I'm Angus and Warwickshire Lazy Cow Ale. Unusually for a Friday night we were really impressed with the

service and style of the bar area and it appears they will look to provide locally brewed ales. The restaurant blends regional and internationally influenced dishes provided by Head Chef, John Cooper, while on the night the food looked excellent with many amuse-bouches available

Entertainment included fire-eaters break dancing a few feet from our seats; and a fabulous band on who will be returning on various Fridays and Saturdays.

They say 'imagine an urban oasis'—well, the Lazy Cow Steakhouse & cocktail bar offers comfort with creativity, good food and a wonderful atmosphere.



Ian Hunter

Twickenham-bound

My better half Carol surprised me on my last birthday by announcing she'd got us tickets for the England / Scotland game at Twickenham, and had booked us a couple of nights away in Teddington to make a weekend of it. (Don't ask how much she paid for the tickets though.) That said I was pleasantly surprised that the real ale prices in Teddington pubs were comparable to those in the Solihull area. Says more about the prices here I think! We spent an interesting Friday evening in some of the pubs and my favourite pint was Twickenham Naked Ladies (a dark golden ale at 4.4%).

Now I knew Twickenham is unlike many



sports grounds in that it does have real ale bars. Interesting really as it has the same issues as other venues with not being open on a constant basis, yet still feels able to sell real ale when it is—I suspect the 82,000 capacity and nature (capacity!) of rugby fans has something to do with it. So Carol and I duly turned up early so we could watch the opening game between Wales and Ireland on the big screen in the West Village, and maybe have a drink or two. Yes, there was real ale (and quite a few Guinness outlets too) but the choice was limited to Greene King and then to either IPA or IPA Gold. And to top the rather limited choice it was £5 a pint.

Despite this we still had a very enjoyable day (winning always helps), albeit bitingly cold. So, if you do ever find yourself Twickenham-bound, I'd suggest you call into one of the local pubs before the match if you want a better selection of ales.

Ray Cooke

BERNIES REAL ALE OFF LICENCE

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.

CAMRA Good Beer Guide-listed continuously since 1983.



A choice of 200 beers during the year, available in bottles or on draught.

Party barrels to order and supplied for any occasion.

Sale or return on sealed goods.

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 also available for your day or evening get-togethers and parties—come in and talk to us about your requirements and we will always be glad to help.



Choice which cannot be bettered

a real ale obsession

Visit our Anniversary
Beer Festival

Friday 10th – Sunday 12th May

Enjoy **20+ ales**, traditional **ciders**
and delicious fresh **Thai cuisine**
a perfect combination.

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Parliamentary Lobby, December 2012

As most CAMRA members will be aware, CAMRA has been pushing for the abolition of the Beer Escalator. This is a tax of 2% above inflation that is levied on beer every year as well as any tax increase announced in the budget. CAMRA feels that this is an unfair tax which is having a devastating effect on our small breweries and pubs resulting in pub closures and unemployment within the industry.

Solihull CAMRA decided that they should take action and join in the Parliamentary Lobby. Allan Duffy, Bob Jackson, Bob Bell and I made arrangements to see our MP at the House of Commons: Bob, Bob and I to meet our Lib/Dem MP, Lorely Burt, whilst Allan contacted Caroline Spelman. We arranged a meeting with Lorely for 12.45-1pm. Allan was unsuccessful as Caroline was not in the House that day. Nevertheless, he joined us on our trip down to London on the morning of the 12th.

Once on the coach with Dudley, Wolverhampton and Birmingham branch members we picked up lobbyists from Coventry and Rugby, and in London we made our way to the Emmanuel Centre near the Houses of Parliament with just enough time to register, pass through security and make our way to the Central Lobby.

