



Solihull
drinker



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

Issue No 3

Winter 1998

The Lion Roars Again

After a catalogue of closures and re-furbishments, the Golden Lion, in Warwick Road, Solihull town centre has once again reopened. Under the management duo of Stuart Williams and Richard Hounsell, the pub now sells at least two real ales, including Theakston's Best Bitter and a guest beer from Birmingham-based brewers Beowulf.

Phil Bennett, who founded the Beowulf brewery in Yardley a few years ago, has been instrumental in ensuring that the beers are kept in perfect condition, and on every visit to the Lion, our members have never been disappointed. Assistant manager Richard Hounsell first heard about Beowulf Brewery in an article in the *Solihull News*, which featured the Solihull CAMRA branch. Our publicity officer, Dave Hobbs, put Richard and Phil in touch with one another, and the result is there for everybody to see (and taste).

Sales of the Beowulf beers are very encouraging, and the Lion has taken beers from the whole range, beginning with



Heroes Bitter, and following it up with Squires Bitter, Grendal's Winter Ale and now Dragon's Smoke Stout. Mr Hounsell reports that the Beowulf products are

outselling most other brands, and so their future in the pub looks promising.

Following the removal of the guest beers from The Coach House and The Saddlers Arms during last year, The Golden Lion is now the only Solihull town centre pub which sells a guest ale, and is sadly a rare outlet for Phil Bennett's fine products in the Borough.

The Golden Lion makes a refreshing change from the poor variety and average quality of Real Ale which is generally available in the rest of the town centre. We hope people will support it, and wish Stuart and Richard every success.

Inside your Drinker: Eating out in Solihull Real Ale pubs.....page 10; and
how to ensure your customers get a full pint every time.....page 3

editor's round

A Happy New Year (belated, maybe) to all our readers! 1997 was an interesting year for Solihull CAMRA, with an unprecedented amount of coverage in local newspapers, thanks largely to the efforts of Dave Hobbs, our publicity officer. We also enjoyed a record number of social events and brewery visits, which culminated in our expedition to Munich and Prague in September. 1998 promises to be even better, and the first of Keven's brewery trips, to Archers in Swindon (along with Uley and the Brandycask), is recalled elsewhere in this issue. We encourage you to join CAMRA and become an active part of our Campaign, which continues to become more and more prominent throughout the Solihull Borough.

Sadly, 1997 passed by without another Solihull CAMRA Beer Festival. Holding a festival is still our principal way of spreading the word of the Campaign and allowing the citizens of Solihull to sample dozens of quality beers from across the country, all under one roof. Due to the lack of a suitable venue, we haven't been able to hold a festival since August 1996. We hope that our search for a venue will bear some fruit during the current year and that the 3rd Knowle (or Solihull, Shirley, Hampton, Olton.....) Festival might become a reality.

Welcome, meanwhile, to the 3rd edition of the *Solihull Drinker*. I am constantly trying to improve the Drinker and to increase its circulation within the Solihull area. It is currently available in

about 12 of our 88 pubs, which surely must be improved upon. If you have any suggestions as to how I can improve it still further, then don't be afraid to say.

I make no apologies for making a big issue of the re-opening of the Golden Lion this month, whilst relegating some other major national issues to inside pages. As I wrote in my last column, Solihull needs a traditional drinkers' pub in the town centre, and as far as CAMRA is concerned, the town centre needs a good guest beer outlet. Whilst the Lion was shut, we didn't have the former, and few a few months now, we haven't had the latter. Now we have both once again in the Golden Lion. I encourage you to support it.

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, 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. Try sending me a letter, too! We need a letters page. It would fill space. It would save me writing anything (apart from sarcastic responses). It would encourage discussion.

Contributors to this issue were Matthew Bullock (Editor), Steve Wood, Keven Parker, Allan Duffy, and Steve Dyson and CAMRA HQ

© Solihull CAMRA 1998

Short Measures – Victory in Sight?

A common sight behind pub bars these days is a notice which reads: "If you feel the head on your beer is too large, please ask for a top-up". Steve Wood explains the legislation which would make this sign unnecessary.

