



solihull  
drinker



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOLIHULL & DISTRICT BRANCH OF  
THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

Issue No.2

Autumn 1997

## BRANCH HONOURS FOREST

Last year the Solihull Branch voted at its Annual General Meeting to introduce an award in addition to the Pub of the Year for the pub which has improved most significantly with regard to real ale within the last twelve months.

Last month members voted for the pub they considered to be the most worthy recipient of the new accolade. The winning establishment by a considerable margin was the Forest Hotel in Dorridge.

The Forest Inn was built in 1878 by the Muntz family adjacent to the railway which had been built on land owned by the family in 1852. The station buildings were constructed at the same time. Now called the Forest Hotel, but still independently owned and run, the hotel can boast a lively bar,

comfortable lounge and large function suite which are all run by joint managers Alan Bennett and Gerry McCarthy.

The Forest has sold Draught Bass for several years, but began stocking a guest beer twelve months ago. Beers sold to date include brews from Shepherd Neame, Marstons, Clark's, Batemans and Church End amongst others; some of the beers, mostly supplied by Bass, are rare for the area. It was this variety and quality of beers which most impressed the branch members. Such has been the success of the guest beers, they are soon to be introduced to the bar, whereas presently they are only available in the lounge. Generally, the guest beer changes weekly and continues to be sold alongside the Bass.

Joint manager Mr Bennett

was eager to stress that the Forest is not just a quality hotel with all the services one would associate with such an establishment, but also a thriving local pub located centrally within the village and adjacent to Dorridge Station. Its status in the area was further enhanced recently with its inclusion in the 1998 edition of the Good Beer Guide.

A presentation to the Forest will take place very soon, and all branch members and members of the public are most welcome to attend. Meanwhile, the branch would I'm sure like to wish the management team at the Forest every success and we look forward to more interesting beers during the next twelve months. Hopefully other Solihull establishments will take note and learn from the Forest's success.

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Inside your Drinker.....Brewery Visit Special - York -Theakstons - Black Sheep - Pilsner  
Urquell - Benesov .....win 9 pints of real ale, page 6..... Good Beer Guide 1998, page 10  
.....and all the local news, page 14.....

## editor's round.....

Themed pubs seem to be all the rage. We reported in the last issue Allied-Domecq's plans to turn most of its pubs into theme pubs over the next few years. This month, Scottish Courage have announced similar plans whereby 80% of its 1,800 managed houses will be converted into theme pubs by the year 2000. The conversions will include several T&J Bernard Ale Houses, the inexplicable Rat and Parrots, numerous chains of eating houses, and the ubiquitous 'Irish' pubs.

Fortunately, Solihull is not blessed with any Scottish Courage establishments, so these changes will only ruin other drinkers' pubs in other parts of the country. However, the only pub in Solihull owned by Inntrepreneur Inns, a pub-owning chain formed by Courage in 1991 but recently sold off to Japanese owners, suffered the Irish conversion only last year. The Golden Lion, in Warwick Road in the town centre received the usual green paint job and the

Guinness signs, and overnight became a "traditional Irish venue". But obviously not a successful one. By early October 1997, the pub was once again boarded up and closed, despite banners proclaiming "Under new management". Hopefully the new management (Japanese or otherwise) will have learned their lesson and will restore this pub to the basic town-centre boozery it once was.

On the positive side, readers might be interested in the forthcoming beer festival at The Vaults in Knowle. I'm told thirty beers will be available about six at a time, and they include some interesting brews from the likes of Kelham Island, Icen, Bunces and Summerskills to name but four. Check out also the branch events for the next few months which are listed on the back page.

Reading this month's Solihull Drinker, you will notice that there are several articles on brewery visits undertaken by the branch over the past few

weeks. Whilst it is our intention to keep much of the content of the Drinker relevant to local issues, we would also like to highlight the many social events which Keven organises for the branch, which take us to such far flung places as York and the Czech Republic. One of the main social events of the year is the annual brewery weekend break; this year it was at the two breweries in Masham and in the pubs of York. You can read more in Keven's article on page 4. We had two excellent brewery tours, and our guides answered every question - except possibly one. "I don't have to tell you this...." repeated our Theakston's guide frequently, but more often than not he did find it necessary to tell us every anecdote after all. "You're such nice people", he would explain. But he couldn't explain everything. Just what are the subtle and complex flavours which he claims exist in Theakston's Best Bitter? I'd love to know.