Lorely came to meet us and suggested retiring to the Strangers Bar, Parliament's real ale bar, for a welcome pint which was very much appreciated. Meanwhile Allan registered to see his MP via the Green Card system. (If the MP is on site they are obliged to come and see the constituent, or, if they are not on site someone from his/her office will come to talk to the constituent.) The conversation with Lorely was a little bewildering: she seemed a little unsure as to what the Beer Escalator was. This being so, which became clearer later, Lorely felt that she could not support our cause as she felt compromised, the Lib/Dems being

in government.; plus she worked within the Treasury with Danny Alexander, Chief Secretary of the Treasury and also a Lib/Dem, the originator of this unfair tax, which put her in a difficult position. She thought the escalator would stay after the next budget in spite of us saying that it would only bring in 0.3% extra revenue over the next two years. She did promise however to take up the issue within the Treasury to ascertain its validity and discuss its effect on the industry.

Following our meeting we popped out to the terrace overlooking the Thames, took a few photos then returned to the Central Lobby where we found Allan still awaiting a reply from Caroline Spelman's office. He decided that he had waited long enough and joined us at the Red Lion, a Fullers pub near Parliament, where London beer and London prices saw us pay over £4 a pint. We only had time for one then made our way back to the Emmanuel Centre where speeches were to be given to over 1000 lobbyists who had turned up on that day.

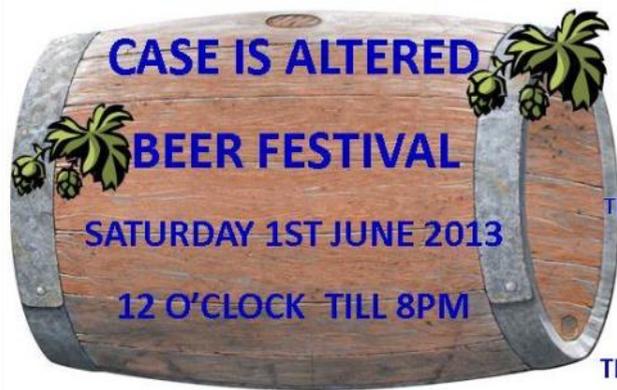
Speeches were given by Labour, Conservative and Lib/Dem MPs, all supporting the abolition of the Escalator Tax. I therefore could not understand why Lorely could not support us as MPs from all parties were voicing these views. Lorely's excuse re being in government does not quite gel given these stances.



The two Bobs on the Terrace at the Houses of Parliament

On leaving London a check of Bob Bell's e-mail revealed that at 10.45am that morning Lorely had e-mailed us cancelling our appointment. This of course was unbeknown to us and may explain her lack of briefing re the Beer Escalator. We arrived in Birmingham at 1040 just in time to get the train to Solihull. It had been a (not entirely successful) long day but at least we had made an effort to make our point.

Steve Dyson



WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOU
JOINING US AT OUR

BEER FESTIVAL

THERE WILL BE A SELECTION OF BEERS
FROM LOCAL AND INDEPENDENT
BREWRIES INCLUDING OUR OWN
BEERS FROM

THE OLD PIE FACTORY BREWERY

A Day Trip to London

Four Solihull CAMRA members with a day to spare thought London might be a good place for a pub crawl.

Our first port of call was the Carpenters Arms in Seymour Place, a street-corner local just off Oxford Street. Reputed to have Harveys on tap and 5 unusual beers, we were disappointed to find only Harveys Best; Jennings Cackle Warmer; Cottage Old Winter and Truman's No. 8. Truman's has historical routes in London but none of the beers was exceptional.



The Carpenters Arms

Next, into Beak Street where we arrived at the Old Coffee House, another street-corner local. The beers here are from Brodie's Brewery in the East End. Having recently tried their beers at the Dudley Beer Festival and being suitably impressed this was a pub we could not miss and we were not disappointed. Brodie's Kiwi; Citra; London Fields Pale Ale; Bethnal Green Bitter and Dalston Black IPA were all imbibed. Some were a little cloudy but we all agreed that the flavours were superb.

