



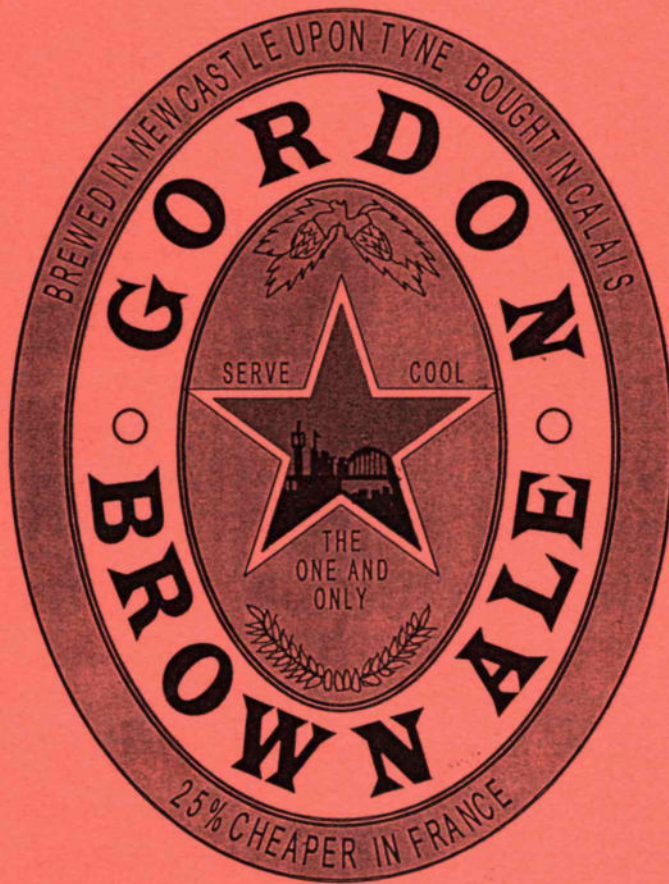
solihull
drinker



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

Issue No 4

Spring 1998



Inside this issue: Gordon Brown, Tony Blair, Cherie Blair, Greville Arms,
Bulls Head, Bulls Head, even more Bull, Ford Fiesta v TVR

Editor's Round.....

Somebody asked me the other day: "I understand that they are different, but what makes Real Ale so much better than Caffrey's?" Well, what does?

Well, consider a keg beer to be a Ford Fiesta. For a start, like the ubiquitous Ford, there are a lot of them about. Ford Fiestas, like keg beers, are functional, and are pretty much the same wherever you go; one Ford Fiesta is much the same as another. The average man in the street is generally quite satisfied with the product, often because he knows nothing else, and you are quite prepared to be happy with it too, because most of your mates are. And even when they try to produce a more potent version to tempt the younger, image-conscious consumer, the result is equally, if not more, sad.

So if keg beer is a Ford Fiesta, then Real Ale is a TVR. A TVR is a much more beautiful object than a Fiesta, a greater performer, a provider of infinitely more

pleasure, with sometimes the odd surprise. A TVR oozes quality and hand craftsmanship, and is a celebration of the imagination and skill of its creator. True enough, some mornings it may be reluctant to start, and the roof might leak a little in the rain, but when it does go, and is on top form, there can be few better experiences. And although there are more around than you might think, it is extremely rare to find two exactly the same.

Or maybe Real Ale is the Church of the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, built by Antoni Gaudi. Now there's a true piece of craftsmanship if ever there was one. It is a unique place: every visit gives one different perspectives, different experiences, different thoughts, and a general feeling of awe and wonder. Gaudi spent much of his life personally overseeing its creation, to ensure the finished product was second to none. If this is Real Ale, then keg beer is an MFI store in Basingstoke. Or High Wycombe, or Basildon. In fact, it could be anywhere.

Keg beers, like MFI stores, (and Ford Fiestas), differ very little from place to place, or from brand to brand, or from pub to pub. Real Ale, on the other hand, like the work Signor Gaudi, is rather more interesting and demanding, and is the unique product of hours of painstaking work by a skilful creator.

