



BORO BANTER



BRITAIN'S BREWERIES UNDER THREAT

Disaster has hit The Black Country! Doris Pardoes home brew pub has been put up for sale following her death last April. The Old Swan was one of Britain's most outstanding home brew pubs, with a beer to match but now its future must surely be in doubt. The pub, plus another in Dudley (The White Swan) and two 'Off Licences' are all up for sale at £400,000. Beer drinkers were dealt more body blows with the news of the closure of both Border of Wrexham and Yates and Jackson of Lancaster. The former is being shut by new owners, Marstons while the latter has been recently taken over by Thwaites of Blackburn who immediately announced its closure. It seems we are in a new era where independent brewers, once much loved by CAMRA, are becoming hungry predators like the big six. Oldham fell to Boddingtons, Hartleys to Robinsons and Theakstons to Mathew Brown. That's five established brewers taken over in about two years. When you add to that the couple of dozen small breweries who have closed in that period you can see how serious things are becoming for drinkers.

THE DEMISE OF GOLD CROSS

Alfred Breweries have stopped brewing the "traditional" hand-pulled lager, Gold Cross. There are rumours that this is only a temporary measure, but I have a feeling it may have gone for ever as demand was never very great. Rather a shame really, because it seemed quite a good idea at first. Personally I thought it was a little 'lack lustre' compared with bitter or mild, but that's how keg lagers taste anyway. Obviously the marketing and advertising men have done such a good job persuading gullible folk beer should be cold and fizzy, that it is too late for them to change now.

The new Lodge



ENJOY TRADITIONAL BEER AT IT'S BEST.

**Yardley Wood Road,
Solihull Lodge.**

BURTON ALE

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

The branch wish all our readers and contributors of THE BORO BANTER a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We would also like to thank all the breweries, pubs and off-licences who have advertised in the Banter this year. Their help is absolutely essential for the production of this newsletter and we are all grateful for their support.

Have a good Christmas, enjoy yourselves but remember to take care wherever you are travelling!

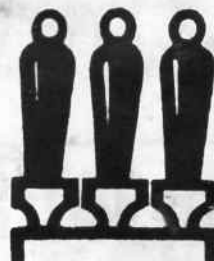
Paul and Martin Soden, who set up The Jolly Roger Brewery in Upton on Severn, have recently started The Three Counties Brewery in Gloucester and the local CAMRA branch went round the brewery in November. Unfortunately, the brewery was very new and the operation had not got going fully yet. Nevertheless, the trip was very interesting and we would like to thank Martin very much for his hospitality. The beer brewed is magnificent and we wish them the best of luck for the future.

BERNIES

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FOR TRADITIONAL FOOD FROM THE

Inn-Kitchen

GOOD BEER GUIDE LISTED



GOLDEN LION
THE BEST IN SOLIHULL

(THE TOWN PUBS IN FOCUS)

QUOTE From a non-CAMRA member.
"This is a fine pub with good beer. It's definitely the best pub in Solihull. In fact it's the ONLY pub in Solihull!"

So what is different about it compared to the others in town? Firstly, and most important is the right sort of landlord in Chris Goodwin; friendly and helpful, plus amiable bar staff. Secondly, its interior remains virtually unchanged through the years while all the other pubs have been modernised, vandalised and all but wrecked to a certain extent by what big breweries call progress. The Lion has the only separate public bar in town, ideal for the sporting types and the boozers. Plus, there is that rare institution the snug room, which is popular with older folks who want a quiet drink, or ideal for social functions. The lounge, popular with the younger generation has been revamped recently but nothing serious, while a paved garden area at the rear of the pub is ideal in the summer for parents with their children.

YOUR HOSTS
BOB AND ANN COPPACK
WILL GIVE YOU A
WARM WELCOME



Thirdly - the beer; a well kept best bitter matched by the renown, strong Directors bitter while the only thing missing is a traditional mild (let us hope that Courage get the message sometime and give us a choice other than keg only Midland mild).

To summarise, it is the town's sole entry in the 1985 Good Beer Guide because it caters for all

SADLERS ARMS:- Small basic pub which had the classical M and B treatment of rooms being knocked through into a lounge bar. No real ale - using gas pressure delivery.

BARLEY MOW:- Lost its separate rooms became yet another lounge bar and restaurant. Once sold an excellent pint of Aston Ale some years back but the kegs and gas bottles now rule. No real ale.

CAPTAINS LOCKER:- If you ever knew the original Gardners Arms, once a cosy little two roomed boozers with good ale where a shop now stands in the High Street, one would weep. Ansell's sold out - an offer they couldn't refuse. Deciding to go underground we now have an all keg beer bar resembling the annexe of some night club. Very popular with young people - so somebody likes it!

THE NAVIGATION INN LAPWORTH

Andrew & Gerd Kimber



fine traditional ales.

Selection of light bar snacks available

Attractive Canalside Garden

GOOD BEER GUIDE LISTED

types, sells good food and beer at sensible prices and has everything going for it. So what are the alternatives - the state of the opposition in the town centre; in a nutshellABYSMAL!!! Remembering the town pubs when I used them around twenty five years ago and having a particularly good memory, today's comparison is depressing; let us see what there is.....

ROYAL OAK(DECEASED):- Long gone, this once fine old Holts pub in its time, became Ansell's then suffered an early demise, used to stand around the cinema area in the High Street.