The notice mentioned above is a visible sign of CAMRA's pressure on breweries to sell full measures of beer, and could soon be replaced by the common-place sight of oversized glasses being used in pubs throughout the country.

This would be the result of an amendment to the Weights and Measures Act (1985) which will make it an offence to sell a pint containing less than 20 fluid ounces of liquid. The Act of 1985, however, was not the start of the story. Measurement of ale was obviously an issue in 975 AD, when King Edgar declared that all drinking vessels should be a standard size. (In those days, people drank beer from four-pint tankards, subdivided by visible pegs into 8 half pint measures. Although no-one was supposed to drink further than one peg at a sitting, it was

often taken as a challenge to drink more, and "take someone down a peg or two").

Ale measurement became law thereafter, and got a mention in the Magna Carta. Now we have the Weights and Measures Act, which has an interesting history of its own. Section 43 of the 1985 Act proposed originally to enforce full measures, but was never implemented, despite Tory promises during the 1993 election campaign. Sure enough, when the Tories were victorious in 1994, they withdrew Section 43 under pressure from the big brewers.

A year later, the Brewers Association issued guidelines stating that a pint should be at least 19 fluid ounces of liquid (ie 95% full), but that top-ups to 20 fluid ounces were not to be refused. Last year,

Wolverhampton MP Dennis Turner submitted a Private Members Bill to Parliament to reinstate Section 43, and it passed through the initial Parliamentary stages without opposition.

Providing Mr. Turner's Bill successfully negotiates the committee stages and the House of Lords, the law will be in place during the summer. Rather than risk prosecution for serving short measures, breweries and pub owners are likely to restock their outlets with oversized, lined glasses which allow for 20 fluid ounces of beer *and* a head. To their credit, some companies have already made the change, such as Banks's and J.D. Wetherspoons, joining, of course, all CAMRA festivals, who have had this policy for some years.

Load of Bull!

Customers at the Bulls Head, Earlswood, have raised a petition protesting at the proposed scheme by Allied Domecq Leisure to convert the pub from a *Big Steak* pub to a *Golden Oak* restaurant.

Over 500 people have signed the petition, whose organisers fear being driven out of the pub by diners. Work is due to start on the pub, which dates back to the 18th century, next month.

Allied Domecq have reportedly said that the Golden Oak con-

cept is designed to be sympathetic to historic buildings and that drinking areas would be retained.

Would this action not have been better several years ago when the pub was wrecked for the first time?

Warwickshire Brewery

Warwickshire Brewery, started by Phil Page in Kenilworth in December 1995, ceased trading at the end of last year.

Warwickshire had brewed a special beer for the 2nd Knowle Beer Festival in 1996, which was well received. The brewery will be sadly missed.



THE BULLS HEAD

BARSTON LANE, BARSTON, SOLIHULL
TEL: 01675 442830



VISIT OUR 17th CENTURY VILLAGE INN
MITCHELLS AND BUTLERS REAL ALES
REGULAR GUEST BEERS
Listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide 1998

HOME COOKED MEALS AVAILABLE
LUNCHTIMES AND EVENINGS
IN THE PLEASANT SURROUNDINGS OF THE PUB
OR IN OUR SEPARATE RESTAURANT
(No meals Sundays)
TELEPHONE RESERVATIONS WELCOME

Beer, beer, everywhere – and all of it to drink!

On Saturday 24th January, Solihull CAMRA and Birmingham CAMRA jointly ran a marathon beer expedition by coach to Wiltshire, our first social of the new year. Organiser Keven Parker recalls the day (or as much as possible).

We were on the road by 8am, our first destination being Archers Brewery in Swindon, for a 10.30am appointment. After a welcoming drink (!), head brewer Mark Archer Wallington showed us round. He was in the RAF for 13 years before becoming an accountant, and it was only after a tour of Ringwood brewery that he caught the brewing bug. Archer's Brewery was founded in 1979. Nineteen years on, his "little business to give him some pocket money" had moved to a purpose built site at a cost of £1.25m. The new building, opened in 1996, follows the traditional tower brewery format, with liquor tanks at the top and fermenters at the bottom, so that gravity does most of the work. After an interesting and entertaining tour, we were invited back to the tasting room to enjoy more *Village Bitter* (3.7%), *Best Bitter* (4.0%) and the superb *Golden* (4.7%). By noon we had adjourned to the Glue Pot in Swindon, one of three Archers tied houses, and where we could enjoy all the Archer's beers and a guest beer "*Bellringer*", brewed by the new Bath brewery.