*Matt*

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The Solihull Drinker is the newsletter of the Solihull & District Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. The views expressed are those of the individual contributor and are not necessarily the views of the Solihull Branch, or the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd, or least of all the Editor.

All contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to:

The Editor, Solihull Drinker, c/o 1255 Yardley Wood Road, Solihull B90 1LA.

Please contact the editor for advertising rates, which start from as little as £10. The Editor reserves the right to amend or shorten any contributions for inclusion in the Solihull Drinker.

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# BERNIES

REAL ALES



## MINI BEER FESTIVAL

14-15 NOVEMBER 1997

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## Yorkie Bars

On Saturday October 25th, Solihull CAMRA headed to Yorkshire for our annual weekend bash, where, along with York CAMRA, we had a coach trip to Masham for two brewery tours.

T&R Theakston was founded in 1827 and control of the company was handed down through the generations finally to Paul Theakston in the late 1980s. In 1987 it was bought by national brewers Scottish & Newcastle, Now Scottish Courage. Paul quickly realised there was no place for himself in the new structure, and promptly resigned. In order to keep the family brewing tradition going in Masham, in 1992 he founded the Black Sheep Brewery right next door to Theakstons! With much resultant publicity, demand for Black Sheep beers soared, and output soon overtook that from Theakston's Masham plant which by now was only producing beer for the local area.

The tour guide on our 12 noon tour of Black Sheep, who constantly referred to Scottish Courage as "Scourge", immediately invited us to pee into Theakston's fermenters over the wall. ScotCo are not popular in the Theakston family. After an extensive tour, it was off to the tasting

room where the full range of beers was available: the quaffable Best Bitter (3.8%), Special (4.4%) and the superb but strong Riggwelter (5.9%), named after an ancient Yorkshire phrase used to describe a sheep on its back which cannot stand up (which is likely to happen to you if you drink too much). The brewery is very commercialised and is geared to tourists as well as intrepid beer explorers. Tours run hourly and there's a visitor centre, bistro and Sheepy Shop.

After too much tasting to be good for us, we walked to Theakston's for our 3pm tour. This proved an anticlimax as it appeared that the brewery was underused and practically a museum. Our tour guide had worked at Theakston's since he was a small boy, and had seen the takeover at first hand. Reading between the lines, he seemed a little upset about the way the Theakston tradition was being destroyed. Most of Theakston's beer is brewed in Newcastle, but "Scourge" continues to advertise Masham as the home of Theakston's, and attracts some adverse publicity from CAMRA for misleading customers about the origin of their beer. Theakston's did generously give us a free bar featuring the Mild (3.5%), Best (3.9%), XB (4.6%) and

Old Peculier (5.7%), the last named after a peculiar village vicar. Some of the party found the beers a bit bland and returned briefly to Black Sheep before we left for home.

The coach took us back to York, and after a brief recovery, we hit the city's pubs. Jim Thompson of York CAMRA was our guide and we enjoyed an extensive crawl of eight of the best pubs featured in the 1998 Good Beer Guide. York is a city steeped in history, and the pubs are no exception. Most are architecturally ornate, and the service is good humoured and friendly, and there is an excellent choice of ales (Quite the opposite to Solihull Town Centre). I'll briefly mention The Maltings, a back-to-basics ale house serving about 8 different ales; the Blue Bell with its Edwardian interior and Vaux beers, and the Lighthorseman, a friendly Thwaites suburban pub. After the days excesses, which for some of us included a visit to York Brewery to sample their wares, we retired to our hotel, though some could not resist the pull of the midnight madras.

Sunday was the sightseeing/sobering up day, before the trip home. Thanks must go to Jim at York CAMRA for an excellent weekend. I only wish we had some pubs in Solihull town centre worth inviting them down here for!



# THE BULLS HEAD

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## SOLIHULL DRINKER PRIZE WORDSEARCH

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Find the 56 brewery names listed opposite in the wordsearch grid below. The names may appear vertically, horizontally and diagonally, and may be backwards. Highlight all 56 names, and then re-arrange the unhighlighted letters to form the name of a 57th brewery.



