



# Solihull BORO BANTER



ISSUE No. 28

OCTOBER, 1985

## The new Lodge

**Yardley Wood Road,  
Solihull Lodge.**



**Ansell's**

**ENJOY TRADITIONAL  
BEER AT IT'S BEST.**

**BURTON ALE**

**Wide range of Bar Meals  
Mon. — Sat. 12.00 — 2.00**



GOLDEN OAK OPEN TWO NEW PUBS

### THE BARLEY MOW

The Barley Mow in Solihull town centre reopened in the middle of August after major refurbishment and it is certainly a change for the better! It could be called a "theme pub" but the theme, which is that of a country cottage or farm kitchen makes a pleasant change from trendy young disco pubs and the like. It is trying to attract a wide variety of people and age groups.

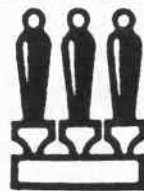
There is also a restaurant and good bar meals are sold in the lounge. There is no bar. Traditional beer is on sale for the first time in years. The three beers are Ansell's Mild and Bitter, plus Tetley Bitter and are kept in excellent condition. In addition, Coates Traditional draught cider is sold by hand-pump which is an innovation in the centre of Solihull. I hope it catches on!

### THE SARACENS HEAD

For several years The Saracens Head in Shirley has been a fairly ordinary pub that seemed to mainly attract young people, although admittedly it did have a steak bar at the back. Now, however, it has been re-opened by Golden Oak Inns and is vastly different and also much improved. A 34 bedroomed luxury hotel has been built on the back and there is also a restaurant. The lounge too has been completely refurbished in a mock but tasteful Victorian style. This room has a very salubrious atmosphere and to keep it that way, dress restrictions are enforced on certain nights. As with the Barley Mow there is no Public Bar. Three traditional beers are on sale. Ansell's Mild and Bitter plus Burton Ale which has replaced the Tetley Bitter that was on sale before the hotel opened. This is a good move in my opinion because it gives a wider variety of beers. Ansell's Bitter and Tetley are of a similar strength. In addition to that of course, Burton Ale has a lot more taste than Tetley!

### THE VIKING

The Viking in Ulleries Road, Hobs Moat recently tried selling traditional Tetleys Bitter on handpump. Previously it was all keg. Unfortunately, sales were lower than expected and it was withdrawn. Now Ind Coope Burton Ale (o.g.1047) is on sale for a trial period and we hope that this is more successful. It should be because the landlord, Tony Bevington is very pro-CAMRA and keeps his beer in very good condition.



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## TAKEOVER MANIA CONTINUES

Mansfield Brewery have taken over North Country Brewery of Hull in a deal worth £42m. Northern Foods, the parent company, recently told CAMRA that reports the brewery was up for sale was pure speculation. However, a few weeks later the whole deal was sewn up and Mansfield announced North Country will close on October 1st, with the loss of 115 jobs.

This news comes as yet another bitter blow to CAMRA and Humberside drinkers alike who are suffering from a lack of choice and competition. It would have been much better for them if the 209 pubs could have been auctioned off to a variety of brewers instead of falling into the hands of Mansfield with their unenlightened views on real ale.

Northern Foods say the old brewery was inefficient and doomed for closure. They have recently spent £51m on buying a dairy company from Grand Metropolitan, a deal which no doubt made up their minds about getting rid of the brewery. Mansfield have given no assurances that real ale would be sold in their new pubs, even if research showed a demand for it! They say they are carrying out market research but this is obviously just a public relations exercise. In fact, the results are not even to be made public. All this shows Mansfield in a very bad light.

Four years after buying up Oldham Brewery, Boddingtons of Manchester have gained control of Higsons of Liverpool. The brewery and 160 pubs were bought for £26m in a "behind closed doors sealed deal". On the face of it, this takeover doesn't seem quite as bad as Mansfield - North Country one. Higsons pubs and beers are to remain as they are AT THE MOMENT.

