



Solihull drinker

free

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOLIHULL BRANCH OF
CAMRA, THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

Issue No: 15

Winter, 2000

CAMRA's Most Improved Pub of the Year 2000 awarded...

Solihull CAMRA has awarded the Boat at Catherine De Barnes its annual award for the Most Improved Pub of the Year.

This award is given to the pub that the branch feel has worked most to improve both the quality and range of its real ales during the last twelve months.

Nigel Cooke and Elaine Rogerson took over the Boat in 1998 having spent their apprenticeship as relief managers. The pub has become well known among local CAMRA members for stocking two guest ales, often from independent breweries.

Furthermore the staff, unlike many pub in our area are both knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the beers they stock.

Nigel and Elaine are keen to introduce a community feel to the pub, and anyone popping in for their Halloween party could not doubt their commitment to this.

On the evening of the presentation the branch enjoyed beers including Hop Back Thunder Storm, Bateman's Miss Saucy, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Theakston's Best Bitter, Courage Director's and Tetley Bitter



*Dave Hobbis, Branch Publicity Officer
presents Nigel and Elaine and with their
award*

More pics inside

In this issue

*Drinking in Mickey Mouse Land, Florida... Spotlight Inn - The Red Lion, Shirley... The Ultimate
Whitbread Tour of Destruction... GBG 2001... new Metro guide*

Editors round:

I had the misfortune recently to spend the evening at the Austin Social Club in Longbridge. The reason for my visit I hasten to add, was a family commitment, and I was hoping that maybe there would be some real ale available, and at a reasonable price. Yes, the price was reasonable, but the beers were a real disappointment. There were about 14 beers stacked along the bar including lagers, bitters and milds. The lagers, as to be expected were all keg, whilst the rest were smoothflow apart from M&B Mild and Brew X1 which likewise were keg. So what to drink? Well, being a dedicated CAMRA member I decided in the name of research to try the milds, comparing the keg M&B with the smoothflows. I started with Banks's Original smoothflow and quite frankly I can not see what Banks's are doing producing such a bland tasteless beer. They can do better than this. My next choice was Bass XXXX. Now there's a turn up for the book. Did I not sample this in its real ale form some 20 years ago in clubs around the Blackpool area. Again I cannot see why Bass produce this drivel now. So down to the last mild, the keg M&B. Believe it or not it was the tastiest of the 3 beers... how sad.

Which brings me on to bottled beers. They have had quite a high profile in the press recently and are widely available in supermarkets. This has no doubt given a new boost of life for some small breweries who supply them. They are popular too with many CAMRA members and I've tried a few, including bottle conditioned ones. I still find them very gaseous and lacking in any distinctive flavour, even though I leave them to degas. Give me the real cask any day... do any other CAMRA members agree with me. My concern is that bottled take home beers are becoming more popular and this must affect the pub trade and ultimately the real ales available in them. Which brings me back to smoothflow. Will they replace real ales? Now that would be very sad.

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

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.

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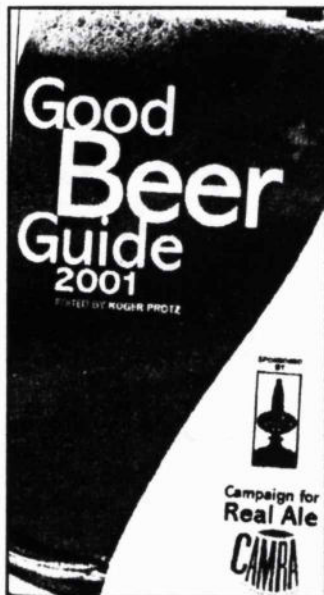
Polypins of Church End beers available to order

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Opening times:

**Mon-Thur 11.30-2.00, 5.00-10.00, Fri/Sat 11.30-10.00,
Sun 10.00-3.00, 7.00-9.30**

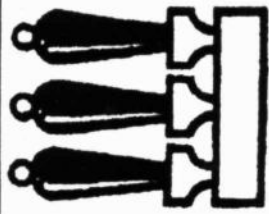


Out in the shops and costing £11.99 the GBG lists 5000 pubs countrywide. The local branch has 8 entries and there are over 100 entries for the West Midlands. If you are a CAMRA member the guide is available from the local branch for £7.50

in brief

Its reported that Ma Pardoe's, Netherton is to brew again. The brewer is Tim Newey. Is this the man who ran the pub some years ago and then moved on to run Holts pubs. If so, I suspect that the beer might be pretty good. Apparently he has the original Ma Pardoe recipes

