

Solihull

Issue No 81
Autumn 2017



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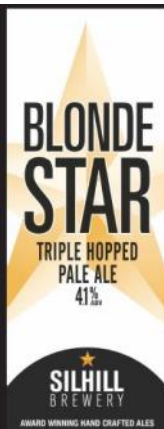
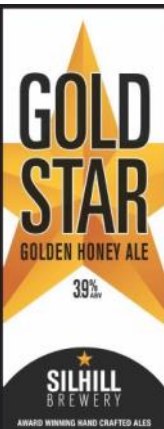
Homebrew competition Saturday afternoon

Live music Saturday night

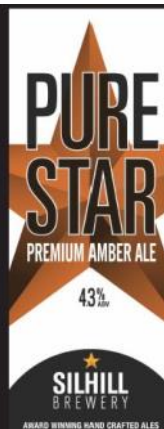
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— Thomas Love Peacock, Melincourt, 1817



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Solihull CAMRA Club Of The Year 2017

Congratulations to Knowle and Dorridge Cricket Club (K&DCC) who were the winners of the Solihull CAMRA Club of the Year for a second successive year.

A presentation on the 16th August was attended by around 15 CAMRA members, who enjoyed a good choice of Salopian Hop Twister and Darwin's Origin, as well as Thornbridge Lumford.

"In winning this award, the Knowle and Dorridge Cricket Club has succeeded in beating the opposition for the second year running" said Branch Chairman Carl Wright. "We know that the popu-

larity of the Club is not due to the efforts of one person, but due to the hard work of the bar staff, cellar manager, and the committee, and their high standards show in the quality and variety of the real ales always on offer. It is always a pleasure to visit and the welcome extended to the CAMRA members here today is typical of the Club's hospitality.

Solihull CAMRA wishes the Knowle and Dorridge Cricket Club another successful year in all their enterprises."

Jon Knibb, K&DCC Membership Chairman, reinforced the sentiment: "This is a great achievement for our club, against some strong competition in the local area. The club prides it ourselves on the variety and quality of the ales that we serve and are proud to receive this recognition.

CAMRA members are welcome to drink at the club and this award is testament to the hard work of our staff and members."



Branch Chairman Carl Wright presents the award to the team (left to right) Molly Minett, Harry Royle (bar manager), and Jacqui Redmond

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Dates For Your Diary

Branch Meetings

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

Monday 2nd October	Olton Tavern
Monday 6th November	White Swan, Solihull Centre
Monday 4th December	Red Lion, Knowle

Committee Meetings

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

Monday 18th September	The Durham Ox, Shrewley
Monday 20th November	Crabmill, Preston Bagot

For more details and contacts for the above, please call Secretary Allan Duffy on 01564 200 431 or visit our website: www.solihull.camra.org.uk

Most, though not all, of our local pubs have disabled access. If you wish to come to a meeting and require assistance to get inside, contact us beforehand and we will do our best to help.

Flo Vialan of Purity Named Brewer Of The Year

Purity's director of brewing Flo Vialan was named Brewer of the Year at the All-Party Parliamentary Beer Group Awards. The highly-prized and prestigious award is one of only a small number handed out annually by this government-related group.

The Frenchman, who hails from Lyon and has been the Head Brewer at Purity for nearly 11 years, has been recognised for his wide-ranging skills in and out of the Brewhouse, and for brewing great beer without prejudice, with a conscience, and with a consistency and attention to detail, which is second to none.

As well as being a dedicated eco-friendly brewer with a degree in Environmental Science and Agriculture, Flo has been crucial in Purity's development of all their beers, and their continued success as one of the leading craft brewers in the UK.

Speaking about Flo's award, Purity's founder Paul Halsey, commented: "He is one of the most dedicated, meticulous and driven brewers I have ever met, as well as being a central part of the Purity

family, so this award is very well deserved. I take particular pride in Flo's journey with us here at the brewery, but even more so in the fact he didn't know about the nomination and had to get up on stage in front of so many people. Nice one Flo!"

And the man himself had this to say: "I am incredibly proud and thankful to receive this award. It's not often you get to combine your work with one of your hobbies and I feel privileged that I get to do this every day. It's not just for me though, this award I would like to share with my excellent brewing team at Purity that continue to push boundaries, strive to improve each day and ensure the beer we brew is the best possible. I'd like to thank the APPBG for this award and also the whole team at Purity as I couldn't do my job if it wasn't for the rest of the guys doing theirs, it truly is a team effort!"

Read more in Purity News July 14th

You can sample a range of Purity's beers at the Purecraft Bar and Kitchen in Birmingham.

Upcoming Midlands Area Beer Festivals

September 7-9 (Thu-Sat):

24TH TAMWORTH BEER FEST

Masonic Rooms, Lichfield St, Tamworth B79 7QE. Inside bars & plenty of outdoor/ covered seating. 75+ ales. Also ciders, perries & foreign/UK bottled beers. Hot/cold food & soft drinks. Live music Fri/Sat. Supervised children permitted until 5pm. Open 11-11pm daily. Entry £3 except Fri 5-11pm (£4) + all day Sat (£1). CAMRA members FREE entry all times. Beer list on website week before: www.lstcamra.org.uk

September 16 (Sat):

BLAKESLEY HALL ALE FESTIVAL

Blakesley Road, Yardley, B25 8RN Birmingham. Open 11am to 8pm. Craft beers, ales and ciders from local breweries including Burning Soul, Two Towers, Thousand Trades, Froth Blowers and Snails Bank. Entry £5 includes glass. Hot food and live music.

