



♪♪ A Million Pint's of beer each day ♪
 flow into Britain, no duty to pay ♪♪
 ♪♪ thanks---to---Clarke ♪♪

So, Mr. Clarke announced that he has decided to freeze beer duty in this budget, thank you very much, I don't think. Here was a chance for him to show some steel. Our beer heritage is under threat from a flood of cheap beer from across the channel. Now was the time for him to do something about it, to start protecting the jobs of brewery workers, publicans and the small high street off licence.

Why is this tide of foreign beer washing over our shores? It's because of the ridiculously high beer duty we pay in this Country. On a pint of 5% a.b.v. beer we pay over 30p, what do they pay in France? less than 5p!

It is this discrepancy that has encouraged this trade to flourish and every day now people drive van's, lorries crammed to the gunnels with beer, cross our border. The bootleggers actions are far reaching. Don't just think that their spoils are sold in the southern Shires, their ill-gotten gains are off loaded throughout the Country. In fact Birmingham is considered to be the major distribution centre. This daily flow of beer across the Channel is equivalent to the business of some 4,000 British pubs. Their actions are undermining our British beer heritage.

I'm not asking that the beer duty should have been dropped straight away to the 5p France enjoys, but a sensible reduction over the next three years to 15p or so would have seen off most if not all of these 'importers', even they have overheads to pay. As for the 'lost' revenue these reductions would make, how much is being lost at the moment by this daily flood of beer? how much will have to be paid to the unemployed brewery worker, publican. Can you put a price on the loss of a pub or the local off licence to the community? You had a chance to act on this matter Mr. Clarke, but it appears that you didn't even bother to read the script.



EDITORS ROUND

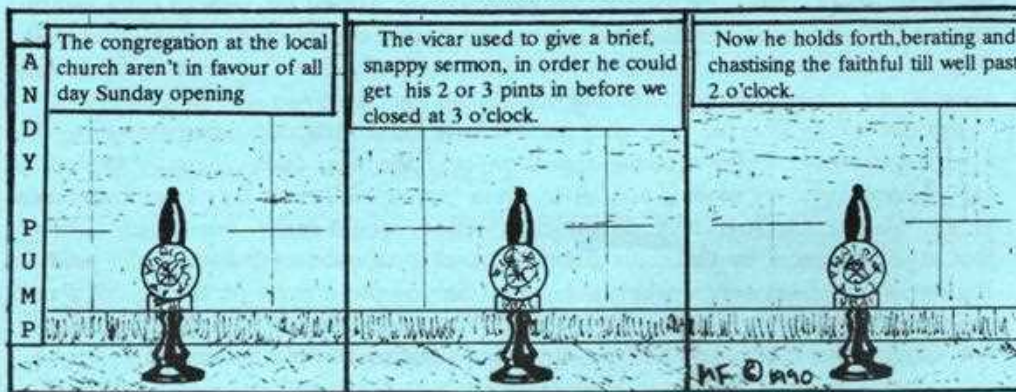
Xmas comes but once a year and when it comes it brings good cheer, at least it would have if a certain Mr. Clarke had done something about reducing the crippling beer duty imposed upon us in this Country. If for some reason you've skipped the front page, please turn back to it and see just how I feel about the 'wonderful' news that beer duty had been frozen in his budget.

A cut in the duty on whisky was balanced out by a rise in one on cider, was this in order to placate the anti-drink lobby? Welcome though this cut in whisky duty is it is something which effects exports. A staged cut in beer duty over the next three years could have seen the end of the bootleg trade of cheep beer from across the channel and may well have guaranteed the jobs of many workers in the brewery industry.

Touching on local matters, residents of Knowle will have by now noticed a change in their high street, The Red Lion is dead, Long live the Felon & Firkin! this pub is still owned by Carlsberg-Tetley but now comes under the Firkin chain. All their pubs have Firkin in the name and sometimes their idea of refurbishment like their insistence in changing the name of the pub hasn't gone down well with the locals. About a third of the pubs have in-house breweries, otherwise most of the beers will be brewed at the Falcon & Firkin in London and appear under different names in the various pubs. As this Banter was away at the printers when the Felon & Firkin was due to open I will have to reserve my comments about it till the next Banter.