Swindon is a town of two halves: the post-war New town which is a bit of a concrete jungle, and the Old

Town, which was built in Victorian times on the strength of its railway industry. An afternoon pub crawl of the Old Town led by some local CAMRA members revealed some interesting pubs, such as the *Wheatsheaf* (owned by *Wadworths of Devizes*) and the *Kings Arms Hotel* (*Arkells of Swindon*). The railway works closed in the early 1980s, and ever since Swindon has enjoyed a renaissance of new businesses, which has generated demand for new pubs. An example was the *Savoy*, a *Wetherspoons'* conversion of a cinema, where we enjoyed, amongst other things, *Harviestoun Burns Night Ale* and *haggis, neeps and tatties*.

The coach later moved on to *Uley Brewery* in the village of the same name in the Gloucestershire countryside. In sharp contrast to Archers, this small, rural brewery has only a few employees and owns no pubs. Their beers, however, the names of which mainly have a pig theme, may be found all over the district, and occasionally make it to the West Midlands on the guest beer market. There was *Best Bitter* (4.0%) and *Old Spot* (5.0%) for us to try; it was probably fortunate that we were out of season for

Pigor Mortis (6.0%). *Uley* was founded in 1985, but the brewery building, which like Archers is a tower brewery, dates from 1833. Space is at a premium, and the cellar area was only about 5ft high, requiring much stooping whilst trying not to spill any beer. After a brief tour and a hurried tasting, we visited *The Old Spot Inn* in nearby *Dursley*, to try some *Old Ric* (4.5%) in the company of "Old Ric" himself, who is the landlord.

Heading north again, we had a final appointment in *Pershore*, a small market town near *Evesham*. We headed for the *Brandy Cask* in the High Street, a superb half-timbered coaching inn sporting its own 5-barrel micro-brewery in the back yard. The more sober amongst us had a whistlestop tour of the brew house, whilst others supped the excellent golden, hoppy *Brandy Snapper* (4.0%), or went in search of food before the journey home up the M5.

Thanks must go to Mark Wallington at Archers, Chas at *Uley Brewery*, Spencer at the *Brandy Cask* and also John at Swindon CAMRA, (and of course Keven, who organised the whole lot), all of whom helped make the day an extremely enjoyable one.

in brief...

New look for Old Nag...

The Nags Head in Henley -in-Arden High Street has recently undergone a refurbishment at a cost of £175,000 and is now branded a "Tetley Festival Ale House". Licensees Paul and Annette Udall offer a choice of real ales, namely Ansells Mild and Bitter, and Tetley Bitter, with up to three guest beers, although at the time of my visit, none were available.

Nevertheless, this should be yet another pub in the Solihull area which serves guest beers, and we hope that this trend continues.

Committee posts

At Solihull CAMRA's recent AGM, elections were held for the posts on the branch's committee.

Those re-elected were Brenda Duffy (chairman), Ken Jackson (secretary), Keven Parker (social secretary), Dave Hobbs (publicity officer), and Andy Lyndon (clubs' liaison officer). Those elected were Malcolm Harry (treasurer), Steve Wood (pubs campaigning officer), Martin Willetts (membership secretary), and Matt Bullock (as editor of the *Solihull Drinker*).

Brian Queenborough continues to audit the branch's accounts.

Vaults Beer Festival

The beer festival held in the Vaults in Knowle last November was the first to be held in a Solihull CAMRA area pub for some years. Report by Allan Duffy.

It was scheduled for the week of November 24th-30th, but was unofficially extended after additional beers were ordered to make up for the huge amount drunk in the first few days, and some of these lasted well into the next week when 4 or more guest beers were on offer.

As tends to happen with most beer agencies, not all the beers ordered were delivered, but the range of ales available was even greater than the menu indicated. At least six were on at any one time, alongside the regular Tetley Bitter and Ansells Mild. Over 40 beers were served during the course of the festival, and whilst we did not try them all (I wish!), all those tasted were in excellent nick (if you'll forgive the pun).

