



Solihull BORO BANTER



DEMISE OF MA PARDOES

Ma Pardoes, the famous Black Country brew pub, and Hoskins are to merge. The Leicester brewery are buying the Old Swan pub for £250,000 and they will manage the brewery there. This follows a steady stream of disasters for the pub since the sad death of Mrs Doris Pardoe. There was the threat of takeover by a regional or even national brewery, so to stop this, CAMRA and a finance company, Mercia Venture bought the premises and formed Netherton Ales. However, the management team formed seemed too big, the company wasn't large enough to get a lot of people-rich quickly.

There was a fire in the brewery, after repair the beer went variable, it wouldn't clear properly and was too sweet. Despite renovation and enlargement the pub is expected to make a loss of over £60,000 this year.

The beer has gone up considerably in price, especially in the free trade where rises have been astronomical! This meant sales to the free trade were disappointing. They tried to kid people Old Swan Bitter was a premium product to justify its premium price. There seemed to be too many money men and not enough brewers! Even now we hear a partner of the stockbrokers handling the merger is joining the Hoskins board.

The terms of the agreement secure the future of brewing in Netherton. Capacity should increase as Old Swan Bitter is going into Hoskins five pubs. CAMRA has welcomed this development as "The only way to safeguard the future of the historic home brew pub". This is almost certainly correct but I sometimes think the ORIGINAL Old Swan, with its absolutely unique character and atmosphere may already be lost for ever.

The new Lodge

**Yardley Wood Road,
Solihull Lodge.**



Ansell's

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

THEAKSTONS & MATTHEW BROWN DEFEATED

At the third attempt, Scottish & Newcastle have finally captured Matthew Brown and this has been described by CAMRA as "The most unwelcome brewery takeover in memory". Browns put up a tremendous fight to retain their independence but in the end the unprecedented collapse in stock market prices persuaded small share-holders to cut their losses and sell out to S & N. This left the national brewery with 56% of Matthew Brown and with the Office of Fair Trading refusing to refer the bid to the Monopolies Commission, the battle was lost. The Blackburn brewers wholly owned Theakstons so this means that one of the most famous real ale breweries in the country is now just another "Big Seven" subsidiary. S & N have not offered many firm assurances and fears are high that brewery closures will follow their new acquisition.



SEASONAL GREETINGS

The Solihull Branch of CAMRA wish all the readers of "Boro Banter" a happy (and safe) Christmas. Without you the publication would be a waste of time. Thanks must also go to the many publicans in the area who have helped us with rooms for meetings and advertising. As usual "Paper and Print" of Stratford Road, Shirley have been our very capable and helpful printers, thanks to them too, particularly for the help with this year's local guide.



BERNIES

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ALAN & JANET



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CHEFS SPECIAL AVAILABLE DAILY

Patio overlooking Birmingham - Stratford Canal.

GOOD BEER GUIDE LISTED

BREWERY VISIT WENT DOWN WELL



One of the best new breweries to open in recent years is Titanic from Burslem in the Potteries and in October, Solihull CAMRA was privileged to go on a Sunday lunchtime brewery visit. The brewery was established in 1985 in a modern industrial unit by John Pazio the owner of a local pub, The Travellers Rest. John is a tremendous character in every sense of the word and he has come up with some of the most flavoursome and distinctive ales available anywhere in the country. Our party was able to give his three beers a thorough testing as a hired coach took us from Solihull to the brewery and then home again! Thanks must go to Phil, the brewer for his guided tour of the brewery and to John for providing a polypin of Titanic Premium, a delicious and full-bodied best bitter (1042). The other beers brewed are Bitter (1036) which is well hopped and immensely refreshing and Captain Smith's (1050) a sweeter, smooth strong ale. Only natural ingredients are used so all the beers are chemical free. No sugar is added either, except for the Captain Smith. The Travellers Rest which

serves as the brewery tap and single tied house is a comfortable and bustling place serving all the Titanic beers plus many more from other breweries. It is also noted for excellent food. It was a very happy and contented party that travelled home that day! Several midland free houses particularly in the Black Country are supplied by Titanic and nationally their beers are becoming more widespread as more beer agencies are distributing their beer. One of the most heartening things we learnt at the brewery was that although they hardly advertised, demand over all was going up continuously. Could that reflect the quality of the product?