Time being on our side I slipped in another Brodie's pub, the Cross; having raved over the beers at the Old Coffee House a visit here was

We reluctantly moved onto Nicholson's pub the Bear and Staff near Leicester Square. This chain of pubs can have a good range of beers. On tap here were Red Squirrel London Porter, in excellent condition; Fullers London Pride; Skinners Betty Stoggs, which others in the party thought in excellent condition; Itchen Valley Dana which the barman took off as it was the end of the barrel; Moorhouse's Pride of Pendle and Nicholson's Pale ale brewed by St. Austell which we agreed was just OK. The pub, another traditional one, has associations with Charlie Chaplin who was a regular, and the upstairs room is dedicated to him.

Just a short walk from here was the Harp in Chandos Place. Our first GBG pub of the day, the Harp won the CAMRA National Pub of the Year in 2010, so it had to be on our list. Built in the 1830's it has stained glass windows and a welcome upstairs room. As to the beers, the pub supports the LocAle campaign so on the bar were Sambrook's Wandle and Junction; Oldershaw Cascade; Red Squirrel London Porter; Crouch Vale Brewers Gold; Tring Mansion Mild; Harveys Bitter and Dark Stars Galaxy, Hophead Galaxy and Dark Star. The Sambrook Junction was OK but the Dark Star and Tring Mild were superb.

Time being on our side I slipped in another Brodie's pub, the Cross; having raved over the beers at the Old Coffee House a visit here was

a must. In Endell Street, Covent Garden, this traditional pub was not quite as good beer-wise as the Old Coffee House. Brodie's London Fields Pale Ale (in excellent condition) and Bethnal Green Bitter, Citra, Redemption Ale, a little disappointing; and Windsor and Eton's Guardsman which was OK but nothing special. Leaving here did not prove as difficult as leaving the fantastic Old Coffee House. We got a little lost but with the trusty GPS in hand we were soon corrected and after the longest walk of the day we saw Euston Station in front of us and the distinctive building that is the Euston Tap. The pub is in the Western Lodge flanking the famed Euston Arch callously destroyed in 1961. It is small and very busy with an upstairs seating area. In the summer it has outside seating. Beers are dispensed from the wall behind the bar as space is so limited. The bar staff were very attentive and our beers were soon with us. On the beer list were Moor Nor' Hop; Fyne Jari; Summer Wine Teleporter; Arbor Oyster Stout, Galaxia Dark and Night Vision and Kirkstall Pale Ale and Dissolution. I sampled four on the list and they were excellent.

The Bree Louise in Coburg Street is a modern pub with more local and independents' beers than any other pub in London that I know of, and like the Euston Tap it was heaving. I have to admit that this late in the day trying to list all the beers eluded me. I tried Highland Oyster Stout (in excellent condition) and Windsor and Eton's Canberra and Knot (not so good). It also has over ten real ciders. Our last port of call was JDW's Metropolitan at Bakerloo tube station where I tried some Potbelly Pale Ale



At the Bree Louise

In devising this tour I found the GBG; CAMRA's Guide to London's Best Beer Pubs and Bars and CAMRA's London Pub Walks invaluable. With these to hand there are innumerable crawls you can devise taking in many cracking pubs in London. Indeed, I feel the call for another visit! Anyone up for it?

Steve Dyson



Friday 17th May

17:30 to 23:30

Saturday 18th May

11:30 to 23:30

Same Venue - Camp Hill Rugby Club, Haslucks Green Road

Same price - £10 entry includes souvenir glass, programme and £5 beer tokens (£6 tokens for CAMRA members)

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Long Itch Brewery: a Passion for Real Ale turns into a Career

Although I moved two years ago to the Heart of Warwickshire CAMRA region, I was a Solihull CAMRA member for several years while I was planning my new venture. My passion for beer and more specifically real ale started many years ago as an engineering student at Birmingham University, where I'd drink copious amounts of Youngers No.3, a rich dark ale full of flavour. Although the fashions in beer styles come and go over the years (IPAs, Golden Ales, Milds etc.), it's great to see the current 'craft beer revolution' fuelling interest from a new generation of drinkers, who are looking for something more exciting than the usual mass-produced drinks.

