

Issue 28

Winter 2015



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

Ales & Tales

*The newsletter for the Campaign for Real Ale in
Stourbridge & Halesowen and Dudley & South Staffordshire*



www.stourbridgecamra.org.uk
www.dudleycamra.org.uk



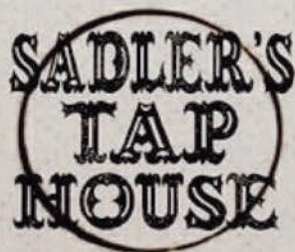
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-CASTLE-

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BREWERY
ON SITE



LIVE
MUSIC



WINDSOR
NEXT ONE
ON US

Welcome Back

Another year has gone and for CAMRA members there were successful outcomes to two of their major campaigns. Firstly CAMRA continued a campaign to stop large Pub Companies (Pubco) making huge excess profits at the expense of pub-goers by forcing licensees to buy their beer only from them and often paying above market value for rents. After ten years of campaigning for reform changes have become law. The Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill has secured Royal Assent and includes key reforms that will ensure that thousands of licensees are protected from unfair practices in the industry. These include:

1. A Statutory Code and Independent Adjudicator to ensure licensees are treated fairly and crack down on cases of inflated rents and excessive beer prices
2. A Market Rent Only Option so that licensees tied to the large pub companies can buy their beer on the open market.

Secondly Budget 2015 saw the Government cut beer duty for a third year in a row and cut cider tax by 2%. CAMRA campaigners helped secure the support of 114 local MPs ahead of the Budget, which mounted huge pressure on the Chancellor to deliver another Budget for beer drinkers.

Locally a boost to protecting landmark pubs in Dudley has been agreed by the council with the agreement that ACVs (Asset of Community Value) would be taken into account before any planning permission is granted on change of use to a pub. This has already been effective in campaigns to save The Haden Cross Inn, Cradley Heath the Seven Stars in Sedgley, the Hare and Hounds and the Maypole, Halesowen.

However the need to save our proud drinking heritage doesn't stop and looking forward we hope that you will join us in continuing the fight to preserve it. Look at the volunteering article to see how many ways you can become active as it were by being a member of CAMRA.

Brewery news and pub news reflect the information we have been given. It's not extensive and we would like to say thank you to all our contributors. If your favourite pub or brewery hasn't been included and

there is news to share then let us know. Send to editor@dudleycamra.org.uk

We hope that you enjoy some of the articles contributed by members of the branches and if you feel you would like to put pen to paper then send you views, comments or articles to editor@dudleycamra.org.uk.

Next Ales and Tales will be due out in April, hope you enjoyed this issue.

Cheers

Pam and Tony

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On My Travels...

...Steve Thompson

In recent years I have spent quite a lot of time travelling up and down the Country and often pass through Carlisle. For years the only decent pubs near the station were the two Wetherspoon pubs. But now MOO bar has arrived. Situated on Devonshire Street about 250 metres from the station it is well worth seeking out. A Mecca for drinkers in the area it opened in November 2014 and features 18 handpumps along with 16 keg taps. The handpumps dispense a continually changing range of beers heavily biased towards the Cumbrian breweries. On my last visit beers from Hawkshead brewery were featured and I sampled Windermere Pale along with Cumbrian legendary Grasmoor Dark Ale.

(Editor: Readers are invited to submit a description and photo of a favourite pub from their travels)



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Our 9 real ales are:

Hobsons Town Crier

RCH Pitchfork

Abbot Ale

Morland Old Speckled Hen

+

5 rotating guest ales

inc Red Lion White Lion every week

*3 draught Belgian beers,
Hoegaarden, Leffe Blonde and
Timmerman's fruit beer*

2 for £10 menu / 2 for £15 menu / 2 Steaks for £25 inc Wine / Large cobs on the bar

GOOD FOOD Mon to Sat 12 - 9pm / Sun 12 - 5pm

Pub News

Maypole, Bassnage Road, Halesowen is selling Enville Ale in addition to Banks's Mild and Bitter and hope to add another hand pump for a second guest beer.

Barbridge, Victoria Passage, Stourbridge, is a brand new venue with up to 6 real ales. It opened early December 2015 in an old retail unit at the end of Victoria Passage behind the Rye Market, more of a micro-pub than a full blown traditional pub although more drinks are on offer than the usual micro.

Old Coach & Horses, Stourbridge Road, Holly Hall, Dudley, has re-opened, serving four ever changing Real Ales.

Rose & Crown, High Street, Wordsley, has re-opened, serving three ever changing guest Real Ales.

Queen's Head, High Street, Wordsley, holds a quiz evening every Wednesday hosted by Russ Johnson.

Kingfisher, Wall Heath, has re-opened as the Hickory Smoke House, with Real Ale on sale.

Lenches Bridge, High Street, Pensnett, has re-opened. It serves Enville Ale, Wye Valley Butty Bach, plus two guest Real Ales. There is now a new Thai restaurant.

For more information on pubs far and wide check out WHATPUB - whatpub.com.

Landlords let us know of events or changes for April to June for inclusion in the next edition; send to the Editor.



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Real Food,
Real People*

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Meet the Managing Director

Featured on the front page, standing on the right, with co-director Nathan Kiszka

Name: Alan Preece

Age: 44

BACKGROUND BEFORE BREWING?

Trained as a lithographic printer, went on to print newspapers for the Express & Star in their new Wolverhampton print room. Finally, left there to run my own printing company, a good few years ago now.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST ALCOHOL DRINK?

Well my first taste of alcohol was down to my dear old Scottish Nan making me a weak Port & Lemon before I went to bed whenever I slept at her house.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES AND INTERESTS?

I guess my biggest hobbies are music, sport and my family. My wife (Jane) has supported me through all my crazy ideas, and my son enlightens me every day! I'm really interested in local history, it's fascinating what has happened in the area where we live. I was recently researching information on Taylor Law (TALA) the cookware factory that our brewery sits on when I discovered King Charles took shelter in Kinver Street, Wordsley during the Civil War.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE:-

BEER - YOUR OWN AND SOMEONE ELSE'S?

My favourite beers, well I have a few depending on the style. Current stand outs are Porterhouse Plain Porter, Ireland's biggest independent brewer and Weisse Versa an amazing drink from a brewery in Texas called Karchbach. Then as a session beer it has to be Salopian Oracle, and who doesn't love a Floris Framboise!

FOOD?

My favourite style of food must be Italian, closely followed by Turkish! I'm a sucker for Humous or a Bacon Sarnie though!

DRINK THAT'S NOT REAL ALE?

It has to be either a big glass of tap water and/or coffee.

MUSIC?

The best band ever is The Waterboys! Yes, I saw "The Whole of the Moon," and yes they are still going!

PUB?

(Could be anywhere in the country as long as you don't own it.)

My favourite pub is any that look after their products, whatever they be, clean, warm with a friendly atmosphere. Locally The Red Lion on Brettell Lane is fantastic, but I guess the one I'd head for the most is Porterhouse Temple Bar in the fair city of Dublin.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE TRADE?

I got started in the trade through my printing business and drinking actually! We did a fair amount of work for breweries and they were firing the interest that was burning inside, along with going out for a pint and enjoying exploring flavours and styles. I thought it would be a good career move! From that I really called in a few favours and crammed as much in as I could visiting and learning from good people. This trade is full of great people who want to see you succeed.

WHAT IS THE DEVELOPMENT PERIOD TO BRING A NEW BREW TO THE MARKET?

The development period for us is a weird one, some beers bumble along in the discussion stage for years, some come like the flash in the dark. At Badelynge Bar we brew a small batch and see what the feedback is. Following that it can be brewed again in a bigger batch as a monthly special, be added to the house beer list or die a slow death!