DRINKERS SET TO LOSE AGAIN



Takeover and merger activity is still prolific in the brewing industry. The most unusual and surprising was when Boddingtons of Manchester were approached by Midsummer Leisure, a non-brewing but pub owning group that was once called CAMRA investments. They proposed a 7 for 15 share exchange which valued Boddingtons at about £270m. Happily the bid was firmly rejected by the Board of Directors, who appear to be supported by Whitbread Investments and Britannic Assurance who both hold substantial stakes. Midsummer withdrew the offer but another attempt involving a cash element cannot be ruled out.

Huge foreign brewing conglomerates potentially pose the greatest threat of all to our traditional brewing heritage and there appears to be undesirable rumblings on the Aussie front. Elders IXL of Fosters fame, who now own Courage have built up a 5% stake in Greene King through a Courage subsidiary. Elders then proposed a trading agreement that would see Fosters go in GK's 700 pubs which, however, was rejected. It is not known whether the 5% stake is the prelude to a full bid or an effort to "manipulate" the East Anglian brewers into taking Fosters. Rumour also has it that Elders are looking at Banks's. Meanwhile the tragic news is that Rayments brewery was closed for good on October 9th despite vigorous complaints from CAMRA and the general public. Greene King have now reduced it to a depot.

THE NAVIGATION INN LAPWORTH

Andrew & Gerd Kimber



fine traditional ales.

Selection of light bar snacks available

Attractive Canalside Garden

1987 PUB OF THE YEAR

GOOD BEER GUIDE LISTED

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BURTON ALE

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7 pm-10 pm daily

★ GOOD BEER GUIDE LISTED ★

BEER FESTIVAL NEWS

BOOZIN' ROUND THE BORO



With the closure of Digbeth Civic Hall, The Heart of England Beer Festival had to be held in the centre of Birmingham, at the Central Library Exhibition Halls. The new venue was rather small but it was either that or nothing. Plenty of good beer was on offer and a fair profit was made which goes into a regional "West Midlands Fighting Fund". The occurrence of a similar event next year is uncertain at the moment. It is known that next year's GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL will go back to The Queen's Hall in Leeds, venue for the 1981 and 1982 festivals. This news comes as a surprise because a provisional date for 1988 had been booked at Brightons Metropole. Unexpected refurbishment at The Metropole ruled this out. The dates are August 2nd to 6th, so make a note in the diary! For Solihull drinkers, Leeds is probably easier to get to, and for people in the north the change of site is excellent news. Brighton was not exactly a central and nationally accessible town!

Looking around the pubs in the area at Christmas the following has been noted: THE BOAT, Catherine de Barnes has had a complete refurbishment with lounge extension and the reinstatement of the Public Bar. Beers served are still the same, Wem Special, Davenport's Mild and Bitter on handpump.

THE LYNDON, Barn Lane, Olton should be fully reopened by now after refurbishment. Beers will probably be Ansells Mild and Bitter on handpump. A real ale gain for the area is THE BALTIMORE (ex Baltimor Diner) Lode Lane, Solihull now under the Ansells flag serving Burton Ale and Ansells Bitter on handpump. It is reported that the LINCOLN POACHER, in Lincoln Road near Acocks Green, is selling Ansells Bitter on handpump. Previously this pub was all keg.

XXXX EVEN WEAKER

The great "foreign" lager con reached a new low recently with regards to cans of Castlemaine XXXX. Until recently, this was the genuine product, imported from Australia (OG1041). Now a larger can is on sale at the same price but it is only a weak, imitation, British made version, the same brew as the Keg XXXX available in pubs (OG 1033). It does admit to being brewed in the UK but the packaging is identical. Many gullible, young lager drinkers will think they are getting more for the same price. They are, but more of WHAT we ask ourselves?