But there is a curious discrepancy with my comparison. Buying a TVR will generally set you back more money than buying a Ford Fiesta, and to build a Sagrada Familia for yourself would cost substantially more than the cost of an MFI. However, a pint of Real Ale will usually cost you less than your pint of Caffreys, Carling Black Label or Worthington Creamflow or any other keg beer you choose to name. And yet you're getting a far superior product, a Sagrada Familia instead of a shed, or a TVR instead of .er...a shed; a pint with taste and character instead of bland, run-of-the-mill ordinaryness. Take your pick.

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 £20. The Editor reserves the right to amend or shorten any contributions for inclusion in the Solihull Drinker.

Contributors to this issue were Matthew Bullock (Editor), Dave Hobbis, Ken Jackson, Steve Wood, Ian Hunter, Allan Duffy and CAMRA HQ

© Solihull CAMRA 1998

Mule Britannia...

In what can only be described as an act of gross stupidity, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has once more raised tax on beer. Ken Jackson outlines why the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, is a complete ass.

In his St Patrick's Day budget, Mr. Brown raised the duty on beer by 1p per pint, which will have a devastating effect on Britain's pubs and breweries. Some 900,000 people are employed, directly or indirectly, in the pub or brewing industry in this country, but since it is now much cheaper to buy beer (legally) on the continent and import it to Britain. Many pubs cannot compete with cheap imports, and are having to close down. Every penny in tax rise on a pint increases unemployment and therefore contributes directly to inflation.

The bootlegging trade is big business, with over £20m a year being spent on alcohol in the French Channel ports. Over 13% of all beer brewed in France is now exported or smuggled over the Channel. When you consider just how poor most French beer really is, this figure is quite amazing, but will only increase until the level of duty in Britain is reduced to

the level it is in France, i.e. about one sixth the British rate. Bootlegging would then become unprofitable, and beer would once again be purchased in Britain.

Not convinced? Then try this. The best evidence has been provided by Oxford Economic Forecasting. They have used the Treasury's own economic model to show that a 20% cut in beer duty would result in a positive contribution to the Treasury within three years, (the French Government is currently the major beneficiary). The present policy is actually costing our Government money.

The Chancellor's beer tax policy is expensive, irresponsible, nonsensical and contrary to European Law. Next time you go to the bar, one third of the price of your pint will be confiscated by the tax man before you've even had a sip. Yet if your beer was 20p a pint cheaper, the tax man would make even more money. But it isn't. This is why Gordon Brown is an ass.

No Full Pints?

Labour MP Dennis Turner's full pints bill was sunk by a lone Tory objector in the House of Commons last week.

The Bill reached the report stage in the Commons on 24 April. Under Parliamentary rules, one shout of "object" from any member would have been enough to scupper the Bill, and sure enough, it happened. However, Consumer Affairs Minister Nigel Griffiths is committed to the full pint cause, and it is likely that the Bill will be taken up by the Government in the near future.

Cherie and Shep's must wait

Kent brewer Shepherd Neame is facing a wait of up to two years in its legal challenge to the Government's failure to harmonise beer duties with other European Union countries.

Represented by Prime Minister's wife Cherie Booth QC, Shepherd Neame last month won leave to appeal against the High Court's refusal to allow it to pursue its case further. Due to its location, Shepherd Neame has suffered more than most from cheap beer imports from the Continent.

The High Court had ruled that the Government was entitled to set taxation rates, but this decision was overturned when Ms. Booth persuaded the Appeal Court the matter was of constitutional significance.

Shepherd Neame is now hoping for an appeal within the next few months, but it may face a two year wait if the matter has to go to the European Court. Shepherd Neame has industry-wide backing for its stand against duty increases, and CAMRA also campaigns for a reduction in beer duty to the European median rate.