WHAT ARE YOUR ASPIRATIONS FOR THE BUSINESS?

We don't set targets, we are growing nicely and that's a great feeling. Cracking the Midlands is a tough cookie as it's full of excellent beer already but if we continue to love what we do we know that will be felt and more people will get on board as we go. We've only been in Stourbridge for 2 years, some have been about for over 100, so we're very pleased with what we have achieved.

WHAT'S THE BEST & WORST THING TO HAPPEN TO THE INDUSTRY IN THE LAST 5 YEARS?

The best thing to happen is without doubt the amount of new breweries that have sprung up, this has given a real revolution to the industry in flavours and profiles. This I guess has led to potentially the worst thing, the hop shortages along with poor harvests. If I were honest though, we are looking at the hop shortages with excitement because without doubt small breweries like ourselves with

virtually zero of the top 5 hops available have really got to think about what and how we are going to move forward. This will lead to even more choice of styles for the drinker.

HOW DO YOU THINK CAMRA COULD HELP YOU IN YOUR BUSINESS?

CAMRA and Green Duck, well where do I start! I think it's great that CAMRA are looking at Key Keg beers as this is something that's not going away, it's the elephant that can't be ignored! I'd like to think locally that all branches fully supported local breweries. I think the focus should be on keeping our pubs alive as much as anything these days, CAMRA saved the real pint, now it has a massive part to play in keeping the pub alive too! We are really lucky as our local branch of CAMRA has been great to us! Big thanks to all but especially Matt Merrick, Si Genner, Tim Cadwell and Tony Skirving for banging the drum!



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Brewery News

Thanks to all the Brewery Liaison Officers and breweries (and branches) for this information. If your brewery isn't mentioned then ask your BLO to get in touch with the editor, so that readers of Ales and Tales can look out for new beers etc.

HOLDEN'S

At the end of their Centenary year Holden's brewed a commemorative special. Masters Ale, ABV 10%, was described as:

"a discerning combination of English Progress and Goldings Hops and the Finest English Odyssey Malt, Chocolate Malt, Caramalt and Crystal Malt. Mahogany in colour, this super-strong Commemorative Centenary Brew has an extra-long cold stored maturation period which gives it an intense, full bodied depth of flavour with a rich, smooth, toffee velvet finish. An outstanding Ale of pure decadence. Sit back, relax and enjoy."

The beer was launched at Dudley Winter Ales Fayre and proved to be a resounding success. Hopefully Holden's will brew it each year.

KINVER

It seems that Kinver Brewery continues to brew beers that are liked by not only the public but also by 'those in the know'. They have continued to gain awards, the latest being SIBA Midlands Gold award 2015 Premium Strong Beers for Over the Edge in cask and SIBA Midlands Bronze award 2015 Premium Strong Beers, small pack, for Over the Edge in bottles which was presented at Nottingham beer festival in October. As the brewery has not been bottling for long this was a welcome recognition for their hard work. In the coming months as well as brewing to full capacity they are brewing 2 specials for Easter: Easter Egg and Kinver Egg!

BLUE BEAR - HIGHGATE & DAVENPORTS

At long last beers brewed by Blue Bear in Smethwick for Highgate and Davenports are being seen in more places. Highgate Dark was available at Birmingham Beer Festival this year where the company had their own dedicated brewery bar. Davenports Red Baron was also available and seemed to be selling well. The brewery also brewed Highgate Old Ale and this beer was showcased at Dudley Winter Ales Festival. Hopefully we can appreciate these beers in the Dudley and Stourbridge area.

PIG IRON

Pig Iron are gradually widening their distribution network with their beers having been seen in the Cat, Enville, Tame Bridge, Masons Micro Bar, Halesowen Golf Club, Bird in Hand, King Edward VII, the Round Oak in Wombourne (outdoor bar for bonfire night), the Old Gate Heathton, the Duke William, Stourbridge, QB Con Club, the Maverick and the Robin Hood, Amblecote along with Weavers in Kidderminster to name but a few. The pub held a very successful Open Day at their brewery in Brierley Hill on December 4th. They have also joined SIBA so their beers will be available for both SIBA competitions as well as CAMRA competitions.

FIXED WHEEL

Held a CAMRA Tasting Panel session hosted by Sally Lavender late last year which was very informative. They won Runner-up at the Birmingham Beer Festival for No Brakes IPA and also had beers finishing in 4th & 5th place. Beers planned for January 2016 are Single Speed Continium and Century Gold.

ANGEL ALES

Received their Beer of the Festival certificates for runner-up at the Stourbridge Beer Festival for BOB64 and were winners at the Bolton Beer Festival with Tainted Love.

CRADDOCK'S

Their latest ale Hop and Glory is now selling well. A 4.2% copper coloured ale which does make a change from their more usual pale and golden ales. There has been no special seasonal beer from Craddock's but their associate brewery, Bridgnorth Brewery, has produced Yule Glow a dark red ale at 6.0% which hopefully will continue to be available into the New Year as a winter ale.

BATHAMS

The cottages on Delph Road below the brewery are currently being demolished to make way for a loading bay allowing off road access for grain lorries with tipping facilities to fill prospective malt silos. This will also provide easier access to facilitate a programme of upgrading the brewery. General building repairs to be undertaken include replacing the section of roof that blew off earlier in the year. The over 100 years old cast iron Hot Liquor Tank together with the similarly aged Mash Tun will be replaced with modern vessels and the 70 years old Copper will be replaced with a new 'copper' vessel. Tim insists on a copper Copper, not a stainless steel one.

Leeds Crawl

We hadn't been to Leeds for a few years and since our last visit quite a few new drinking establishments have opened. These are not pubs but restaurants/bars in the style of our own Sadler's Brewhouse & Bar or Green Duck's Badelynge Bar so it was these we decided to aim for.

We began in the northern part of city centre in the appropriately named North Street. At number 76-78 we found The Reliance, a light and airy corner bar with an open kitchen and restaurant up a few steps from the main drinking area. Five real ales, even more craft ales and a worldwide selection of bottles were available. We had halves of Arbor Triple Hop 4%, Rooster's Wild Mule 3.9%, Golden Owl Pale 4.8% and Ilkley Fortis 4.15%. Needing to line our stomachs for the forthcoming crawl we enjoyed their excellent food, which is sourced locally. They have their own home cured charcuterie too, if you fancy a snack.



The Reliance

Our second call was only 40 yards away at Crispin House, North Street, at Shuffledog. This is the newer of the two BrewDog bars with three shuffleboard tables in the cellar. This is a cross between shove ha'penny and curling. Sticking to halves we drank Jack Hammer 7.4% and IPA is Dead - Simcoe 6.7%. Not enjoying BrewDog prices we moved on to Bar North at 24 New Briggate. Not new, this is the only old favourite we visited. Sixteen draught beers, real and keg, make it a difficult choice but we went for Magic Rock Cannonball 7.4% and Ilkley Derby Day

Stout 7%. BrewDog prices here too, so we settled for the one half each.

The longest walk between bars took us to Tapped Leeds, at 51 Boar Lane, an American-Style Brew Pub, in the same group as Sheffield Tap serving 13 cask ales and 14 craft keg beers plus 100+ bottled beers from around the world. It was very busy and after fighting our way to the bar for Dark Star Halcyon 4.7% and Brewsmith IPA 6% we moved on.

Friends of Ham was just around the corner at 4 New Street, this had a mouth-watering selection of ham and pork dishes on offer but we were there for the beer. We sat at the bar and with the help of the friendly and knowledgeable barman enjoyed halves of Rooster's Assassin 6.1%, Black Iris Snake Eyes 5.8%, Camden Ink Stout 4.4% and Lost Abbey Veritas 7% from their range of 5 casks and 8 kegs.