Thwaites has introduced another cask beer to its range called Reward at 4.2%. It has been launched in London. Let's hope that it will soon appear at the Red House, Solihull and the Bulls Head Earlswood



BERRIDGES

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* CAMRA GOOD BEER GUIDE
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NOTE: 8.30pm CLOSING FOR NEW YEAR



Drinking in Orlando, Florida

Easter 2000 saw me in Orlando, Florida with the family, for what was essentially a Disney holiday. I was determined, however, to try some American beers. If anywhere should be a beer desert you would think that Orlando would be it. However, I was pleasantly surprised. The two breweries I tried are the Shipyard Brewery which has a bar on the Delta Airlines Concourse at Orlando Airport, and, amazingly, at The Boardwalk not far from Downtown Disney called the Big River Grill and Brewing Works. I did not have time to visit the Mill Brewery in Winter Park.

I visited the Big River Grill twice and can report that I was impressed with the quality of the beers.

Tilt Pale Ale at 4.5% was a full bodied beer



reminiscent of a best bitter.

Gadzooks Pilsner at 4% is a

German style Pilsner and is a light refreshing beer with a

distinctive lager palate. Rocket Red Ale at 4.7% is a little sweet.

However, the bitterness of the hops pulled it back to be a cracking

beer. Indeed, Big River advertise it as an "aggressive ale that is

designed to appeal to the beer

connoisseur". I can certainly agree with that! I also tried

Ironside Stout which is like Guinness but more bitter.

My other sojourn was at the Shipyard bar at Orlando

Airport. I have to admit that I had no more time for

other than a quick small Export before flying home. However, it was very tasty.

Verdict - There are good tasty beers available in Orlando. Yes, they are served on the

cool side but the flavour shone through in all the beers I tried. For details of breweries

in Florida visit the website <http://beerismylife.com>



Beers seen around 'ere...

Guest beers seen in the Solihull area over the last couple of months include:

Coniston Bluebird, Ridley's 3 Points and Woodforde's Wherry at the Hogshead, Solihull. The Harvester, Olton has sported Hampshire Pride of Romsey and Cottage Evening. The Blue Bell, Henley has stocked Greene King Triumph. Imbided at the Navigation, Lapworth was Weatheroak Triple Tipple. Downed at the Bulls Head, Barston, Wychwood Shires XXX. The Forest meanwhile has given us Beartown Bearskinful. The Boat, Catherine De Barnes, winner of the Most Improved Pub of the Year 2000 has offered Hopback Thunderstorm and Batemans Miss Saucy. The Railway our other Dorridge emporium has had Jennings Sneek Lifter, whilst the White Lion, Hampton in Arden, a recent convert to guest beers, has sold Black Sheep Bitter. Visit these pubs yourself to see what delights they may be stocking now.

ADNAMS, ADNAMS AND MORE ...

The branch was back on its travels to Suffolk for an October Adnams weekend. We travelled on Friday and quickly settled in to our new home for the next two nights : the wonderful pubs of Southwold.



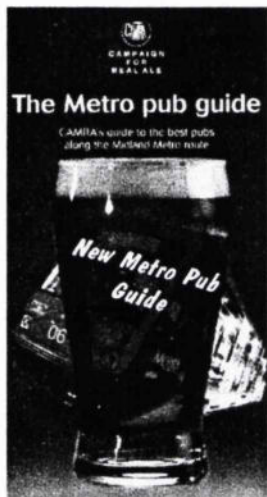
Southwold a genteel fishing port has changed little in the last few hundred years. It bristles with olde worlde references – you can buy “home killed meat” at the butchers. Adnams, while not dominating the town in terms of landscape, does dominate in more subtle ways – look out for the Adnams off licence, Adnams wine merchant and Adnams estate agent to name but a few.

The town is blessed with great pubs. All are Adnams and all sold their 3 stock beers at the time of our visit : the hoppy and fruity “Bitter”, a new strong mild with burnt liquorice flavours “Fishermans” and the malty but smooth Broadside. First stop was the Lord Nelson full of character overlooking the sea. Then to the plush bars of the Globe & Swan Hotels before the Sole Bay Inn, an unpretentious boozier with a nautical theme. Even on a Friday night, Southwold pubs had a quiet laid back atmosphere (quickly changed by 17 CAMRA members intent on drinking the place dry). Our darts match took over the Sole Bay for last orders but the landlord “Delboy” made us most welcome despite the odd misplaced dart in a punters ear.