Well, all that it remains me to do is to wish you all a merry xmas and a 'hoppy' new year and if you need any information about CAMRA, want to buy the 1996 Good Beer Guide, (if you need a reason see page 5), have any gripes or moans about pubs or breweries then give me a call, my telephone numbers on the back page or drop me a line to 34, Harwood Grove, Shirley, Solihull. B90 4AS.,

Cheers! Malcolm Field.



Birmingham's first new brewery for 20 years.

You heard it here first! In darkest Yardley, a new brewery is born. Based at 10-14, Waterloo Road you'll find the Beowolf brewery, named after the legendary Anglo-Saxon hero who killed the monster Grendel. The brewery is being set up by Phil Bennett who has been a home brewing enthusiast for the last 14 years. He is a member of the Federation of Home Brewers and has decided to make a living out of his favourite hobby.

By the time you read this Phil hopes to have begun brewing his first beer, 'Hero's bitter' an excellent full mash bitter weighing in at 4.7% a.b.v.. He uses quality Fuggles and Goldings hops and at present is looking for outlets to serve his beer.

There are plans to expand into bottled conditioned beers and possibly a barley wine. Anyway, I've tried the product (research, honestly) and it's terrific stuff. Tell your landlord to stock it now as it's sure to be a Xmas number one! All enquiries to Phil Bennett, Beowolf brewery ☎ 0121 708 2155.

TITANIC celebrates it's 10th Birthday.

Back in the Autumn, the Titanic Brewery of Burslem near Stoke on Trent celebrated their 10th anniversary. As the main supplier of Titanic Ales in Solihull area is Bernies Off licence, jointly run by Brian and Dave Queenborough they were both invited to a Sunday afternoon celebration party. A superb marquee had been erected with plenty of food and a live Jazz Band. There were also brewery visits. Local and National CAMRA members were invited to the event and three regular Titanic beers were on offer plus a special strong 10th Anniversary ale called Survivor.

Lets hope this was appropriately named and they survive many more years in the difficult and competitive world of small independent breweries.

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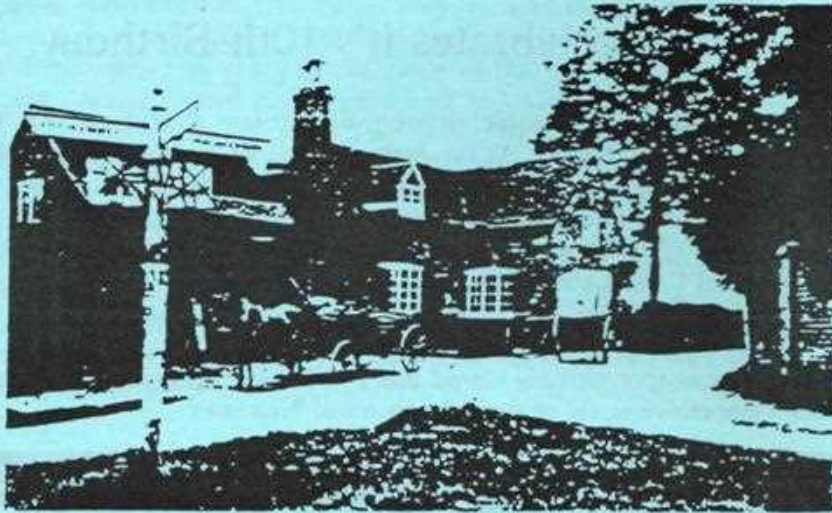
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Britain's Beer buffs Best Beer Book.

CAMRA's GOOD BEER GUIDE

The Good Beer Guide is now in its 23rd edition and each year we manage to cram in more pages with more facts and figures. What's more we've kept the price pegged back to last year's £9.99.

So what do you get for your ten quid? Well, first of all, County by County, place by place an easy to read guide of some 5,000 pubs that local CAMRA members have found on frequent visits during the year to serve a consistently good pint. As



this book is the Good Beer Guide some of the pubs we listed may not be to your taste, but the beers they sell will be. A pub doesn't have to be the Ye Oldie timbered coach house complete with rustic locals to warrant an entry. A pub's place in this guide as always, is decided by the *quality* of the beer served there. A plethora of handpumps decorating the bar, although most impressive is no passport to the guide if the beer served there is inconsistent or duff. Quality not quantity is the hallmark of this guide.

