



solihull  
drinker



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

Issue No: 9

Summer, 1999

## New Lease of Life for the Golden Lion, Solihull



The Golden Lion in Solihull is under new management. The pub, Solihull CAMRA's 1998 Beer Festival venue has had a chequered history recently. Many ancient CAMRA members will remember the publican Chris who served Courage Directors and Best Bitter in excellent condition. Since his leaving the quality of the beer and the physical state of the pub has deteriorated. It used to be very popular with the local postal workers and the comfortable snug was well used by the more senior members of the community. The whole pub emanated a friendly atmosphere. The last couple of years it has deteriorated to what seemed on occasions to be, quite frankly, a pub for under aged drinking.

Now, hopefully all that will change. Peter and Chris Scoltock who run the Harvester in Tanhouse Farm Road, Olton, now run the pub. The Harvester is a GBG entry pub and has won the Branch's Pub of the Year Award in the past.

On a recent pub-crawl the Branch popped into the Lion and can say that the atmosphere in the Lion has changed. It now feels a "comfortable" place to be and although the range of beers was not superb everyone agreed that the quality of the Speckled Hen; Wells Bombadier and John Smiths Bitter was good. These are early days yet and one hopes that Peter and Chris will offer drinkers the range of guests that often appear at the Harvester.

However, as a branch we welcome Peter and Chris to the centre of Solihull and encourage all drinkers to pop in for a pint when in Solihull and support what is Solihull town centres only real community pub.

---

### Inside this issue

The 1999 Budget effects on the drinker... The End of the Public Bar... A Midsummer visit to Stratford...  
Old Royal Oak, Hockley Heath changes hands... Allied/Whitbread deal... plus more

## editor's round

The brewing and retailing of beer certainly seems to be undergoing rapid change at the moment. Brewers who have served their community for years seem to have thrown in the towel to become beer retailers or have decided to leave the industry all together. Whitbread is going for the former, having just bought Allied Domeq's estate. This means that to comply with The Beer Orders they must sell their breweries, as they can't have both! So what future is there for Boddingtons?

Allied appears to be getting out of everything. When they've sold their pubs to Whitbread and their spirits business their won't be anything left... maybe some would say this is no sad loss, but what a tragic end to a once great brewing tradition. Then there's Marston's. Having made Pedigree a national beer whilst maintaining its unique Union system of brewing it sells out to Bankss'. Meantime Scottish and Newcastle owners of Courage Georges Brewery in Bristol intend to close it after 300 years of brewing despite a promise three years ago that the future of the brewery was secure.

So what's happening? It's the same old thing, accountant's win the day, and what will the consumer get from it. Less choice, more bland, expensive beers in identikit surroundings that reflect the corporate image... and our quality microbreweries will find it even more difficult to find outlets for their distinctive beer, thus closing down [eg. Judges]. Indeed this is a depressing time. Its been said before but I'll repeat it... join CAMRA and voice your opposition to the decimation of our brewing tradition.

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

All contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to:

The Editor, Solihull Drinker, c/o 79, Walsgrave Drive, Solihull B92 9PP  
or e-mail [steve\\_dy@yahoo.com](mailto:steve_dy@yahoo.com)

For advertising contact Dave Hobbis on 0121 706 0162 who can offer very competitive rates!

The Editor reserves the right to amend or shorten any contributions in the Solihull Drinker but will always honour the spirit of the contribution.

Persons who foolishly insisted in contributing to this edition of the Drinker are The Editor, DaveHobbis, Dave Queenborough, Ken Jackson, Brenda Duffy and Steve Wood

Methods of discouraging them would be gratefully received by the Editor!!

Solihull CAMRA 1999 ©



## Worcester Beer Festival

Taking place at The Three Choirs Fringe, on a site opposite Worcester Cathedral and beside the River Severn this festival is in idyllic surroundings. It takes place from Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> to

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>, August. Over 100 real ales will be available including ciders. Admission charges do apply, but CAMRA members do get a concession. Phone Peter on 01684 573018 for more details, or if you're on the web get the latest details from [www.camra-worc.freeuk.com](http://www.camra-worc.freeuk.com)

## Warwickshire rises from the grave

Phil Page ex Warwickshire Brewery is back in production again. Based in Cubbington the range of beers includes Ffiagra [4.2%] and Golden Wonder [4.9%], first brewed for one of Nick Worralls festivals at The Vaults. Regular outlets include The Oak in Warwick, The Granville Arms in Barford and in Leamington, the Avenue Hotel and Coventry Arms

*From "Bear and Ragged Staff" CAMRA Heart of Warwickshire branch newsletter*

## Whitbread buys up Allied Estate

You can't have missed it in the papers, on the radio or on TV. Allied seems to have accepted Whitbread's offer for their retail estate. Although, having said that, a joint Bass/Punch Taverns counterbid is still in the background. The upshot will be that Whitbread will have to dispense with its breweries if the deal goes ahead.