Shepherd Neame, who celebrate their 300th anniversary this year, will fight on: lobby your local MP to show your support, and in the process help Britain's brewing industry.

New look Greville

The Greville Arms on Cornyx Lane re-opened in February after an extensive refurbishment. Bass Taverns obviously felt there was room for improvement, as they spent £600,000 on the pub, which was closed for three months over the Christmas and New Year period.

The resulting conversion of the bar and lounge into one room means that yet another public bar has been lost. On the positive side, however, the pub now has 2 hand pumps for the M&B Mild and the Draught Bass. The Brew XI is unfortunately now keg.

Branch members who have been there since the re opening were impressed by the quality and the flavour of the Mild (which is now contract brewed by Highgate). The Bass, however, was not quite so well recommended, but was generally quite adequate.

One concern of the branch was the prevalence of short measures, although top-ups were always given when requested.

Overall, it was felt that the pub has made a bid to widen its appeal by offering more comfortable surroundings and by serving more food. It would be nice if it could offer a wider choice of ales as well – for example, one of the other Highgate beers would be a welcome addition to the range.

Steve Wood

Warwickshire Breweries Week

Warwickshire Breweries Week this year will run from 4-11th July to coincide with CAMRA's national Independents week.

Beers from the four Warwickshire breweries, Church End, Judges, Fat God and the new Millwrights Brewery in Warwick, will be available in selected pubs throughout the county during this week.

Solihull pubs which are taking part will be the Vaults in Knowle, The White Swan in Henley, The Navigation at Lapworth and the Bulls Head in Barston. Visit these pubs in July and sample some of your local brews.

Nags promise...

The Nags Head in Henley-in-Arden, now a festival ale house, has the following sign on the wall in the bar:

"We pride ourselves on the excellent quality of our cask conditioned ales. We guarantee if you are not entirely satisfied, we will exchange your ale for another AND refund your money."

In our visits to the pub, the beer has been in good condition, but surely this sort of system, laudable though it is, must be open to some abuse. If anybody has had cause to test out the claim, we would love to know how you got on!

Punch up in Solihull

Punch Taverns have recently spent £564m to take control of 1,420 tenanted pubs from Bass.

Amongst the pubs sold are some well known Solihull pubs such as The Railway at Dorridge and The Bulls Head at Barston, and at present it is unclear what the company policy will be regarding guest beers.

Punch Taverns is owned by Hugh Osmond, a founder of Pizza Express, and Roger Myers, who created the Café Rouge chain before selling out to Whitbread, and they hope to float the company on the stock market soon.

Osmond and Myers, together with former Bass executive Peter Thomas, have high hopes for the new company.

"We see ourselves becoming the Marks & Spencer of the pub trade", said Osmond. (!)

The company has a fair mix of pubs, with back street boozers, country inns and estate pubs, and tenants will be offered more secure leases and will be encouraged to back refurbishments, better food, and "more profitable beers".

Quite what the latter comment means for the guest beers offered in the two pubs mentioned above in still unclear; as long as they continue to sell well, I presume that they will continue to be stocked under the new regime.

Enterprise Inns Expands

Shirley-based pub group Enterprise Inns purchased Salisbury brewers Gibbs Mew in February along with that company's 310 pubs. Enterprise Inns is now the UK's largest independent pub owning company, with over 1,500 pubs, and has a stock market value of over £200m. It has since closed the brewery in Salisbury, and the beers are now brewed by Ushers of Trowbridge.

About half of the pubs owned are on 21 year leases and the other half are tenanted. However, Enterprise has announced that it is to sell off about 140 of the poorer-performing pubs in its estate, approximately 30 of which are from those recently acquired.

Current Enterprise pubs are supplied by all the major breweries and certain Regionals such as Banks's, but since the group no longer owns a brewery, licensees have no automatic rights to stock guest beer. Licensees are currently not allowed to buy from outside the company.

Enterprise has also sold Gibbs Mew's distribution business to The Beer Seller, and will move all Gibbs operations to Shirley in June with the loss of about 30 jobs.