Apart from the list of pubs, there is an update on all of the breweries, big and small, new and old, who owns who and who sells what. Speaking of what, there is an index of some 1,000 beers, so if you need to know who brewed that beer with a strange name you drank last night, then a quick flip through these pages will tell you.

With CAMRA holding over 125 beer festivals across the country each year. You won't want to miss out on a local one will you? A month by month list of all the established festivals will be found simply by turning to page 225.

Add to all this articles by Roger Protz who warns you of the new nitrokeg beers and why the breweries favour them. Barrie Pepper's article on bottled conditioned beers lets you know that Worthington White Shield isn't the only one. Jill Adam's writes about the children's licence and the demands being made on the landlord. Want to know why the price of a pint is always going up? Stephen Cox may have the answer. Mark Dorber attacks the use of the swan neck dispense method and Ted Burning explains why the pub chains buy their beer from certain breweries.

So what are you waiting for? At £10.00 it's a snip! Why, that's less than 20p a week. Get your nearest and dearest to buy it for you as a Xmas present. It makes an excellent stocking filler, providing you've got funny shaped feet!



ROUND-UP

I'm glad to report that a number of pubs in the Solihull area are now taking guest beers in. First on my list is **The White Swan** in Henley-in-Arden, they have recently had Abbot ale on sale. Not too far way in Barston the **Malt Shovel** has had new beers. The **Drawbridge**, just down from Shirley Railway Station on the Haslucks Green Road have had beer's in from the Poole brewery in Dorset and Batemans XXB and Moorhouses Pendle Witches have been on sale at the **Drum & Monkey** in Bentley Heath. In Olton the **Harvester** has put on the Enville bitter, brewed with a touch of honey, by the Enville brewery in Stourbridge.

There are new landlord's at the **Golden Lion** in Solihull centre, the **Red Lion** in Claverdon, which I understand will be closed down for about a month or so



after Xmas for a lick of paint and at the **Lodge** in Yardley Wood Road, Solihull Lodge, where he intends to keep the guest beer range. I heard a whisper that the **Taverna** on the Stratford Road will re-open under it's old name of the *Royal Oak*.

CAMRA's 23rd Good Beer Guide was released in late October and the Solihull area can boast of 9 entries. In alphabetical order the first pub will be **The Bulls Head** in Barston. The building has been dated back to the last decade of the 15th Century and Martin Bradley keeps his beers in excellent condition and thoroughly deserves

his entry in this guide. Our next stop is just over the border into Warwickshire where Andrew Kimber is your host at the **Navigation** in Lapworth, He has won Solihull CAMRA's Pub of The Year award for the past two years, what else can I say? except it's one of the very few pubs around here that offer you a chance to try real cider. **The Old Colonial** in Damson Wood is the next port of call, Ralph Newnes who runs this deceptively large pub insures you have a regular change of guest beer. Over at **The Railway** in Grange Road, Dorridge which has been run by the Watson family for, well! ages, you will find the M&B mild in excellent condition. From the outside our next pub may not look all that impressive, but John Fewtrell at the **Red Lion** in Shirley will offer you a choice of eight different beers and most unusual in this area two of them are mild. For our 6th pub it's back to Warwickshire again for the **Tom O' the Wood** set alongside the Grand Union canal at Rowington, built in the 18th Century to cater to the canal trade this now much modernised single roomed pub offers you the choice of up to six different beers. The village of Knowle is the home of **The Vaults**. In 1992 & 1993 this three level pub won the Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year award and Nick Worrall still keeps his beer in excellent condition. The final pub for Solihull in the 1996 Good Beer Guide is the **White Lion** in Hampton-in-Arden. Offering accommodation for visitors to the nearby N.E.C., meals are served in a separate restaurant area at →

the back of the pub and the bar, one of only a handful left in the Solihull area has remained virtually unaltered over the last 50 years. John Moffitt serves his Bass and guest beer through handpump.

