



Solihull

# BORO BANTER



ISSUE No. 16

MARCH 1984

## The new Lodge

Yardley Wood Road,  
Solihull Lodge.



ENJOY TRADITIONAL  
BEER AT IT'S BEST,



Wide range of Bar Meals available:  
Mon. — Sat. 12.00 — 2.00 p.m.

THE PLUME OF FEATHERS on the Stratford Road in Shirley is undergoing major changes including the building of a carvery at the back, which should be completed by about June. The owners Mitchells and Butlers are thankfully not knocking the bar down, (as they did at the Red Lion in Earlswood) because "it has too much custom". However, it is being given a general face lift, including enlarging the Public Bar to include both front rooms.

### MORE PROBLEMS FOR BEER DRINKERS

On Tuesday 7th February a consortium of Breweries went to London for talks with the Prime Minister and Chancellor, regarding possible EEC inspired increases of duty payable on beer. This brings beer duty in line with that paid on wine. These rises in the price of beer were opposed equally vehemently by the brewers and CAMRA. At one stage a SEVEN PENCE increase was mentioned. (Potentially 10p extra per pint by the time it reached the pubs). However, at the meeting it was decided to put one penny on the price of a pint and bring the duty on wine down slightly. Let us hope the Chancellor doesn't have a change of mind. Even so, with the budget coming up and with VAT, beer could still rise by 2p or 3p per pint - with a stronger beer even worse. Remember, the higher the original gravity of a beer the more duty the breweries have to pay.

This increase can only mean beer sales may slump even lower than they are at the moment. It is very debatable whether these moves, to bring wine and beer duty in line with each other, do anything to reduce the EEC

wine lake, which is what they are hoping will happen. If not, the French may have to consider the other option open to them. Pour their wine down the drain.

ANSELLS are now selling canned Castlemain Lager (1048) from Australia in some of their pubs. It sells for around 80p a can. A real bargain when you think at Bernies Off Licence you can get an identical size can for as much as 65p!!!!

### ANOTHER MANAGER LEAVES OUR AREA

The Manager of the NAGS HEAD in Hockley Heath, George Powell has recently retired and the branch wish him all the best for the future. He has been one of our best supporters and regular advertiser in the BORO BANTER". It is possible he may buy a pub on the fringe of our area, in which case we can continue our acquaintance with him. Cheers George.

THINK OF A PUB with a choice of 19 beers on draught

THINK OF A STORE with a selection of 150-plus bottle and canned beers

THINK OF AN OFF-LICENCE that sells spirits, sherry, port and cider on draught

THINK OF AN OUTDOOR that stocks 120 varieties of wine.

YOU CAN'T ? ? ? ?

## BERNIES

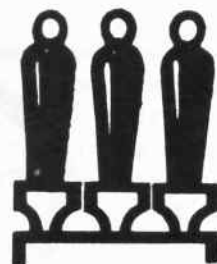
BIRMINGHAM'S No. 1

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Containers supplied from pints to gallons.

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SCRUMPY from  
39p PER PINT

Severn Bore  
Aston Manor  
Bathams Bitter  
Pendlewitch.  
Bridge Bitter

# Oyez Oyez...



## "Why not advertise in the Boro Banter?"

**Circulation 500 copies**  
**Distributed free throughout the**  
**local pubs in the Solihull area.**  
**Charges - 4½" x 4½" £12-00 per issue**  
**4½" x 2½" £6-00 per issue**  
**Contact - B. Queenborough on**  
**021-744 3113**

### THE POSSIBLE DESTRUCTION OF THE TRADITIONAL PUB.

In last month's Banter it was reported that Watneys were going to make "the most radical changes to pubs in history". It was also stated that other breweries would follow them in the destruction of the British pub and this does seem to be the case across the country now. In fact the annihilation of the traditional pub constitutes one of the gravest problems for Camera and pub users in general. Everywhere large and small breweries are changing pleasant pubs into horrific fun palaces and characterful, traditional pubs, are being "tarted up" to the extent that it is nothing short of legalised vandalism.