On the advice of the Friends of Ham barman we went around the corner to Bundobust, 6 Mill Hill. Bundobust is not a restaurant, it is a bar that sells Indian street food with an extensive selection of the world's best craft beer. The vegetarian food is designed to be washed down with hoppy India Pale Ales, right up our street. We drank Thornbridge Bear State 7% - so good I had it twice, Bridget settling for Magic Rock High Wire 5.5%.

The Bear State ran out so moved to the Head of Steam, at 1 Mill Hill, directly opposite. More of a traditional pub this, where the 1950's style barmaid served us Dominion Hop Mountain 6.3% and Stones IPA 8.2%. Feeling the worse for wear by now, we decided to head back to our Travelodge.

We couldn't resist making another call as it was (almost) on our way back but wished we hadn't. It was the Black Swan at 37 Call Lane. The traditional pub name mislead us, it was in club land, bouncers on the door, very loud music and very dimly lit. The beer was fine, Beavertown Gamma Ray 5.4% but it was £5.50 a pint! Tired and skint we called it a day.

Tony Skirving



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Dark Swan Mild 4.2% ABV

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Bumble Hole 5.2% ABV

Ma Pardoe's Black Widow Brew 6.7% ABV

NPA 4.8% ABV

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Festival Focus

REDDITCH BEER FESTIVAL will be the first festival of 2016. As usual it will take place at the Rocklands Social Club, 59 Birchfield Road, in Headless Cross, Redditch, B97 4LB. This family friendly club is easily reached from Redditch train station by using the buses across the road in the bus station. It's about a 20 minute walk from the station but uphill all the way. The festival opens on Friday 5th February at noon until 11pm and continues on Saturday 6th February, opening time on the Saturday is 11am. Entrance is £4.50 which includes glass hire. The festival will feature 33 Beers and 8 Ciders/Perries
www.redditchwaf.org.uk

WALSALL BEER FESTIVAL will take place from 10th to 12th March. This event is provisionally scheduled for Walsall Town Hall. Opening on Thursday evening, it continues all day Friday and all day Saturday.
www.walsallcamra.org.uk

Planning is well under way for **Burton Beer & Cider Festival** which will take place at Burton Town Hall (DE14 9JG) from Thursday 17th March to Saturday 19th March. This will be the 37th festival that the

branch has organised. The Thursday session opens from 6pm until 11pm, Friday from 11am until 11pm and Saturday 11am until 10pm.

www.burtoncamra.wordpress.com

COVENTRY BEER FESTIVAL takes place on 15th and 16th April offering 90+ Real Ales with a fine selection of Cider & Perry and bottled beers from around the world as well as Country Wines. The festival takes place at Coventry Rugby Ground, Butts Park Arena, Butts Road, Spon End, Coventry CV1 3GE. Opening times are Friday & Saturday, Noon-4pm & 6.00pm-11.00pm. Admission charges apply including glass and tokens (both refundable).

For more information visit:

www.coventry.camra.org.uk

STOURBRIDGE BEER FESTIVAL will take place at Stourbridge Town Hall starting on Wednesday 20th April with a CAMRA members only preview evening. The festival is open to the public on Thursday evening, Friday and Saturday.

www.stourhalescamra.org.uk

Hitchmough's Lost Pubs

Here is a photograph of another mystery pub. Can you identify it?



The solution to the last mystery pub is the KING WILLIAM, which was situated in Cole Street, Darby End, Netherton. One of the early Batham's pubs, with two family members serving as licensees, it became a Hanson's pub in 1915. It was rebuilt in 1956, and closed in 2007, before being demolished. Thomas Booth was the landlord from 1916 until 1921. He went on to become a brewer 18 years later, at Corbyns Hall, Pensnett.



Four Clubs of the Year 2016

Eight Times Local Champion named as Finalist in the Campaign for Real Ale's National Club of the Year Competition

The Kinver Constitutional Club is looking to reclaim the Campaign for Real Ale's Club of the Year crown it last won in 2011. The Kinver is one of four clubs catering to members with interests as far ranging as motoring, the RAF and politics - but sharing a love of real ale - which have been named the finalists in the Campaign for Real Ale's Club of the Year competition.

Kinver has won the Dudley & South Staffordshire local branch COTY every year since 2007 and National Club of the Year in 2011.

Club Mirror magazine and CAMRA joined forces three years ago in the quest to find the best clubs serving real ale - those which offer a fantastic atmosphere, welcoming surroundings and most importantly, top quality real ale served in great condition. John Holland, Chairman of CAMRA's Clubs Advisory Group and one of the judges to determine the finalists commented: "CAMRA's Club of the Year Competition continues to go from strength to strength as more and more clubs show great commitment to quality real ale.

This has made it increasingly difficult to become a CAMRA Regional Club of the Year and then get through to the final. Therefore I anticipate an extremely close fight to become CAMRA's Club of the Year 2016".

Clubs are nominated by CAMRA branches across the country and judged by a panel of volunteer CAMRA members throughout the year. There are four finalists who will now have to wait until spring next year to discover which will be named CAMRA's Club of the Year.

The four finalists are:

Albatross RAFA Club, Bexhill-on-Sea

This friendly club welcomes CAMRA members; it has been the local Club of the Year since 2012 and regional Club of the Year in 2013.

It hosts popular beer festivals in April and September in its large function room and has a full diary of regular social events including jazz, folk and quiz nights. They stock beers from local brewers such as Rother Valley, Weltons and Dark Star.

The comprehensive range of upcoming beers is listed on a blackboard behind the bar. The club boasts an interesting collection of RAF memorabilia.

Cheltenham Motor Club

This friendly and welcoming club, formed in 1906, is open to all including CAMRA members that have their membership cards with them.

It usually has five ales on tap and Thatcher's Heritage cider. The club is divided into a bar/TV room and a games room separated by a folding partition.

The bar is decorated with motoring paraphernalia and an extensive collection of pump clips.

Kinver Constitutional Club

Built in 1902 on the site of an old pub, this converted hotel has three main areas: a smart restaurant, a large snooker room and a bar always dispensing 8-10 real ales and as many as 18 for special events, at reasonable prices.

The club enjoys an enviable sporting reputation and hosts regular quiz and music nights. Card-carrying CAMRA members welcome but must be signed in; groups should book ahead.

Kinver has won the local branch COTY every year since 2007 and National Club of the Year in 2011.

Orpington Liberal Club

This superb club is a runner-up in the 2014 CAMRA National Club of the Year competition. It is also the Greater London Club of the Year for 2013, and has been the Club of the Year for the local CAMRA branch (Bromley) for the last three years.

The refurbished club is free of tie and is run by a real ale enthusiast who doesn't serve regular beers, but purely guests with particular focus on local beers and micro breweries. Nearly 200 different real ales were served in 2013 and prices are extremely competitive.

The club has regular live music, runs occasional beer festivals, and has a large rear garden.

It would be nice to visit them all but that could be difficult so why not visit the Con Club (as the village calls it) and see if your opinion matches the judges. There are also several other hostelrys in Kinvor worth a visit!

Good luck to the Con Club.



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How Good Beer Guide Pubs are Chosen

Ever wondered how pubs are selected to appear in the Good Beer Guide. The answer is that it is via beer scores submitted by CAMRA members from all over the country into the "What Pub" database. If you've ever wondered why your favourite pub isn't in the Guide, this may well be because you, and others, haven't entered scores rating the quality of beer there. By beer scoring, you can contribute to selection of pubs that go in the Good Beer Guide. For further advice see

<http://www.camra.org.uk/nbss>

Besides submitting scores from our own pub visits, each month our local branches organise beer scoring socials. Here are a couple of the ones we have done recently.

