



**solihull**  
drinker

**free**

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

Issue No 6

Autumn 1998

# VANDALS!

Two pubs are in the front page spotlight this month, one for a refurbishment which has just been completed, and another for a refurbishment which is due to take place early next year.

Actually, I would rather not use the term "refurbishment", as this usually implies an improvement: neither scheme could be described as such. The first, which has just been completed, is the Malt Shovel in Barston, once a two-roomed country pub with a public bar and a good local trade.

The Malt Shovel is now a one-roomed establishment, which has lost its original bar and fittings, and is now a pot plant and pine furniture sort of place. The conversion has outraged branch Pubs Campaigning Office Steve Wood so much, he has written to the local press to express his anger, commenting that it makes the alterations to the Bulls Head at

Earlswood, featured in a previous issue, look sympathetic. We hope to feature the Malt Shovel in a future issue.

Unfortunately, it is too late to save the Malt Shovel. It is not too late, however, to save the Lodge in Solihull Lodge. Allied-Domecq Inns are considering turning this locals' estate pub into a Mr Q's Pool Hall, despite objections from regular customers, local residents, local councillors and the West Midlands Police Force.

The pub, built in the mid 1960s, was a magnet for trouble in the late 1980s when it boasted a disco every Friday and Saturday night. It was

refurbished in 1989 and prospered under a successful and keen manager. The current enthusiastic manageress, Gail Haynes, has tried to build up the business after a period when the pub went through several managers in a few months, but she has had little support from Allied-Domecq.

The local community needs a pub like the Lodge, not a pool hall. If you care about pubs, offer your support to Solihull CAMRA and the Save the Lodge Campaign. Write to Allied Domecq and express your opinion as a customer: the next pub to be ruined might well be yours.

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Inside this issue: A century of Mitchells and Butlers; Good Beer Guide 1999 review; Why Budweiser is the best beer in the World; More brewery news; Solihull sporting triumphs; Not the most improved pub award 1998; and all the local pub news, including Pugh, Pugh, BARney McGrew.....

## Seconds out, sixth and final Editor's Round.....

I make no apology for my slightly critical review of the new Good Beer Guide on page 12. I know how difficult it is to ensure the accuracy of a publication, even one as small as this. But, I still think somebody at CAMRA should have at least picked up some of the major omissions, in what it its showcase publication, and is often well up in the best seller charts. Last year a huge chunk of Wales was omitted: thinks don't seem to have improved.

I make no apology either for this issue's lead story on the Lodge, which, although it is not one of Solihull's premier

real ale outlets, is still important to the branch. We must make every effort to protect local community pubs, and this is no exception.

Add to this the fact that this pub has been my local for many years of living in Solihull, I have a special interest in its future. It is only recently that it has ceased to serve as my local as I have moved away to Oxford.

This move South means that this will be the last issue of the *Solihull Drinker* that I will edit; from next issue, this task goes to ex-branch

chairman Steve Dyson. I am proud to think that I was instrumental in seeing that the *Drinker* got off the ground in the first place as a worthy successor to the *Boro' Banter*, and I'm sure Steve will be a worthy successor to me. However, he can only succeed with the help of the branch members and readers who make contributions of articles, letters and items of local news. I'm sure you'll all help out.

Now stop waving your white handkerchiefs and get down the pub!

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, or I doubt the new one.

All contributions, comments, ideas, cheques, postal orders (please do not send cash), and general enquiries should be sent to:

**The Editor, Solihull Drinker, 79 Walsgrave Drive, Solihull B92 9PP**  
**Please note yet another change of address!**  
**Hopefully, this will be the last change for a while.**

Please contact Captain Dave Hobbis on 0121 706 0162 for advertising rates, which start from as little as £20, and you can get a full page for just £40. Join CAMRA and save money with your Solihull CAMRA discount. Just to emphasise again, all contributions in the form of articles, news items or letters are most welcome, from members and non-members alike. I'm sure Steve will appreciate them. The Editor, and the new Editor, both reserve the right to amend or shorten any contributions for inclusion in the Solihull Drinker. The Solihull Drinker is written, produced and printed in the United Kingdom on 80gsm paper from sustainable forests, using ink from recyclable glass bottles, and is usually quickly recycled itself. I can't believe that you're still reading this, but since you are, may I wish you a merry Christmas, because the next issue isn't due out until 1999, and then it will be too late. Please dispose of this magazine carefully. Do not drop litter.