Can we surmise the effect on the pubs in our area... after all we have a lot of Allied pubs around here. Of greatest concern will be the future of the beers. Ansells Mild and Bitter, particularly the latter is becoming increasingly difficult to find on handpump, and Burton Ale, their flagship real ale has not had a high profile in the advertising media. Whitbread are renowned for being food orientated, and how many Whitbread pubs have genuine bars. Will there be selected sell offs of unsuitable pubs? All this will unravel in the next few months. Solihull CAMRA will be watching with great interest

in brief...



## GBBF 99...

If you want to keep up with the latest news concerning this year's GBBF then visit the Website. It can be accessed via CAMRA at [www.camra.org](http://www.camra.org). This year's festival will have a family room available up until 9pm.

## Derby Festival

As usual this year's festival is at the Assembly Rooms, Market Place in Derby from Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> July. 100+ beers, ciders and perries available. Family Room or creche at lunchtimes. Souvenir glass, tea shirts, hot and cold food. Free admission to CAMRA members. More details from Duncan Crabtree on 01332 834658

## Fat God's Festival

Definitely a season for local festivals. From Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June to Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June at The Queens Head, Iron Cross, near Evesham. Over 30 beers on tap, including a special festival brew only at festival. Open all day, food all day and special events during the festival. For details 01386 871012



# THE BULLS HEAD

BARSTON LANE, BARSTON, SOLIHULL  
TEL: 01675 442830



VISIT OUR 17<sup>th</sup> CENTURY VILLAGE INN  
MITCHELLS AND BUTLERS REAL ALES  
REGULAR GUEST BEERS  
Listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide 1999

**Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 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 WELCOLME  
BASK IN FRONT OF OUR REAL LOG FIRES

## The End of the Bar

Pubs come in many shapes and sizes, but the common format is a central bar serving a number of rooms. A noticeable trend of the last decade has been the reduction of rooms; the one-room lounge is now a common sight. Last years refurbishment of the Malt Shovel at Barston is the latest local example where a public bar was lost in the name of progress.

So the question is, why were there separate rooms in the first place, and why are the walls coming down?

The modern pub is essentially a Victorian creation. Interiors consisted of small private bars creating intimate areas for small groups of people. Over time these rooms were labelled according their function and status within the pub. The common terms used were the Lounge, Public Bar, Saloon Bar, Smoke Room and Snug. Over the last hundred years, the average number of rooms has gradually decreased. The current trend is the amalgamation of public bar and lounge into one cavernous drinking area.

Advocates for the removal of public bars tend to dismiss them as irrelevant to modern society. Bars are perceived as lacking in comfort, tend to have a male-only atmosphere, attract smokers, and are generally plain and unwelcoming to non-regulars. The concept of a smoke room is now seen as an anachronism, the smaller number of smokers no longer justifies a separate room. Also people tend to drink in larger groups, single rooms make it easier to find and seat friends and colleagues. Pub managers prefer them as they can staff and supervise one room easier than two, plus knocking down walls tends to increase capacity.

The argument for the retention of separate bars and lounges harks back to the reason for their existence in the first place. The old style multi-roomed pub offers a real choice for customers. It can cater for the different and often conflicting activities and tastes of drinkers under the same roof. This keeps alive the healthy social and age mix that is the traditional hallmark of the true pub. There can be a choice between loud music/games orientated rooms, and quiet comfortable rooms where conversation is all that is desired. Rooms can be furnished in comfortable or basic style, even enabling differential pricing allowing the choice between comfort and cheap beer. Will the loss of the bar see the demise of pub games such as darts and dominoes? A good example of a two-room community-based pub is the Harvester [Tanhouse Farm Road].