Stourbridge Marking Social and Crawl

As well as attending regular meetings regarding pub and beer matters in the area, the branch performs other important tasks such as gathering beer quality data on various local pubs. What a tedious task, but someone has to do it!! The branch regularly organises pub-crawls which allows us to survey a number of nearby pubs in the same area which also serves a social purpose away from the more formal meetings. As well as beer quality, it gives us a chance to ensure that our 'whatpub.com' facility is kept up to date.

The crawl on this occasion focussed on pubs in and around Stourbridge town centre, however we try and look at a number of different areas throughout the year.

A couple of branch members usually decide to survey a couple of additional pubs before meeting at the advertised meeting point. The New Inn on Cherry Street was a port-of-call for some, where good beer quality was reported. This pub is easy to miss being in a residential area so do pop in if you're passing.

The rest of us started at the Plough and Harrow in Worcester Street. As well as the house Craddock's there is always a couple of guest beers on here in case anyone ever fancies a change. They also stock cider on hand-pull in addition to a good choice of carbonated varieties.



Waggon & Horses

Next we made the short 'hop' to the Waggon and Horses, also on Worcester Street. Around 6 hand pulls are usually on, with a good variety of guest beers in addition to the house Enville beers. Again, there is also a good choice of Cider on hand-pull. The beer quality fully justified the pub's immediate inclusion into the CAMRA Good Beer Guide as soon as it became eligible.

As we had a couple of canine-companions with us on this trip, some of us had to skip the two Wetherspoons pubs in the town due to their no-dog policy, however they both usually have a good selection of real-ales with discounts available for CAMRA members.

One of our party suggested a new bar in the High Street: Scary Canary. We were surprised to find two casks on top of the bar, Dark Star Pale Ale and Wolf IPA, plus boxes of cider. There were also a number of different 'craft' style beers in the fridge.

Unfortunately it isn't dog friendly.

With our crawl drawing to a close we headed to the familiar surroundings of the Duke William, another Good Beer Guide regular. This is also the branch's Cider Pub of The Year for 2015. Branch members are regulars here so it was a good place to round off the evening!

Although we didn't visit on this occasion, branch members did pop into The Mitre some days after to check it out. We were greeted warmly by the regular customers before we chose from the 3-or-so hand-pull beers on offer. Surprisingly, we hear that The Mitre is listed as a 'Heritage Pub' due to its features.

Although we have an excellent range of pubs in our CAMRA Good Beer Guide, you shouldn't hesitate to pop into your other local pubs to experience a friendly welcome and great beer!

Tim Cadwell

Short Cross – An Oasis of Beer

The Waggon & Horses, The King Edward VII, The Hawne Tavern and The Whitley! We are very lucky to have this group of pubs in a small area on the number 9 bus route in Halesowen. A renowned group of pubs which has been written about many times before, but is worthy of mentioning again for anyone who has yet to discover them. CAMRA had a social crawl of the pubs one sunny evening and there were 36 different ales available across the four pubs! You really cannot go wrong here with many beer styles available.

We started at The Whitley with Black Country Ales and guest beers (in my case I drank a Fist Full of Hops from Derby's Falstaff Brewery), then on to The Hawne Tavern for an impressive range of guest beers. Mallinson's Four Spotted Chaser, Pictish Comet, and Salopian Vortex to name just the three that I tried. Then the King Edward VII for Wye Valley's Dorothy Goodbody's Festival Sunset and Thornbridge's Kipling.



Hawne Tavern

Finally the Waggon & Horses for the usual challenge of deciding what to drink from the 14 ales on offer. There's always a darker beer available so I drank a Derby Peregrine Porter before dashing off for the bus. Never enough time to do these pubs justice on a pub crawl, hence the need to return on a regular basis.

Geoff Mills



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Pig Iron Brewery

We had a treat on 4th December when we popped along to the open day of Pig Iron Brewing Company in Brierley Hill. Dean Cartwright and his team of helpers greeted us, showed us around the brewery, told us about themselves and provided us with beer.

Dean comes from a local family of bakers (Supercrust in Kingswinford, Wordsley and Brierley Hill) and with his wife Justine had been in the pub and club trade for 15 years. After a year of research, the brewing plant was purchased (through ebay) two years ago. It came from Aberdeen (in a 9½ hour journey) where Brewmeister were upgrading. Dean spent a week at Brewmeister to familiarise himself with the equipment.



Back in Brierley Hill, test brews got underway, the building was adapted and the kit installed. Eventually, three beers made their debut at Stourbridge Beer Festival last April. There is now a core range of four beers: Blonde 3.8%, IPA 4.2%, EPA 4.2% and APA 4.5%. In addition, a seasonal brew Black Country Mon's Oppy Christmas 5.0% is currently available. Dean deliberately produces his beers to be slightly on the malty side. I found this noticeable in the Blonde but the other beers were more to my taste, with APA being my favourite, its sweetness being enhanced by a touch of maple.

Sales and marketing assistance comes from Pete and Ruth Walker and, as business has grown, Tim Hibbert arrived to help with the brewing. Looking to the future, bottling is likely to be introduced next year and key kegs (a sort of beer in a bag in a box) are being investigated.

Many thanks to Dean, Ruth, Pete and Tim for their hospitality.

Further information can be found at pigironbrewingco.co.uk

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Bridgnorth Beer Festival

A CAMRA social was arranged on September 5th to Bridgnorth Beer Festival at the Severn Valley Railway station. It was a glorious day and after a quick pint of Craddock's in the Duke William in Stourbridge, ten of us boarded the minibus.



The festival coincided with the SVR Golden Jubilee celebrations so the station was buzzing with families and enthusiasts. For once we didn't head for the Railwayman's Arms on the platform but instead went straight to the beer festival marquee, where free entry enabled access to 68 beers with a good range of champion beers, including the recently crowned national champion Cwtch from Tiny Rebel. There was lots of choice of many familiar ales and the group didn't waste any time spending the beer tokens. Magic Rock, Dancing Duck, Red Willow, Three Tuns, Salopian, Kelham Island were all represented here. We spent a very pleasant couple of hours sitting on a platform bench in the sun watching people watching trains. An empty train in front of us gave us the chance to compare the first class and third class accommodation. Bit of fun and a surprisingly mixed opinion on preference.

By mid-afternoon it was time for a pub crawl in the town, and we aimed for three pubs in the Good Beer Guide. First to The White Lion to sample their range of their locally brewed Hop and Stagger beers (Sovereign in my case) and the finest black pudding scotch egg I've tasted for many a year. Quite unusual these days for them to be served warm. And "did I mind having a handled glass?" Certainly not!

Then we walked up to the historic centre and down the Cartway to the Black Boy. There had been improvements to the bar area since I was last there and plenty of beers to choose from. I drank halves of Abbeydale Rye-Valley Star and Bishop's Castle's Winning Web while we had a good natter.

Finally it was back up the hill to the Old Castle, another atmospheric traditional pub with a lovely sunny garden and a great view across the valley. A pint of Hobsons Town Crier did the trick.

If you are interested there is a useful pub trail map of Bridgnorth's 28 pubs to be found at www.bridgnorthpubtrail.co.uk

Then we popped back to the festival for a couple of stronger ales to finish (Three Tuns Old Scrooge and Wylam's Jakehead) and a quick half in the Railwayman's Arms in the station. Also in the Good Beer Guide this is normally a pub worth visiting at any time for local beers, especially from Bewdley Brewery.

A cracking afternoon in great company!

Geoff Mills

Spot The Pub

by Bridget Skirving

Pubs with a change of use in Amblecote and Wordsley



1



2



3



4



5



6

Dudley Winter Ale Fayre 2015



The end of November saw the opening of the 30th Dudley Winter Ales Fayre, bringing to fruition over 6 months of careful planning and organisation. The theme adopted this year was in honour of our sponsors, Holden's, with the glasses

depicting a particularly striking image of Father Christmas posing as the Holden's man sporting a glass of ale and saying 'Ho Ho Holden's'! These glasses proved to be an instant success with customers taking many away as souvenirs.