Well, that about wraps it up for our pubs in the new Good Beer Guide but, at the beginning I said that there were 9 entries this year and if you have been keeping count I have only mentioned 8 pubs, the reason is quite simple the last one is not a pub! it is an off licence and not just any old one where you might go to get your wine, fags and canned beer. **Bernies** in Cranmore Boulevard, Shirley, offers you the chance to take the real thing home with you, be it a pint or a barrel full. All their beers come from the small independent breweries, the likes of Titanic, Hook Norton, Fuller's and so on. Not only that, but they stock a range of bottled conditioned beer's, British and Foreign. Well worth a visit and another and another

[CAM(E)RA?]

Every now and then during the course of conversation you are bound to be asked what your hobbies are and if I mention I'm a member of CAMRA and there is a slight pause it's a sure bet that the next thing they will say is something like, oh! I've got a Praktica myself, what do you take photographs of? I quickly have to explain that CAMRA has nothing at all to do with taking photographs, which in my case can be a little confusing as I do carry a camera around with me to take photographs of pubs.

You may think that it's only because the names sound similar that this confusion arises but many of the photographic terms can be used to describe things which are heard or seen in a pub. Hard to believe?, well maybe if you glance through the following list you'll understand what I mean.

APERTURE: Corruption of "A percher"- someone who always insists upon sitting on a bar stool at the busiest corner of the bar, especially at the busiest time.

BOX BROWNIE: A crate of beer from Newcastle.

BUILT IN FLASH: A typical refurbishment by one of the big breweries.

DIN RATING: A measure of how loud the juke box is turned up.

LENS: The chair in the corner where Len always sits.

OVER EXPOSURE: Somebody who did not adjust his dress properly before he left the gents.

VIEW FINDER: Customer who selects his seat to achieve the best sight line to a group of young ladies in the bar.

"WATCH THE BIRDIE": Lusting after the barmaid.

[My thanks to the London Drinker for allowing me to use this list taken from an article written by Sandy Ripon in the April 1989 London Drinker.]

NUTT all Good News for HIGHGATE.

Walsall's Highgate brewery, for so long under threat of closure from Bass is now in safe hands. This unique mild only brewery has been bought for £600,000. The new owners are Neil Bain who was head brewer at Highgate from 1991 to '93 and Steve Nuttall former Caffrey's brand manager.

The newly formed Highgate & Walsall Brewing Company have got a contract to supply Bass over the next three years. This will maintain the present 18,000 barrel output from the brewery, which will give the owners time to market the brands more actively. Mr. Nuttall said that he always thought that the Highgate beers had been undersold and would ensure that they would get the attention they deserved.

They have no intention of producing any nitro-keg at the brewery and will major on dark ales, quality will always be put first. They intend to open a visitors centre and tap and in time a bottling line for bottle-conditioned ales. The Brewery has a capacity to produce 50,000 barrels a year and as they have already said that they would like to work towards this I think that we will soon see new beers from them, one around 3.6%abv (bitter?) and a porter around 4.2%abv would slot in quite nicely.

For having the foresight to save this brewery and its beers I congratulate both of them and I have no qualms at all about its future in their hands. I look forward to enjoying Highgate beer's as I know them for a long time to come.

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GOOD BEER GUIDE LISTED

SOLIHULL CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR FOR 1995

Solihull CAMRA on the move!

Beer, bed & breakfast!

On Saturday 14th October, twenty two adventurous drinkers including myself piled into a convoy of cars and headed east to spend a wonderful weekend sampling the delights of Batemans beers at the Salem Bridge Brewery at Wainfleet near Skegness.

Batemans is a family brewery started by the Bateman clan back in 1874. In the mid 80's a family dispute threatened the brewery's future, but after a 3 year battle George Bateman secured the brewery's independence and since then it is growing from strength to strength.

We had the chance for a thorough tour of the works and brewery, aided and abetted by our guides Charlie and Dennis who were a wealth of information and readily answered all the questions we put to them. Then we had to settle down to the onerous task of testing these fine brews.

The beers have a soft feel on the palate and are rare in that they are designed to be pulled through a tight sparkled handpump.