What was my beer of the festival? Well, everybody has their favourite and we could go on all night. But my vote went to Kelham Island Pale Rider. Can we have some more please, Nick?

We would hope that the success of this venture might encourage other landlords to try something similar themselves. A Beer Festival in the centre of Solihull might be interesting. Indeed, the director of the Bank House Hotel has indicated to the *Solihull Drinker* that another festival at the Vaults is planned for this Summer.

In the meantime, we must congratulate Bob Cull and Nick Worrall at the Vaults, and we await the next festival eagerly.

Bernie's 200

Bernie's Real Ale Off Licence in Shirley, listed in the Good Beer Guide virtually since it opened in 1982, stocked 200 guest beers in 1997.

81 different breweries were represented, most being independent micros, from as far apart as the Isle of Skye, Orkney, Kent and South Devon.

Congratulations must go to Brian and Dave Queenborough for offering the best range of guest beers in Solihull, and we wish them every success for 1998.

1998 CAMRA Beer Festival in Solihull!

This, I am sure, would be music to the ears of readers of the Solihull Drinker. There's nothing more rewarding for any real ale enthusiast than the prospect of a beer festival in your local area. The Solihull branch has organised two festivals in the past, both held jointly with the Vaults in Knowle. They were outstanding successes where over 900 people drank 40 firkins, that's 2500 pints over 3 days, accompanied by a variety of entertainment's on both Friday and Saturday evenings. Beer festivals also give the branch a high profile in the local press helping to publicise any local campaigning issues and of course promote the distinctive styles and flavours

of traditional beer. They also help swell both branch and central CAMRA funds enabling us to run major national and local campaigns. Last, but definitely not least, they are enjoyable to work at and to drink at!

Unfortunately, the prospect of running a festival is and has always been precarious. The premises at the Vaults are unavailable due to its use by an exercise and fitness business. Other well-known venues are too expensive... maybe you know of, or have access to a suitable venue in the Solihull area. So, you ask, what is suitable? The ideal would be somewhere that is secure and available

from Tuesday to Sunday. A fire limit of between 300 - 400 is an indication of the size of venue needed. The beer is stillaged on scaffolding platforms and cannot be moved once set up, which is usually on the Tuesday. Kitchen, reception and an office with safe facilities would all be required - and all at a reasonable cost as we are a voluntary organisation!

If you can help in any way give Steve Dyson a call on 0121 603 8994 or speak to any local CAMRA member and help make a 1998 CAMRA Beer Festival a reality.

Steve Dyson

Hampton Wines

42 High Street, Hampton-in-Arden – telephone 01675 442305



Come and browse our extensive choice
Of wines, beers and spirits

Over 200 carefully selected wines in stock

Sale or return for parties etc.
Glass Hire

Case discounts for payment by cash/cheque

Bottle-conditioned beers now available

Opening Hours:

Mon-Thurs 11:30 – 1:30, 6:00 – 9:30, Fri/Sat 11:00 – 10:00, Sun 11:30 – 2:00, 7:00 – 10:00

SOLIHULL DRINKER PRIZE WORDSEARCH

WIN A SELECTION OF BOTTLE-CONDITIONED BEERS

Hidden in the wordsearch grid are the names of 42 beers. The names may appear vertically, horizontally or diagonally, and may be backwards. Find and highlight all 42 names, and then rearrange all the unhighlighted letters to form the names of two of the breweries whose beers appear in the list opposite. I know it sounds complicated, but there it is. Best of luck!



Completed entries with the names of the two breweries should be sent to the Editor at the address on page 2, along with the entrant's name and address to arrive no later than 1 May 1998.

Photocopies are acceptable. Should more than one correct entry be received, then the prize winner shall be determined by pulling one entry out of a hat. Once again, the Editor's decision shall be final, and the winner notified by carrier pigeon. The prize is a selection of six bottle-conditioned beers, the exact selection of which is at the discretion of the Editor and is subject to availability.

Only in exceptional circumstances will an alternative be offered.

