



Solihull drinker

free

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

Issue No: 19

Winter, 2001

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Good Beer Guide 2002 blunder...

CAMRA's 2002 Good Beer Guide has omitted Solihull CAMRA's entries for Warwickshire.

The Navigation, Lapworth, and the Blue Bell, Henley in Arden are missing from the guide, even though being voted in by the branch.

Of particular concern to the branch is the fact that the Navigation has had an almost unbroken record of being in the guide for the last 17 years.

Andrew Kimber, landlord of the Navigation has been informed of the omission, and, to his credit, was quite philosophical about the error.

Branch Chairman Dave Hobbs is currently investigating the situation to see what can be done to in some way rectify the blunder.

However, feelings run high within the branch, some members pressing for some recompense be due, not only to the Navigation, but also the branch which democratically voted the pub into the guide. The entry for the Navigation, which would have appeared in the guide, is included in this edition of the Drinker.

As to the Blue Bell, Henley, this would have had to be deleted from the 2002 Guide due to its recent change in ownership, a criteria set by CAMRA HQ. Recent visits vouch that although the guest is a run of the mill beer, the quality is as good as ever. Give it a try and let Solihull CAMRA know what you think

Greville Arms a loss!...

The last edition of the Drinker ran an article on the Greville Arms, Elmdon under its Spotlight Inn banner. To the embarrassment of the editor who wrote the article the pub has since removed all its real ales, so readers of the Drinker are advised to avoid the pub

Editors round:

I was relaxing over the Christmas break drinking Church End Gravediggers, Phoenix Golden Glow, Slaters Original, Dent T'Owd Tup, Roosters Special and Oakham JHB musing over the editorial content of this edition of the Drinker. Whether it was due to the beer or not, inspiration was difficult to come by. Usually, it's traditional to reflect on the past year in the last edition of the years newspapers and magazines. There have been ups and downs in both the national and local beer scene which have been adequately covered by recent editions of the Drinker. Supping on Dent T'Owd Tup and the other, by now empty bottles, ideas began to form in my mind as to how I would sign off the old year...

...and that is the availability in local pubs of micro brewery beers.

There are only a couple of outlets where beers from micro's are consistently available. Bernie's Off License is always a good bet, but granted it is an off license and many readers may not be keen on the idea of taking bottles of beer home for consumption fearing that they will taste like the disappointing flavour of bottled beers bought from supermarkets. That fear I can allay. The beers are always in excellent condition, because they are living beers, and can maintain their bite for some 24 hours after purchase, even longer for the stronger beers. The Boat at Catherine De Barnes is another pub which can have some micro brewery beers, but they, like many other pubs owned by pub companies have to work from a list supplied by the owning company. These beers are usually from the national or regional breweries and are dependant upon the discounts offered to the company. Likewise in many instances these beers are selected for their strength and not necessarily for their flavour. When speaking to Dave Queenborough of Bernie's recently he told me that a nine gallon barrel of Phoenix White Monk, not a beer seen in our local pubs, went in an hour of going on sale, so there is a market out there for distinctive beers from micro breweries. Likewise, how often too do we see beers from our two local micro's Weatheroak and Beowulf in our local pubs?... not very often. Is it because Solihull drinkers are not very discerning? I think not. Maybe too many pubs jump on the real ale band wagon in a half hearted way, thinking that anything will do. Granted Solihull's beer history has been dire in the past, being swamped by Allied, Bass and Whitbread but it has improved immensely this last five years. However, it really is time to move forward. Pubs should get away from the Tetley's, Marston's, Wadworth, Speckled Hens and Greene King's of this world which frankly are getting a little jaded and tired and look at beers from breweries such Hop Back, Oakham, Dent and many other of that ilk. Will any pub rise to this challenge.. will any pub operating company seriously consider these distinctive beers becoming an integral part of their lists? There could be a marketing killing in appealing to the discerning beer drinkers of Solihull with some real quality crafted beers... any takers?

