



Solihull drinker

free

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

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Spring, 2003

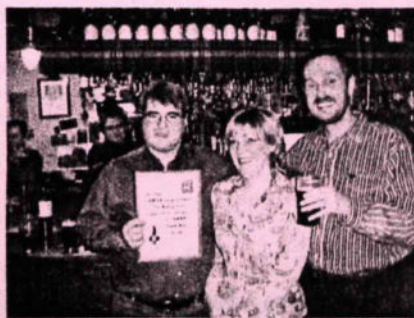
Bernie's and the Navigation celebrate 20 years in the Good Beer Guide



Branch Chairman Ray Cooke presents Brian and David Queenborough with their plaque at Bernie's

evening to present Brian and Dave with the award, noting the fine range of beers on tap including Phoenix White Monk, Roosters Scorchers, Timothy Taylor Landlord, York Centurions Ale, Ma Pardoe's Bumble Hole and Phoenix Double Dagger... what a selection! Branch Chairman Ray Cooke congratulated them on the consistent quality of their beer, and also their range, especially beers from micro's not usually seen in Solihull.

The Navigation, Lapworth has been run by Andrew Kimber for over 20 years now and is a popular pub beside the Grand Union Canal in Lapworth. It has appeared in many guides to the best pubs in the country. Andrew Kimber was one of the first publicans in the area to take advantage of the guest beer laws that came in in the early 90's. Draught Bass, M&B Brew XI are always available as well as a guest beer, all served on hand pump. Solihull CAMRA turned up at the Navigation after presenting Bernie's their award to do the same. The guest on offer was Everard's Beacon. A traditional cider is also on tap for the lovers of the apple juice, which at the time of our visit was Old Rosie, a stunning 7.3%. Also noted was Elliotts Spiced Mulled Wine



Andrew Kimber and his wife Sonia receive their plaque at the Navigation

Cont. over

at 8.5%.

The pub is well known for its meals served every day throughout the pub. If you are a beer drinker though, you will enjoy imbibing in the traditional stone flagged bar with its roaring log fire in winter and in the small lounge next to it. During the summer months the garden is a pleasure to be in, overlooking the canal and its passing boats. At the presentation Ray congratulated Andrew and Sonia for running a pub which sells good beer, food in ample portions and extends a warm welcome to its customers.

Whilst in the area we could not resist popping into the Cockhorse at Rowington to finish the night in this traditional country pub where conversation was accompanied by Ansells Bitter, Flowers Original, Adnams Broadside and Fullers London Pride

Local News and Beers around 'ere...

Watch out for Ember Inns Cask Ales Champions Festival from 7th March to 21st April. There might be some good beers on, though don't get too excited following the disappointment of the last one, where the beer range was unexciting. Due to happen locally at The Woodman's Rest, The Colebrook and The Fieldhouse.

The Railway at Dorridge has had Smiles Old Tasser and are building a new patio at the back. The Sharmans Cross has reopened following refurbishment with Draught Bass and M&B Mild, but the smart new exterior belies an interior which our ace reporter felt had not changed much. However, this is one of very few pubs in our area to sport M&B Mild. Whilst on the subject of mild there

has been a change of management at the Lyndon, renowned for its Ansells Mild. It was still on in late February alongside Tetley Bitter, the Marston's Pedigree has gone though.

The Vaults continues to get some good beers with Jennings Cumberland Ale, Oakham White Dwarf and Kelham Island Easy Rider, City of Cambridge Ice Breaker seen recently. The Wharf, Hockley Heath served J W Lees Plum Pudding at 4.8 and Cottage Wicked Hound, certainly a pub to keep an eye on. The Bluebell Cider House has stocked St. Austell Tribute and Enville Maiden's Ruin. Out at the Winged Spur, Ullenhall, Everard's Tripple Gold at 5.0 was recently on offer, and nearby in Henley in Arden the Blue Bell, was serving Worthington 1744, however the Ansells Mild has gone—bad news, but so has Tetley Bitter—good news? Staying in Henley the Black Swan had no cask Boddingtons, usually available, you could enjoy perhaps the Banks's Original and Theakston's Best Bitter. Extremely gratifying to see the Saddlers Arms in Solihull serving Caledonian Duechars alongside its normal range recently. Down the road at the Boat Catherine De Barnes Nigel has been serving us St. Austells Tribute at 4.2, Charles Wells Banana Bread at 4.5 and Adnams Broadside. Also enjoyed there recently was Courage Directors two for the price of one, value indeed! A little outside our area but a pub deserving of support the Case has had Frankton Bagby Village Pride and Hook Norton Double Stout. Meanwhile real ale off licence Bernies has been selling Phoenix Snowbound, Fernandes January Bitter, Bank Top Bocton Life and Red Lion Chardonale. At the Red Lion, Shirley enjoyed recently were Abbeydale Matins and Weatheroak Light Oak