The future of the Gibbs Mew beer brands appears to be in the balance. A recent visit by myself to Salisbury revealed that the range offered in most

Gibbs (now Enterprise, of course) pubs was much depleted. Conversations with a couple of licensees revealed that since the takeover, Gibbs Mew brands had become increasingly difficult to buy, and that only Bass and Whitbread had been knocking at their doors ever since.

Enterprise Inns says it is planning on "maximising the brand value" of Gibbs Mew beers, which could mean almost anything, although Enterprise boss Ted Tuppen said they would not be available in most of his company's pubs.

Mr Tuppen also envisages a big change in the way beers are distributed amongst pub chains, and foresees a time when all companies will have to distribute exactly what the retailer requires, even if this means distributing rival companies' brands.

The trouble is with all these new pub companies is that all they know about brewing is

from the delivery side. They know very little about production and have no loyalty to any particular brand of beer or even type of beer.

That's good news if they are prepared to use a supplier with lots of cask brands, but bad news if not. Mr Tuppen cannot have failed to notice the success of cask ale specialists such as Wetherspoons or Hogshead. Unfortunately, however, his right hand man is Hubert Reid.

Mr Reid used to be on the board of Boddingtons, and we all know what a disaster it has been at promoting and protecting cask beer. As far as the Gibbs Mew beers are concerned, the future looks bleak. Mr Tuppen has stated that very few of his pubs will stock them. Keep an eye on any Gibbs pubs to see that "maximising the brand value" also means "maximising the brand taste" and "ensuring the brand's survival".

Matt Bullock

Whitbread Tour of Destruction continues

Castle Eden and Cheltenham breweries are next on the closure hit-list of giant Whitbreads. They currently have too much excess capacity at Boddingtons in Manchester, and intend to transfer all cask ale to the Strangeways Brewery.

Castle Eden is in the constituency of Prime Minister Tony Blair, who, only two years ago, visited the brewery and described the pint of Castle

Eden Ale he downed as "a very nice beer".

Cheltenham brewery brews the well-known Flowers beers,

originally brewed in Stratford, and which are found quite widely in Solihull. CAMRA is of course pressurising Whitbread to change its plans.



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

The Bulls Head, Barston

If I had to choose a pub to visit in the Solihull area that would guarantee me a warm welcome and a well kept pint there could only be one candidate.

The Bulls Head, in the village of Barston, only a few miles from the centre of Solihull, has been my "local" for the past 13 years. Although I have never actually lived in the village, having a friend living only two doors along from the pub meant it was a regular weekend haunt for both of us for many years.

For the last ten or so years, the pub's licensee has been Martin Bradley, known as "Brad" to his friends and customers, and during this time he has turned it into one of the best beer pubs in the Borough. In recent years, the Bulls Head has been an ever-present entry in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide. Although Brad has been in the trade for more than 30 years, he originally trained as an accountant with Rolls Royce in Coventry, before being called to the bar. His career locally began in the Wayfarer in Hockley Heath (now the Nags Head), and via a spell as a relief manager at the Wilson's Arms in Knowle, he arrived at the Bulls Head.



For many years now, Brad has served well kept pints of Draught Bass and Brew XI at the Bulls Head, and it was on the strength of this that the pub first entered the Good Beer Guide. (This I hope proves that Solihull CAMRA's GBG entries do not necessarily have to serve unusual independent guest beers).

A couple of years ago, Brad added Tetley Bitter to the range; an unusual choice for a guest beer, but a well known name which helped sell the beer to some of the more sceptical drinkers who had grown accustomed to drinking the regular beers. Once the change became accepted, the range was gradually expanded. As a result, the Bulls Head is now able to offer two independent guest beers at a time from a wide range of breweries.