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 Hobbs 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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Sun 10.00-3.00, 7.00-9.30**

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	Pete Clarkson	0121 420 1901
Burton on Trent	Dick Allen	01332 8657
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	Stuart Dench	01527 501175
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	Dave Powell	mobile: 07754077399
Worcester	Peter Bottomley	01684 573018

**If you have any complaints about short measure, contact
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available. For further info phone Gareth Stead on 01332 331854 or visit website www.derbycamra.org.uk

Local Beer Festivals... a treat not to be missed

January 25th-26th is the 7th Burton Winter Beer Festival held at Burton Town Hall, King Edwards Place. Fri 12-3pm, 6.30-11; Sat 11.30-4, 7-11. Over 45 real ales. CAMRA members free admission at all sessions, non-members lunch sessions free, Fri evening £4.50, inc commemorative glass [£2.50], Sat £4.00 inc glass. Live entertainment Fri, Sat and food available at all sessions. Website: www.camra.org.uk/burton

Two weeks later from Thurs 7th to 9th February is the 1st Derby Winter Beer Festival in the Darwin Suite of the Assembly Rooms in Derby Market Place. 40 plus beers, ciders, bottled beers topped off with entertainment every night. 5-11 Thur; Fri and Sat all day 11.30-11. Free admission to CAMRA members [take your membership card]. Souvenir glasses

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"I'm only hier for the Bier

Some of you might know that on the first weekend of April yours truly spent a very pleasurable time in Deutschland (that's Germany to you Engländer and Engländerinnen). If you, like me, read your "What's Brewing" carefully you would have noticed an article about the Knickerbocker's Bier Tours operated by Tom Perera, an American not in Paris but in Dinslaken, not too far from Düsseldorf. Being a semi-Kraut (me mam's German) and possessing a degree in the language I thought it was high time to re-visit the Mutterland (female version in honour of my aforementioned mother). I don't intend to regurgitate verbatim the said article in "What's Brewing" but I'd like to give fellow members of Solihull CAMRA some details of the weekend as it might whet your appetite and so lead you to wet your whistle in a fellow European country (Yes it's true Mr. Duncan-Smith!)

I left Brum mid-morning a caught one of our highly reliable British trains- I am sober whilst I'm writing this, honest!- to Stansted Airport for the flight around 4 p.m. You travel with KLM-Buzz, so once you've made the booking via Tom you don't need a ticket, you just need to show your passport when you check in. You have to go on the same flight as everybody so that you all arrive at Düsseldorf Airport at the same time, approximately 7 p.m.

We duly arrived on time and we met Tom, you couldn't miss him, a great bear of a man sporting a cap advertising his beer venture. About 28 of us assembled to catch the coach... special mention must be made of Mike Beynon from Wale who couldn't find his luggage, thus we all knew immediately that this bloke would be a bit of a character!

We had a 30 minutes coach drive to our hotels: there were so many of us that we were split between two hotels. One was situated near a bar, but as Tom pointed out to the unaware, a 'bar' in Germany can have none too salubrious meanings..... this hotel was about 10 minutes on foot (or 5 minutes if you used both feet) from the other hotel, which was where I was staying.... which Gott sei Dank was literally six paces from our first port of call, the Haus Holtbrügge (see photo of me outside with *The Tea Party*, the late Stockport County fanzine, RIP). We had huge portions of ham, mashed spuds, sauerkraut and gravy, and being of Germanic stock (which probably was in the gravy) I wolfed it down and partook of the sauerkraut which was spurned by a fair few of our party.

I suppose I should mention beer! All the beers in the original article were, I think, all the ones we had during the weekend, with maybe the odd exception. During our meal we had Kronen Export and Hövels, plus a schnapps. These like all the samples and all the food during our stay were free, but drinks after the meal were extra. In fact when we finished the first/main course a second course arrived..... more of the same! As a human dustbin I wasn't complaining!

The locals were well used to seeing the English in their pub and were all very friendly. Indeed, a married couple came in (as apparently they always do) to talk/socialise with Tom's guests. As luck would have it they sat next to me, so I had the opportunity of using my German, although I have to say both the married couple could speak English, the husband particularly well. In fact he also shares (like me) a love of whisky so we ended up buying each other beer, whisky, schnapps, who knows, maybe even industrial strength floor cleaner, my old brain cells were starting to hurt at 2.30 a.m. when I finally decided I'd had enough!

Some of the others had, like me, stayed in the pub to drink and chat with the locals, but some of the more intrepid members went on a pub crawl: Dinslaken is quite compact so you will come across a number of pubs within walking distance.

As I said, I turned in at 2.30 but others rolled in after 4, including our friend Mike who couldn't open his room, having key and/or obvious co-ordination problems.

Next morning..... oooo, a bad head! Nevertheless I had planned to do a bit of souvenir German food

shopping so I had set the alarm so I could do this before the coach came to pick us up at 10.30. However being somewhat inebriated the previous evening I'd forgotten the hour difference so I woke up with only just about enough time to get ready and have breakfast. I was up so (comparatively) late that the chamber maid came into my room whilst I was just preparing to enter the shower. I popped my head round the bathroom door, we both apologised, she made a quick exit! No, I didn't take advantage of the situation: it had nothing to do with the fact that I'm a good Catholic boy nor the fact that she was probably in her early sixties, no breakfast and more importantly beer beckoned.... having said that I did think "It's a good job I've already paid for all this otherwise I could happily lie in bed all day!"