One cannot complain about basic maintenance if a pub is generally getting shabby, but usually when they are renovated, all the original atmosphere is lost for ever. Yet this need not always be the case. Bathams famous brewery tap, the Bull and Bladder, is an example of a superb pub that has been given a clean-up and a lick of paint but it still retains its character. Another such example is the Woodman in Albert Street, Birmingham. This is the local branches pub of the year and Ansell's have kept their renovation to a minimum. The pub remains a Victorian gem with irreplaceable etched windows, carved mirrors, tiles and terracota.

In our area the Bulls Head, Earlswood (Ansell's) was much altered which included considerable extensions a few years ago. These renovations were carried out sympathetically and the building retained its country-pub atmosphere. The bar was so small it was almost "pokey" but it was extended to reveal a very pleasant drinking area. The lounge was extended too, but retains some intimate corners. The Blue Bell in Henley has also been rebuilt inside, and for a Whitbread job it has been done superbly. Ansell's again have spent a lot of money on the New Lodge in Solihull Lodge. The lounge here resembles a fun pub but to the brewery's credit they have kept the public bar, so at least the pub caters for a variety of tastes which is more than can be said for many other pubs locally and nationally.

The fun pub seems to be spreading like wild fire across the country. In Knowle, the 'Red Lion' has recently had a small room changed into a trendy cocktail bar but there is an ordinary lounge and public bar too, which is certainly not the case at the Clock, Bickenhill or the Drum and Monkey near Bentley Heath. Just how long this type of pub remains popular is uncertain. A Whitbread pub in Manchester was recently converted into a fun pub and then changed back into being a normal pub soon after, because they couldn't find a landlord who wanted it. The potential manager wanted a "proper pub with a public bar".

The loss of public bars across the country concerns me greatly. About half the pubs in the Solihull area do not have bars. The most recent loss is the Red Lion, Earlswood. Admittedly the old bar was hardly a gem but at least it was there for a certain type of customer to use. The pub already had two fairly large lounges which could have been renovated if necessary and the bar only needed a clean up. Instead, walls have been knocked out everywhere and the new interior must have cost M and B a "bomb". No wonder beer prices are soaring. The money currently being spent on modernisation by all the breweries must run into many millions of pounds. If only they could be a little more selective regarding which pubs were changed and HOW they were changed, beer prices could almost freeze without loss of profit to the breweries.

### MILD - THE FORGOTTEN BEER

Next time you pop into your local, give a thought or two for MILD, the beer which is disappearing from our pubs as quickly as new lagerades are proliferating.

The reasons for its decline are twofold. Firstly, Mild retained 40% of draught beer sales until the 1960's, and has been in decline ever since. This coincides with the period breweries abolished the Public Bar in many pubs, so as to charge Lounge prices throughout. Secondly, Mild is an old beer. It used to be the cloth-capped beer for the working man and it was cheap. Its characteristics do not endear it to accountants and marketing men.

As its name suggests, it is milder than Bitter. Usually it is of a lower gravity but not always, as in the case of Marston's Merrie Monk, the strongest Mild made. Often Mild is dark, malty and caramel-sweet. Some Milds, however, are almost as light in colour as Bitters, i.e. Hook Norton mild. At best, it is a splendid change from Bitter.

Image has it that Mild is the weakest brew available in the pub. However, let's explode a myth, lagers such as Hofmeister, Tuborg

and Heineken are generally weaker than Mild and easily cost 10p per pint more, thus making Mild the Value-for Money pint.

The Midlands is the great Mild stronghold, with such notable Milds as Ansell's Mild, voted by CAMRA as MILD OF THE YEAR 1983, and M and B's Walsall brewed Highgate Mild, which is a superb malty brew sadly not available around here, mainly in the Walsal area. Davenports Mild does not appear to be as well regarded, which is sad, because it is a fine pint.