The names of the following beers are hidden in the grid:

Ace of Spades	Gem	Mill Ale	Smuggler
Bat out of Hell	Gold	M'lud	Spectacular
Blencathra	Heroes	Normans Conquest	Stag
Bright	Hobgoblin	Old Gavel Bender	Swift
Bull	Landlord	Old Hooky	The Bishops Tipple
Bullion	Liberty	Old Peculier	Thunderstorm
County	London Pride	Old Tom	Wild
Eagle	Magus	Original AK	Winter Warmer
Easter Special	Master Brew	Pedigree	Yeomanry
Formidable Ale	Mayfly	Pews Porter	
Fyre	Menacing Dennis	Pride	

Congratulations to the winner of the wordsearch in Issue 2 who was **Dean Wilson, of Billesley, Birmingham**. As reported on page 3, the demise of Warwickshire Brewery meant that we had to offer Mr. Wilson an alternative prize. Many entries were received, some from as far away as Sheffield. Many thanks to all those who entered; I hope as many people take the trouble to enter this time.

The answer last time, by the way, was that the 20 letters left over spelt **Fuller, Smith and Turner**, who have appropriately just opened their first pub in Birmingham, the **Old Joint Stock**, opposite St Philips Cathedral in Temple Row West, and it is well worth a look.

There are no prizes for this one, but see for how many of the above beers you can name the brewery – without reference to the Good Beer Guide!

Are you aged under 26?

If so, you can benefit from CAMRA's latest recruitment scheme which was launched last month.

The scheme extends the £8 annual membership fee, previously only available to students, to anyone under 26. CAMRA sees the need to attract younger members to ensure the future success of the Campaign.

If you are under 26 and wish to join us, fill out the form on page 15, and benefit from CAMRA membership, which includes free or discounted entry to all CAMRA beer festivals, for just £8. It's a bargain!

Undercutting Supermarkets

National pub chain JD Wetherspoon has just had a month long promotion of selling major brands in its pubs at below supermarket prices.

Supermarkets have for a long time been accused of undercutting pubs prices, to the extent that most pub tenants claim that they could buy their beers more cheaply at Tescos than at the wholesale prices offered by their own breweries.

During January, Wetherspoons sold Theakston Best Bitter at £1.20 a pint, compared to an equivalent £1.42 to £1.60 at major supermarket chains; Courage Directors was sold at £1.39 a pint, compared to £1.55 at Sainsbury's, and both bottled Murphy's and Newcastle Brown Ale were sold also at cheaper rates.

Wetherspoon boss Tim Martin commented: "We take pride in trying to provide the best quality beers in Britain at the most reasonable prices. Who in their right mind would queue up in a supermarket and pay more to drink at home, when they could be spending less drinking in one of our excellent pubs?"

The biggest challenge for the industry as a whole will be to keep this competitive pricing policy all year round. Too many pubs are suffering through lack of custom purely because their prices cannot compete with the supermarket trade. Continue to use your local pubs before they disappear altogether!

Eating out in real ale pubs Part 1: Rowington and Lapworth

Sadly, the Editor's budget did not allow me to eat out in all these pubs on expenses (should that be any? -Ed). In fact, I have not eaten in all the pubs listed during the last month or so, as my own budget does not extend that far! However, I do drink in all of them, and I see the food being served to hungry customers, leaving me with the feeling of "I wish I hadn't already eaten tonight".

Anyway, for those of you looking for somewhere different to eat, you can be sure that you will also be able to sup a decent pint of real ale in any of the following pubs, which, incidentally, form a fairly neat circle on the map, enabling anyone with a car and a driver who likes soft drinks to visit them all in one night (but perhaps not eat in them all!).

The Punchbowl, Lapworth

This is a relatively new Banks's house, which is designed to look much older. This is a pub where you need to visit in groups of even numbers. The reason for this is that if you buy one main course, you get a second one for 99p. It is available every day except Sundays when full price applies, and tends to be very busy, especially on long summer evenings.

There is a blackboard menu offering a reasonable choice of food, and of course an excellent pint from the full Banks's range, including Camerons Strongarm and Marstons Pedigree. All in all, worth a visit, as two people can eat for as little as a fiver.