As in previous years, the beer festival committee worked unceasingly to source an eclectic range of beers spanning the length and breadth of the country. We had a lot of IPAs, American Pale Ales, dark stouts and porters and milds alongside some innovative styles in cask form, including several Rye Beers, a lemon and coriander beer and a raspberry infused wheat beer.

We also played host to the West Midlands Barley Wines and Strong Old Ales competition, plus the competition where the winners of style of ale categories go head to head to arrive at the overall Champion Beer of the West Midlands winner. These were as well as our Beer of the Festival competition. The first two competitions are judged by specially invited guests who have no connection with the breweries shortlisted, each is tasted blind and scores are given in particular categories. The Beer of the Festival shortlist is arrived at by a hardy group of us gathering at the Town Hall on the Wednesday before the festival publicly opened where we are sub-divided into teams to taste small amounts of beers in a given section (usually around 15 beers per section with 4 teams - it's a hard life but somebody has to do it!) and each is given a score out of 5. The top three in each section are shortlisted and then the other teams taste these beers and similarly score. This leads to a shortlist of 6 or 7 beers that are

then tasted by an independent panel of judges on the Thursday. These volunteers are guests and have no connection with the breweries concerned nor are they informed what the beer is during tasting. From these processes, and in a closely fought contest for the Beer of the Festival, Vocation Chop and Change (4.8%), an IPA from a recently established micro in Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, emerged victorious, closely followed by Cloudwater Red (4.8%) from Manchester and Wishbone Divination (5.6%), another IPA, from Keighley. Salopian Automaton won the Strong Old Ale and Barley Wines category. It went on to compete in the West Midlands overall Champion beer contest, the result of which is announced at the Regional meeting, held after we go to press.



Food was provided by Little Devil's Diner and we had a varied selection of music. This ranged from a young 16 year old singer, Ellisha Green, who played and sang excellently as a soloist on the Friday (I doubt any of my charges would have had the courage to do so!) and a brass band, Liquid Brass, who entertainingly gave unique renditions of many classical songs of different genre and Greenway, a rock band who brought lots of their fans who helped drink many of the wares still available! Our usual breweriana auction continued to raise funds for our charities and customers were also generous

Dudley Winter Ale Fayre 2015

with their unused beer tokens. The total amount raised being £1608 which is a magnificent amount which will be greatly appreciated by our charities.

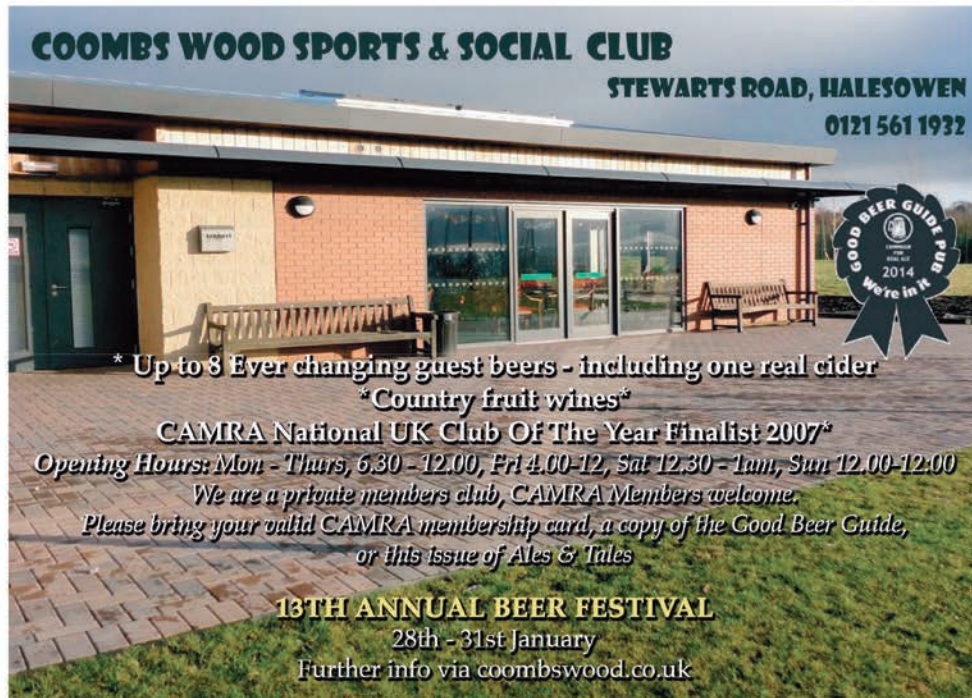
Overall, the festival was very successful with about 5.5 kils of beer left (one was returned as it was deemed undrinkable). Although the cider failed to sell out there were favourable comments made regarding the range that was available. All of the foreign beers and virtually all of the wine sold, there was one bottle of Birch left! There were nearly 2500 customers through the doors over the three days of trade and several of those signed up to join CAMRA.

On behalf of the organising committee, I would like to thank most sincerely all of our sponsors, principally Jonathon and Abi Holden and the staff at Holden's brewery, Bains of Netherton for their continued sponsorship of our tokens, The Park Inn,

Woodsetton for hosting our festival meetings and the generous hospitality they have provided, as well as all our advertisers and local breweries. However it is the dedicated band of CAMRA volunteers who undertake a major organisational role who willingly give up their time not just to work at the festival but who put in a lot of preparatory work from May of each year to make this festival happen and those volunteers who also undertake a variety of roles during festival opening that make it the success it is! To many of our regulars who are reading this thanks for your support and if you haven't tried Dudley Winter Ales Fayre hope to see you next year.

Pete Clarkson

DWAF Festival Organiser



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Graham's Place Beer & Cider Festival

On the 2nd and 3rd of October Graham held his first Beer and Cider Festival at Graham's Place (where else?) Wollaston with seven ales available at the bar, two of which were Graham's own, GPA and Blonde Bombshell alongside Blonde and APA from Pig Iron, Shropshire Gold and Oracle from Salopian and Three Tuns 1642. These were supplemented with six others on a stillage in the conservatory – Kinver Brewery Flanker 4%, Scarborough Brewery Transmission 3.9%, Downton Brewery German Pale Ale 4.2%, Purple Moose Snowdonia Ale 3.6%, Three B's Autumn Gold 4.1% and Elland Brewery Catch The Rainbow 4.1%.

Despite a delay in erecting the stillage and getting the barrels in place which resulted in one or two of the ales being somewhat cloudy come 12 noon on Friday, within an hour or so all had cleared and all six proved to be very quaffable on a warm sunny afternoon.

Three ciders were also on offer with the regular Thistly Cross Whisky Cask together with London Cider Co. Bush Pig and one other which Chris (our branch Cider Rep) can't remember but all three were excellent.

Chris and I were there with Ade and Joy Stevens for much of the Friday afternoon enjoying what was on offer in the glorious sunshine and accompanied by good simple food. Although the numbers of people attending were initially low they gradually increased and Graham told me that the evening and the following day were busy and come Sunday there was not much left to mop up so I believe we can all look forward to this becoming a regular event.

Nigel Heardman





Celebrating Cider Month

Making Cider In Wollaston

Part 1

Yes folks it's true, there is a Ciderist producing great cider right in the heart of Wollaston, near Stourbridge.

Recently we had a wonderful evening at the Duke William in Stourbridge when David and Jan Millward gave a presentation on how David produces cider in his garage.