September 19th - October 31

STONEGATE BEER FESTIVAL

Buy 6 pints on a collector card, get one free. Locally this festival will be on at the Flute and Flagon.

September 21-23 (Thu-Sat):

4TH CANNOCK CHASE BEER FEST

Prince of Wales Theatre, Church St, Cannock WS11 1DE. 63 ales, 20 ciders & perries & international bottle bar. Open: Thu 5-11pm, Fri & Sat 12-11pm. Entry £3 general public, £2 Seniors, Students & HM Forces, £1 CAMRA members. £10 package to include admission, programme, souvenir glass (refundable) & beer tokens. Entertainment: Thu: live broadcast on Cannock Chase Radio, CBOB judging, Fri night: Stone Cold Soberish, Sat aft: The Busker, Cider tasting with Sally Lavender,

Sat night: Waiting For Susan. Hot & Cold food available all sessions. Tombo-la, Membership & Merchandise stalls. Plenty of seating available. Info at www.cannockbeerfestival.co.uk

October 6-7 (Fri-Sat):

18TH SOLIHULL BEER FESTIVAL

The Royal British Legion, Union Road, Solihull B91 3DH. 12 noon - 11pm both days. 45 real ales, cider & perry. See front page for more details.

October 6-7 (Fri-Sat):

WYTHALL'S 8TH BEER FESTIVAL

Wythall Community Club, Silver Street, Wythall, Birmingham B47 6LZ. Check www.wythall-park.org.uk for details.

October 11-22 (Wed-Sun):

WETHERSPOONS BEER FESTIVAL

As usual up to 50 real ales available, including beers specially brewed for the occasion. Locally pop into either the White Swan, Solihull Centre, or The Pump House, Shirley.

October 12-15 (Thu-Sun):

INN ON THE GREEN BEER FEST

2 Westley Road, Acocks Green, B27 7UH. 20 ales, 5 ciders. Music Fri and Sat live and free. 20p per pint off for CAMRA members.

October 26-28 (Thu-Sat):

BIRMINGHAM CAMRA BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL

New venue - The Custard Factory, Gibb Street, Digbeth, Birmingham, B9 4AA, 200 yards from Digbeth Coach Station. Up to 150 beers + 70 ciders. CAMRA members get extra £2 beer tokens on entry. Free programme, glass refundable. Beer tasting sessions & street food available. Advance tickets for Thu/Fri only via Ticketsource.co.uk. For details www.birminghambeerfestival.org.uk

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Hail to the Ale!

Local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news

The Saxon in Cheswick Green recently re-opened after a refurbishment. With a much brighter look, there are several TV screens to show sport. At a recent committee meeting three handpulls served Doombar, Purity UBU (though without a pump clip so we didn't know it was on), and Timothy Taylor's Land-lord, which was good.

Yates has now opened (or should that be re-opened) in Solihull after refurbishment of the former Assembly Rooms. On a recent visit the décor looked as though it had significantly improved, though the range of real ales on offer were basically the normal fare from the large national brewers.

The **White Swan** in Solihull town centre passed their Casque Mark inspection with a maximum 100% in July.

The car park machine and cameras have now been removed so there is no longer a charge for parking on the **Hobs Meadow** car park.

Solihull BID are advertising an "innovative Ale Trail complete with designer mini pint glass and dedicated trail of our local bars finest swigs" to be held at the Solihull Food and Drink Festival that runs from the 29th September to the 1st October.



This is also the end of Cask Ale week so look out for other offers and events.

The **Saddler's Arms** in Solihull town centre has closed and we have no news

on whether it is to re-open or when. The **Metro Bar** has also closed after going into administration.

The **Ebb and Flow** has been sold by Marston's to Boston Tea Party who are carrying out a total refit with expected completion date to be November 2017. It looks unlikely that there will be cask ales, but craft beers could appear on the menu.

There are two Meet the Brewer events coming up at the **Fieldhouse**. Brains are coming on **Tuesday 3rd October** with all their beers half price. Rev James Original, Rev James Gold, and Brains Open Casket will be on offer, and a quiz night will be based around real ale. On Tuesday **31st October** St Austell will be visiting. There will be half price Tribute, Proper Job and Bucket of Blood (a 4.3% Halloween special), as well as a Halloween quiz night, plus lots of give-aways. Free buffet for CAMRA members at both of these events.

The **Thousand Trades** brewery held an open day as part of Birmingham Beer Week. They also launched a collaboration with Ar Súil at the Wolf in Birmingham in early August. A keg beer, "My Name is Istvan", went down very well and was sold out in a day.

Watch out for Hop Star from **Silhill brewery**. This is a golden IPA with Citra, Amarillo, and Chinook hoppyness. At the brewery a new fermenter room is under construction. Check out the progress and latest news on Facebook, Silhill Brewery Ltd.



It seems as though micropubs are a little like buses. In most of the 35 year history of Solihull CAMRA there were none, but in 2016 two turned up. While the Pup and Duckling was the first arrival in February, the Ale Rooms appeared on Friday 2nd December on Knowle High Street.



The owner, Mark Caldicott from Hampton in Arden, took over a premises previously used as a funeral parlour and went from planning permission to opening in just 3 months. The building work itself took just 6 weeks, all done by himself and occasional specialists.