The Higsons Chairman said if Boddingtons had not come along, his brewery would probably have been taken over by one of the big six, and consequently closed down. This brings me to a hidden danger. Those potentially heavy handed giants Whitbread, who have a considerable stake in Boddingtons. They already operate several large breweries and it is a well known fact that many breweries in England are not brewing to capacity. If Whitbread were to ever takeover Boddingtons, they could probably close Higsons, Oldham and Boddingtons and still supply all the pubs with beer from their existing breweries. This would be an almost unprecedented blow for

real ale fans, just the thought of it makes me shudder!

If any of our readers are getting complacent, thinking that all this doesn't concern Solihull drinkers - THINK AGAIN - This next one is much closer to hand! Simpkins of Brierley Hill have just fallen to Greenall Whitley of Warrington. 100 years of trading was wiped out in a flash and the brewery closed immediately. This one cost £1.9m. The fifteen pubs acquired will sell Wem Ales, a Greenall Whitley subsidiary. Shipstones of Nottingham are also part of the group.

All this has left CAMRA and the twenty redundant brewery staff extremely annoyed. Apparently there were alternative bidders who would have kept the brewery open, including a local property development company. Again, worse could follow. Other Black Country breweries could be bought up soon such as Bathams or Holdens and I wouldn't mind betting one of the big six would like to get their hands on Banks's. You never know who will be next. We have said it before and will say it again. A strong and active CAMRA (the only voice of the beer drinker and pub goer in general) is the only organisation who can curb future takeovers.

Anyone who thinks CAMRA has won is asking for all Britain's beer to ultimately be brewed by perhaps five or six mega-companies. Think about it....



## THE NAVIGATION INN LAPWORTH

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#### THE GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL

This is CAMRA's most important beer festival of the year and it was held at The Metropole, Brighton from August 13th until 17th. Unfortunately this venue is rather remote from our area but four Solihull CAMRA members were able to get down there and with the help of a night in a Youth Hostel, we spent nearly 3 full sessions there. Was it worth the effort you might ask? Yes it most certainly was!

The Festival took up an enormous amount of space and it was quite entertaining just exploring without even drinking the beer! There was a wide range of food available, many pub games, live music, a wine bar, a tombola, plus stands selling CAMRA products, badges, T-shirts, beer mats, rare bottled beer etc. etc.

Over 20 traditional ciders were available, so were rare draught American beers which put some of our blander beers to shame, much to my amazement.

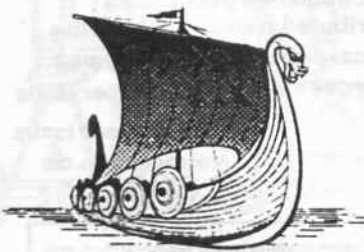
On the beer front about 120 breweries were represented and over 200 actual beers were on sale. MOST were kept in fairly good condition as the halls were kept cool. What pleased me most was the large number of new small breweries represented. Alice, Bunces, Bosham, Dunnings Mill, Linfit, Warwickshire, Wye Valley. The list is endless.

I managed to keep sober enough MOST of the time to remember how enjoyable it all was!!!

In my opinion, beer festivals are the best part of CAMRA. I hope there is another GBBF next year but I wish it would be a bit nearer the Midlands.

The South coast is not the most accessible part of the country is it, especially for people living even further north than Birmingham.

## the viking



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the  
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#### SOLIHULL PUB HISTORY

(A pot pourri)

Although the modern spate of home brew pubs has so far by-passed Solihull, it is interesting to note that the Borough has had its fair share of 'mini breweries'. Two brewers, Hoods and Walls had premises in the High Street up to 1874. The Gardners Arms, also in the High Street, fell to the demolition gang in 1971, but was known to have brewed up to 1936. The Barley Mow in Poplar Road, although not in its present form had a brewery in 1873. The longest survival of all was the Bluebell Inn, Ilshaw Heath, near Earlswood, which brewed up to 1968 and was Warwickshires last home-brew pub, before becoming a cider house.

Going back to the Barley Mow, before it was partially rebuilt in 1900, it was a regular stop for the London, Oxford and Warwick horse-coaches. Its original name was The Limerick Castle. Showells Brewery Co., of Oldbury took over the lease in 1899 before they were taken over by Samuel Allsopps of Burton in 1914, who were eventually swallowed up by the multi-national we know and love today as Allied Breweries!