14 lucky people attended and sampled his cider, which although he apologised in advance for it because it was the end of last season's production and he had had to blend it, was still amazing, and it's no wonder at all that he won the 'Best Cider of the Festival' at Stourbridge Beer and Cider Festival 2015, along with Novice of the Year at Putley Cider Festival 2015. We presented him with his certificate at the end of his presentation. Well done to you David and much deserved.

David explained that although 2015 had been a bumper year for apples the juice content was not very good so, whereas he would normally get 450 litres from the apples that he collected from his daughter's orchard in Somerset – Red Streak variety – he was only going to get 400 litres this year. (He had also had to shake the trees this year where normally the apples would be on the floor by now). To these he was going to add some eating/cooking apples and then some Crab Apples for tannins, and would blend as he goes along.

He also has a supply of Perry Pears which he gets from an orchard in Chaddersley Corbett, so will be producing a small amount of perry.

- **Fact 1** - If you use ordinary pears then it's pear cider that is produced. Whilst David was telling us all these interesting facts we were enjoying sampling not only his cider but he had brought along a single variety Red Streak at 6.1% and a keeved cider, Pilton at 5.5%, both excellent. Keeved cider was something that David wanted to try to do this year but he doesn't think there will be enough sugar for him to try. He had also brought along several bottles of

cider that he had bottled 3-4 years ago and when tasted after 6 months had tasted like 'battery acid' – his words not mine – he had then bottled it and put the 400 bottles away in a loft and forgotten about them until recently, when he decided to try them again, there had been a wonderful transformation as the cider had gone through its 2nd fermentation, Malolactic Fermentation, whilst in the bottle and now because of this every bottle tastes slightly different. We all really enjoyed this cider.

- **Fact 2** - It takes 20-40lbs of apples to make 1 gallon of cider, depending on juice content of apples. David invited us to go and see the scratting, pressing and blending processes that he was going to be doing over the next couple of weekends.
- **Fact 3** - The English were the first to carbonate cider/wine because we made the strongest glass. Jason Taylor then spoke to us about how cider sales have improved over the last 2 years in The Duke William, they have gone from 1½ boxes a week to 3 boxes of Dog Dancer and 3 boxes of other ciders per week. Excellent news! We were also treated to help yourself from boxes of Sheppy's Orchard Dew Cloudy Cider 6% and Waddlegoose Lane Wood Sprite 5.8%.

As usual the food supplied was excellent, with cooked meats, cheese, bread and grapes. And at only £5 a head wonderful value for money!

A wonderful merry night was had by all and a BIG thank you to David and to Jason for making it happen.

Part 2

For part 2 we move to David's garage. Here four of us got to see a wonderful array of machines, some of which David, being an engineer, has made himself.

First the scrapper (not made by him) which cuts the apples into little bits, and then the press (which he did make) which presses until every little bit of juice is extracted from the bits.



Each apple variety is scrapped and pressed separately, and then blended in plastic barrels. He used 50% cider apples and 45% eaters/cookers and 5% crab apples – this is where Dave's wife Jan comes in, she gets to taste the blend and tells him if it is the right combination. David then checks the Ph level and takes a Hydrometer reading, and notes these along with the date on labels attached to the barrels. These barrels are then lidded and air-plugged and left to their own devices but 2 have been put on heated trays so that they will be ready in time for Stourbridge Beer and Cider Festival 2016. It's always a problem getting cider and perry for our festival because it's so early in the year and it's generally not quite ready. These barrels will then be racked up during Xmas week.

The waste product is bagged up and fed to the pigs on his daughter's small holding. Nothing gets thrown away.

Hopefully, Dave and Jan's success may inspire others to have a go.

Chris Heardman

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Hail - 'Hail to the Ale'

West Midlands Region Pub of the Year 2015



Each year CAMRA branches get an opportunity to select their Pub of the Year, a pub that the local branch believes epitomises all that is good about a pub. This magazine has featured several pubs that have earned that accolade from local CAMRA branches but it is Wolverhampton's choice that is featured here. The 'Hail to the Ale' is part of a growing breed of micro-pubs, small independent pubs, often former shops, that feature Cask Ales and Traditional Cider. Most do not offer keg lagers and do not have gaming machines. The 'Hail to the Ale' fits into this category. Situated just outside Wolverhampton in the Claregate area of the city this former corner shop has been converted into a welcoming one-roomed pub which provides two distinct drinking areas. The bar area has two former barrels centrally situated acting as beer tables with some seating around the wall; and the front of the pub which features a mix of tables and chairs. Meals are not served but snacks such as pies, scotch eggs and cheese are available.

The drinks on offer change regularly but always feature at least one beer from Morton Brewery. On my last visit Morton Essington Bitter was available supplemented by Morton Brooklyn Blue, Titanic Plum Porter and Derventio Cleopatra along with two ciders, Orchard Pig Navel Gazer and Waddle Goose Spadger, giving a wonderful range to pick from. The pub is run by Gary and Angela Morton and like many micro pubs the opening hours are arranged to suit the owners and with Gary brewing regularly at Morton Brewery the pub opens its doors on Thursday evening from 5pm until 10pm, Friday from 5pm until 10pm, Saturday from 12noon until 10pm and Sunday from 12noon until 5pm.

Since winning the Wolverhampton CAMRA branch (City) award the pub has achieved further success by winning firstly the West Midlands County CAMRA Pub of the Year award and more recently the prestigious West Midlands Region CAMRA Pub of the Year award. (The best in Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and West Midland counties).

Further details can be found at www.whatpub.com and on the pub's facebook page.



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Birmingham Chilli Festival Crawl



Too Hot to Swallow

T'was on a hot summers day, (yes that was from the 'Bat out of Hell' album, except it was day not night), in September that the now annual Stourbridge and Halesowen CAMRA branch visit to the Birmingham Chilli festival took place.

This was the 2nd year that the branch undertook the visit with last year's attendees numbering 8, this year, other CAMRA branch members joined us from Birmingham and the Redditch and Bromsgrove branches, the number was in excess of 20.

Everyone met at the Wellington on Bennet's Hill, who as usual offered a vast range of beers from far and wide including several of the local breweries, their own Black Country Ales 3 standard beers (Fireside, Pig on the Wall and BFG). Our branch region was represented by the Fixed Wheel brewery's 'Cyclone' coming in at a heady 15% .

After a serious sampling session the group started

to drift across to the festival, however, true to form and tradition, we were waylaid by a visit to the 'Post Office Vaults'. Again, an excellent establishment, that not only offered an excellent selection of beers, it also had 14 ciders available. It is at this juncture, overwhelmed by the choice, the visit to the Chilli festival looked in serious doubt, real beer, chilli fest or chilli fest, real beer? The strength of character of the group shone through with a compromise. The chilli fest, then back to the Post Office Vaults.

For those who have never visited the Birmingham Chilli festival, it how in its 9th year and has grown from strength to strength each year and has become one of the seasonal events along with the Birmingham German market.

The group sampled some chilli sauces of varying strengths and judging by some of the facial expressions from the group they were very hot. The added bonus to the event was that the new Dale Brewery had a stand at the festival and they were giving away samples of their beer, which are to the old Davenport recipes (who remembers Davenports Drum Bitter and their logo statement "Beer at home means Davenports?"), enough of the nostalgia.

At the closing of the Chilli festival, we all regrouped in the Prince of Wales, in Cambridge Street and then headed off to the Craven Arms, another Black Country Ales establishment, again their own 3 brewed beers were on offer with another selection of fine beers from across the country also being offered.

Realising the time, we all decided to drift back to Birmingham City Centre to make our way home, but CAMRA folk are made of stronger stuff, yes, some of us ended up back in the Post Office Vaults, well the beer was good, the World Rugby Cup opening games had finished and lots of rugby followers were there, what more could we have asked for good beer and good company?

Eventually, with heavy hearts, we had to call it a day, but not without us all promising to do it all over again next year.