Those who argue that choice is available between pubs, and is not necessary within the same pub should check out Solihull centre. It is now dominated by similarly themed pubs competing for the same clientele, and doesn't offer the choice of venue that could sustain a diverse drinking population. All this succeeds in doing is increasing the value of the home drinks market [but that's another story].

Despite the advantages of two-roomed pubs, current designers believe open-plan is best. Do you agree? Should we fight these conversions or trust pub owners and designers to look after our interests? If you have a view one way or another, please let us know. Write to the Editor of the Drinker, or if you prefer send your viewpoint to the local press. Alternatively, come along to a CAMRA branch meeting, and meet others who care about their drinking environment.

Pubs are changing, but are they to the liking of the customers or the pub owners?

Steve Wood

### **in brief**

Harveys of Lewes is Britains most successful brewery according to Plimsoll Publishing. It's also hoped to be the venue for the Branch's Annual weekend away... certainly something to look forward to...

## Budget 1999

Drinkers were disappointed by the 1999 budget. The Chancellor failed to reduce duty on beer even though it is much higher than that in other European countries and is responsible for the loss of both jobs and tax revenue.

CAMRA's Mike Benner said, *"Drinkers are still reeling from the penny on a pint announced in the last Budget. Mr Brown has offered no support for the 900,000 jobs supported by the beer and pubs industry. Pubs are closing as a result of high beer tax. Millions of pints of cheap French beer will continue to flood our shores."*

CAMRA had been hoping for a progressive system of excise duty that would have meant microbreweries paying a lower rate of beer tax than their giant competitors. Such a system would have cost the Treasury very little but could have made the difference of life or death for small breweries in an increasingly competitive market. The Chancellor did not consider even this second best solution to the problem of punitive tax rates.

The Chancellor is also constricting the beer and pubs sector in another insidious way. Business Strategies, a consultancy, forecast that 80,000 jobs will go in the next three years as a result of the minimum wage. Many of these will be in the pubs sector, which pays less than other sectors. CAMRA has called for it's members to monitor the levels of staff in our local pubs and record any pub closures so a national picture can be formed.

The Governments harmful treatment of the sector is of concern to a more wider public than beer enthusiasts. Those who work in the pubs, breweries and off-licences, those who are unemployed or in low paid work and people who simply enjoy visiting pubs are worried about the effect of recent thoughtless policy decisions on their lifestyles.

Already there is far less employment in the beer and pubs sector and far less beer sold in pubs than if the government adopted a neutral fiscal stance. The sector now operates under crushing pressure in Britain.

And the irony is that lower beer tax would actually raise increased tax revenues for the Treasury from the increased sales.

Ken Jackson

## Solihull

Enjoyed the last Weatheroak Beer Festival?... another is planned for September. Watch out for it

### Shorts

---

Orange Tree, Chadwick End is under new management... no news on beer, try it and see

---

Holts has now vanished from the Vaults, Knowle. This once popular Black Country brewed beer is now consigned to the grave... however Hardy's Country Ale has replaced it

## LOCAL CAMRA CONTACTS

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

Birmingham	Robert Walker	0121 478 1653
Bridgnorth	Adrian Zawierka	01952 590467
Burton on Trent	John Hoddy	01283 225669
Coventry	Paul Hamblett	01203 417675
Dudley and South Staffs	Steve Amos	01384 252266
Heart of Warwickshire	John Crossling	01926 431376
Kidderminster	Richard Lycett	01562 861951
Lichfield & Mid Staffs	Ray Jennett	01543 255195
Nuneaton & Bedworth	Les Hall	01203 311835
Redditch and Bromsgrove	Paul Long	0973 596650
Shakespeare	Vaughan Hully	01789 778726
Solihull & District	Keven Parker	0121 242 5548
Stafford & District	Paul Mudge	01785 226529
Stourbridge	Patrick Bird	0121 422 5394
Tamworth & Sutton Coldfield	Gary Clay	01827 705711
Telford & East Shropshire	Paula Walters	01952 641549
Walsall	Rob Bentley	01922 861626
Wolverhampton	Fred Morton	01902 426513

If you have any complaints about short measure, contact Solihull Trading Standards on 0121 704 6844

# 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

Case discounts for payments by cash/cheque

Bottle-conditioned beers now available

### Opening Hours:

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

# BERNIES



## REAL ALES

- AN EVER CHANGING SCENE OF EXCITING DRAUGHT BEERS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR
- 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