Two giant breweries fob Mild drinkers off with only keg Mild - Courage and Whitbread. Keg Mild lacks traditional Mild's main attributes. It is overly fizzy, too sweet and lacks body and flavour. Real Mild is served with a beautiful creamy head and has a malty, slightly hoppy taste lasting to the last drop.

Courage, however, say that there's no demand for real mild in the Midlands. This is laughable. In many pubs in the Black Country, Mild out-sells Bitter two to one. So how about giving the public what they want you too!?

Finally, if you are weight conscious, believe it or not, the fact is, that Mild is the slimming beer. Diet Pils and Hemeling may be low-carbohydrate, but their calorific values are greater than Mild, and it is calories that fatten you up. So if you want to stay slim, stop taking the Pils and drink MILD.

#### THE BREWERS TIE

Have you ever thought of Solihull pubs selling Banks's Bathams, Holdens, Wadworth's Donningtons etc. et. Looking around what have we got in the main? Ansell's and M. and B. Don't get me wrong. These brews have many devotees, but it seems to me that they have an unfair advantage over other breweries as they have under their wing over 60% of the pubs in the area.

A recent survey made by Solihull Branch reveals that of the 80 or so pubs in Solihull the percentage ownership is:-

Ansell's 32½%	26 pubs
M. and B. 30%	24 pubs
Whitbread 16 %	13 pubs
Davenports 7½%	6 pubs
Courage 2½%	2 pubs
Manns 1.1/4%	1 pub
Free Houses 10%	8 pubs.

It is clear from these figures that Ansell's and M and B have a major advantage over other competitors. Why should this be so?

Enquiries at the Planning Office in Solihull reveals that there is no agreement between the planning authority and the brewers as has happened in other cities, i.e. Birmingham's improved pub policies of the 20's and 30's, but it would appear that the breweries do keep 'in touch' with the planning authority and may be this familiarity has lead the Planning Authority to accept that Ansell's and M. and B. are the only brewers interested in supplying Solihull. In fact the authority appeared willing to consider an application made by any brewer, and so it would appear that the lack of choice in Solihull falls squarely elsewhere. Apparently Greenhall-Whitley were interested in a new site at Elmdon Heath, which has

gone to one of the big two brewers, so where can we look to next?

The Liscencing Bench when approached said their concern was only that the premises should be fit for its intended business and that the area of ownership was not their concern. So where do we go to now?

Can it be the brewers themselves? It would be in their interest to have a trading area that is solely their own, within which competition is kept to a minimum and it certainly makes one wonder if a gentleman's agreement exists between the brewers.

In the end though it is the consumer who comes off worst. To be frank Ansell's and M. and B. can do what they like in Solihull given their advantage over the others. They can 'up' prices, destroy our locals and they will still get the trade. It is time that the local authority realised that they are working against the public interest. The E.E.C. realises this and is not happy with the system, so it appears to me that if we want things changed for the better we must air our views to local councillors, and maybe, just maybe we may see a reasonable choice of beer being made available in Solihull.

## Drawbridge Inn

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**12.00-2.00 p.m. AND 6.00-8.15 p.m.**

**COLD TABLE EVERY WEEKDAY LUNCHTIMES**

**CHEFS SPECIAL AVAILABLE DAILY**

*Patio overlooking Birmingham - Stratford Canal.*



Public houses are undoubtedly the most visited and most popular of all Britain's historic buildings. Why then are they wantonly demolished or vandalised? The Solihull District is lucky in that few pubs have been demolished through road or building schemes, yet the Old George and Dragon Inn, a fifteenth century timber framed building (not dis-similar to the Manor House) lasted until the 1960's when it was replaced by the concrete jungle we now know as Mell Square.

Birmingham has lost many Victorian pubs since the Second World War due to the Inner Ring Road and re-building of the Inner Suburbs. Work on the Small Heath By-pass and Middle ring Road is still claiming them. Should pubs fall in the name of progress? Perhaps so, but even the most decaying and inhospitable pub is a "local" for someone.