Completed entries with the name of the 57th brewery should be sent to the Editor, along with entrant's name and address to arrive no later than 31 January 1998. Photocopies are acceptable. Should more than one correct entry be received, the winner shall be determined by drawing one entry from a hat. Please do enter, because the hat was very nearly redundant last time. Once again, the editor's decision on the result of the competition will be final, and only substantial bribes will be acceptable. The prize on offer is a 9-pint take-out polypin of Warwickshire beer supplied by Hampton Wines. There is no cash alternative. The name of the winner and the solution will be published next time.

The following breweries' names are hidden in the grid:

ABC	Cartmel	Kempton	Shepherd Neame
Adnams	Chiltern	Lees	Smiles
Alloa	Church End	McMullen	Stanway
Ash Vine	Cotleigh	Mill	Swale
Badger	Dent	Mordue	Taylor
Banks's	Federation	Oakhill	Tetley
Bass	Freeminer	Orkney	Thwaites
Brains	Hambleton	Otter	Titanic
Brakspear	Hanby	Porter	Uley
Burtonwood	Hardy	Randalls	Vaux
Butterknowle	Highgate	RCH	Wadworth
Cains	Holt	Ridleys	Ward
Caledonian	Iceni	Samuel Smith	Wood
Camerons	Ind Coope	Sharps	York

Congratulations to last months winner, Mr. J Wilson of Cheetham Hill, Manchester. Quite how a copy of the Drinker made it to the North West is not known, but I'm sure he'll enjoy his nine pints. The answers to the crossword were:

Down: 1 Hartley; 2 Head; 3 Uncle Igor; 4 Second; 5 Sturgeon; 8 Valiant; 9 FA; 12 DOA; 15 ERA; 16 Ebony Dark; 17 Randalls; 18 Capstan; 19 Sleigh'd; 21 Samson; 22 Dog; 25 OB; 26 Asum; Across 6 Pageant; 7 Velvet; 10 Stud; 11 Leadboiler; 13 Nemesis; 14 Ale; 18 Colours Best; 20 Nip; 23 Ansell; 24 Autumn Gold; 26 A-Bix; 27 London; 28 Draught

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## Don't München the War.....

Solihull CAMRA members don't confine their drinking to within these shores; just to prove it, a dozen of the most battle-hardened members embarked on a 'fact-finding' mission which took them first to Munich in deepest Bavaria.....

The group's arrival in Munich was timed to perfection: the start of the 'Oktoberfest', the world's largest beer festival. The Oktoberfest attracts thousands upon thousands of beer connoisseurs from all over the globe and lasts for 16 days (despite the name, much of the festival is in September): in this time about 10 million pints of beer are drunk, mainly to wash down the very salty pretzels and a few of the ¾ million chickens which are consumed.

All this activity takes place in ten beer tents, located to the south of the city in the middle of an amusement park. Each tent holds around 6,000 people, and combined with a noisy 'Oom-Pah' band and all the fairground rides, the atmosphere, particularly in the evenings, is electric.

Only six Munich-based breweries are allowed to sell their beer at the festival (for the record these are Hofbräuhaus, Paulaner, Spaten, Lowenbräu, Hacker-Pschorr and Augustiner), and each sells only one in each

tent, so don't expect to drink a huge range of beers as you might at a British beer festival. Nevertheless, the Solihull dozen got stuck into what was on offer, strengthening their biceps during the week with the lifting of heavy, 1 litre steins, and managed to sample most of what was on offer. Thankfully, Germany's Reinheitsgebot, or purity law, allowed most of us to wake up with clear heads, despite drinking beer, much of which was over 5% ABV, in quantities which would have sunk the Bismarck.



The festival is prohibitively expensive to spend a week at (DM11 for a stein = £4), so we found time to take in other attractions. The Olympic Stadium and the BMW museum are worth a visit.

Outside of Munich, the town of Regensburg, set on the River Danube, proved to be a popular destination. Once said to contain 28 breweries

including the very first north of the Alps, built by the Romans, Regensburg is still a place of pilgrimage for all beer lovers.

The St Katheriner Spital brewery with its beer garden by the river proved to be a pleasant place to spend lunchtime, and the Thurn und Taxis brewery's excellent rye beer was well worth searching out.