Contributors to this issue were Matthew Bullock (Editor), Dave Hobbis, Steve Wood, and CAMRA HQ. Where was everybody else?  
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**Please note the deadline for issue 7 will be 23 February 1999**

## Mitchells & Butlers - a (pint) potted history

All Midlands drinkers will be familiar with Brew XI, but how many realise that it was 100 years ago in 1898 that Henry Mitchell and William Butler joined forces to form Mitchell's & Butlers? Steve Wood recounts the history behind this famous brewery.

The story began in 1851, when Henry Mitchell Senior was landlord of the Oddfellows Arms in Hall Street, West Bromwich. As was common practice in those days, innkeepers brewed their own beer rather than being supplied from elsewhere.

Either through the quality of his ale or his business acumen, Mitchell became very successful. He soon had to move to larger premises, namely the Cape Inn, in Spon Lane, West Bromwich. In 1854, Mitchell moved again to an even larger site, the Crown Inn, in Oldbury Road, Smethwick. This was ideally situated, being between the main Dudley Road and the busy canal, and his trade continued to expand. Upon retiring in 1861, he was succeeded as licensee by his son, Henry Mitchell Junior.

Meanwhile, William Butler was proving just as adept in the expanding brewing industry. In 1859, at the age of 16 with just ½d in his pocket, he walked from Leicester to Birmingham to find a new job. After working part-time behind the bar of the Old Crown Inn, in Broad Street, Birmingham, and

whilst here he saw the potential of the licensing trade, and in 1866 acquired the London Works Tavern in Grove Lane, Smethwick, where he too began to brew his own ales.

That same year the ambitious young Mitchell, in need of increased brewing capacity, built the Crown Brewery next to the Crown Inn in Smethwick. He was now in a



position to supply other innkeepers in the area.

By coincidence, Butler, with similar reasons to expand, also took over a Crown Inn, in 1876. This was the one in Broad Street, Birmingham, where he had formerly worked.

In 1878 Mitchell bought part of Fawdry's Farm, between Smethwick village and the Birmingham boundary, an area called Cape Hill. There he built a new Crown Brewery, which commenced brewing in 1879. Butler meanwhile was also building up his business, eventually building a new commercial brewery next to the Crown in Broad Street.

By now, Mitchell and Butler were well aware of each other's operations, and they each had great respect for the other, so when further expansion was necessary they decided to form a partnership. So it was that in 1898 the new company of Mitchell's and Butlers was founded, concentrating its brewing operations into Mitchell's Crown Brewery at Cape Hill.

The rest as they say is history, and the Cape Hill brewery continues to brew, although Mitchell's and Butler's is now owned by Bass. However, how many of today's brewery names will still be around in 100 years' time?

**Steve Wood**

## Local Pubwatch

The branch has continued to focus on a particular local pub each month. In July, it was the Sharmans Cross on Prospect Lane.

This one-room 1970s estate pub was closed for a refurbishment during the early part of 1998. It reopened with a slightly extended lounge area, with more emphasis on food, but with an increased range of real ales. Draught Bass and M&B Mild are now available on handpump.

The mild was found to be a little uninspiring, but the Bass was felt to be one of the best examples recently tasted. The Sharmans Cross importantly remains a community pub, with a fairly large catchment area, being situated as it is in the suburban triangle between Solihull town centre, Shirley and Olton.

August's choice of pub, the Saddlers Arms, in Warwick Road, Solihull, has also had a refurbishment this year, although its appearance has changed little.