Vandalism at the Greville Arms...

Passing by the Greville Arms in Elmdon Heath the editor noticed that painters and decorators were hard at it giving the outside a lick of paint. I was horrified however, to see that the Sizzling Pub Co. have removed the traditional pub sign shown above. It has been replaced with the most awful, garish plastic monstrosity demonstrating that this pub co. is perfectly able to display that it has extremely bad taste in the design department

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Sun 10.00-3.00, 7.00-9.30**

Branch Christmas pub crawl of Solihull town centre...

On a chilly evening in December, a group of Solihull CAMRA members met for our traditional Christmas pub crawl. Solihull town centre was chosen, as there are now a number of pubs serving real ale, and we gathered in the Saddlers Arms, on Warwick Road to begin the evening. The Saddlers is a comfortable and welcoming hostelry, with friendly bar staff. We decided to forego the delights of Monday night football (Sunderland v Man City) on the big screen, and concentrated instead on enjoying Young's Special and Adnam's Broadside, (and Shepherd Neame Spitfire for those who arrived before it ran out). All the beers were in excellent condition. Next we moved across the road to the Bar Co, formerly the Golden Lion. This has a modern, stylish décor, though sadly somewhat lacking in atmosphere. Here we were offered a choice of John Smith's Bitter and Charles Wells Bombardier, with all of us opting for the latter. A stroll through Mell Square brought us to the Mason's Arms, pleasant and welcoming, but disappointingly offering no guest beer alongside its regular Draught Bass which was actually very good.

We moved on, along the High Street towards Station Road and the Hogshead. This is a lively and cosmopolitan pub, with an ever changing list of guest beers. On the night of our visit, we could choose from Fuller's London Pride (which later ran out), Marston's Pedigree and Hook Norton Old Hooky, all of which were most enjoyable. We were perhaps a little disappointed, as on other occasions the choice has been wider, and included some more unusual beers. It was, however, a pleasant way to end the evening.

Brenda Duffy



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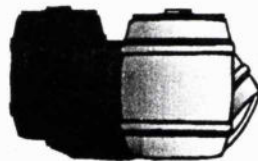
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From the Fringe 2...

Keen readers of *The Solihull Drinker* will have seen my article *From The Fringe* in the last but one edition, in which I stated that I intended writing about what is on offer for the discerning beer drinker just on the other side of the Solihull/Birmingham border. So as promised here's the second instalment about Michael's supermarket on the Coventry Road. Michael's is on a border of its own, namely that of South Yardley/Sheldon. It is situated within walking distance of the Swan Centre (and consequently not too far from the Beowulf Brewery). It is also close to The Shooting Star pub, the pub formerly known as Harry Ramsden's or (further back) The Good Companions.

Being a supermarket one can, of course, buy any number of things, but one eye-catching section is the range of bottled beers. As follows:

Theakston's Cool Cask/Old Peculiar
Bateman's Combined Harvest/XXB
Timothy Taylor Landlord
Wychwood Fiddler's Elbow/Hobgoblin
Tom Wood Jolly Ploughman
Daleside Old Legover
Young's Waggedance/Dirty Dick's
Caledonian Golden Promise

Marston's Owd Rodger/Pedigree/Strong Pale Ale
Shepherd Neame Master Brew/Spitfire/Bishop's Finger
Late Red/1698/Goldings/Whitstable Bay
Badger Golden Champion/Tanglefoot
Usher's Mann's Brown Ale/The Bishop's Tipple
Jennings Cross Buttock
Greene King Abbot Ale
Black Sheep Black Sheep Ale
Morland Old Speckled Hen/Hen's Tooth
Carlsberg-Tetley Double Diamond (!)