A visit to the town of Freising with its 8th century monastery brewery of Braustuberl Weichenstaphen was well worth the twenty minute slog up hill; the beer slipping down on arrival disconcertingly easily.

Similarly the uphill hour long walk to Andechs Monastery to taste their beers took its toll too, but the walk was well worth the effort. Munich itself has some wonderful beer gardens and bars, many of which are detailed in Graham Lees' CAMRA guide to Munich and Bavaria, which despite being a few years old, is still reasonably useful.

If our trip to Munich proved one thing, it was that the word 'lager' doesn't have to mean the cold tasteless fizzy water that it does in Britain. Genuine German lagers bear no resemblance to this apology for a beer. Go there and try for yourselves.

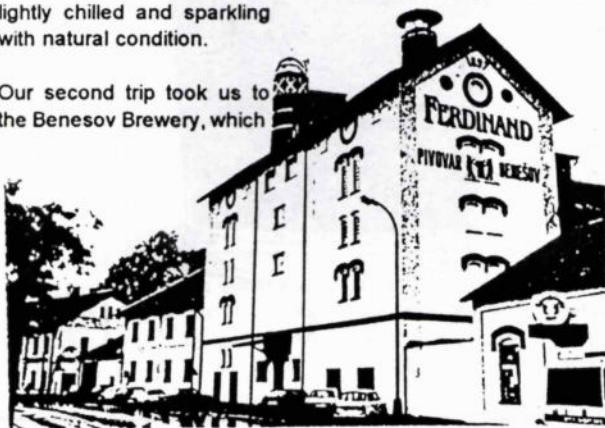
Dave Hobbis

Following on from our Oktoberfest experience, several of our intrepid Solihull CAMRA members ventured into the Czech Republic in search of the real Pilsner, as Ken Jackson explains.....

Whole Saaz hops, oak fermenting vessels and miles of chilly underground lagering cellars: this is what Pilsner Urquell, the original Pilsner brewery, founded in 1842, is all about. Or at least used to be. These days, over 4 million barrels every year of Pilsner Urquell beer are fermented in conical stainless steel vessels, and the beer is kegged and bottled to be sold around the world. You can probably buy it in Sainsbury's.

Mercifully, a couple of hundred yards of the 5½ miles of underground cellars are still full of vast oak fermenters and barrels. The beer which is fermented here is outstanding, balanced and clean tasting with a complexity of hop character that would embarrass many English ales. Two and a half months in the fermenting barrels mean that the beer is lightly chilled and sparkling with natural condition.

Our second trip took us to the Benesov Brewery, which



is on the scale of a British regional. They brew five times a day, which produces an impressive 300,000 barrels per year. The most interesting feature is the brewery's own maltings in the cellar, where long furrows of barley germinate in the cool darkness. Upstairs, the familiar coppers, mash tun and fermenters are used in an unfamiliar way. Mashing is by two stage decoction, firstly at 63° C and then 75° C. The boil is for two hours with hops and (sadly) hop extract added in three stages for bitterness and aroma. Bottom fermentation is by Budweiser Budvar yeast and takes ten days. The unfiltered beer then spends 2½ months in the chilled horizontal lagering tanks where it absorbs carbon dioxide which gives the beer a natural sparkle. The beer is then twice filtered and flash pasteurised

before being kegged or bottled. We tried the "Ferdinand Pale 12" and "Dark 11". The benefit of the in-house maltings is apparent in the solid malt flavours, which are well balanced by the bittering hops. The beers are surprisingly 'English' compared with other Czech beers.

These excellent beers are apparently only available at the breweries. The same brands are sold in the bars of Plzen and Prague in kegged, cold, fizzy form. The only other live beers to be found are in the few brew pubs in the capital city. In spite of these oases, it would appear that the Czech Republic could well do with an organisation like CAMRA to support these important beer styles if they are to survive the new technologies and commercial pressures in the new Czech economy.

Visit the Brewery Museum in Plzen (Veleslavinova 6) which is open daily from 10 till 6 and costs 40Kc (about 80p). Brewery visits to Pilsner Urquell commence at 12.30pm and are conducted in English. The cost is 70Kc. Benesov is 35km south of Prague; our tour was organised by Martin Tours, and the brewery visit was conducted in Czech with a rough English translation.

CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

# GOOD BEER GUIDE 1998

EDITED BY JEFF EVANS

Britain's biggest selling pub guide is 25 years old. The Good Beer Guide, published by CAMRA (The Campaign for Real Ale) was first issued in the 1970s, at a time when beer was 15 pence a pint and traditionally brewed ale was becoming increasingly hard to find. The Guide was an immediate hit, selling over 30,000 copies in its first year. The 1998 edition is now on sale and looks set to break all previous sales records.

The Good Beer Guide 1998 runs to some 560 pages and features around 5,000 pubs all of which must serve excellent beer. All entries are nominated and researched by local CAMRA members, who only select the pubs they know well and trust. No payment is ever taken for inclusion in the Guide, which also provides information about meals, accommodation, family rooms and other facilities. The Guide also gives full up-to-date details of all Britain's breweries and the beers they produce, including tasting notes. It's a book no beer lover can afford to be without and is available now from most local bookshops or from the Solihull branch at the bargain price of £10.99, or direct and post free from CAMRA at 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans AL1 4LW (cheques made payable to CAMRA).

There are nine entries in the 1998 Good Beer Guide from the Solihull area. They are, in no particular order, Bernies Real Ale Off Licence and the Red Lion in Shirley, the Navigation in Lapworth, The Railway and The Forest Hotel in Dorridge, The Vaults in Knowle, the Bulls Head at Barston, The Harvester in Olton and the White Swan in Henley-in-Arden.



# “BORO BANTER”

## **Boro' Banter - a tribute**

From 1982 until 1995, the Solihull Branch of CAMRA's newsletter was the *Boro' Banter*, as Steve Wood recalls

This may be only issue 2 of the Solihull Drinker, but some readers may be unaware that the Solihull branch has been producing newsletters since it was formed in 1982. The Boro' Banter began life as a single sheet newsletter distributed amongst branch members; produced monthly, one of the earliest issues welcomed the opening of Bernies Off-Licence in Shirley. Bernies was described at the time as an oasis in the Shirley real ale desert, which with the notable exception of the Red Lion, has not improved greatly since.

Issue 7 in January 1983 was the first to be distributed to pubs throughout the area. Features during that year included congratulations to the Railway in Dorridge for appearing in the first ten years of the Good Beer Guide, plus a warning of a hostile takeover of Davenports brewery by Wolverhampton & Dudley (Banks's). Also whilst commending its recently increased beer range, the Crab Mill at Preston Bagot was criticised for selling Hook Norton Bitter at the expensive price of 68p a pint. It seems that some things don't change.

1985 saw issue 27 which noted the appearance of a hand pump in the formerly keg-only White Swan in Henley-in-Arden; it is nice to see how this pub has gone from strength to strength ever since. Issue 39 in 1989 saw the re-launch of the Banter after a year's break with a new editor and in a new A5 format, much the same as today's Solihull Drinker. Bad news was top of the agenda with confirmation that Birmingham's last independent brewery, Davenports, was to be closed. Having been acquired by Greenalls, its demise only served to remind people of the warnings printed in the Banter some six years before.

The Banter always tried to place national campaigning issues in a local context. 1990 saw a clear and informative piece on the complex issues surrounding the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report. It was also quick to point out the availability of beers from small independent breweries at the Navigation, Lapworth, which, with the exception of Bernies, has been the only place in the region to regularly stock ales from the smaller breweries over the last seven years.

The Banter was also quick to recognise and promote promising new real ale outlets. The Christmas 1990 edition welcomed the opening of the Vaults in Knowle; two years later we celebrated this establishment's selection as Solihull Pub of the Year. Further honours have followed, notably when the Vaults was chosen as the venue for the highly successful First Solihull and Knowle Beer Festival in 1994. Also celebrated in this year was the achievement of Bernies' 11th successive entry in the Good Beer Guide, a tremendous feat given that it had only opened 12 years previously.

Sadly, all good things must come to an end. December 1995 saw the 52nd and last issue of the Boro Banter, which signed off on a welcome high note: the opening of Birmingham's first new brewery for 20 years, the Beowulf Brewery in Yardley.

So there you have it, a toast to the Boro Banter. Hopefully the Solihull Drinker will celebrate its 50th edition with a similar tribute. I'll drink to that!