The Navigation, Lapworth

Renowned for its large portions, the "Nav" has recently been extended to cater for more diners. I recommend anyone with a healthy appetite to try the

large cod. Make sure you find a big table first, or the fish might hang off the end for passers-by to sample! For those with more exotic tastes, the specials board boasts some more unusual dishes, which tend to be a bit pricier. Again, it is popular in summer, as the garden adjoins the canal so you can moor up your barge and dine al fresco.

pricey. Worth trying for the beers alone, and only 15 mins walk from Lapworth station.

The Boot, Lapworth

Perhaps this is more of a special occasion place to eat, but the menu is certainly a cut above most pubs. Some quite exotic dishes are on offer if you want to splash out; for



The Navigation

Beers are very good (The Navigation was Solihull CAMRA pub of the Year in 1994-1996), with a choice of Draught Bass, M&B Brew XI, Highgate Dark and at least one guest beer, which is often an unusual choice but usually

example try a Malaysian Laksa starter followed by duck with sweetcorn soccotash. Not much change from £16 for that little number, and you may wish to bring a dictionary or a specialist cookbook to make more sense of the menu, but

the attentive staff are always willing to assist. Wash your meal down with Tetley Bitter or Wadworth 6X, or if you are lucky, a guest beer might be available.

The Fleur-de-Lys, Lowsonford

This is another canalside pub, popular in summer for its large outdoor eating area and playground. Part of the Wayside Inns chain, it offers traditional pub food from a standard menu, with good value blackboard specials. Look out for "pie of the day", which is invariably tasty, but the crust on the pie is far bigger than the head on the beer!

Whitbread's Flowers IPA and Original are on offer, often with an unusual guest beer, but always priced at over £2.00 a pint.

The Tom O'The Wood, Rowington

This pub has changed hands



The Tom O'The Wood

in recent months, and both food and beer menus have changed as a result. There is now a larger area of the bar set aside for meals, but I have not tried it out for a month or so. It tends to offer special deals for Monday nights and reduced prices for pensioners.

The beers are from Whitbread's permitted range: Boddingtons Bitter and Wadworth 6X feature regularly, as does Boddingtons Mild, which is rare in the Midlands.

I think the five pubs listed are your best bet in the Lapworth and Rowington area for both good food and good ale.

In the next issue, I hope to develop this idea further with a feature on the pubs of Knowle and Dorridge, that is if my budget (hint, hint, Mr. Editor) and waistline will allow.

Report by Allan Duffy

Editor's note: the special offers and deals Allan mentions were correct at the time of writing, but are likely to change at short notice. Check with the pub beforehand to ensure they are still valid. As for the budget – sorry, "Egon", no can do!

LOCAL CAMRA CONTACTS

For information on CAMRA and details of local branch activities, contact one of the following:

Birmingham	Robert Walker	0121 478 1653
Coventry	Paul Hamblett	01203 417675
Heart of Warwickshire	John Crossling	01926 613256
Redditch & Bromsgrove	Paul Long	01527 450016
Shakespeare	Vaughan Hully	01789 778726
Solihull	Keven Parker	0121 706 0162



If you have any complaints about short measures, call the trading standards hotline on 0800 413381, which, unlike the short measure, won't cost you a penny.

BERNIES

REAL ALES



- AN EVER CHANGING SCENE OF EXCITING DRAUGHT BEERS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR
- 200 DIFFERENT BEERS DURING 1997
- CAMRA GOOD BEER GUIDE LISTED CONTINUOUSLY SINCE 1983
- PARTY BEER BARRELS AVAILABLE FOR ANY OCCASION!
- SALE OR RETURN ON SEALED GOODS
- EXCITING RANGE OF BOTTLED BEERS

THE OFF LICENCE THAT IS REFRESHINGLY DIFFERENT
SERVING HUNDREDS OF DRAUGHT REAL ALES FROM
NATIONAL AND MICRO-BREWERIES FROM THROUGHOUT
THE UK

VISIT OUR WEB SITE:

<http://www.yell.co.uk/sites/real-ale-at-bernies/>

OPENING TIMES	MON 5.30-10.00	TUE-FRI 12.00-2.00 5.30-10.00	SAT 11.00-3.00 5.00-10.00	SUN 12.00-2.00 7.00-9.45
------------------	-------------------	-------------------------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------------

PAY BY
CREDIT CARD



266 CRANMORE BOULEVARD SHIRLEY SOLIHULL 0121-744 2827

Forest Presentation



Branch Chairman Brenda Duffy presents Forest manager Alan Bennett with a commemorative certificate after Solihull CAMRA voted it The Most Improved Pub in 1997.