Most of the above bottled beers also have a cask equivalent. Of these beers only one is bottle-conditioned, i.e. Hen's Tooth, whilst two are organic, namely Golden Promise and Whitstable Bay.

There is also a wide range of foreign beers, with the usual suspects being joined by some interesting brews, including Dragon Stout from Jamaica, at 7.5%!

So if you're in the area you could use it as an excuse to shop here, rather than Safeway's down the road. And then come round to mine (as I only live round the corner from Michael's) and crack open a bottle or two with me!

Martin Colling

Vaults Birthday Bierfest...

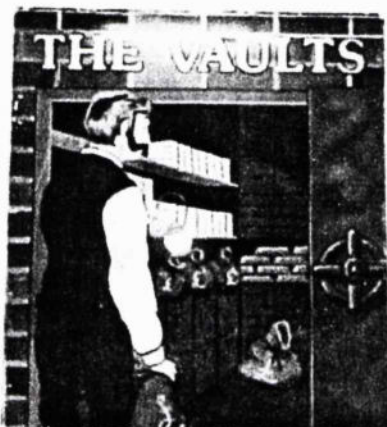
Is it really a year since the Vaults, Knowle moved into their new premises? The pub seems to be going from strength to strength having the best range of beers available anywhere in the Solihull area.

To celebrate their "first birthday" Nick served over 20 different beers during the week beginning February 15th. An advance party went on Friday night and sampled some of the beers, whilst a concentrated effort was made by the rest of the branch on Saturday night when we sampled Oakham Kaleidoscope [4.7], Phoenix Valentine Massacre [4.7], Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby [6] and Hampshire Temptation [4.2]. Other beers available during the festival included Kelham Island Pale Rider, Daleside Monkey Wrench and Old Legover. Beers also came from local brewers Beowulf, Weatheroak and Church End and to top it all the beautiful Deuchers IPA and my favourite Oakham JHB at 3.8% a superb session beer. The whole branch congratulates Nick, Gwen his wife and Nigel the cellarman for a cracking week!

Nick and Gwen welcome you to the Vaults, Knowle...

The Real Ale venue in Knowle with:

- ◆ Six handpumped beers including regulars, Ansell's Mild, Greene King IPA, Burton Ale, Tetley Bitter and two guest beers
 - ◆ Real cider from Weston's
 - ◆ Food available lunchtimes Monday - Saturday
 - ◆ Occasional Beer Festivals
- Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 1993 and 1994



CAMRA Good Beer Guide listed since 1993



The Vaults, St Johns Close, Knowle.

Tel: 01564 773656

Beer of the Festival presentation...

As a thank you to all those who worked at our last beer festival we took everyone off on a free night out to present Church End Brewery with a plaque congratulating them on winning the Beer of the Festival Award with their Bats in the Belfry, a beer which has won quite a few awards recently.

Our evening started off at the former home of the brewery at the Griffin in Shustoke where Bass PS2 Stout, Brewster's Marquis Bitter and Holden's Trevor supplemented the usual range.

On to the brewery where we sampled Gravediggers, Cuthbert's, P Reg, Fallen



Angel, Silent Night, Cracker, Porter, Goats Milk, Stocking Filler and Vicars Ruin, quite a selection! A buffet and tour of the brewery was given by Carl one of the brewers at Church End, whilst Darren in between a busy time at the bar accepted the plaque on behalf of Stuart who was unable to make it that night.

Carl from Church End on the left and Brian and Dave Queenborough from Barnie's. Church End and Barnie's came to the rescue of the festival by delivering an extra 300 pints to the festival to stop us running dry on the last evening of the festival!



2002
Beer Festival

National Pubs Week...

Although past this Drinkers sell by date, CAMRA's National Pubs Week ran from 22nd February to the 1st March. The idea behind the week was to emphasise and heighten the profile of the pub in the local community. Indeed Mike Benner, CAMRA's Head of Campaigns said, "The aim of National Pubs Week is simple - to encourage people to visit pubs more regularly." Figures produced for the promotion show that only 29% of local people go to the pub

more than once a week and 26% of people never go to the pub, whilst countrywide only 38% of men and 21% of women visit a pub once a week or more. 25% of men and 34% of women never visit a pub! Research also showed that Midlander's valued quality of food; people who use the pub; quality of beer and friendliness of staff as important points in deciding to go to the pub.