Mark had spent 16 years in the banking industry, but with a young family, was looking for a change in direction. He initially looked at taking over a pub with Punch, but the lease was not a long term prospect. Having had the idea of opening a micropub in May 2016, he first looked at Leamington but the "numbers didn't add up".

Luckily for us the numbers did work in Knowle when he found the vacant unit.

Although Mark was already a CAMRA member by the time he opened, regularly drank at the nearby Vaults, and frequented Bernies, he admittedly had never pulled a pint before his opening night.

He is however a fast learner, and acknowledges with gratitude the help he was given in learning about beer and how to keep and serve it.

Silhill have been a great help, including providing his house beer (Knowle Special Ale—or KSA) and have helped Mark make useful contacts. New Silhill brews are also tried out at the Ale Rooms - a bit of live market research. Mark Gregory from Silhill regularly comes in to check that his beer is being sold in good condition!

Backyard, Church End, and Church Farm have also been supportive and given help when needed. Mark is grateful to all of these brewers for their contribution to his success, and recognises that the big national brewers would not be supporting in the same way.

Thanks to the guidance, Mark cleans the lines after every barrel, checks the beers for appearance and flavour at the start of the day, and renovates his glasses every month (something I'm sure many landlords fail to do). In May he installed a chilled room to keep the casks in, which is kept at a constant 12 degrees. Previously they were on the floor under the bar.

Other improvements, including some furniture changes, are being planned to tidy other things up a bit, recognising

that the initial construction only took 6 weeks.



The 2017 Champion Beer of Britain, Church End's Goat's Milk, is a regular on the bar as well as Purity Bunny Hop, and of course KSA. One of Mark's next ambitions is to get some Bathams in. The vast majority of the beers sold are normally from Midlands breweries. What you won't normally see are dark strong beers as they are not popular with his customer base.

As well as the 7 real ales on offer, Mark has expanded the range of gins available from 6, when he opened, to 42 now, and he gets in 3 or 4 new gins each week. There is even a non-alcoholic gin on sale.

Although there is a wine bar sign in the window he sells more gin than wine, and approximately half his customers are women.

Food consists of Pieminster pies, as well as scotch eggs and pork pies from a corner shop in Hampton in Arden.

Including Mark and Amanda, his wife, there are 8 staff in total, some of whom have been there since they opened. Callum

has just been appointed as the new bar manager and will be in charge of looking after the beers.

Craig, his previous manager has taken over running the Black Tap in Redditch so expect to see some developments there as well.

For CAMRA members there is a generous 50p / pint, and also 50p/ half pint, discount offered bringing prices down to £3 a pint or £1.50 for a half. Ian Murrie, our 600th member, is a regular in the Ale Rooms and one of several swayed into joining by the offer. On a Friday night recently one quarter of beer sold was to CAMRA members.

Friday and Saturday nights tend to be very busy, but the rest of the week is "steady". Opening hours are from 2pm to 11pm 7 days a week, recently extended from the original 10pm closing.

A first anniversary beer festival is being planned for early December, so keep an eye open for announcements, but you don't have to wait till then to visit.

To check out the latest news, events, and which real ales are available on the bar go to Facebook @AleRoomsKnowle.



Mark and Amanda proudly show off the 2017 Champion Beer of Britain, Goat's Milk, on their bar just after the announcement.

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Fridays & Saturdays
12 noon—12.00pm
Food Service: 12 noon—10.00pm

2017 Beer Quality Report Published

Cask Marque have recently published the 2017 Beer Quality Report. You can access this from their website <http://cask-marque.co.uk/>.

The extent of the quality issue facing the industry is spelled out in the executive summary which states that the risk to the industry from additional employment legislation and business rates is £374m per year (£7,178 per pub). In comparison the cost of sub-standard quality is £709m per year, or 5.8% of beer sales.

The report details the various sources of poor quality.

6% of beer is served too warm, and a quarter of UK pubs had a major temperature issue in 2016 serving more than 20% of beer too warm. One third of cellars are outside the recommended temperature.

One third of pints are served via unclean lines. Cider is worst at 44% unclean, while cask is slightly better than

keg at 29%. The worst location is the South West with the North East being best.

One seventh of cask handpulls are dispensing less than 20 pints per week. The number of wasted taps has reduced, but still is a source of waste and poor quality as beer is sat in lines too long.

Temperature and cleanliness of glasses is also explored. A 2016 Cask Marque survey found that 37% of pubs had dirty glassware resulting in: flat beer, "off" aromas and flavours, poor appearance, and collapsing heads. "If the head on a cask beer disappears very quickly then 90% of the time it's the glass that is the problem (Source : Proton)"

The report is one that should be read by all licensees and bar staff. We all want a win-win and one is up for grabs here. Better quality = better drinking experience = better pub profits.

London Calling

A sunny, warm Saturday in early June saw a party of Solihull CAMRA members and guests descend on London with the intention of enjoying the beers that the great city can provide.

Arriving in Marylebone, we made our way to the nearby George and Dragon, 1 Cleveland Street, Fitzrovia. Advertised as the only brewpub in Fitzrovia we were all looking forward to trying the beers. However, we were to be disappointed. None of their beers were available and we had to make do with a choice of 6 other beers. Lines Phat Acid Mosaic and East London Truman's Lazarus were my choice, the former a superb hoppy beer, with the latter typical of a southern beer, malty. Other breweries represented were Southwark, Oakham, Cellar Dweller and Adnams with an average cost of £4.60 per pint. The pub itself is a typical London corner pub, but has a thoroughly modern interior. It was rather quiet when we arrived and seemed a little soulless. Maybe a visit later in the



day would give the pub more character when more folk are about.