Since the introduction of guests, Brad has served up brews from Fullers, Judges, Cottage, Hook Norton, Goff's and Kimberley, to mention just a few. The pub is one of the few in Solihull which serves more beer than lager, and the turnover of guest beers is huge, often six firkins (432 pints) per week. This throughput ensures the beer is always of the highest quality. And what is Brad's advice for serving a consistently good pint? "Keep the pipes clean, and tap and vent the cask well in advance of serving", he confides.

I make no apology for viewing this pub through "rose-tinted spectacles"; to me, this is what any pub ought to be. The staff are helpful and welcoming, and the landlord is always willing to pass the time of day with customers, especially when the topic of conversation involves his two other passions, horse racing and cricket! It treats drinkers as importantly as diners (by all accounts, the food is excellent), and is the focus of village life. It is impossible to understate the important role pubs such as this play in rural communities throughout Britain, a fact that some of the larger breweries seem inclined to ignore.

Dave Hobbis

Any other readers or branch members are most welcome to write a feature about their own favourite Solihull pub. Please send all information to the Editor.

SOLIHULL DRINKER PRIZE WORDSEARCH

Sponsored by Hampton Wines, 42 High Street, Hampton-in-Arden

WIN A SELECTION OF BOTTLE-CONDITIONED BEERS

Hidden in the wordsearch grid are the names of 12 popular beers and also the names of 11 of the breweries who produce them. One brewery is missing. Which one?



Completed entries with the name of the missing brewery 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 August 1998. Photocopies are acceptable. Should more than one correct entry be received, the prize winner shall be determined by drawing one entry from a hat. As usual, the Editor's decision will be final etc etc etc. The prize will be a selection of six bottle-conditioned beers, the exact selection of which is at the discretion of Hampton Wines and is subject to availability. Only in exceptional circumstances will an alternative be offered.

The winner of the last issue's wordsearch was Mr. D. Hobbis, of Olton, who wins six assorted bottles of bottle-conditioned ale. The correct answer was that the remaining letters spelt **SUMMERSKILLS** and **SHEPHERD NEAME**. Many thanks to all those who entered.

Multilingual marketing.....

Everybody remembers a good advert. Of all the breweries selling beer in Britain, Guinness has probably run the most memorable TV and poster advertising campaign, and has achieved worldwide success. Some companies, however, find it more difficult to market their products overseas, as the examples below will testify.

- Coors put its slogan "Turn it Loose" into Spanish, where it was read as, "Suffer from diarrhea".
- Scandanavian vacuum manufacturer Electrolux used the following in an American campaign: "Nothing sucks like an Electrolux".
- When Gerber started selling baby food in Africa they used the same packaging as for the US market with the beautiful Caucasian baby on the label. Later they discovered that since many Africans cannot read, companies routinely put pictures on the label of what's inside.
- An American T-shirt maker in Miami printed shirts for the Spanish market to promote the Pope's visit. Unfortunately, instead of "I saw the Pope" (el Papa), the shirts read "I saw the potato (la Papa).
- Pepsi's "Come alive with the Pepsi Generation" slogan translated into Chinese as "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave"!
- Frank Perdue's chicken slogan, "It takes a strong man to make a tender chicken" was translated into Spanish as "It takes an aroused man to make a chicken affectionate".
- When Parker Pen marketed a ball point in Mexico, its ads were supposed to have read, "It won't leak in your pocket and embarrass you". Instead, the company thought the word "embarazar" (to impregnate) meant to embarrass, so the ad read: "It won't leak in your pocket and make you pregnant".
- The Coca-Cola name in Chinese was first read as "Ke-kou-ke-la", meaning "Bite the wax tadpole" or "female horse stuffed with wax" depending on the dialect. Coke then researched 40,000 characters to find a phonetic equivalent "ko-kou-ko-le", translating as "happiness in the mouth".

Ian Hunter

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

Eating out in Real Ale Pubs Part 2: Knowle

Following on from the last issue in which he looked at pubs in Rowington and Lapworth, this time Allan Duffy turns his attention to Knowle, to find out which places serve good food and a decent pint of ale.