Fortunately, the pub has retained its four handpumps, serving Brew XI, M&B Mild, Draught Bass and Worthington Bitter. At the time of our visit, the Brew XI was indifferent, the Draught Bass was passable, but not as good as in the Sharmans. On the plus side, it was refreshing to see the cask version of Worthington and not the nitro-keg, which is staring to become more commonplace. The cask mild, incidentally, is the only one in the town centre.

September saw the branch visit the newly renamed Family Inn at the Golden Acres, in Rowood Drive, Damsonwood (previously, of course, plainly the golden Acres), another pub which serves a large housing estate.

The pub has recently re-introduced real ale in the form of Marston's Pedigree, and branch members' comments were very favourable.

The staff were found to be welcoming, measures were topped up without having to ask, and the beer quality was good.

The old public bar has been converted into a children's room, although some members considered it to be a little bleak. Overall, though, the picture is very promising. One day, perhaps, it may even be a rival to the highly successful Harvester in nearby Olton.

October's choice of pub is the recently refurbished Malt Shovel in Barston, more details of which can be found within this issue. Any reader who cares to visit this pub is most welcome to send their comments and observations, and a full report will be included in the next issue.

**Steve Wood**

## Solihull Beer Festival 1998

**As readers will no doubt be aware, the Third Solihull Beer Festival was held on the first weekend in September at the Golden Lion pub in the town centre.**

Around 800 people came to enjoy forty different beers, which included three real lagers, which proved very popular.

The overall impression of the organising committee was that the new venue was a reasonable success, partly due to its accessibility by public transport. Reports from drinkers at the festival were that the quality and variety of beers on offer was very good.

Credit should be given to all the committee members and to festival organiser Steve Dyson, and to all those volunteers who staffed the festival and helped both before and after the event.

Voting for the beer of the festival was very close, and the final result was a tie between local breweries Church End and Beowulf, for their Banana Madness and Swordsman respectively. A suitable presentation will be made to both breweries shortly.

Watch out for the fourth Solihull Beer Festival next year!

# BERNIES

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## in brief....

### Barn blaze

This isn't a reprint of an article from the Yokels' Country Gazette, but a report of an event which happened at a pub near you over August bank holiday weekend. "Red sky at night, the Barn's alright", as the old saying goes. But it was true! The Barn, in Hockley Heath, was severely damaged in the blaze, but it will be rebuilt. Everybody is invited to the house warming party when it re-opens in November.

### Banbury Micro

The 1999 Good Beer Guide contains details of all Britain's breweries. What could be Britain's smallest brewery is the Banbury brewery, situated in the garage (literally) of its owner's house in the town. Brewing is undertaken on a part time basis, but the beers are of a high quality, and are available locally.

### Erratum

The Good Beer Guide-listed Navigation Inn, at Lapworth, Warwickshire has not been sold to Punch Taverns as printed last issue (page 2). We apologise for any confusion caused.

## Punch Taverns – more beer choice

**CAMRA has extended a cautious welcome to a new range of cask beers unveiled by Punch Taverns in its so-called "Ale Spotting" programme. Beers from a list of thirty cask ale brands are already available to tenants, but a further 13 guest beers will be until January, when another selection will be made available.**

Beers already noted in Punch pubs locally include Tomintoul Stag, Black Sheep Bitter and Wells Bombardier, all of which have been available in the area's two principal Punch real ale pubs, the Railway in Dorridge and the Bulls Head in Barston.

The list also includes Wychwood Special, real lager Harviestoun Schiehallion (a big hit at the third Solihull Beer Festival), and Titanic White Star, as well as beers from Jennings, Gale's, Bateman's, Ushers, Brains and Robinsons.

Punch Taverns managing director, Peter Thomas, claims that the new range of beers will "offer lessees an unrivalled choice of ales to meet the ever-changing demands of their customers".

