

Issue 32

Spring 2017



CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

# Ales & Tales

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

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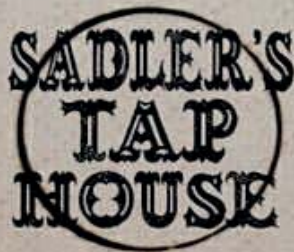
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*We are a private members club, CAMRA Members welcome.*

*Please bring your valid CAMRA membership card, a copy of the Good Beer Guide, or this issue of Ales & Tales*

# Welcome Back

At the start of a new year everyone (well almost everyone) makes plans and resolutions for the year ahead. If you're reading this you are obviously interested in Real Ale and how the branches of Stourbridge & Halesowen and Dudley & South Staffs are planning their year ahead.

CAMRA as an organisation is 45 years old and plans are afoot for it to revitalise itself. Much of the groundwork has already been done via e-mails to members and meetings across the country to collect the views of the membership. Once the data has been collated and reviewed by the National Executive, then their proposals will be sent out to members for consideration and the final proposals will be voted on at the Annual General Meeting in Bournemouth in April. If you are members then please read the proposals and respond to make your voice heard, or go to the AGM and cast your vote personally (details can be found on CAMRA's website). After all it's a bit like a general election if you don't vote then you can't moan after the event.

It's all about getting involved. With over 170,000 members there should be plenty of people to support branches in all sorts of activities. Sadly most branches are run by a dedicated hardcore of volunteers. So please if you are a member as well as campaigning via e-mail, by supporting local pubs etc. why not go to a branch meeting see what goes on and get involved. There's an article on complacency and how people need to become more proactive in ensuring that Real Ale doesn't die.

In this issue we also have several write-ups on crawls which you might like to try. Better still, if you have enjoyed a crawl, why not send in a write up. It doesn't have to be a long article about half a page would do plus a photograph or two.

There are reports on two of our local festivals both of which were very successful, in spite of a shaky start for Dudley & South Staffs and in the planning stages at the moment is Stourbridge & Halesowen's

festival which is in May, look out for details on their website or in the local press.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Ales and Tales and would ask you if you have any news on pubs or breweries then send it to us. Make it your New Year resolution!

Cheers

**Pam and Lizzie**

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Local Consumer Advice For consumer advice in our area, contact: Dudley Trading Standards 3 St James's Road, Dudley, DY1 1HZ Tel: 01384 814677, fax: 01384 814670, [trading.standards@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@dudley.gov.uk)

# Pub News

## ABBEY

**Abbey Road, Bearwood B67 5RA**

Has recently re-opened following a well organised campaign by local stalwarts.

It was announced in January 2016 by the then owners, Stonegate, that the pub would close at the end of February (although it was closed unexpectedly mid-February). A petition was set up which achieved 2000+ supporters. Publicity was generated through the Express & Star, Radio WM and protests outside the pub. Information on getting the pub registered as an Asset of Community Value was obtained via CAMRA and the paperwork was completed by Julie Birley.

All this hard work paid off. Although the pub was initially sold to a developer, it was subsequently sold on and has been refurbished, with dining for curries/grill in addition to the bar, lounge and pool room. There are two handpumps in place and Real Ale may become a regular feature in the future. Congratulations to all involved in the campaign. Long may the Abbey community survive.

## BLACK HORSE

**79 Delph Road, Delph, Brierley Hill DY5 2TP**

Has re-opened after a major refurbishment, the bar had been moved, it is now a modern style pub, and has four permanent ales – Enville Ale, Enville Ginger, Holdens Golden Glow, Sharps Doombar.

## CASTLE VIEW

**Castlegate Drive, Dudley DY1 4RJ**

Has been open a few months now adjacent to Castlegate Island in Dudley. A Greene King Hungry Horse pub it is a new build and is totally family friendly offering baby changing facilities and family dining. A range of Greene King beers including IPA and Abbot as well as the Greene King brewed Morland range with Old Speckled Hen and Old Crafty Hen on the bar.

## WHEATSHEAF

**High Street, West Bromwich B70 9QW**

Has a new licensee. This Holden's pub welcomes Ian Saunders as the new gaffer.