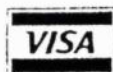
THE OFF LICENCE THAT IS REFRESHINGLY DIFFERENT SERVING HUNDREDS OF DRAUGHT REAL ALES FROM NATIONAL AND MICRO-BREWERIES FROM THROUGHOUT THE UK

VISIT OUR WEB SITE:

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

OPENING TIMES	MON	TUE-FRI	SAT	SUN
	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

## shorts

The New Lodge, Yardley Wood Road has become a Mr Q's offering a variety of amusements. Indeed according to Allied it is one of Britain's liveliest locals... makes you wonder why Allied are selling all their pubs!

Beers sampled in the locality recently.... Boddingtons Bitter, Thomasons Heaven Can Wait, Hampshire Hare, Tisbury Archibald Becket, Border Janus, Adnams Extra, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Tisbury Natterjack, Border Ceres, Fullers London Pride, Lichfield Stella [a 4.5% lager], Charles Wells Bombadier, Smiles Best, Thwaites Fat Cat, Wyre Piddle Old Toms Tipple, Ash Vine Giant Leap, Exmoor Gold, Nene Valley Leyland and Batemans Frolicking Reaper... and there are bound to have been others

Local festivals held recently were the Vaults, Knowle. Well known for its festivals this one was a little different than usual. All the beers were brewed in the West Midlands. Landlord Nick Worrall said that they had been looking for a theme which would make the festival a little different and realised the answer was staring him in the face; with so many excellent beers brewed locally, why not try to include as many as possible

Meanwhile the Nags Head, Henley in Arden also held a festival recently. 10 beers were featured, including beers such as Oakhill Mendip Gold, Morlands Original, Jennings Cockerhoop and several beers from Smiles brewery. Well done Nag's Head - let's hope there will be more such festivals before long

### **The Taming of the Brew - A Solihull CAMRA trip to Stratford on Avon**

Ah Stratford, the reporters dream. All those titles to choose from - A Winter's Ale, Ales Well That Ends Well, Full Measure for Measure [enough, Ed.!!]. Anyway, the purpose of our trip, a visit to the new brewery at Cox's Yard. Situated near the river this entertainment complex is aimed at Stratford's three million visitors. Once a timber yard it includes a brewpub owned by Charles Wells. The brewery occupies the engine shed of the old saw mill. It opened last August, some thirty years after Stratford's last brewery, Flowers was closed by Whitbread. Like many micro-breweries the brewery is clearly visible from within the pub, which in our case enabled us to be given a guided tour of the brewing process from the comfort of the bar! [However you then lose out on the smells and sounds of the brewery, a quintessential part of the brewery tour experience]. Our guide was Sara Jane Anderson, who set up the brewery with some assistance from the Grainstore Brewery. Sara gave us a most entertaining description of the brewery and its albeit short history. She brews twice a week, 500 litres per brew [that's over 91,000 pints a year if any tourists are interested]. We also learnt something of Sara's origins in the Shetland Isles - mention the Orkneys at your peril. [Did you know that the Shetlands are fourteen hours away from Aberdeen by boat?]

All in all Cox's Yard is well worth a visit, though the theme park feel of the place suggests it is best avoided at the height of the tourist season. As for the beer, only one is produced called Jester Ale, a very quaffable beer. This is supplemented with beer from the Charles Wells range.

Our evening was most enjoyable and as our train left Stratford early we stopped off at Henley in Arden where we sampled beers from Smiles, Thwaites and Fullers.

All together now - Friends, Romans, Countryman - Lend me your Beers

Copyright Will Shakesbeer

[Ed. In the interests of personal safety I refuse to supply the name of the rousesome knave who authored this article]

## in brief...

### National Pub of the Year Award

The Fat Cat in Norwich has been awarded CAMRA's prestigious Pub of the Year Award. The pub described in the GBG as a "beer drinkers paradise" has up to twenty real ales, many served from the cask. Runners up were the Brewery Arms, Keighley; Number Twenty-2, Darlington and the Plough and Harrow, Monkash, Glamorgan

### Beer on the Net

Continuing this series of interesting Web sites try Fullers. Well designed, the visitor is given a tour of a Fullers pub, a brewery tour, facilities to search for a Fullers pub near you, details about the beers and a link to CAMRA. Try it at [www.fullers.co.uk](http://www.fullers.co.uk).