CAMRA Solihull is very interested in local pub history, if you can help with supplying information or photographs etc., please contact John Salmon at 42, Barn Lane, Olton or telephone 706 7514.

#### POST SCRIPT TO TAKEOVER MANIA

We said more takeover bids could follow the ones that have already gone through and after reading CAMRA's monthly national newspaper, "What's Brewing" that seems a foregone conclusion. It makes depressing reading. Breweries that are rumoured to be under threat include Bathams, Devenish, Greene King, Hydes, Leeds, Buckley, possibly Felinfoel, Batemans, Holdens, Davenport and even Allied Breweries! Most of these are very well respected breweries who produce excellent real ales. It would obviously be devastating if several were to fall in the near future. The situation has become so serious that CAMRA has called an EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING to discuss the growing crisis and to try and work out ways to stop future takeover bids succeeding. Let's hope they come up with something positive for all our sakes!

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Charges - 4 1/2 x 4 1/2 £12-00 per issue  
4 1/2 x 2 1/2 £6-00 per issue  
Contact - B. Queenborough on  
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I wish to become a member of the Campaign for Real Ale Limited. I agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.

I enclose £7 (£10 overseas) for full membership for a year. ☐

Any additional amount will be welcomed as a donation ☐

FULL NAME (Block capitals)

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Cheques should be made payable to Campaign for Real Ale Limited, 34 Alma Road, St. Albans, Herts.



## BRANCH DIARY

**TUESDAY 10th September - OPEN MEETING at THE NEW LODGE** in Yardley Wood Road, Solihull Lodge. Please come along and try some of the best kept Ansell's beer for miles around.

### SATURDAY, 28th SEPTEMBER

**SOCIAL MEETING** with Rugby branch. We shall meet at THE SEVERN STARS in Rugby around 8.00 for a game of skittles. After that we will hope to go on a mini pub crawl around the town. It should be an interesting and varied night out!

**TUESDAY 8th October - OPEN MEETING at THE BLACK SWAN** in Henley in Arden High Street (Davenports).

Date to be confirmed - our 3rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held in November at THE LYNDON, Barn Lane, Olton (Ansell's). Could all branch members try and be there please!?

## ADVERTISING STANDARDS

### AUTHORITY FARCE

The ASA have recently had several complaints about a misleading advert showing keg Carlsberg lager being dispensed through a handpump. However, they found nothing wrong with the advert which is nothing short of a FARCE. No wonder there are so many T.V. commercials for lager telling down right lies! This latest decision gives the breweries the chance to be more misleading than ever.

### AUGUST SPORTS

Under normal circumstances the Churchill at Paxford several miles from Chipping Campden is a quiet pub where locals sup Hook Norton Bitter and Old Hookey. Occasionally, however, chaos descends when a pack of 'hooligans' do battle at Aunt Sally.

The Branch has had experience of this lethal game before, and wishing to brain themselves, and others, foolishly challenged local branches to have their faces rubbed in defeat. Battle lines were drawn up, and armed with Bitter and Old Hookey the debacle commenced. The game, unusually was very orderly and the dexterity shown by some players was truly amazing. However, the beer soon got the better of many and the 'thing you chuck' became a lethal weapon. Many a person was floored with the misbelief that the Old Hookey was 'strong tonight!'

A caravan parked near the Aunt Sally also received some attention. The windows survived but otherwise it escaped with only a few bruises.

Alas as darkness came on so did the rain and abandonment seemed inevitable. Solihull did the gentlemanly thing and admitted defeat, the opportunity being taken to trundle into the pub to finish off a convivial evening.

The Churchill has some good internal features, especially the bar area. Stone flooring and an inglenook give character to the pub. Unfortunately unsympathetic modernisation of the lounge, a common problem with most pubs today, has destroyed what must once have been a pub full of character. The beer was in good condition and the availability of food was much appreciated.

Although Solihull were again defeated we shall rise again!!



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If you want any information regarding CAMRA nationally or locally contact Steve Dyson at 79, Walsgrave Drive, Damson Wood, Solihull (021 705 1168) or Dave Queenborough at 11 Upton Close, Shirley, Solihull. (021 744 3113).