Brewer loses tax battle

Kent brewers Shepherd Neame has lost the first round in its fight against Chancellor Gordon Brown's penny-a-pint tax rise on beer after two High Court judges refused to allow the issue to be referred to the European Court of Justice.

Shepherd Neame had wanted the Government decision to raise excise duty declared in breach of European Law, which requires member states to harmonise duties across the European Union.

Shepherd Neame, who are based in Faversham and own 390 pubs, mainly in Kent and the South-East, claim that the increase in duty coupled with the cheap beer readily available in France, has drastically diminished its sales.

Company vice-chairman Stuart Neame said the result of the Chancellor's decision would be that "hundreds, if not thousands, of pubs could be closed".

The company's proximity to the Channel ports has meant that the smuggling of cheap beers and wines from France has hit it particularly badly, although other brewers throughout the country are suffering too. The company launched its legal action in the High Court last year, claiming the Government's actions were "a threat to British beer".

Chancellor Gordon Brown had decided in his budget last July to impose an increase of 3% on excise duty for beer from January 1.

Shepherd Neame are considering an appeal, and naturally have the full support of CAMRA.

in brief...

Villagers win sign battle

The Harvester Restaurant chain, owned by Bass, has finally agreed to remove the bright green and yellow sign from the Engine, at Hampton -in-Arden, which had angered residents in the village after it was erected without planning permission. Solihull Council rejected Harvester's appeal against the initial decision, and the company has agreed to remove the sign and replace it with a more traditional one.

A Spokesman for the Hampton-in-Arden Society welcomed the news, but said they would continue to fight to protect other parts of the pub which are said to be under threat.

Season's Greetings?

Any lucky Shirley resident who received a Christmas Card from Bass Taverns last year, may have recognised the pub on the front. Of its 2000 pubs, the company chose the Woodmans Rest in Union Road for the picture on the official card. It's a pity that the "picturesque" quality of its exterior is not matched by the interior - it's many years since the bar has been graced by a hand pump or two.



solihull news

Welcome news as reported elsewhere is the re-opening of the Golden Lion in Solihull town centre, and we wish the licensees every success. The Nags Head in Henley has also reopened after its refurbishment; the latest pub to close for a re-fit is the Greville Arms, on Cornyx Lane. This pub did not serve any real ale previously: will it now?

The Colebrook on Haslucks Green Road certainly doesn't any more. The Draught Bass has apparently been replaced by Worthington "Creamflow", allegedly at the request of customers. Obviously the £2.99 steaks do nothing for your taste buds. Better news down the road at the Lodge, on Yardley Wood Road, where a new licensee has boosted trade significantly, sufficient enough to add another real ale to the much depleted range: Marston's Pedigree is now available alongside Ansell's Mild and Tetley Bitter. The Bulls Head in Earlswood is also a *Big Steak* pub, and also has a new manager, who informs me that he is the fourth at the pub within a year. They seem to get through more managers than WBA!

On the guest beer front, recent sightings made known to me have included Lichfield Mincespired and Morland Old Speckled Hen at the White

Swan in Henley; Theakstons Old Peculier, Burton Bridge Festival Ale, Judges Old Gavel Bender and Everards Old Original at the Harvester in Olton (a nice light selection there); The Lyndon in Olton is rare in that it continues to stock Tapsters Choice guest ales, Allsops Game Keeper (4.5%) being noted; whilst Beowulf beers continue to impress at the Golden Lion, the Stout being the latest.

The Railway at Dorridge has three guest beers on a regular basis now, unusual sightings there being Highgate Porter and Crown Buckley Reverend James Bitter, whilst the Forest has enjoyed Church End "What the Fox's Hat", suitably shortened for the guest beer blackboard. Perhaps more surprisingly, the Crabmill at Preston Bagot has been stocking Fullers London Pride, which also features quite regularly at the Bulls Head in Barston.