Our next pub was the Old Coffee House in Beak Street, Soho. Always a pub I make a beeline for, stocking Brodie's, who brew my type of beers. Nothing much to say about the pub other than there were 3 Brodie's beers on; Mild, Citra, and Culture. I thoroughly enjoyed the Citra and Culture which were full of hop character.

Moving on, we headed for the Lyric in Great Windmill Street, a favourite with London CAMRA members. A nice tiled entrance takes you into the pub which is both small and intimate, and was busy when we arrived. Battling to the bar we found Portobello VPA, Southwark Clink, Big Smoke Bonfire Bitter, Thornbridge Lord Marples, and Redwell Extra Pale Ale, a really hoppy gluten free beer. The others were OK but the Clink needed jailing as it was not in good condition.

The next port of call was the Harp in Chandos Place, a longstanding GBG entry that has a pleasant upstairs room with a bay window overlooking the street scene below. Beers on hand-pump included Harveys, Oakham, Dark Star, Hop Stuff, Weird Beard, Redemption, and Belleville. I tried both Dark Stars; Hophead and IPA, which were not the best I have tried, and followed this with a Breville Picnic Session IPA which was OK but somewhat mediocre.

On to the White Swan in New Row, just around the corner from the Harp. It was a typical Nicholson's pub with a modern aspect but comfortably traditional in character. Sharps, Fullers, Black Sheep, Gales, and Nicholson's



Checking the beers at the George & Dragon



The White Swan

own, brewed by St Austell, did not inspire, so I sat this one out looking forward to better luck at the Cross Keys.

Together with the Old Coffee Shop, this pub dating from the 1840s, is

a definite on my list, as between them they usually have a good range of Brodie's and Dark Star beers. Having battled through the foliage at the entrance, we found Brodie's Mild and a superb hop mouthful of a beer called Simcoe Pale Ale at 5%. It certainly hit the spot for me. Also on the bar was Belhaven Wembley 67 (a Greene King beer).

The next pub was a new one for me, the Craft Beer Co. in High Holborn. I had heard of this company who have 6 pubs in London, and was eager to try them out. As it was on our way towards Euston it would have been churlish not to. With the feel of a bar/bistro it had a good range of 11 beers on handpump including 4 Oakham's, Crouch Vale, 3 Tritons, Siren Craft, and 2 Acorns. I went for 6 beers here, not a sensible decision. All were in good condition but the Oakham Blue Skies at 6% certainly packed a punch! Well worth looking out for the other pubs in this chain on future London visits.

We poked our noses into the Museum Tavern in Bloomsbury but were not very impressed. Nothing special: even the Radio X on closer inspection was a Greene King brew, so we decided to move on to the Euston Tap.

Located in one of the lodges of Euston

Station (the other is a cider bar) this is a busy small venue with an upstairs seating area, if you are able to negotiate the spiral staircase successfully. Seating outside is recommended, particularly after a few beers, avoiding precarious ascents! Not really a pub, more a bar, the Euston Tap is a cask/keg bar with 8 cask and 8 keg beers on tap, so there is a good choice of beers to suit everyone's taste. I tried 7 out of the 8, finding Red Willow Seamless to be the best of a bunch which included Magic Rock, Oakham, Williams Brothers, Anarchy, Atom, Hawkeshead, and Kent. I never used to rate Red Willow highly in days of yore, but these last 12 months they seem to have come on in leaps and bounds. Time was running out for us so we had to get to the Bree Louise. Luckily it was only 5 minutes from the Euston Tap.

A lovely end to the day saw us finishing our session in London sitting outside at the Bree Louise. Another long



term GBG entry, it is a one room pub which has beer on both gravity and handpump. When we visited 11 were on handpump, and 11 on gravity, and for cider lovers there were 11 to choose from. What a selection... where

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do you start? Of course I went for the Dark Star Hophead and 2 others, but I can't read my writing! However, I did try one of the Bree's regulars Titanic Plum Porter. Not my style, but I can understand why it has many followers. From the Bree Louise it was a stout

walk back to Marylebone for our trip back home to Solihull.

Just as an addendum, most of the pubs we visited today did food so if you plan a trip to London you can easily get fed!

Steve Dyson

As a sad postscript to what was wonderful trip organised by Steve, news broke on the 25th July that the Bree Louise had become one of the first casualties of the planned High Speed 2 rail line.

The Good Beer Guide listed and North London branch's pub of the year is set to close on 20 November.

Owner Craig Douglas said, before the bulldozers move in, he is planning a last hoorah. "Please put it out there and the only liquid I want left on site is our tears," said Douglas.

"It's my house, my home and my business," he said.

If you've never been there it is well worth a visit - while you still can.

The History of Solihull CAMRA

October 2017 not only marks the return of the Solihull CAMRA beer festival, but it is also the 35th anniversary of Solihull CAMRA. To commemorate this we are re-printing an article that first appeared in Solihull Drinker 41, with thanks to Julia Wright and her archive of Solihull Drinker magazines, as well as the original author Steve Wood.

You can read more about the branch and it's history, as well as the history of our local pubs on our branch website www.solihull.camra.org.uk

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

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

decision was taken in March 1971 to form a Campaign for the Revitalisation of Ale.