Whilst it is true that under the ownership of Bass many pubs would not have stocked such a range of beers, it is not true for the two I have mentioned above. Prior to the Punch take-over, both pubs sold regular guest beers from across the country, with as many as three being on offer at any one time in the Railway and two in the Bulls Head. The range now on offer to these pubs, whilst it contains some excellent and interesting beers, still does not allow the

licensee to exercise any personal choice to support his or her favourite breweries.

All Punch tenants are forbidden to purchase from outside the company, and Punch have scrapped their right to stock an additional guest cask ale.

In order to enforce this policy, lessees who defy the company have been threatened with the removal of all discounts and the imposition of a total tie, that is without being able to stock any of these "Ale Spotting" guest beers. There are reports of some landlords even being evicted.

Around 20% of Punch's 1450 lessees are trying to hold on to their guest beer rights, and CAMRA supports their claim. Only an individual landlord can determine what his customers will buy and drink, and really should be able to make their own decisions that affect their individual businesses.

Meanwhile, I suppose we should be grateful for small mercies, and enjoy the beers which are on offer. Let's hope that the small micro-breweries who once relied on long-established custom from the old Bass estate can find new customers, because without them, the future looks less than rosy.

## Vaux is latest under threat

Sunderland-based brewery giant Vaux is the subject of a £100 million take-over bid by its managing director Frank Nicholson, who is aiming to buy the company's two breweries off chief executive Martin Grant, who is keen to quit brewing.

Mr Nicholson, who is a member of the family which has run Vaux since it was founded in 1837, is also looking to buy 350 tenanted pubs, and has the backing of most of Vaux's senior management.

This will leave Martin Grant with an estate of managed pubs and the lucrative Swallow Hotels chain.

Vaux has two breweries, the Sunderland site brewing well known cask brands such as Samson and Double Maxim, whilst the Ward's site in central Sheffield also produces cask beers. The company also has important contracts to brew for Bass and Whitbread.

It is understood that Mr. Nicholson is keen that neither brewery should close, which must be welcome news.

The outcome of the bid should be known by December.

Meanwhile, the sale of Castle Eden brewery in County Durham by Whitbread to a consortium of northern businessmen has been delayed. The delay, caused by contractual problems, is not likely to jeopardise the deal, which should now have been signed on 21 October.

Morrell's of Oxford found a buyer in October. New York-

based tycoon Michael Cannon paid £48 million for the city centre brewery site, the distribution depot, the 132 pubs and the Morrell's name.

The new company will be called Morrell's of Oxford, and will shut the brewery "sooner rather than later" according to Cannon's UK henchman Paul Beadle, who has a background with Greenalls.

The pubs will continue to serve Morrell's Bitter, Varsity and Graduate, although these are to be contract brewed elsewhere: it is reported that trial brews from five different sources were being considered in late October.

Meanwhile, English Heritage have refused to list the historic Lion Brewery site in the heart of Oxford, and it would appear that this will now be redeveloped, with several of the Oxford colleges prime candidates to purchase the land.

And finally, Flowers brewery site in Cheltenham, closed last month, looks set to become a leisure centre if Whitbread get their way, an ignominious end to a site which ten years ago was earmarked to be the strategic centre of Whitbread's presence in the West and South. All Whitbread cask beer production will soon be transferred to Manchester.

## In brief.....

### No Improvement

Following the success story at the Forest, Dorridge, which was voted Solihull's Most Improved Pub of 1997, the branch last month took nominations for the pub which the members thought should be awarded the 1998 title.

The past year has seen many refurbishments, and several changes of ownership, especially with the Punch Taverns situation, but has seen little activity on the pub front which has significantly boosted the profile of real ale in the Borough.

At a meeting last month, therefore, it was decided not to make any award for 1998. We will, however, be keeping a close eye on the situation to find a winner for 1999.

### Free Beer?

Wetherspoons latest promotion, other than the new brim glasses one which gives you less beer than you've paid for, is its most generous yet. Buy a burger, chips and a pint of Fosters (health freaks need not apply), and you pay only £2.99. Buy just the burger and chips, and it will set you back £3.75. So Wetherspoons are paying you 76p to drink a pint of Fosters. I wish we could say it was a bargain, but really, 76p isn't nearly enough.