Black Boy

Amazingly, when we called in at 7pm on a Saturday evening, the whole place was jam packed, mainly with people eating or waiting for a table. We did not actually eat there this time, but judging by some of the platefuls coming out of the kitchen, it is still a favourite for those with big appetites, and possibly expanding waistlines!

The menu is mainly traditional pub food, but there are daily specials. However, these are not at special prices, except at lunchtimes midweek. One useful feature is the blackboard which shows approximate waiting times for meals.

On the beer front, the pub boasts its own brew – Black Boy Bitter – which is served on handpump and is brewed by the Red Cross brewery of Bromsgrove. This is the only outlet in the Solihull CAMRA area for Red Cross beers and it was in excellent condition when we called. The Draught Bass and M&B Mild are also real but are served through electric pumps.

Here are two tips for those who have not visited before: get there early and take a doggy bag!

Greswolde Arms

A large hotel on the High Street, the Greswolde offers an interesting combination of four or more good real ales and an excellent restaurant. This offers both A La Carte and Table d'Hote menus to suit all tastes, but perhaps not all pockets. To be fair, I see it as somewhere to go on a special occasion – usually the wife's birthday. So if you want to celebrate something, go along and enjoy a top quality meal but make sure you bring your credit cards.

Whilst the restaurant is separate, real ale can be brought through from the adjoining bar for those who prefer it, or for those hoping to keep the bill down.

Victorian Vaults

Formerly "The Venue" nightclub adjoining the Vaults pub, this traditionally refurbished restaurant is a further addition to the extensive selection of menus available in Knowle village. Specialising in roasts from the Carvery, the Victorian Vaults also offers a selection of steaks and the usual pub fare.

Whilst the restaurant only sells keg beers, the more

discerning customers will have a pint or two in the Vaults first. You can also ask the helpful restaurant staff, who are part of the same management team as the Vaults, to bring your beer order through from the bar.

For those who eat before 7pm, the carvery is only £5 and should be enough for the largest of appetites.

Wilson's Arms

A standard Toby Inns menu, served in a pleasant setting. Now that the Draught Bass handpumps have reappeared in both the bar and restaurant, it is worth giving it a try, especially if you take advantage of the early evening special deals. These are widely advertised, and usually involve soup and a carvery for around £5.95.

I have to admit that the only time I have used the Wilson's Arms in the last year or so has been as a short cut through the car park to avoid that difficult right turn into the High Street! Now that the Draught Bass is back, I might park the car and try the food once again.

Allan Duffy

THE VAULTS

SUMMER BEER FESTIVAL

Friday 3rd July to Sunday 12th July

The Vaults, High Street/St John's Close, Knowle

★ Over 30 Beers available ★

Food available lunchtime and early evening

Opening hours 12.00 – 3.00, 5.00 – 11.00

LOCAL CAMRA CONTACTS

For information about CAMRA or details of your local branch's activities, contact one of the following:

Birmingham	Robert Walker	0121 478 1653
Coventry	Paul Hamblett	01203 417675
Dudley & South Staffs	Steve Amos	01384 252266
Heart of Warwickshire	John Crossling	01926 613256
Kidderminster	Richard Lycett	01562 861951
Lichfield & Mid Staffs	Ray Jennett	01543 255195
Redditch & Bromsgrove	Paul Long	0121 622 3114
Shakespeare	Vaughan Hully	01789 778726
Solihull & District	Keven Parker	0121 706 0162
Stourbridge	Patrick Bird	0121 422 5394
Tamworth & Sutton	Gary Clay	01785 353531
Telford & E Shropshire	Paula Waters	01952 641549
Walsall	Rob Bentley	01922 861626
Wolverhampton	Fred Morton	01902 426513



If you have any complaints about short measures, call Solihull Trading Standards on 0121 704 6844



NEW LOOK BULLS HEAD

The Bulls Head in Lime Kiln Lane, Earlswood, reopened in early April after a complete refurbishment and conversion of the pub into the first "Golden Oak Inn" in the Solihull area.