The Bulls Head



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- *A friendly country pub atmosphere
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- *Ansell's Mild & Bitter
- *Burton Ale
- *Traditional Coates Cider

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Join the Campaign. Take up the fight. Only £7 a year. Send cheque or P.O. to Campaign for Real Ale Limited, 34 Alma Road, St. Albans, AL1 3BW. Marked Membership. Name

Address

BRANCH DIARY

TUESDAY 15th DECEMBER - Branch Meeting at THE LYNDON, Barn Lane Olton. Large town pub, many facilities, Good Beer Guide listed. Ansells beers.

TUESDAY 22nd DECEMBER - Christmas Social. Pub crawl of Solihull town centre. Starts at George 8.00 pm then Barley Mow 8.30 ish. and finishing at the Golden Lion at 9.30 onwards. All welcome CAMRA members or not, everything completely informal.

TUESDAY 12th JANUARY - Branch Meeting at The Boat, Catherine de Barnes. Davenports pub recently improved by replacing disco room with a public bar.

TUESDAY 26th JANUARY - Social evening at The Bulls Head, Barston. Pleasant country village local with Brew XI and Draught Bass on handpump.

SOLIHULL LICENSING SURVEY

1987



The Monopolies and Mergers Commission is at present looking into the tied house system operated by breweries and Solihull CAMRA has been actively involved in supplying information on the situation in our area. It is disturbing to note that over 60% of pubs in and around Solihull are owned by Ansells or M & B. Whitbread are next with 17% making a grand total of 77% owned by three nationwide breweries. Hunting around one can find one Banks's house, two Courage, six Davenports, and one Watneys house. Free Houses? Are there any genuine Free Houses in or around Solihull?.....The Forest, Dorridge? Durham Ox, Shrewley? The only place where Solihull drinkers are offered a choice of beers is BERNIES OFF LICENCE....shame it's not a pub! Real Ale may be more available in the area than in the past but we must fight for more choice and a slackening of the tied house system. Every publican should have some freedom in the choice of beers he stocks which ultimately should be that preferred by his customers.

PUB AND BREWERY ROUND-UP

The Black Country has always been a good place for drinking but things appear to be getting better. It was reported in the last issue of "Boro Banter" that Sarah Hughes Ruby Mild from the Beacon in Sedgley was worthwhile drinking only at the home brew pub. Due to many requests from the free trade, from now on it will be available more widely. A chain of multi-beer houses, Premier Midland Ales are planning to brew their own beer in Stourbridge early next year. They have bought the plant of the Hawthorn Brewery of Gloucestershire, which closed last summer. Holt, Plant and Deakin, the Black Country chain of traditional pubs are still expanding, especially to the north and west of their area. Sadly there doesn't seem to be any plans to move our way!

On a more local note, things look less rosy. The Orange Tree in Chadwick End has closed for extensive alterations. It will reopen with more emphasis as an eating house. The previous manager was not offered the position at the "new pub". The George and Dragon, Stratford Road, Shirley has been demolished. It has been replaced by a sort of restaurant - cafe bar called Calendars!

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.

THE TITANIC BREWERY Co. Ltd.



TRAVELLERS REST

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Tel. (0782) 810418
823447

BEST BITTER	OG 1036
PREMIUM BITTER	OG 1042
CAPTAIN SMITH	OG 1050

THE TITANIC BREWERY BEERS ARE AVAILABLE AT

<i>BERNIES OFF LICENCE</i> - Shirley and Harbourne	<i>The Wharf - Old Hill</i>
<i>Court House</i> - Tipton	<i>The Shovel</i> - Lye
<i>British Oak</i> - Dudley	<i>& other Midland Towns</i>
<i>The Beacon</i> - Sedgley	



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