## in brief....

### Reprieve for Fox

Birmingham planners have rejected a bid to redevelop the Fox Hollies in Hall Green as a supermarket, on the grounds of traffic generation and harm to local shops. CAMRA was one of the objectors.

### Full pint

Legislation to ensure drinkers get a full pint looks closer since JD Wetherspoon ceased using lined glasses.

Department of Trade lawyers are looking at ways of protecting consumer rights by secondary legislation, thus avoiding a commons debate which was the downfall of MP Dennis Turner's bill earlier in the year.

Mr. Turner's bill was sunk on a single cry of "object!" from Tory MP Eric Forth, who objected because he probably never got to say anything in the house normally and wanted to be noticed.

Lawyers for the Department of Trade are examining all possibilities, including a compulsory introduction of lined glasses, but any new moves are not expected until at least the new year.

## Having a nice day.

Solihull CAMRA's most ambitious social event ever took place in late September: a pub and brewery tour of the West coast of the United States of America. The two week, 1500 mile jaunt, took an intrepid foursome from California to Washington, via some of the country's finest micro-breweries.

The tour began in San Francisco, and more accurately at the San Francisco Brewing Company, only hours after touching down at the airport, where the Shanghai Pale Ale and Alcatraz Stout went down a treat.

India Pale Ales and Stouts are two of the commonest styles of beers brewed by American brewers, mainly in a naturally carbonated, unfiltered form, but cask ale has reached the States, and more and more breweries are experimenting with the concept.

Most cask beers tend to be unfiltered and unfinned, and are thus cloudy, but are nevertheless fine beers.

We also recommend the German-style lagers of Gordon Biersch in San Francisco, and the Triple Rock brew pub's products over the bay in Berkeley.

We left San Francisco to head north, with our itinerary of brew pubs as our guide, and our first port of call was the Mendocino Brewery at Hopland, some 100 miles north of San Francisco, a brewery directly descended from the now defunct New Albion Brewery, in the town Mendocino itself, America's first micro brewery to be set up since prohibition (est. 1983).

Up into Oregon, The Wild River brew pub (and pizza restaurant) at Cave Junction brews a fine ESB, in the English style, and the bizarre but most welcoming Blue Pine micro in Grants Pass, jointly owned by an English-born rock musician, is well worth a visit; the Rip Roarin' Red being recommended.

Our route took us through Bend and the Black Butte Porter of Deschutes Brewery, via Steelhead's brewpub in Eugene, and to the most eagerly anticipated stop, Newport, Oregon, home of Rogue Ales.

If you've never tasted Rogue beers at the Great British Beer Festival at Olympia, then I suggest that in 1999, you do. The Shakespeare Stout, the Brutal Bitter and a dozen more beside were supped; the Imperial Russian Stout (11% ABV) and Old Crustacean (11.3%), not to mention the extra hoppy I<sup>2</sup>PA (!!!%), were the undoubted highlights, and possibly some of the finest beers in the US.

We finally dragged ourselves away, first to Portland (try Bridgeport ales), and on to Seattle, where Big Time, The Elysian and Hales impressed most. If you thought beer in the US was only Budweiser and Miller, then think again. It is well worth a look.

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## 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
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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

# The Beer World Cup 1998

If the best football team in the world is France, following their 3-0 victory against Brazil in the 1998 World Cup Final, then the best beer in the world is Budweiser. Or, at least, if you believe what you read in the *Daily Express*.

To coincide with the football extravaganza in France during the Summer, those wise old hacks from the *Express* decided to organize a World Cup of Beer, a blind tasting of a representative beer from each of the 32 footballing nations, with a panel of tasters to decide a winner.

The competition was organised by *Express* 'creative director' John Tennant (what an appropriate name and inappropriate title). Unfortunately, he didn't appear to know what a beer really was, or have the brains to realise that the likes of Saudi Arabia and Iran were unlikely to have many beers they could enter.