With possible redundancy looming a few years ago, I looked into the possibility of setting up a micro-brewery. It was something I'd dreamed about for years, so decided to research it further by putting myself on a couple of training courses (Brewlab at Sunderland Uni and Dave Porter's in Bury). Although I'd home-brewed for 20+ years, the complexities of commercial brewing were a different ballgame! But rather than put me off, it spurred me on to believe it was an achievable goal.

When I told friends of my intentions to start up a micro-brewery, they often commented "that sounds like the perfect job for you, with your passion for real ale and engineering background", I hope I can prove them right. Along the way, I've realised the importance of the support of family and friends, and as a small one man start-up I'm most grateful for any help. With twenty years experience as an engineer in

product development and prototype engineering at Land Rover and MG Rover, process and operations are my thing. It's a massive step to take into the world of brewing, but I'm relishing the 'hands on' aspect of operating the equipment, with all its interconnected stainless tanks, valves, pumps, pipework and taps.

Long Itch Brewery opened for business on 25th January 2013, and my initial range of four beers will increase to six later this year, then possibly eight by year end, plus seasonal specials.

Backscratcher (4.5%), a classic premium ale; Honey Trap (4.1%), a golden ale with a hint of honey; Light Relief (3.8%), a zesty hopped light-coloured ale; and Dubbel Trubbel (6.0%), a Belgian-style beer, are currently being sold at

pubs including The Harvester and Green Man in Long Itchington and The Old New Inn in Harbury. Several upcoming beer festivals have also shown keen interest, so things are definitely going in the right direction. Also when his premises licence comes through Trevor will be able to sell direct from the brewery door (eg. polypins, mini-pins etc).

Trevor Howarth

For more details and beer descriptions, see www.longitchbrewery.co.uk



Trevor in front of his brewing kit

An ideal crawl round the City of Dreaming Spires

Oxford is a small city, with a population less than that of the Borough of Solihull, but unlike Solihull, it is not short of good pubs and good beer. Despite its history and sheer number of historic buildings, Oxford can only boast one pub on CAMRA's National Inventory, and bizarrely, this is a 1950s estate pub to the east of the centre. That's not to say there aren't any architecturally interesting pubs in the centre, and my suggested crawl includes several that can trace their history back to well before the oldest of the Oxford Colleges was founded.

From the railway station, it's only a ten minute walk to St Giles, a wide street heading north out of the city, dominated by the buildings of St John's College, who own and run the first pub, the **Lamb & Flag**. It's a free house, dating in parts from the 16th century, and features beers from Skinners and Palmers alongside guest beers and real cider. Directly opposite (take care crossing the road) is the **Eagle & Child**, once frequented by writers JRR Tolkien and CS Lewis, and now part of the Nicholson's chain offering four ever-changing beers.

From here walk round the corner into Broad Street, where you'll find the **White Horse** nestled amongst the various entrances to Blackwell's bookshop. This narrow pub claims to be Oxford's smallest and is a regular outlet for local Shotover beers. A few doors down is the **Kings Arms**, an imposing 17th century pub serving Young's beers, plus guests: try the back bar and snug for more atmospheric surroundings.



The King's Arms



The Eagle and Child

From the KA it's a short walk to the famous **Turf Tavern**, hidden down a narrow passageway. Best avoided when the students are graduating, it offers a good choice of guest beers despite its Greene King ownership. Passing the Bridge of Sighs and the Radcliffe Camera, you'll reach the High Street. Tucked away off here is the **Chequers**, another fantastic old building, and another Nicholson's pub selling Thornbridge Jai-pur permanently alongside a number of guests. A third Nicholson pub, **The Crown**, is also nearby.

Round the corner from the Chequers is the **Bear**, allegedly Oxford's oldest, and one of its smallest; note the rare pewter bar top. It's a Fuller's pub and offers guest beers, albeit at a price. The other side of the Town Hall (Oxford CAMRA's beer fest venue) is the **St Aldate's Tavern**, a high-ceilinged, one room pub, recently re-opened and now selling six local beers.