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

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

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

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

By the early 1980's, increasing membership had led to the possibility of a



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Sat 25 November - Freddie Mercury Tribute

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- 31st October St Austell

Free buffet for CAMRA members



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

but it ain't gonna happen". He was of the opinion that Branch status for Solihull probably wasn't feasible at that time, and that a sub-Branch of Coventry was more likely.

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

Steve Wood

We will also be re-publishing part 2 of this article in the Winter 2017 Solihull Drinker - Issue 82.

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A Midweek Crawl of Beeston

A sunny May day saw 4 Solihull CAMRA members and my sister Pat undertake an easy circular pub crawl in Beeston, one train station stop before Nottingham. We caught the 11.49 from New Street, arriving in Beeston for 1pm.

Our first pub was right next to the station, The Victoria Hotel. You can access it directly from the platform. Head in the opposite direction to the way out signs and you'll see a gate on the left into the pub's garden. A pub has stood on the site since 1844, the present dating from 1899 when it stood opposite Beeston Brewery. It is a typical Victorian pub, large and with many rooms for food, drinking or for private functions. It is a long standing GBG entry and deservedly so. On the bar were 11 real ales and 3 real ciders: what a great way to start the day. I tried Salopian Oracle, a superbly hoppy clean beer as you would expect from Salopian, Charnwood Delicate Flower at 3.5%, and Castle Rock Special Reserve at 4.5, all in excellent condition.



Leaving The Victoria, we headed to the Crown Inn. An early 19th century Grade 2 listed building, the pub is on CAMRA'S list of historic heritage pubs. It has a warren of rooms, a feature not found in many pubs today. It used to be owned by Everards, but is now under the wing of Brown Ales Pub Company. They have recently

sympathetically refurbished the pub and, with 9 handpulls on when we popped in, proved a most comfortable place to enjoy a beer or two. I had a taster of them all. Particularly tasty were Ashover Crown Pale Ale, Rudgate Brew No. 32, and Nottingham Mild. The other 6 were not far behind.

A short walk round the corner bought us to one of Beeston's micro pubs, Totally Tapped. This is the tap house for Totally Brewed, a Nottingham based brewery. As with most micro pubs it is in a converted shop. I tried their Punch in the Face, a 4.8% American hopped beer. It didn't quite hit the spot for me. Maybe it was the first one through the pipes as we arrived just as it had opened at 3pm. Other beers were Crazy Like A Fox, Slap in the Face, Blueberry Muffin, and Choc Malt Porter.

On to the other town centre micro pub. Called the Pottle of Blues, it too is in an old shop and opens at 3pm. The beers I tried were Beartown Black Bear Mild at 5% and Pot Belly Crazy Days. Other handpulls had Manning Brewers Blues Man, Charnwood Delicate Flower, and a couple of ciders.

If you are visiting these micros I suggest you check opening times on Whatpub first.

On to our final pub The Star, a traditional pub in every sense of the word having a bar, lounge and various nooks and crannies to eat in. However, it does have a good array of beers. A bank of 9 handpumps gave us a choice of 8 beers. I sampled the Nottingham Brewery Star Inn. It was getting on in the day and being a little 'tired' I found the beer pretty ordinary, but I did not try any of the other beers which I have to say were a good selection in terms of where the beers were from.

With one eye on the clock we had to make our way back to the station where it proved convenient to pop into the Victoria to await our train home.

Steve Dyson

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Brewery Investments Are Good News for Cask

After the news in January that Cloud-water brewery would cease cask production, Thornbridge have given cask a boost by announcing a new dedicated brewhouse for cask beer production.

Thornbridge CEO Simon Webster, explained: "We've enjoyed really strong growth in both keg and cask. We have always made cask beer and always will."

"Our next stage of planning at the brewery will focus on building a new brew house dedicated to cask beers, while at the same time increasing the production capacity to the main brew house, to meet increasing demand for bottles and keg."

"We have demand for our beers and also the space in which to expand, so

we are really well placed to move forward with the plans during 2018".

Fuller's have also announced an investment in two new robots for its cask racking line at the Chiswick brewery in London.

Simon Dodd, managing director of Fuller's Beer Company, explained: "These robots show our continued long term commitment to producing fantastic and delicious cask beer."

After all the controversy of cask vs keg at the start of the year (see Solihull Drinker 79—page 22) it is encouraging to see this investment being made in cask by two significant brewers.

Let's hope there is more good news for cask beer in the months ahead.

Play Your Part In Choosing The UK'S Best Beer

CAMRA's national director responsible for the champion beer of Britain Nick Boley wants to see more members voting in the competition.

The Champion Beer of Britain (CBOB) competition is, along with Pub of the Year (POTY), one of CAMRA's two flagship competitions. CBOB celebrates and promotes excellence in the brewing of cask ale, and to become our Champion Beer of Britain is a much sought-after accolade. It's disappointing that we don't have a larger percentage of the membership voting, which helps to choose some of the beers that go through from each area which are then subject to further judging.

Some members may not be aware of what happens when they vote on their favourite beers in the competition. The votes are collated on an area basis (we have nine CBOB areas) and the top beers in each area in each of our 10 style categories, plus Real Ale in a Bottle (RAIB), go forward to area judging, usually at a beer festival, where they are tasted "blind" under the guidance of an experienced CAMRA judge who

chairs the panel. These area competitions are run by our team of excellent area CBOB coordinators. They all run things slightly differently, and this is always agreed by discussion with branches and Regional Directors in their areas, as no two areas are the same.