Nevertheless, this pointless competition went ahead, with beers arranged in eight groups of four, just like the genuine article, but with only 23 of the 32 countries represented. A selection of these fine, hand-crafted beers which proudly competed for their countries is as follows:

Scotland (Tennents, no relation, I presume); Italy (Peroni); France (Kronenbourg); South Africa (Castle); Spain (San Miguel); Belgium (Stella Artois); Holland (Grolsch); Mexico (Sol);

England (Carling!!), need I go on?

And so, the "panel of eight beer enthusiasts" set to work, and judged these liquids against one another round by round.

Eventually, Budweiser, described as a "classic American lager", beat Germany's Becks in the final, three judges voting for it and two against (the other three were obviously in the toilet vomiting).

"Although it doesn't compare to winning the real world cup, Americans everywhere should be proud of Budweiser's victory", boasted August A. Busch IV (made up name? No, it's genuine!), vice president of Anheuser-Busch, "brewers" of Budweiser. (How come my word processor recognizes Anheuser-Busch, but recommends I spell colour without the "u"?) "The USA may not yet be a World Soccer power (football, August, please....), but Americans certainly know their beer!" added Mr. A. A. Busch IV, modestly.

What a great example this is of the national press coverage that real ale gets - none. Most national newspaper writers wouldn't recognize a beer which wasn't fizzy, coloured like

piss, and tasting of piss, and presumably took their choice of Carling to represent England just to emphasize their ignorance. How many papers have a regular feature on beer as well as one on wine?

I'm sure most of the countries represented in this World Cup Competition could have put forward a decent beer, and although it is virtually impossible to judge, say a Kriek against a Pilsner, those poor eight "enthusiasts" might have had a more enjoyable time if some thought and imagination had been introduced into the contest.

It is just disappointing that the ignorant British public is so wrongly led to believe that Budweiser is anything better than a putrid concoction of chemicals, and that Carling is suitable to represent its country in any competition about beer.

As for the eight beer "enthusiasts", they must have been very disappointed or not very enthusiastic to have to judge such a poor show. Next time an *Express* journalist invites you to a beer tasting, beware!

MB

# Sports Argus

## UNSTOPPABLE SOLIHULL

Birmingham CAMRA 1 Solihull CAMRA 4

Dave Hobbis reports from the Aston University Stadium



The winning team – back row l-r: Keven Parker, Phil Holt, Steve Wood, Matt Bullock. Front row: Ian Sharpe, Dave Hobbis (Captain), John Salmon

Solihull started badly, losing Keven Parker in the first minute to the opposition to even up numbers. However, the pre-match warm up and team talk in the Faculty and Firkin soon paid off, with Phil Holt waltzing through the Birmingham defence before drilling the ball into the corner of the net to open the scoring.

Steve Wood skilfully made it two as Solihull pushed forward and began to dominate, but Ashley Stoneman pulled a goal back for the home side just before the break.

The second half was one way traffic, with skipper Hobbis dominant in defence, and Ian Sharpe living up to his name on the wing.

Sharpe it was who laid off the ball for Bullock to score the third from close range midway through the second half, and Bullock was on hand minutes later at the other end of the field, saving Rob 'Spoons' Walker's penalty, awarded by the referee (or was that the Birmingham captain?) for a rather dubious hand ball.

From the throw out, John Salmon picked up the ball on the left, and found Holt, who beat his marker and found the unmarked Sharpe, who scored a deserved fourth.

On the final whistle (well, we didn't actually have a whistle), the post match press conferences were given in the Anchor, and the Solihull team celebrated well into the night!