Haus Holtbrügge, our first "port of call"

After a goodly breakfast i.e. rolls, bread, boiled egg, hams of various description, cheeses, jams, coffee, juice, a typical hearty German breakfast, we set off again on our comfy and modern coach for the first pub, Walsumer Brauhaus. You can see me nursing my team's fanzine and a hangover on the second photo. Here we had a 'Blond' and a 'Braun' beer, unfiltered if I remember rightly, and quite tasty too.

We then went by our coach to the nearby town of Duisburg and to Schacht 4/8, 'Schacht' being a mine shaft (remember those folks, in pre-Maggie Thatcher and Ian McGregor days?) Part of the interior was indeed set out like a mine shaft, so that's why the third photo is a bit dark (cheap disposable camera folks!) Here we also had a meal, this time we had a choice of what we ate. And what we drank...? Mulvany's, perhaps the nearest thing we had all weekend to a bitter; Grubengold, a golden beer, a Pils and one other beer called (I think) Ruhrpott.

Our third port of call, Websters (no relation!) was within walking distance. Here we not only had a couple of beers, a Braun and a Blond, but we were given a short talk by the head brewer, with Tom translating: we also had the opportunity to ask questions, and we were given a quick tour round the brewpub.

Our final destination was Diebels in Issum. If you'd added the previous three establishments together they still would have been dwarfed in size by this brewery, now sadly largely owned by (you've guessed it!) Interbrew. We were given a guided tour of the brewery and the site, the bottling plant, etc (see photos). Then we sat down for traditional Abendbrot, i.e. "Evening Bread", which meant in addition to enjoying that other thing of which yeast plays an important part we had hams, sausages, salad, etc. Once again I didn't let the side down and did my usual trencherman performance.

We had a couple of 10 (or 15?) litre mini-barrels of Diebels Altbier ("Old Beer") to drink, so 17.5-26ish pints in each. These were 'help yourself' barrels, and pretty decent too.

All this eating and drinking took place in a large pub on the Diebels site- we'd noticed it looked fairly empty when we'd arrived, but after our one hour tour it had filled up, mainly with what I'd call young people, i.e. 18-30 (being 38 myself!) Borussia Dortmund were playing Bayern München in a key Bundesliga match, so some had come to watch the game. There was also a large hen-party in the room next to us, so some of our group started milling around near these young ladies of the opposite sex. However only about 4 out of our party of 28 could really converse in German, so I strode across to these girls and had a chat to them, saying things like "We're a group of lonely English boys and does your boyfriend work on an oilrig?" After a chat they could see I was a cunning linguist, so if this isn't an incentive to learn a language I don't know what is.

But all this drinking, eating and travelling had taken its toll on me. We arrived back in Dinslaken at about 11 p.m. but I was so knackered that I had one more beer and went to bed. Others repeated 4 a.m. of the previous night!

After a leisurely breakfast we left about 10ish for the Borbeck brewery near Essen (trust the Germans to name a town which means 'food' or 'meal'). Here we were shown round the (small) brewery and had four beers: a Dampf or steam beer, a Zwickelbier (even I don't know how best to translate it), but I think this was my overall favourite during the weekend, a Salonbier and a Pils. We again had a choice with regards to food, and we had the accompaniment of an old-style jazz band.

Sadly we had to catch a flight back at 3ish, so we set off on our coach at 2ish. The flight back was quite adventurous as the pilot aborted twice owing to a technical problem, we took of the third time, not 'third time lucky we hoped', or as one of the jokers in our group put it to the stewardesses, "We're not going to die, are we?"

I felt sorry for those from Jersey who, due to the delay, ultimately missed their connecting flight home, and (as a footie fan) I felt even sorrier for the Wycombe lads trying to get the latest score as it was their FA Cup Semi-Final moment of glory v Liverpool.

We finally arrived back at Stansted at I (think) 6 p.m. to find out that Wycombe had (sadly but bravely) lost 2-1 and that there was now only one direct train left back to Brum, which I duly caught, finally arriving home at 20 to 11 but too knackered to go for last orders.

A memorable weekend: great beer, great food, good accommodation, good company and, on a personal level, the chance to re-visit the Mutterland and speak my mother's tongue. I'd heartily recommend either to members or to the branch as a visit. It cost about £220 but that includes the flights, the coach, accommodation, all meals, tours of breweries/brewpubs and all samples. I quite fancy the idea of making this an annual pilgrimage, so I'm toying with the idea of doing this all again next year. Anyone else interested? If you need any further details, please speak to me. Prost!