So after you have read this Drinker, pop out to the pub and enjoy some real ale in a convivial atmosphere in one of the many good pubs we have in the Solihull area.

Plough, Monkspath re-opens...

The Plough on the Stratford Road in Monkspath has recently reopened after a refurbishment. It was closed for most of January and much rebuilding work appeared to be going on. However, the interior layout is similar to what went before with a typical Beefeater restaurant to the left and a large "pub" lounge area on the right. It's good to see traditional beer there, if not that inspiring. Four hand pumps dispense Boddingtons Bitter, Draught Bass, Marstons Pedigree and Banks's Bitter. If you've taken to much of the amber nectar there is a Travel Inn hotel at the rear of the pub.

Dave Queenborough





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Spotlight Inn...

Wharf, Hockley Heath

Formerly a Chef & Brewer, the Wharf transferred into the Scottish Courage fold some years ago becoming what was the first outlet in Solihull for S&N beers. Maybe not something to shout about we hear some of you say, but at the time it was a welcome addition to the very limited choice of real ales available in the mid 1990s.

The Wharf is now run by Wayne Ansell. In the 4 years he has been there, we have seen the choice of beers expand to include a regular guest beer. They come from the Scottish Courage Retail guest list as supplied by The Beer Cellar, but can also include other even more interesting ones. At the time of one of our more recent visits, we was delighted to see Taylor's Landlord on tap. Regular beers are Theakstons Bitter, Directors and Pedigree as well as the guest, and all were selling well for a Tuesday night.



Formerly known as the White Lion, the Wharf was built in 1868



A view of the garden overlooking the canal

The Wharf is a canal side pub situated on the main Stratford Road in Hockley Heath, bordering on Dorridge and close to the M42. It has split level flooring where it has been extended at the back. There is a public bar area though not a separate room, which is frequented by one of the two darts teams every Monday night. The Bar area has a coal fire but regrettably not a real one. On those occasional warm summer days, the garden and open air drinking areas are popular with families. The boating fraternity are also attracted, as there are plenty of moorings for those taking the slow route round the area. The moorings and outside area were formerly a coal yard dating back to when it was transported by barge.

The Wharf specialises in roast meat carveries, which are available lunchtimes and evenings and all day on Sundays. Whilst a committed CAMRA member and real ale drinker, we do recognize that different tipples do appeal to others. So if it is wine you prefer, there is a varied choice on the wine list rather than the glass of lukewarm house plonk often available in British pubs. Well worth calling in if you're in the area, or even if you're not!

Allan and Brenda Duffy

in brief....

W & D put up to 15p on the price of your pint

Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries is to put up the price of beer by 3.5% - and the cost of a pint could go up by as much as 15p.

The group, with breweries in Wolverhampton and Burton on Trent, is imposing the increase from January 27, with around 500 tenanted pubs likely to be most affected across the region.

Spokesman Jeremy Eaton said "As a major employer, the company faces additional costs, including pensions, raw materials, distribution and fuel.

Some pubs could see a 1p increase while others could see a 15p increase. It is the licensees decision whether to pass on the increase to their customers or not"

[One wonders whether this is to pay back the investors following last years unsuccessful takeover bid... again the drinker loses out. Ed.]

Death of Edwin Holden

It is with sadness that the branch records here the death of Edwin Holden at the comparatively early age of 57. Edwin, the mainstay of Holden's black country brewery in Woodsetton had been unwell for some time. The branch extends sympathy to his family and wishes the brewery well for the future hoping it will continue to brew real ale both to his memory and in celebration of the independent brewers craft

Family Inn - Revisited

March 2003 sees the return of Solihull CAMRA to the Family Inn, Damsonwood, Solihull after a gap of well how long would you say.