Then after an evening drinking Batemans it was just a matter of making our way back to our assigned pubs where we had been booked in for bed & breakfast in one of the local Batemans pub, on the Sunday morning it was a case of and a quick paddle in the Skeggie sea and then home in time to see Blues on the telly.

Cheers.

Keven Parker.
Social secretary

On behalf of Solihull CAMRA, I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a hoppy new year.



Malcolm Field

Malcolm Field Editor.

and please remember don't drink and drive,
you're not only risking your own life.

Solihull CAMRA Annual General Meeting

(at the Red Lion, Shirley. Monday 6th November.)

Starting promptly at 8.00pm a brisk brief branch meeting preceded this years A.G.M.. Never, had so many reports been given in so few words in so short a space of time. Or words to that effect.

We had the rare luxury of holding the meeting in a private room and after we had dutifully listened our committee members giving their reports to the branch, it was time to find out who would be standing on the committee this year.

As it turned out only Keven Parker our social secretary and myself as branch secretary and general dogsbody remained, our new chair is Brenda Duffy who joined the branch a year or so ago from 'up north', Dave Hobbis left his job as the branch treasurer and took on the post of press officer, Peter Bates has taken over his old job. Our new membership secretary is Malcolm Vince and our pubs campaigning officer is Matt Bullock.

1996 is a new year and by then this new committee will have gotten to know each other and as other Solihull CAMRA committee's in the past will be striving to make sure that you, the beer drinker, the pub goer, will be informed, advised, helped and supported in every way to insure that you can continue to enjoy a good pint at a reasonable price in a decent pub.



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(not Wednesday evening or during Sunday)

Telephone reservations welcome.

* Two lounges * garden area * Car parking *



M&B Bitter, Bass & Tetley beers
all served on handpump.

THIS PUB IS LISTED IN THE
CAMRA GOOD BEER GUIDE



BRANCH MEETINGS & SOCIAL EVENTS

- DEC 11 Mon. Branch Meeting, the Colebrook, Haslucks Green Road. 8.30pm.
- DEC 21 Mon. Xmas crawl. B'ham. Meet at Old Fox, Hurst Street for 7.00pm
Newt & Cucumber 7.45. Shakespeare 8.30pm. Wellington
9.00pm finishing at Square Peg around 9.45pm.
- DEC 29 Fri. Beer & Balti. Key's Club, Birmingham. 7.30pm.
- JAN 8 Mon. Branch Meeting, the Harvester, Tanhouse Farm Road. 8.30pm.
- JAN 20 Sat. Wolverhampton social. Meet up at the Feline & Ferkin for
7.00pm. and from there on to Posada at 7.45pm, then the Moon
under Water around 8.30pm finishing up at the Great Western
at 9.15pm.
- JAN 26 Fri. Beer & Balti. Anchor at Rea/Bradford Street, B'ham 8.00pm.
- FEB 12 Mon. Branch Meeting at the White Swan, Henley-in-Arden. 8.30pm.

APPLICATION TO JOIN CAMRA

I/We wish to become members of the Campaign for Real Ale Limited and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.

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LOCAL CAMRA BRANCH CONTACTS

BIRMINGHAM.

Babs Ellgood. ☎ 0121 779 5730 (h).

COVENTRY & NORTH WARWICKS.

Paul Hamblett. ☎ 01203 417675 (h).

HEART OF WARWICKSHIRE.

John Crossing. ☎ 01926 613256 (h). 01926 412481 (w).

REDDITCH & BROMSGROVE.

John Moisy. ☎ 0121 476 5559 (h).

SHAKESPEARE.

Vaughan Hully. ☎ 01789 778726 (h). 0121 554 5050 (w).

SOLIHULL.

Malcolm Field. ☎ 0121 745 8981 (h). 0121 622 2323 (w).

TAMWORTH & SUTTON.

Suzanne Poynton. ☎ 0121 311 2748 (h).



The Boro Banter is the newsletter of the Solihull branch of CAMRA. The views expressed are those of the individual contributor and are not necessarily the views of this branch or the Campaign for Real Ale Limited.

Advertising rates are available from the Editor Malcolm Field on 0121 745 8981 during the evening.

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