Saturday morning and it was time for the Adnams brewery tour! We met at the Red Lion for teas and biccies and then off for our tour. Adnams is actually rather well hidden and is secreted between the town and the lighthouse. We inspected all areas of the brewery and enjoyed a tutored tasting session with the head brewer before heading back into town for a fresh fish and chip lunch with Adnams rep Jon Watchorn. I can honestly say I have never had so many excellent pints of beer in such a variety of pubs – every one was superb. The Adnams hospitality was unsurpassed.

It was sadly time to leave and we boarded our hired mini-bus for an afternoon/evening jaunt to some other local hostelries. First stop was the Low House at Laxfield, a fantastic 16th century thatched pub which has changed little over the years. High backed settles and log fires dominate the warren of small rooms and beers from Adnams (of course) and Earl Soham Brewery. Next stop was St Peters Brewery nearby which is famous for its speciality bottled beer range. The modern brew-kit contrasts with the 13th Century manor house next door. Our tour guide Gordon showed us round at a fast pace but sadly so quickly that we felt embarrassed to ask questions and break his stride. After a brief self-service tasting session it was back on the bus to the Green Dragon brew pub. Regular readers of this column will know that all brewers are mad. This one was no exception, apparently it is quite normal for him to drink 12 pints lunchtime and sleep the rest of the day each Saturday. A brief tour of the brewery was conducted while his eyes played pinball. We then had our pre-booked meal and jugs of beer to wash it down – splendid! Our final port of call was the fishing town of Lowestoft. Thanks must go to our bus driver who not only knew the pubs like the back of his hand but was also kind enough to take us on a pub crawl door-to-door with the bus so as to avoid the rain. We visited a selection of GBG pubs after turning up at one to find keg fonts only, the landlord having moved on. Luckily there were a few kindly yobs to point us in the right direction. Finally we returned to Southwold for last orders in the Sole Bay Inn to finish as we had started : Adnams Adnams and more Adnams.

Cheers... Keven Parker



In conjunction with local CAMRA branches Midland Metro have updated their guide to real ale pubs along the route of the Metro from Birmingham to Wolverhampton. Fifteen pubs are highlighted, including the Black Eagle, Hockley; the White Rose, Bilston and the Old Crown, West Bromwich. The guide

is well produced, however, a street map is a must if you wish to do a crawl of all fifteen pubs. To get a copy keep an eye out on the Metro trains, at the stations, at any Centro office or phone Midland Metro Traveline on 0870 608 2 608

in brief...

Solihull branch has a change in its committee. Dave Hobbs takes over as Chairman, whilst ex chair Brenda Duffy takes on the role of Secretary replacing Jamie Crompton who is now Press Officer.

6th Burton Winter Beer Festival

January 26-27 is the date, the venue the Town Hall. Fri 12-3; 6.30-11, Sat 11.30-3; 7-11 Free lunchtimes for CAMRA members, £1.50 evenings. Seasonal brews available all under cask cooling. Contact Richard Perry on 01283 564983

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Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 1998 and 2000

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IN THE PLEASANT SURROUNDINGS OF THE PUB,
OR IN OUR SEPARATE RESTAURANT
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BASK IN FRONT OF OUR REAL LOG FIRES

Spotlight Inn...

Red Lion, Shirley



The Red Lion, Shirley, at first glance, may be a pub that you would pass by. Don't, it is one of the best pubs in the Shirley area.

The site of a coaching inn on the main trunk road Stratford Road since 1751, the Red Lion was used for Coroner's inquests into unexplained deaths, the stable block acting as a temporary mortuary. It was sold in 1885 to Crossman and Co,

Burton on Trent and in 1903 to William Butler and Co. of Wolverhampton. It was rebuilt in 1937, then demolished in 1965 to make way for a new shopping precinct. The current building set back from the road, dates from 1965 and although having a brutal 60's exterior has a comfortable, old fashioned interior.

Now a Punch Tavern, licensee John Fewtrell stocks five real ales, all on handpump. This includes Ansell's Mild, Marston's Pedigree, Tetley Bitter, Boddington's Bitter and a guest beer which, at the time of my visit was Slater's Bitter. The guest is usually from a small independent brewery, not usually available in the Solihull area. Lunches are also provided between 12-2pm.