Breweries have tried to improve their images during the last twenty years or so. In an attempt to compete with Kentucky Fried Chicken and the Curry House, original pub interiors have been gutted to give Merrie England type atmospheres with mock oak beams. Pubs fell to the whims of the interior designer, the late 1960's saw the age of the theme! To see what I mean, go to the Firebird, by the ABC Cinema, Bristol Road, Lee Bank: to find a typical Parisian cobbled street and lamp-posts in the middle of a lounge bar.

The Brewers are starting to transform their houses without consulting their customers. Witness two "Fun Pubs" which have just appeared over the Solihull border in Acocks Green and Hall Green. Beagles Flies Again (Formerly New Inns) and Toad hall (Formerly Horse Shoes) have been turned into plush lounge bars with loud music, cocktails and "the very latest in lighting layouts". Toad Hall even offers an original line in food - fish and chips!

All very well for the 18-20 age group but what about the pensioner or factory worker who wants to enjoy a drink or a chat with his mates?

Thankfully some Breweries are now starting to see sense, they have found that pubs can be tastefully renovated without losing their original character.

The battle though is not yet won, help CAMRA to save one of Britain's greatest institutions: THE PUB.

If you hear of any major alterations or proposed demolition of a pub in the Solihull area, please contact John Salmon on 021.706.7514.

### JOLLY ROGER BREWERY

#### UPTON-ON- SEVERN

The Jolly Roger Brewery at Upton-on-Severn has appeared in previous Banters, but I make no apology for mentioning it again.

A recent visit heralded the arrival of a Winter Wobbler, a strong 1084° brew, dryish on the palate, reminding one of Guinness.

Of course this visit enabled us to reacquaint ourselves with the other beers in the range. Jolly Roger, Seven Bore and Anchor. I have to say that this range of four beers are the most excellent range I have ever tasted. Every beer has its own distinctive taste, the work of Paul who must have spent many hours dedicated work in formulating the recipes for these outstanding beers.

Also Paul's dedication to quality and distinctive brewing should be taken note of by every brewer in the country especially those of the Big Six (or Seven).

CAMRA members who have not visited the Brewery's tap - The Anchor at Upton must hang his head in shame as this brewery has worked really hard in producing excellent real ale. Ma Pardoes, The Bull and Bladder, The All Nations etc., are on the itinerary of every real ale fan - I have to say The Jolly Roger Brewery should move to the top of that list.

### LAST MONTH'S CROSSWORD ANSWERS

W	H	A	T	I	S	B	R	E	W	I	N	G
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Monday 5th March. Committee Meeting at 8.00 p.m. at THE WHARF, Hockley Heath, the only traditional Manns in our area. (plus real cider too). There may be a cellar trip laid on.

Sunday 18th March. Weatheroak ramble. About 4 miles easy walking around the pleasant lanes near the "COACH AND HORSES", then finishing up in that pub for some Sam Smith's, Everards, Holdens, Davenport's, Courage, Woods, Banks's or Aston Manor. non-walkers 12 noon onwards.

Monday 26th March. Keg Killer. postponed visit to GRESWOLDE and BLACK BOY Knowle.

### 1985 GOOD BEER GUIDE ENTRIES

Monday 2nd April 1984 at the CASE IS ALTERED, Fiveways just off the A41.

Voting for the pub entries in the 1985 GOOD BEER GUIDE will be taken during the evening. All card carrying CAMRA members, resident in the Solihull area, are entitled to vote on this very important issue.

It should be noted that nominations of pubs worthy of inclusion should be submitted BEFORE 30th MARCH, 1984. to Steve Dyson at 79, Walsgrave Drive, Damsonwood Solihull, or by tel: 021.705.1168.

THURSDAY 19th APRIL, 1984. Branch Meeting at THE LYNDON, Olton.

Mr. David Hill, a regional director of Ansells, has accepted an invitation to come along and join our local group to give a short talk during the evening.

If you want any information regarding CAMRA nationally or locally contact Steve Dyson at 79, Walsgrave Drive, Damson Wood, Solihull. (021.705.1168). or David Queenborough at 11 Upton Close Shirley, Solihull (021.744.3113)