The winner of each category, plus the runners-up in the bitter, best bitter and golden ales categories, go through to final judging held at the Great British Beer Festival (GBBF), the Great British Beer Festival Winter (for the four "winter" styles), with the winner announced at the GBBF. RAIBs are judged at the BBC Good Food Show.

Your vote is important, as it can be the difference between a beer going through to area judging or not. You have potentially 50 votes, five in each style category, plus five votes for RAIBs, but if you only want to vote for a few beers, or even just one beer, that's absolutely fine.

Voting starts on 1 September this year and is open until 1 November. You can vote at www.cbobvoting.org.uk

Solihull Pubs & Clubs CAMRA Member Discounts

Ember Inns (**Fieldhouse, Colebrook, Woodmans Rest, Olton Tavern, Red Lion Knowle**) - 20p/ pint except Mondays where all cask ales are £2.49

Fieldhouse additionally gives 20% off food with a discount card available from the bar. For other offers see the advert on page 17

Flute and Flagon gives 10% off real ales (not applicable with the £1.99/ pint offer)

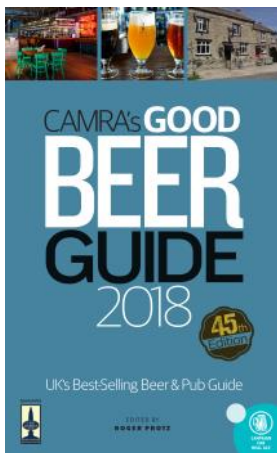
Lady Lane Wharf 30p/pint Monday to Thursday between 5pm and 8pm

Drum and Monkey, Wharf Tavern, The Greswolde Arms give 10% off real ales

Vintage Inns (**Red Lion Earlswood**) 20p/ pint

The **Ale Rooms, Knowle** 50p/pint or 50p/ half pint

2018 Good Beer Guide—On Sale from September 14th



The 45th edition of the Good Beer Guide is published on the 14th September.

The price is £12.99 or just £10 for members of CAMRA (special online price)

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



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Contributions, comments and advertising enquiries should be sent to Solihull Drinker Editor, 2 Dunton Hall Road, Shirley, Solihull B90 2RA; or via email to

davidcove@hotmail.co.uk

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The Editor has the right to amend or shorten any items in the newsletter, but will always honour the spirit & intention of the contribution.

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Cape Town's Devil's Peak Launches In The UK

Back in March 2016 I was lucky enough to be taken by my daughter and son-in-law to visit the Devil's Peak brewery in Salt City, Capetown. A typical South African brewery tap, with the brewing coppers just behind the bar, we en-

joyed a tasting tray in the autumn sunshine accompanied by the smell of a fresh brew. I was very impressed with the King's Blockhouse IPA while the others were pleasant but probably more to South African tastes.



Now Devil's Peak is launching in the UK, partnering with Aberdeen's Fierce Beer for its brewing operations. Recognising the differences in taste between the UK and South Africa, Devil's Peak has updated its logo and packaging for the UK market, and is launching with beer styles that they are confident will find favour here, year-round sour pale ales and juicy IPAs.

It will be worth seeking them out to try when they arrive.

David Cove

Devil's Peak Brewery and Tap, Salt City, Capetown

CAMRA calls for new business rate relief for pubs

CAMRA is calling on the Government to stop viable community pubs from being driven out of business by introducing a £5,000 annual reduction on their rocketing business rates.

Reviews of business rates across England are seeing many pubs hit with a massive new financial burden, which in some cases could only be covered by them selling tens of thousands of extra pints of beer every year.

Tapping into the 50,000 beer-lovers heading to the Great British Beer Festival, CAMRA asked festival attendees to back the campaign by calling on their MPs to address the sky-high tax burden on pubs which is contributing to 21 pub closures a week.

While the Government introduced a one-off £1,000 discount scheme for some pubs in the latest Budget, CAMRA says this action does not go far enough to help keep many afloat.

Sean Hughes, landlord of The Boot pub in St Albans, which has stood on its site since the 16th century, is set to see his rates bill soar by 280% over the next five years from £14,000 a year to £52,000. He says: "Our new business rates bill means that we would have to sell an additional 22,000 pints of beer a year just to pay for the increase. I can't see how we're going to do that - it leaves us in a very difficult situation. We've already had to increase our beer prices by 10p per pint, and expect that to increase to 35p a pint. If our customers can't afford a pint at the pub they will go elsewhere, which means that our historic pub of 600 years may cease to run as a public house. We urgently need support from the Government to continue trading."

James Brown who runs three pubs as part of the Brown Ales portfolio agrees, saying: "All of our pubs are multi-CAMRA award winning pubs and are seeing enormous increases to their business rates. The Chesterfield Arms has seen its rateable value rise from £27,000 to £64,000 - an increase in its final business rates bill of 140%. What is the incentive to run a successful business if the additional profits are taken away in rates? The £1,000 reduction is just a drop in the ocean when rates are increased by £20,000 - any publican will tell you that the business rates system is the most unjust cost to successfully-run pubs in this country."

Colin Valentine, CAMRA's National Chairman says: "Taxes now make up more than a third of the cost of a pub pint. Despite the fact that pubs currently account for 0.5% of turnover of the UK economy, they are still paying 2.8% of the business rates. This is frankly unsustainable, and it is the consumer that will ultimately pay the price - whether it's when their beloved local closes down or when the price of their pint goes up."