John has been at the Red Lion for eighteen years, although it is managed by Joe Baker. During those years John has always been keen on real ale. Indeed, the Red Lion has appeared in previous Good Beer Guides and has only lost its place due to competition from other pubs in the Solihull area.

There is a large lounge, part of which is designated as non smoking. It also has a back games room with a pool table, a games machine and a six foot sky satellite TV, popular with the sporting fans who use the pub.

Steve Dyson

The sad demise of a great name

Whitbread, one of the oldest breweries in this country has not only sold its breweries but is also selling its pubs, retaining no semblance to its original reason for its existence

It is true that in recent years, the quality of their beers has slowly, but surely declined. This has been the occasional blip with some tasty special beers, but generally the fayre has been pretty dire. The once proud beers such as Pompey Royal are no longer. In a recent drinker article I recall, I think, stating that Greenall's seemed to be disappearing up its own backside. Well Whitbread, congratulations you've achieved it!



Whitbread:

born: 1742

died: 2000

Cause of death: greedy shareholders; neglect; a management- with no love of the business who were dictated to by accountants and had no truck with Whitbread's rich brewing tradition, whilst proving themselves to be of the utmost mediocrity ...

R. I. P.

Steve Dyson

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
Burton on Trent	May Arthur	01283 542646
Coventry	Paul Hamblett	024 7641 7675
Dudley and South Staffs	Steve Amos	01384 252266
Heart of Warwickshire	Dave Rosling	01926 431376
Kidderminster	Gill Waller	01562 824760
Lichfield & Mid Staffs	Ray Jennett	01543 255195
Nuneaton & Bedworth	Les Hall	024 7631 1835
Redditch and Bromsgrove	Brett Laniosh	0976 610144
Shakespeare	Vaughan Hully	01789 778726
Solihull & District	Keven Parker	0121 242 5548
Stafford & District	Trevor Edwards	01785 252546
Stourbridge	Patrick Bird	0121 422 5394
Tamworth & Sutton Coldfield	Andy Cooke	0121 359 1100
Telford & East Shropshire	Peter Arden	01952 244954
Walsall	Rob Bentley	01922 861626
Wolverhampton	Fred Morton	01902 426513
Worcester	Peter Bottomley	01684 573018

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I enclose a cheque for £.....

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PUB OF THE YEAR 1998/9**



*CAMRA members celebrating the success of the Boat, Catherine De Barnes as
The Most Improved Pub of the Year 2000*



Solihull times

Non-members and guests are welcome to attend our branch meetings and social events. Branch members are welcome to attend Committee meetings but will be unable to participate unless invited to do so.

Branch meetings are held on the first 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!]

Christmas Do's

The Branch will have two socials to celebrate Christmas this year. On Saturday 9th December we shall partake of a Chinese at the China Villa Restaurant, Birmingham, at 9pm. Take your own beer. Meet for an aperitif or any other dental requirements [what is this man on about?? Ed.] at the Briar Rose about 7pm. This will be followed on Monday 18th December by our more traditional Christmas Pub Crawl. This year we will hit Knowle, meeting at the at the Wilson's Arms at 8.30pm

Peak District mini bus tour Saturday 31st March

Cancelled from last September this is an all day affair. We shall be visiting the classic pubs of the Peak District, including the Lamb at Holymoorside, Three Stags' Head, Wardlow Mires, the Gate, Brassington, the Barley Mow, Kirk Ireton and the Bentley Brook Inn home of Leatherbitches Brewery. Lunch at the Sycamore, Parwich and in the evening Leek... a quiet day! Cost approx £15... names to Keven asap

Beer & Baltis

Friday 29/12/00	Harvester, Olton
Thursday 1/2/01	Spread Eagle, Acocks Green
Friday 23/2/01	Anchor, Digbeth
Friday 23/3/01	Red Lion, Shirley

Branch Meetings

Monday 8/1/01	Blue Bell, Warings Green
Monday 5/2/01	Red Lion, Shirley
Monday 5/3/01	Griffin, Shustoke

GBG 2002 vote

Socials

Saturday 13/01/01	A visit to Derby, easy to get to and a beer drinkers mecca	More details from Keven
Saturday 17/02/01	The Somers Club, Halesowen	More details from Keven

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

Brenda Duffy is the Branch Secretary on 01564 200 431

The 16th edition of *Solihull Drinker* will be published on 5th March 2001.

The deadline for advertising or contributions will therefore be

Saturday 17th February 2001