SNOOTY FOX:- Another great Ansell's disaster! Okay if you like restaurant/disco pubs - too bad if you don't! Strictly a young peoples' pub; music rules in the lounge bars and take a torch with you if you want to read a newspaper! All this replaced the original Malt Shovel, an old timber and whitewash building which had "olde worlde" cosy rooms with low plaster and beamed ceilings, open fires and a small bar. Once a place of great charm; the sort of pub big breweries try to re-create these days. Yes, Ansell's have a lot to answer for in Solihull, apart from letting the once all-keg Golden Lion go to Courage during a pub swap. The bitter is

The Bulls Head

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real in the Snooty but expensive.
MASONS ARMS:- A matching M and B disaster! This once had the air of a country house type of pub with several rooms of various sizes which were immaculate; white walls black edging timbers, brass ornaments and open fires gave it a cosy atmosphere. Now we have the usual boring one-room lounge bar effort making it small and cramped. Another major renovation is now on the way which cannot make it much worse than it already is! Perhaps M and B will know exactly what they're doing soon? Bass is the only real ale, the others are on gas pressure.

GEORGE HOTEL:- Is what you would expect from a 2-star place, comfortable and expensive. The Burton Ale is very good and the Tetley Bitter good for what it is, but you need a mortgage to buy a round of drinks!

All in all, barring a disaster at the Lion, I think their entry in the G.B.G. is assured for several years to come.

THE LOCAL BREWS OF

HOLLAND AND BELGIUM

Amsterdam is one of the most cosmopolitan and exciting cities in the world, from the charm of its meandering canals to the violent drugs scene. The Netherlands isn't well off for interesting beers, so I was stuck with the city's two brews Heineken and Amstel. Both unpasteurised they have a certain "tang" in the taste, but they soon become very ordinary. One interesting beer I tried was the bottle of Old Bruin, the Dutch equivalent to our Brown Ale. I was looking forward to my visit to Belgium, a very underrated country. First stop was Antwerp, well known for its diamond market. The local beer is the hop fermented, copper coloured DeKoninck. I tried some in an open-air cafe in the shadow of the beautiful Flemish Cathedral. The country has the greatest variety of styles and the most unusual beers in the world, it is a "tipplers paradise". A night in scenic Bruges found me sampling Rodenback, I wish I hadn't! this beer is a typical Flemish brew, it was so sour it took me half an hour to sip a small glassful, and then it burnt my tongue!

Golden Lion

WARWICK ROAD, SOLIHULL.



COURAGE

TRADITIONAL COURAGE BEST BITTER
 DIRECTORS BITTER

*A Merry Christmas and a
 Happy New Year*

from
 Chris and Caron Goodwin
 and Staff



COURAGE

A VARIED MENU IS AVAILABLE
 MONDAY TO SATURDAY

12.00 - 2.00, 6.00 - 8.30

District Winner National Pub Food Week

GOOD BEER GUIDE LISTED



COURAGE

Brussels was my next stop, well known as the home of the Common Market, but also the site of a beautiful medieval square or "Grand Place". A walk around the cobblestoned market place observing the gold-leafed gothic guildhalls is a delight. The first beer I tried was the strong Chimay Trappist (available in Solihull). The Belgians have a penchant for drinking beers out of varying types of glasses, in this case it was more like a goblet.

Brussels and its immediate surroundings is the home of the strangest of all beer styles - Lambic. No yeast is used in the brew, instead fermentation is assisted by the micro-organisms in the open air. That's not the end of it, because there are several forms of Lambic. I tried pure Lambic in the popular Cafe Becasse or Woodcock just off the Grand Place. Everyone sits behind long wooden tables on benches

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*Merry Christmas
 and a
 Happy New Year*

FOOD AVAILABLE AT ALL TIMES.






before being served by a waiter who brings along a grey stone-ware jug full of Lambic and a glass. The beer is sweet and the surrounds and the atmosphere here make it a real treat to visit.

When two Lambic brews are mixed together they start a new fermentation to produce a fruity Gueze, freely available in the majority of Belium Cafes. If cherries are added then Kriek can be produced. I ordered this in the belief that it would taste like Cherryade. The barman went into his cellar to produce a cobweb covered unlabelled bottle which is a very popular summer drink in these parts. I found it extremely sour and needless to say I just had the one!

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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The views expressed in the Boro Banter are intended to inform the general public, in and around Solihull of changes, or happenings, with the ever changing Real Ale and Pub Scene. They may not necessarily reflect the views of CAMRA nationally.

BRANCH DIARY

FRIDAY 28th DECEMBER - Evening social at The Golden Lion, Solihull.
MONDAY 14th JANUARY - Open meeting at The Prince of Wales, Solihull Lodge. (M and B Mild, Brew XI and Bass)
MONDAY 11th FEBRUARY - Open meeting at The Red Lion, Knowle. (Tetleys and Burton Ale).
WEDNESDAY 20th FEBRUARY - Branch meeting at The Lyndon, near Olton. Special guest speaker will be Bob Smith, the General Manager of Holt, Plant and Deacon of Oldbury. He will also bring along his chief brewer, Dave Rostone. Start. 8.30 p.m.
TO BE CONFIRMED. Night out including Bed and Breakfast in Upton-on-Severn, sometime during the spring.

Our printers this year have been

Paper & Print

PHOTOCOPYING
 PLANPRINTING · INSTANT PRINT

387, STRATFORD ROAD, SHIRLEY, SOLIHULL 021-745 3214.

Without their help the very existence

of the

**BORO
 BANTER**

would be in grave doubt. The branch sincerely thank Alan for all his favours and advice during the last year and wish him and all his staff a Merry Christmas.

Jayne & Ray

welcome you to

The Golden Arrow

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 Christmas & a prosperous
 New Year*