"It's clear that most of us believe that pubs need our help and recognise the vital role that they play in local communities. From celebrating a special occasion to meeting up with friends after work, pubs are an integral part of many people's social lives. Business rate relief is urgently needed in order to ensure their continued survival."

CAMRA is also calling on the Chancellor to freeze beer duty for the rest of the Parliament to help cap the price of beer, keeping more money in consumers' pockets and helping the pubs and brewing sector to grow.



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Goat's Milk Takes The Cream As Champion Beer

A Warwickshire brewery, originally located in an old coffin shop, won the Campaign for Real Ale's prestigious Champion Beer of Britain award on the opening day of the Great British Beer Festival at Olympia London.

Goat's Milk by Church End scooped gold in the competition thanks to its blend of pale barley, crystal malt oats and aromatic hops.

The award comes after almost a year of local tasting panels and regional heats resulting in the best beers from across the UK being invited to compete at the Great British Beer Festival.

Final judging for the competition was held at the beer festival which opened its doors to the public on 8 August and saw more than 50,000 people visit to sample from more than 900 beers, ciders, perries and fine wines – including the chance to try the nation's best beer.

Bishop Nick from Essex took silver with Ridley's Rite, a pale ale with a floral aroma and satisfying bitterness, while Welsh brewery Tiny Rebel – former Champion Beer of Britain winner – won

bronze with Cwtch, a red ale with a blend of six caramelly malts and three citrusy American hops.

Nick Boley, CAMRA's National Director responsible for the competition said: "Congratulations to Church End for winning the Champion Beer of Britain award for Goat's Milk, which is the highest beer accolade in the country.

Goat's Milk is a stand out beer – it has a lovely balance of malts and hops and a full flavour. It is a very fine example of a bitter and incredibly refreshing."

Paul Hamblett, sales manager from Church End says:

"Goat's Milk is our biggest selling beer – it's a nicely balanced beer with a hoppy edge. We originally brewed and named it for a festival taking place in the Goat pub, and the beer just caught on. It's the first time we've won the competition, and we expect it to put us on the map."

You can check out Goat's Milk for yourself at upcoming local beer festivals, and it is a regular at the Ale Rooms in Knowle.



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Long Weekend In Stockport and Manchester—Part 2

Continued from Solihull Drinker 80

It was my friend Dave Queenborough who urged me to look at the GBG entries for Chorlton. Since then we had been back twice so Saturday's crawl was my third visit. It is pretty easy to go there direct from Stockport by bus and we alighted just before opening time at 12noon.

Chorlton can be split into 3 areas; the Wilbraham Road run, Manchester Road run, and the Village Green area. Very few are pubs as we know them, as most are converted shops with outside drinking areas - very continental, even in November!

Our first port of call was Elektrik on the Wilbraham Road. A typical café bar, opened in 2009, the handpumps sported Hawkshead Windermere Pale and Dry Stone Stout, Howard Town Dinting Arches and Glotts Hop, and Blackjack The Pokies. What a start to the day. The Blackjack and both Hawksheads went down a treat.

A short walk brought us to Bar, now renamed as Chorlton Tap. It's been here for 20 years and boasts a covered area fronting on to Wilbraham Road and with 4 out of the 8 pumps in operation I was able to relieve the casks of Dans Brewery Pale Ale and IPA (both superb). Dans is a new Manchester brewer set up in 2016. Also on tap was Magic Rock Chipolata Choc Porter at 5.4%, a little too heavy for me on a lunch time crawl.

Across the road, just past the Metro stop, was Oddest, part of a small chain, and had 3 beers to offer us. Very much a café bar, food and cocktails were available but we were here

for the beer. A beautiful 7 Brothers IPA followed by a quality Spitting Feathers Pumpkin Spiced Porter left only Crwr Ial Volunteer, a 3.7% copper ale. That was Wilbraham Road done, as both Mono and Dulcimer were closed, and Jam was not very inspiring.

On to the Manchester Road bars and one pub, starting with Pi, again part of a small chain and specialising in, yes you've guessed it, pies. Many of us took advantage of this whilst drinking Track Oatmeal Stout, Tatton Blonde, their house beer (both 4 out of 5 from me), and Bad Co. Love Over Gold, a very quaffable golden ale. The bar is pretty small with limited seating but manages to serve a variety of world beers, draft lagers, and a real cider, but none of the big brands.

Next stop was Mary and Archie, more a café than a bar, but not to be outdone by the other café bars it has 4 handpumps. We settled down to more Blackjack The Pokies and The River, supplemented by a cracking Tweed Hopster and Arbor Hoploader.

Just a fall out of here and we were into Font, a large bar with tables, chairs, and sofas - seating for all types. Going



through the door we were met with a mum's and grannie's crèche alive with children playing games and doing craft work. They were all having a great time. What a great way to get custom on a quiet Saturday afternoon. We headed to the bar to be hit in the face by 8 handpumps; Track Sonoma Pale Ale and Oatmeal Pale Ale, Kirkstall Three Swords, Vocation Chop and Change, Squawk IPA Eldorado, Almesty IPA, Siren Undercurrent, and Red Willow Seamless. How is that for choice? With a 25% reduction for CAMRA members we could have stayed here for the rest of the day. I sampled the Vocation and the Almesty which were both in superb condition. Font has other outlets in Manchester, Liverpool, and Fallowfield, Manchester. Had enough yet? We hadn't.