The brewing plant at the Borbeck Brewery

Martin Collinge



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Spotlight Inn...

Cock Horse, Rowington

Surrounded by beautiful countryside, Rowington is a few miles north of Warwick on the Old Warwick Road. Popular for cyclists and walkers the area has quite a few good pubs including the Navigation at Lapworth, Tom O' the Wood at Finwood End, and in Rowington, a typical Warwickshire village the Cock Horse, which has recently come under the management of David and Wendy Preston.

Owned by Inn Business, the pub is quite small, being full of low beams and having a traditional quarry tiled floor in the bar. To one side is a larger room which is used as a restaurant serving an a la carte menu on some evenings. At other times it is used for bar meals which are available during opening hours.

The beers available at the pub on my visit were Draught Bass, Ansells Bitter, Flowers Original and Fullers London Pride all beers from the big brewers or large regionals. However, it is fair to say that at the beer festival at the pub in summer there were some twenty beers, many from the micro's, and served in good condition.



A plaque in the pub traces the line of publicans back to 1775.

The atmosphere in the pub is conducive to conversation with the background music kept to a reasonable level, all in all a pleasant way to while away a lunchtime or evening session.

Steve Dyson

Vaults, Knowle on the move...

The Vaults in Knowle has been listed in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide for a number of years and is regarded as one of the leading Real Ale pubs in the Solihull area. Plans have recently been announced to make the pub even better... by moving it next door. The builders are currently working on the site of the former Victorian Vaults restaurant with a brief to retain the traditional cosy atmosphere of the present Vaults.

Licensee Nick Worrall tells us that the new premises will have a better cellar, temperature controlled to ensure that every pint is served at the correct temperature. Other improvements include an extraction system to remove smoke and smells. The disabled will be well catered for, with everything on one level, and disabled toilet facilities provided. Although slightly smaller in area than the existing Vaults, the pub will be less cramped than at present, due to a better layout.

What will not change is the commitment to good quality Real Ale. Nick says that the existing beer range of 4 regular beers plus 2 guests, and real cider, will remain. As before the pub will provide food at lunch times, but not in the evenings, as it is primarily a drinkers pub, where the beer is more important than the food!

The move is scheduled to take place around the second week of January, and the old pub may need to close for a short time to arrange for the removal of a few of its treasures. The extensive collection of pump clips will be moved, as will the glass display cabinet containing an unusual variety of drinks related articles, and even a hairdresser's dummy! The dart board is to be retained but unfortunately the bar billiards will make way for more space for drinkers.

Why not call in soon to bid a fond farewell to an old favourite, and make a date to try out the new pub when the move is completed. As well as Nick and his wife Gwen, all the existing staff will remain, so there will be plenty of familiar faces behind the bar, and a warm welcome is assured.

Brenda Duffy

in brief....

Yates Wine Lodge changes hands...

Yates Wine Lodge in Station Road Solihull is now owned by Morrells of Oxford who exited brewing last year. Our mole in Oxford predicts a "Que Pasa" Mediterranean-themed pub in Solihull soon!

Real Ale choice at the Barn, Hockley Heath cut by two thirds...

The Barn, on the Stratford Road has cut its range of real ales. Boddingtons and Wadworth 6X have been removed leaving only Marston's Pedigree behind the bar

Hogshead, Solihull withdraws CAMRA discount...

The Hogshead in Station Road, Solihull has withdrawn the 10p per pint discount to card carrying CAMRA members

Fieldhouse, Monkspath for refurbishment...

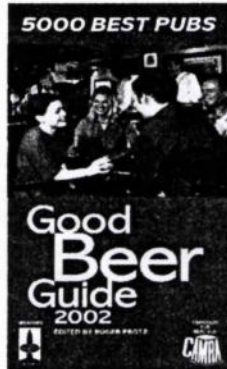
The Fieldhouse could now be open after its makeover as an Ember Inn. Suited for the more mature [30+] age group, it is to be hoped that the London Pride will still be available

Evening Mail/Sunday Mercury Pub Awards...

Our local newspapers are running a 2001 best pub awards, separated into 8 different categories. Pubs in Solihull so far nominated include Navigation, Lapworth; Olton Tavern, Olton; Black Boy, Heronfield; Colebrook, Shirley; Pitcher and Piano, Solihull; Orange Tree, Chadwick End; Lyndon, Olton; Wharf, Hockley Heath; drum and Monkey, Bentley Heath; Woodman's Rest, Shirley; Hogshead, Solihull, Plume of Feathers, Shirley; Highwood, Olton... no accounting for some tastes?