Turning down Pembroke Street will lead you to the **Royal Blenheim**, a single-room corner pub run by White Horse brewery, which sells up to ten real ales including the excellent Village Idiot. And before you leave, take the short walk to George Street and the **Grapes**, another recently re-opened pub, and run by Bath Ales. The final stop on the crawl is just around the corner and down an alleyway, the unusually titled **Far from the Madding Crowd**, a modern shop conversion offering six ever-changing guest beers, and the current Oxford City Pub of the Year.



The Bear

This is just a taster of what Oxford can offer the real ale drinker, and being only a short train ride away from Solihull, it makes an excellent choice for a day out.

Matt Bullock

J.D. Wetherspoon

The White Swan and The Assembly Rooms 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.

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

Phone: 0121 711 6990

Opening times:

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Thurs — Sat: 7.00am — 2.00am

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

Live sporting events screened weekly
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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 tailored to your needs: please ask staff for further details.



Coming soon: a Solihull Wetherspoons Real Ale festival over the week commencing Friday 16th March

Special feature on Saturday 17th March: the Battle of the Breweries!

Five local breweries will supply two casks of ale each, one at each JDW pub, and whoever sells the most will win a 6-month residency in both pubs.

Come along and support your favourite local brewery!

www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk

Be a real JD Wetherspoon's fan — join us on Facebook!

* New dates for the 2013 GBBF *

You may notice from the poster below that the dates of this year's GBBF have moved to a week later than usual: from Tuesday 13th August (Trade Day) to Saturday 17th August. Whether you plan to help as a staff member or visit for a few drinks, make sure you put the dates in your diary now to avoid missing this iconic beer festival!! For further details of opening hours, ticket prices, beers, awards and entertainment, see www.gbbf.org.uk.



Great British Beer Festival London Olympia 13-17th August

A fantastic fun packed festival atmosphere with over 800 quality beers & ciders, variety of food, live music, entertainment, games and activities to enjoy.

www.gbbf.org.uk



Young Persons Contact Wanted

The branch is looking for a Young Persons Contact, to encourage people between the ages of 18 and 35 to visit pubs, drink real ale (responsibly!) and support CAMRA and its aims.

If you are a branch member and think that this voluntary role might suit you, then call the chairman on 0121 603 1621 for more information and an informal chat about the post's duties.

Have you met any of Dorothy's Heroes yet?

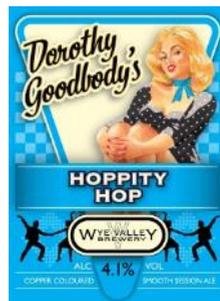
Dorothy Goodbody, the legendary daughter of a local hop grower, has put her name to 12 special Wye Valley Brewery ales that will each be available in participating pubs for just one month during 2013.



You can get the full low-down on all 12 ales by visiting the Dorothy's Heroes website:

www.wyvalleybrewery.co.uk/dorothy-goodbody/

And while you're in the pub enjoying a great pint of Dorothy's ales, be sure to look out for the Dorothy's Heroes beer mats. As well as featuring images from Wye Valley's Dorothy for the Day photoshoot, they give you instructions on how to enter a monthly draw to win a case of Dorothy's ales.



PS If, sadly, your local doesn't serve Dorothy Goodbody ales, ask them to look into stocking them in future!

A Campaign of Two Halves

Fair deal on beer tax now!

Save Britain's Pubs!



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Complete the Direct Debit form below and you will receive 15 months membership for the price of 12 and a fantastic discount on your membership subscription.

Alternatively you can send a cheque payable to CAMRA Ltd with your completed form, visit www.camra.org.uk/joinus or call 01727 867201. All forms should be addressed to Membership Department, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW.

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For Young Member and concessionary rates please visit www.camra.org.uk or call 01727 867201.

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

I enclose a cheque for _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Applications will be processed within 21 days

Partner's Details (if Joint Membership)

Title _____ Surname _____
 Forename(s) _____
 Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy) _____

01/06

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- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay by Direct Debits.
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