We missed out De Nada, which was almost next door, as there was a film crew filming in there and the beers were not too inspiring, so we headed down to Marble Beer House, sister to the Marble Arch, Manchester, both owned by Marble Brewery. As you would expect, Marble beers were the order of the day with Lagonda, Stout (both 4 out of 5), Pint, Bitter, and Earl Grey IPA. Real cider was also available. The bar is long and thin with a covered outdoor yard which makes for a very



pleasant seating area in the summer, and in the winter when it is heated.

Our only pub of the day, Weatherspoon's Sedge Lynn, was next. The only saving grace is that Wetherspoon

saved the old Billiard Hall from oblivion. A Grade 2 listed building, it dated from 1907 and is impressive, but it was a shame the beer was not likewise: cheap, yes, but awful, the only blot on the whole day.

I didn't partake of a beer here, preferring to await our trip across the road to Beagle, a sister pub to the Port House in Manchester. On tap at Beagle were Red Willow Shameless, Rooster Jarrylo, Torrside Franconia, and Magic Rock Inhaler. I had the Magic Rock (4.5%): with Amarillo, Citra, Equinox, Galaxy, Mosaic, and Simcoe hops it proved a success with me.

We then popped round to Dulcimer on the Wilbraham Road/Manchester Road junction, which had now opened. The bar is massive inside and had a good variety of beers; Bad Seed Cascadian Dark Ale, Hardknott Lux Borealis Northern Lights, Brass Castle Lemon Spritz, Dulcimer ... (my writing is too slurred for me to understand by now!), and Thwaites Wainwright.

That was two thirds of the crawl done, with only Morley Cheeks, Elk, Parlour. Famous Trevor Arms, Beech Inn and the Horse and Jockey to do. However, we were beaten and weary so we decided reluctantly to call it a day and head back to Stockport, where, I think we popped into the Hope Inn for more Foolhardy beers, and then the Railway where I had Holts Bitter. They had 4 others on which I am afraid I do not recall. Holts Bitter was timely beer for me, for it was Holts Bitter that got me into Manchester beers way back in the 1990's, but unfortunately it is now a shadow of its former self. Well, that concludes our long weekend away, and readers, I SHALL BE BACK, AND SOON.

Steve Dyson

A Find in Lanzarote – Los Aljibes Brewery.

It seems wherever you go in the world today small craft brewers are springing up like there's no tomorrow.



On a recent trip to Lanzarote to visit my cousin who lives there, I was more than delighted when he told me he would be taking my sister and I for a meal at a new brewery, recently established in Lanzarote.

The brewery and restaurant is located in Tahiche at Calle Bravo Murillo 6, 35507, Lanzarote. My cousin drove us there from Peurto Del Carmen, but is also not far from Teguisse. It has everything you could want, excellent beer, excellent food, and a brewery to view on site. What more could a CAMRA member want?

The beers on tap were quite varied. Tea IPA is typical of its type, full bodied and well balanced. Aguita was my kind of drink: an American APA at 4.8%, generously hopped with a hint of malt. I was quite keen on this one. Helles Beer is the lager at 4.5% that completes the range. I have to admit I did not try this one, not being a lager drinker.

It is a little bit of a journey to get to the brewery, but it is well worth it. If you are staying in Peurto Del Carmen

they do have a tap house on the sea front at 57 Avenida Las Playas, Centro Comercial la Peñita, Puerto Del Carmen. Not only can you enjoy the beer, there is food as well.

Steve Dyson

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Membership Matters

The 2017 Great British Beer Festival (GBBF) at Olympia in London had over 900 beers, in various different styles on offer. This year was the fortieth anniversary of this great showcase of real ale. I couldn't help but wonder, whilst walking around the festival, what the attendees 40 years ago would have made of the choice of real ale on offer in many of today's drinking establishments?

Whilst at the festival I struck up a conversation with some fellow drinkers, who thought that maybe CAMRA had run its course with the amount of beers on offer, but I pointed out to them that while it might seem like that, it is actually far from the case. CAMRA, with the help of the money it gets from the membership, has helped save over 1800 pubs, secured cuts in beer duty, and pressured government to establish a Pubs Code.

CAMRA is the beer drinker's friend, and with a membership of 189,251, including over 610 members in the Solihull & District branch, we are one of the largest consumer groups ever. People from all walks of life join CAMRA: they're brought together by a love of real ale, the traditions of the great British pub, and a desire to protect them.

CAMRA membership starts from as little as £25 per year (that works out at about 48p per week) to become part of the community, and members enjoy discounted entry to beer festivals and many other exclusive benefits. Go to www.camra.org.uk to check out the full details.

Our branch meetings are held on the first Monday of every month at a local pub. A certain amount of branch business takes place, but we do try to make them as friendly and informative as possible, while enjoying a pint of real ale at the same time. If you don't fancy coming to a meeting, try coming on one of our social events: these are less formal and allow people to get to know each other in a relaxed setting.

As a bonus, all new members will get a voucher for a FREE PINT in their branch welcome pack, which is redeemable, in conjunction with a valid membership card, when attending their first Branch meeting, courtesy of Solihull & District CAMRA Branch.

So come on, what are you waiting for? Join up, Join in, Join the Campaign.
www.camra.org.uk/joinup

Dave Mckowen, Membership Secretary

Useful Contact Numbers

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Carl Wright 0121 603 1621

Secretary

Allan Duffy 01564 200431

Membership

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