Steve Wood

## readers write

It's amazing how far copies of the Drinker get! Reader Alan Hinkes lives in Washington (Tyne & Wear, not DC). Alan is a mountaineer, and is attempting to climb more than four 8,000m peaks in one year, and to be the first Briton to climb all fourteen 8,000m peaks in the world; so far he has climbed nine. Real Ale and, more surprisingly, Solihull, are never far from his mind, as the following extract from his letter explains....

"The flour on a chapati made me sneeze and I rolled on the ground in agony - I had slipped a disc. It was not in a Birmingham curry house but high in the Himalaya. Luckily I was only at 13,000 feet, and helicopters can just make it to that altitude. Unfortunately, the heli got lost, the weather socked in and I was stranded for over a week in agony. I was running out of food, painkillers and fuel and only has half a dozen cans of Australian brewed Fosters. What a torture - Fosters! I did have satellite communications and could use the telephone to speak to anyone in the world, even the helicopter

company, but nobody could help me. Eventually I struggled down 2,000 ft, the lower altitude making it easier for the helicopter, and I was finally airlifted to Islamabad.

Ironically, the orthopaedic surgeon I saw there had spent the last 15 years in England working for the health service. I was in pain and in dire need of a good pint. I reckoned beer would relax my back muscles. There is no cask beer in Pakistan and I had to search out a bottle of the locally brewed Murree Beer and some imported fizz at the British High Commission Club.

It was great to return back to blighty where I received physio, not to mention therapy from various hostelrys where I savoured excellent English cask ale, Castle Eden and Fuggles were the first two I downed. Physio was as essential as the beer - it's good to search out your own favourite pints and pubs. I am Northern based but often visit the Midlands. In Shirley I have had a pint or two in the Red Lion several times. There are a good few cask beers to choose from; the JF house bitter was thin but very drinkable and at £1.00 a pint a bargain!"

Alan will be in the Midlands as part of his UK tour on Monday 1 December to give a talk on his adventures, mountains and no doubt beer. Contact the Camping and Outdoor centre in Birmingham (0121 643 0885) for details. The venue will be the Midland Institute.

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The 3rd Issue of the

### Solihull Drinker

will be published on 9 February 1998

Please note that the advertising deadline for this issue will be  
Saturday 31 January 1998

May we wish our readers, contributors and advertisers a Merry Christmas  
and a prosperous New Year.


## LOCAL CAMRA CONTACTS

For information on CAMRA and details of your local branch's events, contact the appropriate person in your area from the following, alphabetical, list:

Dudley and South Staffs	Steve AMOS	01384 252266
Walsall	Rob BENTLEY	01922 861626
Stourbridge	Patrick BIRD	0121 422 5394
Tamworth & Sutton Coldfield	Gary CLAY	01827 284576
Heart of Warwickshire	John CROSSLING	01926 613256
Bridgnorth	David HADDON	01746 862454
Coventry	Paul HAMBLETT	01203 417675
Shakespeare	Vaughan HULLY	01789 778726
Redditch & Bromsgrove	Paul LONG	01527 450016
Kidderminster	Richard LYCETT	01562 861951
Wolverhampton	Fred MORTON	01902 26513
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# solihull

## news

Yates's are now trading from their new premises on Station Road. As anticipated in the last issue, there is real ale available but the choice is uninspiring, although the quality seems fine. OK, this might be a long shot, but how about a guest beer, chaps? Give us something good and we'll say a few nice things about you.

Sadly, there were never many nice things we could ever say about the Golden O'Lion down the street on Warwick Road, except until now. The pub is closed! As yet the reason is unknown, but despite the "under new management" banner, the windows are boarded up and there are no signs of it reopening in the near future. Nevertheless, I'm sure the whole of Solihull is mourning the lack of craic to be found in the town centre since the big event. We, for sure, are not.

It has been brought to my attention that the Black Boy at Heronfield now has a handpump adorning its bar, which usually dispenses a new house beer, Black Boy Bitter. It is brewed by the Red Cross Brewery of Bromsgrove and is 4.2% ABV. The Blue Bell Cider House also now

sells real ale, usually Marstons Pedigree alongside its real ciders. The Old Colonial in Damsonwood, on the other hand, is heading in the opposite direction. Both the guest beer and the real mild have disappeared and the only remaining real ale, Bass, is reported to be below par. The Old Colonial was a Good Beer Guide entry in 1996 and 1997. Buy your updated 1998 guide now!