GBG 2002 hits the streets...

The 2002 edition of the CAMRA Good Beer Guide offers a whole new reading and drinking experience for lovers of real ale. The guide has



been overhauled and redesigned from start to finish. There are still 5,000 of the best pubs in Britain that offer cask beer in tip-top condition, but 4,000 of the entries now have longer descriptions. Readers will learn more about these pubs before they visit them, and will have all the information they need about the food, the history, the architecture, the

facilities for families and children as well as the beer.

As always, the Good Beer Guide features its unique Breweries section that lists all the breweries, from micros, to regionals to global producers that make cask and bottle-conditioned beers.

Editor Roger Protz gives a no-punches-pulled analysis of the state of the brewing industry, while other top writers Susy Smith of Country Living, Susan Nowak and Jeff Evans describe the battle to save Britain's country pubs, the campaign to improve pub food, and the growing number of bottle-fermented beers.

Don't go to the pub without it! The Good Beer Guide 2002 costs £12.99 from bookshops or direct from CAMRA head office. For CAMRA members the price is £9, remarkable value, so if you're not a member of the Campaign, now is the time to join! The 2002 Good Beer Guide is sponsored by Cask Marque. If you order direct from CAMRA, send cheques made out to "CAMRA" to 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans AL1 4LW; Access or Visa orders to 01727 867201. Alternatively get your copy from the local Solihull branch which has copies now, again at a discount to CAMRA members

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Bar Humbug or Bar Rilliant ...

The Golden Lion has entered the 21st Century in a new guise - now renamed the Bar Co, with a substantial makeover into the bargain. So the once traditional 3 roomed pub with lounge, snug and bar has completed its transition into a one roomed bar. A monument to Thirties splendour has been replaced by a plastic artificial environment or a dour & slightly grim road-house has been converted into an inviting, comfortable modern entertainment venue. So which camp are you in? Surprisingly, as a self-confessed traditionalist, I find myself in the latter party. There are time capsule pubs which will be retained to document traditional pub formats. Maybe not so many in our area admittedly, though the White Lion at Hampton-in-Arden springs to mind (lets hope the new owners don't get carried away with thoughts of drastic renovation there) and the Case Is Altered is not far away. However the majority of pubs need to move with the times to attract customers - they are a business after all. At the end of the day, Bar Co sells Real Ale (currently Marstons Pedigree, John Smiths Bitter & Charles Wells Bombardier) in a venue more likely to attract a younger clientele. And CAMRA (cue the famous Jonathan Ross joke) needs new blood just as much as the Black Pudding industry. (However I do wish they hadn't changed the name - I'll get me coat)

Steve Wood

Mild rebuke?...

Recent editions of the Drinker have bemoaned the decline in the availability and variety of mild in the Solihull area. Sadly, just out of our branch area and in Coventry branch territory is the Case is Altered at Five Ways near Hatton. This lovely pub is on CAMRA's National Inventory of Unspoilt Pubs. Brains Dark Mild has been available there for a number of years and is served from the cask

and more on the Case...

The Case used to sell national brands form Ansells and Whitbread. Alongside the mild you'll find beers like Greene King IPA and Old Hooky. In addition recent guests have come from some interesting and excellent small breweries such as Brewsters [Leicestershire] and Frankton Bagby of Church Lawford, Rugby.

Well done to the Case for supporting the micros!

Dave Queenborough



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!]

Socials

On Friday 18th January the branch celebrates 10 years in the Good Beer Guide with the Bulls Head, Barston. Starting from 8pm onwards, we shall be presenting Brad with a plaque in recognition of his achievement

Saturday 16th February sees us on another minibus tour of 4 pubs in the branch area, including, hopefully, a visit to the new Vaults at Knowle where we shall celebrate their 10 years in the Good Beer Guide

Planned for March.... A visit to Lees Brewery, Manchester. Phone Keven Parker for details

Beer & Baltis

Friday 1st February Spread Eagle, Warwick Road, Acocks Green
Friday 1st March Red Lion, Stratford Road, Shirley
Friday 29th March Anchor, Bradford Street, Digbeth, Birmingham

Branch Meetings

Monday 7th January Old Royal Oak, Hockley Heath
Monday 4th February Red Lion, Stratford Road, Shirley [2003 GBG vote]
Monday 4th March Harvester, Tanhouse Farm Road, Olton

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 20th edition of *Solihull Drinker* will be published on March 4th, 2002
The deadline for advertising or contributions will therefore be
Saturday 23rd February, 2002