## GALLANT THIRD PLACE FOR SOLIHULL

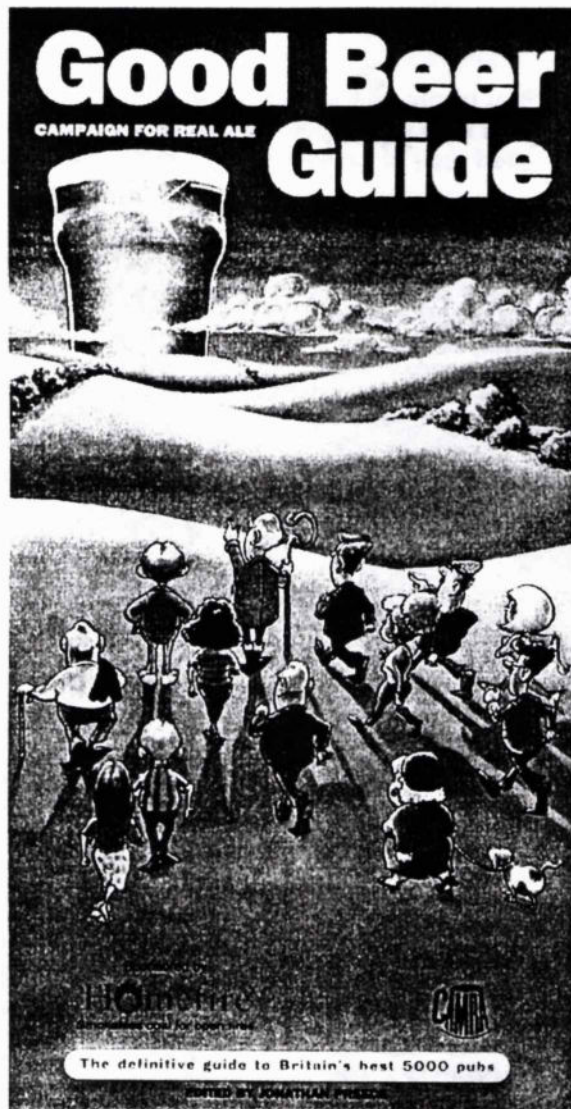
By Worzel Gummidge

Solihull's brave Aunt Sally team, led by inspirational captain Keven Parker, achieved a creditable third place in the annual three-way floodlit CAMRA challenge last month.

Solihull, missing several key players through better things to do on a Saturday night, trailed 3-2-0 at half time to the more skilful and vastly more experienced North Oxford and Northamptonshire teams. Solihull hit back in the second half with two "scores", one each for Matt Bullock and debutante Phil Holt. This was no doubt in part due to the amber-coloured energy drinks, which were consumed throughout the match, beginning to take effect.

All three teams braved cold and wet conditions at the Peyton Arms, Stoke Lyne, and after the interval, North Oxford ran out 9-8-2 winners in a close-fought match, with Solihull just missing out on second place by 6 points.

However, Solihull's third place was their best ever in the competition, because usually four teams take part.



The 1999 edition of the Good Beer Guide has just been published by CAMRA books.

Now in its 26th edition, it is the definitive guide to the best pubs in the country, and includes details of all Britain's breweries, both large and small, with details of all the beers they brew along with tasting notes on many of the beers.

This year, the layout and appearance has changed once again under a new editor; the immediate difference is the colourful, cartoony cover (if you don't like it, place your order with CAMRA for a plain hard-back protective slip-on cover now!).

Looking inside, the layout is improved by the inclusion of more pictures and brewery logos, but is let down somewhat in its content, which somehow managed to get past the proof reading stage with a staggering amount of basic errors.

Should you be looking to drink in Newark on Trent or Stockport, then you'll have to look hard to find where the pubs in these towns have been listed, despite being shown on the maps! And if you start looking for Carlton Bridge station in Smethwick, it may take you a while. These are but a few examples of probably many, but it raises one serious question. This guide is meant to be a book which people can trust to recommend them a good pub wherever they may be in the country. Once you begin to find basic errors creeping in to the publication, how far can you trust the pub information as to its accuracy?