Amongst the guest beer sightings in the last few months are Shepherd Neame Spitfire and Ruddles County at the Forest in Dorridge (see the front page article); Robinsons Hartleys XB down the road at the Railway; The Bulls Head at Barston has had Fullers London Pride and Kimberley Frolicking Farmer (indeed, the Frisky Farmer reported to be in the Railway last time turned out to be a Frolicking one instead); The Harvester has taken Old Speckled Hen and Judges Solicitors Ruin, as well as Everards Old Original and Equinox, a 4.8% autumn beer brewed with Maris Otter Barley and Goldings Hops. Friary Meux has appeared at the Old Royal Oak, Wood End, but the Tapsters Choice guest beers seem to have disappeared from the Hobs

Meadow just as they did from the Lodge. The Malt Shovel in Barston, meanwhile, is selling guest beers, including Highgate Saddlers at a bargain £1.30 a pint during happy hours (before 7pm) which is worth a visit in itself. Try too the guest beers at the Bell in Tanworth-in-Arden, which have included some rare beers.

At the end of November, The Vaults in Knowle will be holding a mini-beer festival, with around thirty unusual ales to be on offer over seven days. Whilst not a first for the area, a pub beer festival is a rare event in Solihull, so make the most of it. Guest beers noted at the Vaults recently included Cottage Golden Arrow.

Finally, our calculations for the Annual General Meeting update show that the Solihull branch area now has 86 pubs, of which 74 serve real ale. The number of keg pubs is slightly lower than last year, which is a welcome trend. Even so, the choice of beers is still pretty limited, although the situation is definitely improving. If your pub is stocking a guest beer, let the Solihull Drinker know!

## JOIN CAMRA NOW

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The Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 230  
Hatfield Road,  
St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 4LW

Current rates are: Single £14, Joint £17

Name (s):.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

I / We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale,  
and agree to abide by the Memorandum and  
Articles of Association.

I enclose a cheque for £.....

Signature(s): .....

Date: .....

## THE ANCHOR

Bradford St.,  
Digbeth  
Tel : 0121 622 4516



Come and visit this classic Edwardian  
pub, with its extensive range of real ales  
and bottled beers from around the  
world.

**Beer Festivals Held Regularly**

**BIRMINGHAM CAMRA PUB  
OF THE YEAR 1996**

D.A.B now sold.



## FIRST BEER FESTIVAL

Monday 24th November to Sunday 30 November

**The Vaults, High Street/St Johns Close, Knowle**

Over 30 different beers available  
Food available lunchtime and early evening

Opening Hours: 12.00-3.00, 5.00-11.00

# solihull times

Non-members and guests are welcome to attend our branch meetings and social events. Branch meetings are held on the second Monday of each month and commence at 8.30pm. Beer & Balti nights are generally held on the last Friday of each month (Balti not compulsory!)

Mon 10 November	Branch AGM	Red Lion, Shirley (back room), start 8.00pm
Sat 22 November	Social	Walsall crawl jointly with Walsall CAMRA Meet at Newt & Cucumber (Bham) for 6.00pm, by train to Walsall, then: Rose & Crown (7.00), Tap & Spile (7.45), Littleton Arms (8.30), Katz (9.00)
Fri 28 November	Beer & Balti	Old Fox, Hurst Street, Birmingham 8.30pm
Mon 1 December	Committee Mtg	The Bird in Hand, Beaudesert 8.30pm
Mon 8 December	Branch Meeting	The Lyndon, Barn Lane, Olton 8.30pm
Sat 13 December	Social	Coach Trip to Nottingham jointly with Birmingham branch. Contact Keven for details
Mon 15 December	Social	Christmas Pub Crawl, Broad Street, Birmingham
1998		
Fri 2 January	Beer & Balti	Harvester, Tanhouse Farm Road, Olton 8.30pm. Note that for obvious reasons, this will not take place on 26 December!
Mon 12 January	Branch Meeting	Venue to be arranged. Contact either Keven or Ken (numbers below) for information closer to the date

**Keven Parker** is the branch social secretary and you can contact him during the evenings on 0121 706 0162.

The branch secretary is **Ken Jackson**, on 0121 705 8743