The pub dates from 1740, when the buildings were constructed as a group of houses which became a pub at a later date.

The Bulls Head was once a multi-roomed pub, with an unusual high tiled bar in one room, but the owners, Allied Domecq, gave it the *Big Steak Pub* treatment a few years ago and destroyed the whole character of the pub.

Allied-Domecq is keen to promote its new chain of Golden Oak Inns, which are intended as family-orientate restaurants, but when the Bulls Head was chosen for conversion, it sparked a large protest from the pub's regular drinkers. As reported in the last issue of the Solihull Drinker, they feared that they might be forced to drink elsewhere if their local became just another restaurant, and over 500 people signed a petition

to try and persuade Allied-Domecq to think again.

The pub reopened on 1 April in its new guise, which really involved just a new coat of paint (the interior seems much brighter than before) and a few internal alterations in the public areas. The effect of creating a country pub ambience is reasonably successful, although naturally the assembled pictures and bric-a-brac look less than convincing.

Nevertheless, the pub offers three real ales, these being Tetley Bitter, Morland Old Speckled Hen and a guest beer from Allsops, called St. Modwen (4.7%), which, it has to be said, was very pleasant, even if the beer is served (or was when I visited) in short measures in brim glasses. The food menu looks imaginative and reasonably priced, so I'm sure the pub will prove to be popular.

in brief....

Mindless Vandalism

Spare a thought for all those poor CAMRA branches whose area includes a Sam Smith's pub.

Samuel Smith's were once considered to be staunchly traditional Yorkshire brewers, who brewed classic beers in Yorkshire stone squares, and served them from wooden casks in traditional pubs.

Not any more. As Sam Smiths extends its tied estate in the south east, many long-standing real ale gems are being converted by Smiths into keg emporiums where the art of good conversation is lost to the intrusive piped music and Sega Rally games.

Classic London pubs such as the Chandos, the Cittie of York and the Olde Cheshire Cheese have been systematically ruined, and yet the tour of destruction goes on.

Let's face it, Sam Smiths is crap. How can a brewery which is supposed to be so proud of its heritage cause so much damage to some of London's great landmark pubs, whilst pushing keg beers in place of its only remaining real ale, Old Brewery Bitter, which is in itself is generally pretty poor. When will they get the message that their presence outside the boundaries of Tadcaster is not required. Someone please tell them to sell up soon, and save all their other historic pubs from this blatant vandalism.

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

PAY BY
CREDIT CARD



266 CRANMORE BOULEVARD SHIRLEY SOLIHULL 0121-744 2827



solihull

news

The re-opening of the Bulls Head, Earlswood, the Greville Arms in Cornyx Lane, Solihull and the Sharmans Cross are all reported elsewhere in this issue; all I will add here is that all three now have an increased range of real ales than before their refurbishment (including real Mild in two), and that in itself is encouraging.

The Harvester Restaurant (a.k.a. The Engine) in Hampton-in-Arden has finally lost its illuminated signage in favour of a traditional hanging sign, which of course is floodlit to a level most football clubs would be proud of. Nevertheless, a victory of sorts for the local villagers, who can now (apparently) enjoy, if that is the right word, real Brew XI whilst waiting for their meals rather than the normal Worthington Creamflow stuff, which itself replaced Draught Bass a few months ago. Hurry on down!

Better news to report of the Lodge, in Yardley Wood Road, which is now in the capable hands of new manageress Gail Haynes, who took over just before Christmas. Additions to the Tetley/Ansells Mild beer range are Marston's Pedigree and Morland Old Speckled Hen, both of which have been very good when sampled. Typical National "guest beers", I hear the

cynics cry, but guest beers none the less.

So now for the guest beer round up. Hopefully, one day this section will have so many entries that it takes up several pages; for now we can make do with just over half a page.