# THE BULLS HEAD

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# solihull

news

News of refurbishments and proposed refurbishments have mainly been dealt with elsewhere in this issue, although there is one more to report: The Clock at Bickenhill. This was the subject of a lightning refurbishment a few months ago, so obviously Allied-Domecq don't expect the proposed airport expansion to happen in the near future, which will see the pub demolished to make way for a runway! Internally, the pub now looks like any other Big Steak pub, but the beer choice remains as before – Burton Ale, Ansells Bitter and Tetley Bitter.

Another pub which is set to change in the near future is the Wilson's in Knowle, which is currently closed, although a planning application recently submitted was only for a new porch.

The Engine in Hampton-in-Arden (a.k.a. the Harvester) and the Highwood in Olton no longer sell real ale, whilst the Golden Acres (a.k.a. the Family Inn!), as reported in our local pub watch section, now is a real ale gain.

Guest beers noted recently include Church End Charter Ale, Judges Gavel Bender and Charles Wells Bombardier at the Harvester, Olton. Ushers Autumn Frenzy has been on offer at the Nags Head in Henley, which followed Smiles Wurz, and was about to be followed by Mauldon's Midsummer

Gold, possibly the last chance to try a summer beer this year!

Jennings' Cross Buttock was very popular during October's branch meeting at the Vaults, Knowle, and was replaced during the night by seasonal beer Shepherd Neame Late Red Autumn Hop Ale (4.3%).

It is reported that following a run of Beowulf beers in the Golden Lion, beers from the Red Cross brewery in Bromsgrove have now been on offer. A Red Cross beer is also available as a house beer at the Black Boy.



The owners of the Jack Barrow's bar and Grill in Warwick Road are now the owners of the Wellington in Birmingham, which has been refurbished as part of the deal. Another new pub in Birmingham worthy of note is the Old Monk on Broad Street, which is part of a chain owned by the brother of Tim Martin of Wetherspoons fame. The Old Monk sells, unusually, Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild, at a

bargain £1.80 a pint, and beers from Barnsley brewery, including Bitter and Black Heart Stout. Wetherspoons, incidentally, have just scrapped the use of lined glasses, claiming that customers demanding full pints have cost the company too much money. Perhaps educating their staff would have been a better and cheaper solution.

The new edition of the Good Beer Guide 1999, as advertised on page 12, has a record nine entries in the Solihull area. These are The Bulls Head in Barston, The Forest and The Railway in Dorridge, The Vaults in Knowle, The Harvester in Olton, Bernies Real Ale Off Licence and the Red Lion in Shirley, The White Swan in Henley-in-Arden and The Navigation in Lapworth. The Nag's Head in Henley is also deservedly listed as a 'try also'. Congratulations must go to all the licensees of these pubs for their commitment to the sale of quality real ales.

Congratulations must go also to John Fewtrell at the Red Lion in Shirley who recently was rewarded by Allied-Domecq for his excellent cellarmanship, which is reflected in the quality of his ales and his inclusion in the 1999 Guide.

Reports of pub news are always welcome for this column; please send contributions to the Editor.

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# 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.

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|----------------------|-------------------|---|
| Saturday 21 November | Social            | Brewery weekend visit: Lancashire and Yorkshire. Moorhouses and Thwaites breweries and Keighley pub crawl. Limited places, phone for availability. £25 per person inclusive of B&B in Keighley. |
| Saturday 28 November | Beer & Balti      | Hop Pole, Bromsgrove<br>Includes visit to Red Cross brewery<br>£10 includes all beer and food.<br>Limited places. Phone Keven to book.  |
| Monday 30 November   | Committee Meeting | Drawbridge, Majors Green, Shirley<br>All members welcome, 8.30 start  |
| Monday 7 December    | Branch Mtg        | Mason's Arms, High Street<br>Solihull, 8.30pm   |
| Monday 21 December   | Social            | Annual Christmas pub crawl<br>This year is Solihull Town centre:<br>Phone Keven nearer the date for<br>Meeting point and itinerary.   |

**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 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Solihull Drinker* will be published on 8 February 1999.

The deadline for advertising or contributions will therefore be

**Saturday 23 February 1999**