It was the year a Gibb brother died, rail disasters & terrorists were very much in the news, and George Bush became President. Sound familiar? OK to be a bit more specific, A Fish Called Wanda had just been released, as had Smooth Criminal by Michael Jackson (whatever happened to him?) Yes, we are talking November 1988. So, what has changed in the world of Solihull CAMRA since then? A dusty copy of the Meeting Minutes reveals the following: The pub was then called the Golden Acres (the name changed in 1998). 14 people attended the meeting. It is likely that 3 of those will be at the next meeting as well. Are they: a) Loyal, b) Dedicated, c) Have no life, d) All of the above. CAMRA membership for Solihull was 81 - it is now 218. We must be doing something right. Future meetings and pub surveys reveal further local name changes. Who remembers the Golden Lion, the Pickwick, the Warwickshire Lad, and the Red Lion at Knowle (has since been the Felons & Firkin, and oh the Red Lion again) Local CAMRA news of the time included: A representative from Ansells (remember them?) was rumoured to be attending the forthcoming Solihull CAMRA AGM. The Licensee of the New Lodge had just resigned. The Great Western, Wolverhampton had reached the finals of the National Pub of the Year competition (no change there then). Bathams Mild was available in 6 of their 8 pubs. There are now 10, and it is probably available in all of them now. Sadly this is a rare success story for Mild Ale these days. Anyway, hope you enjoyed this little trip down Nostalgia Avenue. Be warned, we could be returning to a pub near you..... soon

Dr. Archive



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solihull
drinker

CAMRA National Winter Ales Festival 2003, Burton on Trent...

This significant event was held this year at the Town Hall, Burton on Trent on the 23rd to 25th January, the first at this new sight. The previous venue in Manchester was unavailable, so at short notice Burton had to step in! They did an admirable job and with the town being the spiritual home of British brewing, together with it's close proximity to several Solihull CAMRA members simply had to visit!

The Town Hall s an impressive building, both inside and out and conveniently close to the railway station. Some 20 beers were tested [several folk sharing a half] and most were very good. Many seasonal milds, porters and stouts were on sale - the main objective of the festival being to choose the Champion Winter Beer of Britain.

Wentworth Oatmeal was third, second Gales Festival Mild and supreme champion was Nethergate Old Growler, a porter from Clare in Suffolk, weighing in at 5%. Burton is an excellent place for the beer drinker to visit There are 4 micro breweries as well as the national combines. Whilst we were there we visited the Bass Museum and found the whole trip was well worth while. Why not join the Solihull CAMRA trip to Burton on Saturday 22nd. March, you won't be disappointed!

Dave Queenborough

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BETTERWARE

BETTERWARE

BETTERWARE

A new pub for Solihull...

As part of its development there is to be a village centre for Dickens Heath. Included is a pub/restaurant. According to a recent newsletter, the owners of the Boot Inn and Orange Tree have identified Dickens Heath as their next venue. It will open in 2004 and feature "wood fired pizzas, wall of fire rotisseries and char grills together with a vast selection of fine wines".

No mention of the beer though? Oh dear!



Solihull times

Socials

Saturday 22nd March	Visit to Burton on Trent, Bass Museum, followed by early evening pub crawl starting at Burton Bridge Brewery. Phone Bob for both lunchtime and evening session meeting times	
Friday 5th April	Social at Coventry Beer Festival	8.30pm
Saturday 17th May	Mild Campaigning coach trip to local Solihull area pubs Pick ups start at 7pm. Phone Bob for details	
Sunday 22nd June	Lunchtime walk/crawl around Lapworth and Rowington. Meet at the Navigation, Lapworth at 12noon	

Beer & Baltis

Friday 28th March	Anchor, Digbeth, Birmingham	8-8.30pm
Friday 25th April	Vaults, Knowle	8-8.30pm
Friday 30th May	Church Inn, Hockley [Steak and Ale]	8-8.30pm
Friday 27th June	Blue Bell, Henley in Arden	8-8.30pm

Branch Meetings

Monday 7th April	Black Swan, Henley	8.30pm
Monday 12th May	Cock Horse, Rowington	8.30pm
Monday 2nd June	Navigation, Lapworth	8.30pm

Bob Jackson is the Branch Social Secretary and you can contact him for information about events during the evenings on 0121 705 8743

Steve Wood is the Branch Secretary on 0121 704 5258

Any complaints about short measure? Contact Solihull Trading Standards on 0121 704 6844.

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 the Editor on 0121 603 8994 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.

Solihull CAMRA 2003 ©

The 25th edition of *Solihull Drinker* will be published on June 2nd, 2003
The deadline for advertising or contributions will therefore be
May 24th, 2003