Our recent social to Henley-in-Arden revealed Young's Special in the Black Swan, Wells Bombardier in the White Swan and Oakhill Best, Brains SA and Otter Ale amongst an increasingly good range in the Nags Head. Also of note was the fine Hook Norton Best Bitter in the Blue Bell, a regular alongside Flowers or Wadworth 6X.

The Bulls Head in Barston continues to impress with Highgate Saddlers, Cottage Golden Arrow, Fuller's London Pride, Beowulf Heroes, Tolly Cobbold Suffolk Shamrock and Ushers Spring Fever having been on offer recently, whilst our current Pub of the Year, the Harvester in Olton, has served up Wells Bombardier, Judges Solicitors Ruin, Church End Father Brown, Super P and Old Pal, and Burton Bridge Festival.

Dorridge has seen Hampshire beers in the Forest and Highgate Black Pig in the Railway, whilst the Burton Bridge Bitter in the Navigation in Lapworth was,

I can assure you, superb, as was the Bathams according to my sources. Black country beers are relatively rare in Solihull: the Bathams was apparently sold at £2.00 a pint, which might explain why. Last issue's cover story, the Golden Lion in the town centre, continues to sell Beowulf beers, and they are still reported to be doing very well.

Some Allied-Domecq pubs still continue to sell guest beers in the *Tapsters Choice* range, although most appear to be in-house brews and not independent beers any more. The Lyndon in Olton has served Allsops Houdini and Arctic Beer, and as reported elsewhere, the reopened Bulls Head, now a Golden Oak Inn, began with Allsops St Modwen (4.7%) as its guest ale.

Beers from the Nene Valley brewery, now marketed as Leyland, have appeared locally in some Allied pubs, the disappointing Griffin (4.4%) in the Vaults and the marginally tastier Unicorn (3.6%) in the Red Lion in Shirley, which makes a welcome return as a guest beer stockist. Another guest ale venue once again is the Tom O'the Wood, although the Piddle in the Hole had just run out prior to our committee meeting there last month, so we had to settle for Flowers IPA and piddle in the hole ourselves.

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):.....

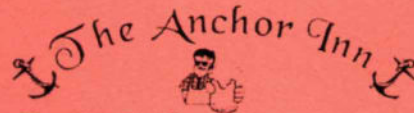
Address:.....

I/We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale. I enclose a cheque for £.....

Signature(s):.....

Date:.....

solihull
drinker



Thursday 21st May -- Monday 25th May

BEER FESTIVAL

Previously B'ham CAMRA Pub of the Year

More than 50 beers to chose from
Breweries to include: *Skye • Nethergate*

Church End • Hop Back

Woodfordes • Harveistoun

Inveralmond • Black Bull

Houston • Exmoor • RCH

Fenland • Branscombe • Cranbourne

Unusual Bottled Ales - Imported Bottled Beers

Full Range of Hot Meals & Bar Snacks Available

308 Bradford Street, Birmingham B5 6ET

Tel: 0121-622 4516



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.

Friday 15 May	Social	Celebrate National Mild Day at Highgate Brewery, Walsall. Numbers strictly limited.
Tuesday 26 May	Committee	Red Lion, Claverdon 8.30pm
Friday 29 May	Beer & Balti	Brewer and Baker, Camp Hill, Birmingham 8.00pm.
Monday 8 June	Branch Mtg	Navigation, Lapworth 8.30pm
Saturday in June	Social	Coach trip to be arranged Contact Keven closer to the date
Friday 26 June	Beer & Balti	Anchor, Bradford Street, Birmingham
Monday 29 June	Committee	Golden Lion, Solihull 8.30pm
Monday 13 July	Branch Mtg	Crabmill, Preston Bagot 8.30pm
Sunday 19 July	Social	Lunchtime pub crawl in Worcester Details to follow
Thursday 6 August	Social	Visit to Great British Beer Festival, London by train

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

The 5th edition of the *Solihull Drinker* will be published on 10 August 1998.

The deadline for advertising or contributions will therefore be

Saturday 1 August 1998