The success of the Vaults beer festival led to some unusual guest beers being available in the pub for a few days after the festival; Jennings Cumberland Ale was noted (and tasted, and tasted again!). The festival was a great success and we strongly advise you not to miss the next.

Those of you who drink in J.D. Wetherspoons pubs (such as the Square Peg or

the Figure of Eight in Birmingham) will have noticed that the chain now serves all its beers in lined, oversized glasses. This is to ensure the customer gets a full pint of liquid as well as a head on the beer. Where in Solihull can you find lined glasses? We believe that most Banks's pubs use them, such as the Coach House and the Punchbowl, and somebody tells me that the Dallas Exchange uses them, but I cannot confirm this. Does anybody else? If you serve or are served beer in a lined glass in Solihull, please let us know.

One "Banks's" pub which does not use lined glasses is the Bird in Hand at Beaudesert, although this is strictly a free house which sells Banks's Beers. The Bird in Hand must have the coldest cellar in the region, for the beers emerge from the handpumps (when they're not frozen up) at about minus 15 degrees Celsius or thereabouts. Do not hold the pint for too long or your hand will freeze to the glass. This is one serious ice beer! If you prefer your beer at a more drinkable temperature, ask the bar staff to put it in the fridge for a while to warm up, or leave it in the car park for an hour. I hope Banks's never try to sell a Winter Warmer here.

JOIN CAMRA NOW

Just fill in this form and send with a cheque (made payable to CAMRA Ltd) to:
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. I enclose a cheque for £.....

Signature(s):.....

Date:.....



The Anchor Inn

Friday 27th February - Sunday 1st March
**CHURCH END WEEKEND
 BEER FESTIVAL**

previously B'ham CAMRA Pub of the Year

Selection of Beers & Ales to include:

ANCHOR BUTTER
 STOUT COFFIN
 MILD QUAKER
 JUMPING JUNIPER
 CLOVES + CUTHBERTS
 WHAT THE FOX'S HAT
 WHEAT-A-BIX
 GRAVEDIGGERS ALE
 VICARS RUIN, OLD PAL
 PEWS PORTER, DAMSON BEER
 REST IN PEACE, CUTHBERTS, SHREDDIES.



*The Complete Range of Church End Beers + 8 Blended Beers
 34 Beers in Total from one micro brewery!
 Imported Bottled Beers*

Full Range of Hot Meals & Bar Snacks Available

308 Bradford Street • Digbeth • Birmingham B5 6ET • Tel: 0121 622 4519

The White Swan Hotel



100 High Street, Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire B95 5BY

14th Century Coaching Inn offering en-suite accommodation
 located in the centre of this picturesque market town.
 Changing range of guest beers – Good Value Food
 Live Jazz Wednesdays – Quiz Night every Thursday
 Listed in the Good Beer Guide 1997 and 1998

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 and Balti nights are generally held on the last Friday of each month – if you don't like Indian food, just come along for the beers.

Saturday 21 February	Social	Stourbridge Beer Festival and pub crawl, by train. 17.34 from Solihull, 17.22 from Shirley.
Friday 27 February	Beer & Balti	Old Joint Stock, Birmingham 8.00pm
Monday 9 March	Branch Mtg	Griffin, Shustoke 8.30pm. Voting for the 1999 Good Beer Guide. All members please attend!
Saturday 21 March	Social	Pub crawl of Henley-in-Arden, meet White Swan 8.00pm
Friday 27 March	Beer & Balti	Red Lion, Shirley 8.00pm
Monday 6 April	Branch Mtg	Golden Lion, Solihull 8.30pm
Date t.b.c. in April	Social	Visit to Coventry Beer Festival.
Friday 24 April	Beer & Balti	Vaults, Knowle 8.00pm

Keven Parker is the branch's Social Secretary and you can contact him for information about events during the evenings on 0121 706 0162.

Ken Jackson is the Branch Secretary on 0121 705 8743

Contact the **Editor** on 0121 430 4792

The 4th edition of the *Solihull Drinker* will be published on 11 May 1998.

The deadline for advertising or contributions will therefore be

Saturday 2 May 1988