### Memories...

Elsewhere on this page is mention of the Old Rooyal Oak, Hockley Heath. One of our local CAMRA members has a link with the pubs past. His Great Grandfather used to keep the original Royal Oak, which was two converted cottages next to a dirt track, the forerunner of the A3400. His father was one of the last people to have a pint in the old pub and the first in the new pub

### Festival at Nursery Tavern, Coventry

Fri- Sun 25-27 June... 50 real ales will be available. Telephone 01203 674530 for details

## Old Royal Oak, Hockley Heath changes hands...

Firstly, don't confuse The Old Royal Oak, a roadside pub on the Stratford Road at Hockley Heath with the identically named pub at Wood End, near Redditch. Following Bankss acquisition of Marstons, Greene King has taken on some former pubs including this one. The Bury St. Edmonds [Suffolk] brewer has been making inroads into the Midlands for a while so they will be pleased at this addition to their estate. The light IPA is on sale along with flagship strong brew Abbott Ale. Marstons Pedigree [the nations guest beer!] has survived the change over but much more unusual is the Greene King XX Dark Mild. With a very easy drinking ABV of 3% this softly malty pleasant beer has never been on sale in Solihull CAMRA's area before.

The pub also offers a comprehensive menu for those wishing to eat whilst enjoying Green Kings beers... this is a welcome addition to the Solihull pub scene

## Judges Brewery closes

Its always sad to record the loss of a local micro but unfortunately due to financial problems the Rugby based Judges closed recently. Well known for its "courtroom" named beers Judges was set up in 1992. In the short term Church End Brewery at Shustoke is brewing ex Judges beers Barrister, Bitter and Old Gavel Bender, successfully according to some reports. There are hopes eventually that Judges will be rescued as a going concern

## Peacock to have its feathers clipped?

More bad news. The UK's largest brewery Scottish and Newcastle has bought the Peacock at Forhill for well over £1 million. This popular pub has an extended lounge with food and smaller traditional bar plus a nice garden. It has recently been built up to something of a real ale haven with about eight interesting beers on tap.

Changes are now inevitable with the Theakstons range replacing some of the old favourites. If you do check them out allow time to visit/commiserate at the nearby Coach and Horses at Weatheroak Hill. This is only one mile away [by bumpy dirt track] and sells *superb home brewed ales*

### JOIN CAMRA NOW

Just fill in this form and send with a cheque  
[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,  
and agree to abide by the Memorandum  
And articles of Association

I enclose a cheque for £.....  
Signature [s]:.....  
Date:.....



## The Anchor Inn



**308 Bradford Street, Digbeth  
Tel: 622 4526**

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

*Always available:*

**A continental style  
real ale**



Full range of hot meals and bar snacks  
available

**BIRMINGHAM CAMRA  
PUB OF THE YEAR 1998/9**

## The White Swan Hotel



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

14<sup>th</sup> Century Coaching Inn offering en-suite accommodation  
located in the centre of this picturesque market town.

Changing range of guest beers – Good Value Food  
On promotion at present, buy two main course meals for the price  
of one.

Live Jazz Wednesdays – Quiz Night every Thursday  
Listed in the Good Beer Guide 1997, 1998 and 1999

# 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 [Balti not compulsory!]

### *Saturday 24 July - Branch Social*

Sample the multiple beer delights at the Waggon and Horses, Halesowen. This, our annual pilgrimage is always enjoyable... meet at The Newt and Cucumber, Birmingham at 6.30pm

### *Beer & Balti's*

Friday 25 June

Vaults, Knowle

Friday 30 July

Old Joint Stock, Birmingham

... and now for something completely different...

Friday 27 August

Bathams and Steak Night at the Church Inn, Great Hampton Street, Birmingham where the size of the steak dinners are justly famous!!

### *Monday 12 July - Branch Meeting*

Golden Lion, Solihull, 8.30pm [tbc]

**Keven Parker** is the branch Social Secretary and you can contact him for information about events during the evenings on 0121 242 5548

**Ken Jackson** is the Branch Secretary on 0121 705 8743

The 10<sup>th</sup> edition of *Solihull Drinker* will be published on September 13<sup>th</sup> 1999.

The deadline for advertising or contributions will therefore be

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August 1999

Solihull CAMRA © 1999