Phil Zjalic

JIM JONES SAYS!

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Oktoberfest at the Green Duck Brewery



Green Duck has a rapidly growing reputation for a great selection of beers at their regular beer festivals. There's always an excellent beer menu with detailed notes and the very reasonable prices are a great credit to the brewery. I went on the opening night and was pleased to join a table of cheerful CAMRA members who had already started, ready to offer me recommendations.

There were 15 cask beers as guests plus a selection from Green Duck itself. On the bar was the bonus of 2 kegs of beer each from Great Heck and Salopian breweries, for those who like to toggle between the styles of presentation and keep an open mind. 15 real ciders demonstrated the brewery's commitment to offering a broad choice.

I have to say that this was the first beer festival I've been to for a while where every beer was very good. I began with 4 pale ales: 7 Brothers Session Blonde, Lincoln Green Tantalum, Mallinson's New World Pale and Five Points Pale, all very refreshing and well served, followed by a Rudgate dark wheat beer. – Chocolate Dunkel Weisen. After that I could wait no longer to drink the Fixed Wheel Suzie's Rye IPA – a real step up the moment I tasted it. To finish: Rat Brewery's Rat Out of Hell (6%) and Salopian Boomerang (6.9%).

No time this time for Tiny Rebel's Cwtch, Great Heck, Titanic Plum Porter, Settle American Pale Ale or Thornbridge Seaforth Copper. A single visit to a Green Duck festival is never enough, unless you can drink prodigious amounts, having said that there was no shortage for people attempting to go through the card. For me it was time to see if I could remember the intricate cut through to the bus station in the dark – a mere 10 minute stroll.

Yet another fine beer night at Green Duck! Great company, and great beer choice. Don't miss the next one.

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Geoff Mills

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Cropton Beer Festival

Nigel and Chris Heardman have been visiting Cropton every November for several years. Cropton, a small rural community near Pickering, North Yorkshire, is also the home of the New Inn, which houses the Great Yorkshire brewery. Curiously their annual beer festival is held in November with adjoining fields opened up for the crowds of campers that turn up regularly to support the festival. In 2014 Chris and Nigel invited us to join them and so much enjoyed our company (or perhaps they have short memories), that they invited us again this year.



The New Inn is well worth finding, the Great Yorkshire brewery fairly well established in a burgeoning local brewing scene. Information on the beers at the festival is not released until the programme is issued on entry – so no internet research beforehand. The entrance fee of £3 takes the form of a festival pint glass – lose it and you will need to buy a replacement. The programme boasted a choice of over 80 real ales, lagers and traditional ciders.

I was intrigued by an offering from Red Squirrel brewery (Herts) – Mad Squirrel IPA (4%) was described in the tasting notes as “A beautifully creamy, full bodied and full flavoured stout” – interesting description for an IPA. This was

indeed full flavoured but was rich red and smooth. Extremely pleasant but definitely not a stout.

My favourite was the Espresso from Dark Star. As the name suggests, this has a distinctive coffee aroma and flavour, produced by adding freshly ground Arabica coffee beans to the copper for a few minutes after the boil. The result is a smooth, full flavoured stout which would go down very nicely as an after-dinner coffee substitute.

We spent a week in North Yorkshire so we were able to visit several local hostelries. The Sun in Pickering is well deserving of the numerous CAMRA awards adorning the walls. They are approaching 1,000 different beers since taking on the business a few years ago. The pub has the positive feel of a community asset with a warm welcome from the enthusiastic and knowledgeable landlady. The side room also serves as a show case for local art works. York is always worth a visit and we could not miss out on a return to the York Tap, a tastefully refurbished beer temple at the railway station.

Other places visited included the North Riding brewery tap in Scarborough and the Dolphin in Robin Hood's Bay. In the early days of CAMRA, we sought out Theakston's Old Peculier and a trip down memory lane at the Dolphin did not disappoint. Unlike several of the other famous brews we used to seek out, OP is still a quality beer.

Whitby sparkled in the rare sunshine on Friday morning. This is such a special place to visit and, after wandering through the winding streets, we headed for refreshment at the Station, with its offering of half a dozen draught ales, including the house brew Platform 3 (Whitby) and the Whitby Jet Black. The pub is decorated with all sorts of railway signs and photos plus a quotation which seems appropriate today, given the constant battles we are waging to save our pubs from being demolished to create supermarkets or car parks – “When you have lost your inns, drown your empty selves for you will

have lost the heart (last) of England". The bar staff advised us that this was a quote from Hilaire Belloc, an interesting character, born in France in 1870, the son of a French father and English mother. The family moved to Birmingham in 1872 following the death of his father. He became a naturalized British citizen, still retaining his French birthright. He is better known for his "Cautionary Tales for Children" but took an active part in politics. Often surrounded in controversy, perhaps his dual nationality gave him a different perspective. Maybe it takes an outside view to recognize the special nature of England's inns. I should also point out that the quotation may not be entirely accurate but the sentiment remains unchanged whichever version is used ('heart' appears on the wall at the Station but it seems that the actual quote should read 'last').

We also managed to find a couple of young breweries in Malton, most particularly Brass Castle whose beers were being served at 2 local premises, the Talbot Hotel and The Yard. The hotel includes

a tasteful brasserie style café and it was good to see them offering the local beers, namely Northern Blonde (3.7%) and Tailgunner (4%). The Yard was a modern style, smart café where they also had Northern Blonde and a small range of craft beers. The other new brewery in Malton, Bad Seed proved more difficult to find but their Aussie Session, an un-fined IPA was amongst the offering at the York Tap.

All in all a most enjoyable week away in a special area of England.

Joy Stevens

Spot The Pub Answers

1 - Little Pig, 2 - Old Dial, 3 - Royal Oak, 4 - Fish, 5 - Red Lion, 6 - Vine

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Branch Diaries

Dudley & South Staffs

JANUARY

Monday 11th - 8pm

DWAF Inquest Meeting, Park Inn, Woodsetton DY1 4LW

Saturday 16th

Wombourne Trysull Greensforge scores, route TBC

Wednesday 20th

Tipton campaigning scores survey. Details TBC

Saturday 23rd

Regional Burns Night Social, meet Wellington, Birmingham at 1pm

Monday 25th - 8pm

Branch Meeting, Britannia, Upper Gornal DY3 1UX

FEBRUARY

Fri 5th - Sat 6th

Redditch & Bromsgrove Beer Fest, Rocklands B97 4LB

Monday 29th - 8pm

Branch Meeting, Court House, Dudley DY1 1LP

MARCH

Thurs 3rd - Sun 6th

Court House Beer Festival, DY1 1LP, social Thursday 8pm

Thurs 10th - Sat 12th

Walsall Beer Festival, Town Hall WS1 1TP, social Thursday 8pm

Thurs 17th - Sat 19th

Burton Beer Festival, Town Hall DE14 2EB social Friday

Wednesday 23rd

West Bromwich survey crawl route TBC

Thurs 24th - Sun 27th

Old Bulls Head Beer Festival, Lower Gornal

Thurs 31st - Sun 3rd

Queen's Head Beer Festival, Wordsley

APRIL

Monday 4th - 7.30pm for 8pm

Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA Branch
AGM Court House DY1 1LP (upstairs room) Branch
Officers needed. See website for nomination forms

Stourbridge & Halesowen

JANUARY

Wednesday 6th - 8pm

Branch Meeting Maypole, Bassnage Road,
Halesowen B63 4HB (on 244 bus route)

Saturday 9th - 12 Noon

Buzz Crawl meet Royal Exchange. (Itinerary TBC)

Thursday 21st - 8pm

Clubs Crawl, Meet Coombswood Sports & Social
Club, Stewards Rd, Halesowen B62 8NA (Itinerary
TBC)

FEBRUARY

Wednesday 3rd

Branch Meeting (Date & Venue to be confirmed)

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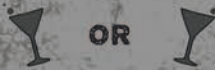
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GPA

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SARA**

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Back Room Tales

It were very quiet, which was not that surprising, as the rain was of biblical proportions, in a very Old Testament kind of way, it sounded like handfuls of grit were being thrown at the windows. We had been marooned for some hours, and the talk had turned from building Arks to perhaps having to make a human sacrifice to appease the Gods. Tarby had then suggested that if we chose to go this route we could always cook and eat the body; he had kept smiling at Dave as he suggested possible menus. Sensing that we were not as keen on this course of action as himself he had wandered off to the bar to look for a willing volunteer. Dave was looking unhappy and said "Did you see the way he was looking at me?" Wizza smiled and, by way of being helpful, said, "I think he's hungry". To which Dave replied "I thought he come from Gornal not eastern Europe." Wizza rolled his eyes and said, "Don't worry, a few bags of scratchings will sort him out". The beer flowed and Dave's good humour

soon returned. I don't quite remember how it came about, but it was probably during the fairly intense debate we had about the relative merits of which Kung Fu style should be used if an umbrella wielding maniac should burst into the pub, Dave bet me a pint that I couldn't write an article about Kung Fu Panda, so for the sake of a free pint...

Once, long ago in old China, Kung Fu Panda walks into his local and orders a pint of Ming & Ping's Lichee Porter (4.8% ABV - Dark, smooth, with deep fruity notes and a lingering soy finish) and a bag of bamboo shoots, and the barman said, "What flavour would you like?"...

(To be continued, or probably not)

Jeffrey Hudson writes about the doings in his Black Country local.

(some names have been changed to protect the innocent)

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Hitchmough's Archives

ANCHOR HOTEL, 1, St. Annes Road, Cradley Heath Tipton Herald 24/4/1909

"A serious accident occurred in the High Street, in Cradley, on Monday. A youth named Fred Lowe, son of Mr. Joseph Lowe, of the ANCHOR HOTEL, was riding with a friend in the direction of Cradley Heath, and whilst endeavouring to negotiate the main street the brake gave way, and the machine [cycle] tore down the incline at a terrific rate. As he approached Mr. Dentith's confectioner's shop – an awkward bend – he noticed a woman crossing the road, and it was while trying to steer clear of her that he ran with great force into the kerbstone. The result of the impact was that young Lowe was thrown headlong into Mr. Dentith's shop window. He sustained a severe bruise on the head, and several small ones on the face. He was attended by Dr. Waugh. The machine, on which there was only one brake, was completely wrecked."

BRITISH OAK, 68, High Street, Old Hill Smethwick Weekly News 5/10/1901

"Yesterday, Mr. H. A. Pearson (coroner) held an inquest at the BRITISH OAK INN, Garratts Lane, Old Hill, respecting the death of Patrick Malsy (31), a slater and plumber, formerly residing at Trinity Street, Langley, who was killed whilst employed at the Bell End Colliery, Rowley, on Wednesday afternoon. Deceased was engaged to paint the pit frame. For this purpose ladders were secured to the pit frame, and placed upon a railway, upon which waggons ran to and from the colliery. One of these came in contact with one of the ladders, and deceased was thrown to the ground, a distance of 27 feet, and sustained a fractured skull and fractures of both arms, death taking place immediately afterwards. The jury returned a verdict of Accidental Death, but expressed the opinion that more care should have been exercised in ascertaining if the tubs could pass under the ladder, also that a man should have been placed at the foot of the ladder."

WHITE LION, Powke Lane, Old Hill Brierley Hill Advertiser 17/1/1857

"William Powell, a collier, was charged with stealing a pair of boots belonging to the child of Mrs. Ann Cole, a publican at Rowley. It appeared that Powell in company with several other men was in the public house on Tuesday morning last, drinking. Mrs. Cole was washing the child and as soon as the parties had left she missed the boots. Mrs. Cole gave a man named Sims a pint of ale to apprehend Powell, and when he did so he denied all knowledge of the affair; Sims then told him to search his pockets, which he did, and in the right hand pocket of an overcoat he found the boots.

In defence Powell denied taking the boots, did not know they were in his pocket, and alleged that some of his companions must have placed them where found, as he had no children or any person to steal them for.

Committal to the House of Correction for one month hard labour."

CROSS GUNS, 59, Newtown Lane, Cradley Heath Stourbridge Observer 4/7/1874

"Joseph Homer was charged with stealing two boots on the 17th ult, the property of Richard Barnsley. Mary Ann Barnsley, said she was in the CROSS GUNS Public House, when she saw the prisoner put something under his coat and conceal it. She informed the landlady of it. Ellen Barnsley, wife of the prosecutor, proved that the boots were stolen, and the two odd boots were near the prisoner.

Richard Barnsley said that from information received he took out a warrant to apprehend prisoner, but before it was executed prisoner said he would buy him a pair of boots to make it right about the others. The police were sent for, and prisoner apprehended.

Solomon Poole, broker of Dudley, said that the prisoner brought two odd boots to his shop, and offered them for sale. He did not buy them.

Prisoner pleaded guilty, and said he was very sorry. Sentenced to 3 months hard labour."

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Volunteer

Without members getting active within CAMRA, the organisation would not exist.



Thousands of members across Britain kindly give up some of their time to actively support the Campaign for Real Ale.

Volunteering should be fun and there are a number of different ways you can become active within CAMRA. Here is just a small list of things that may be of interest to you:

- Surveying local pubs for the Good Beer Guide
- Pulling a few pints at your local beer festival
- Distributing campaigns publicity material to local pubs
- Writing to your MP to encourage him / her to sign one of our petitions
- Writing articles for your local CAMRA newsletter or website
- Serving on a branch committee

It is this last option that is perhaps the most important as without active and committed branch officials there would be no local branches. There are several key roles without which branches cease to function. Dudley and South Staffs have listed the roles needed to run a branch on their website ready for their AGM in April. If you feel you have a few hours a week you could give to ensuring that CAMRA in our local area remains a vibrant and proactive organisation why not volunteer for one of the roles. Details of what is involved can be found on the CAMRA National website or come to a meeting and ask questions to get a truer picture of what is involved.

Taken from the CAMRA website here are 2 members' experiences which give you an insight into what to expect.

Sarah Bellis

Age 29

Member for 5 years

I joined CAMRA after my partner agreed to volunteer at a local beer festival and asked if I could also help. Just a few years later and I am now Branch Chair!

I would like to encourage all CAMRA members to get active. Volunteering for CAMRA is great fun and I have met some lovely people over the years.

The position of Branch Chair has been challenging and rewarding and should this position become available in your area then please grab it with both hands.

Paul Beardsley

Age 50

Member for over 20 years

After moving to a new area five years ago, I took the opportunity to get more involved in CAMRA's North Herts Branch.

I am now the Branch and Social Secretary and help run the Hitchin Beer Festival. I also enjoy volunteering at the Great British Beer Festival in London and help judge the Hertfordshire Beer of the Year competition (somebody has to do it).

I would encourage all CAMRA members to get involved with their local branch - you will be doing your bit for real ale and local pubs but most importantly you will have a lot of fun!

As you can see they do not match the stereotype usually shown of a CAMRA member and their perceptions are that as well as working hard for the organisation it should also be fun!

There are approximately 200 local branches that need support. A great way to get to know other local members is to attend one of their socials which could be a pub trail or a visit to a local brewery. This would give you a great opportunity to find out what is on offer.

So, if you have not heard from your local branch already then drop them a line or give them a call. They will be delighted to hear from you! To find details of your local branch, visit the CAMRA Near You page.

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