Holden's have also announced changes of licensees at the Swan Cradley Heath, New Inn Coseley and Codsall Station.

## RED HOUSE BOUTIQUE

**21-26 Foster Place, Stourbridge DY8 1EL**

We have heard that the owners have now taken over the Little Chop House in Colley Gate.

## NEW TALBOT

**349 Brettell Lane, Brierley Hill DY5 3LJ**

Has re-opened under new management and is open 12-11, 7 days a week.

## CHAPEL HOUSE (FORMERLY MINERS ARMS)

**Ruiton Street, Lower Gornal DY3 2EG**

Has been restored to its former glory. During renovation work to the exterior it was accidentally found that beneath the render lay the original local Gornal sandstone.



*Before*



*After*

# Meet the Brewer, Sarah Hughes Brewery

**Name:** Simon Massey (front cover)

**Age:** 49

## Background before Brewing?

Project Manager in the Automotive Industry.

## What was your first alcoholic drink?

Believe it or not Ansells Mild!

## What are your hobbies and interests?

I enjoy air rifle shooting in the local area when I get the time. As I'm married with 2 daughters, being a taxi does keep me well occupied as well taking them to football and climbing. Anyone who is a parent will know what I mean. As a brewer I also enjoy drinking Real Ale of course!

## What is your favourite

### - Beer your own?

Pale Amber

### - and someone else's?

Malvern Hills Black Pear

### - Food?

I love to barbeque but really I'm not fussy as long as it's good quality food.

### - Drink that's not Beer?

Real cider on a hot day with plenty of ice, really cools you down.

### - Pub - could be anywhere in the country as long as you don't own it?

Kinver Constitutional Club, it's got a tremendous range of beers all kept well and I can walk home.

## How did you get started in the business?

It's a family business as most people know, I came to help out when the hot liquor tank needed replacing. I was offered the job when the project had finished and learnt on the job as it were.

## What is the development period to bring a new brew to the market?

How long is a piece of string!

You need a recipe, knowledge, to know the flavours of the hops you are using, the utilisation of your equipment (not all equipment works in the same way) and a really good team. The team at Sarah Hughes consists of Mark Hyde, Ricky Folloos and myself, and our teamwork means that we all know what goes into a new brew and it doesn't come to market unless we are all satisfied!

## What are your aspirations for the business?

To keep doing what we are doing, maintaining the quality of our beers so that everyone still visits the Beacon for its high standard beers. Having just won West Midlands Regional Beer of the Year we want to go on to the national festival and emulate our achievement of 1993 when we became Champion Beer of Britain. However, it will be much more difficult this time as since 1993 the number of breweries has grown considerably!



## How do you think CAMRA could help you in your business?

To me it's very simple. CAMRA members know their Real Ale and will drink where the beer is good. If you haven't got their support then you haven't got a viable business.

# Festival Focus

Welcome to 2017 with a run-down of festivals taking place in the region in the first few months of this year.

Sadly, as many of you may well have already gathered, the festival in Redditch has been cancelled for this year which means you will need to wait until late February for Rugby beer festival.

## RUGBY BEER FESTIVAL

Rugby festival is occupying a new position in the calendar and also a new venue. The festival will be held at Arnold House, Elsee Road, Rugby, CV21 3BA. (Behind the Merchant's Inn Pub). 30+ beers, Cider and Perry, also a Foreign beer bar. The festival opens on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February at 2pm and closes at 11pm. The Saturday times are 11am until 11pm. Entry is £2 for all sessions with a reduction to £1 for card carrying CAMRA members.

With easy and frequent train services from Birmingham New Street station this a festival worth seeking out.

More details from [www.rugbybeerfestival.com](http://www.rugbybeerfestival.com)

## WALSALL BEER FESTIVAL

Walsall festival is your next festival and it is also at a new venue. The MPV, MAP Performance Venue, is based at 1 Whitmore Street, Intown Row, Walsall, WS1 2AD and the doors open on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March from 5pm until 11pm and then on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> from Noon until 11pm. The festival will feature over 75 Real Ales plus a selection of Cider and Perry along with some bottled foreign beers.

## COVENTRY BEER FESTIVAL

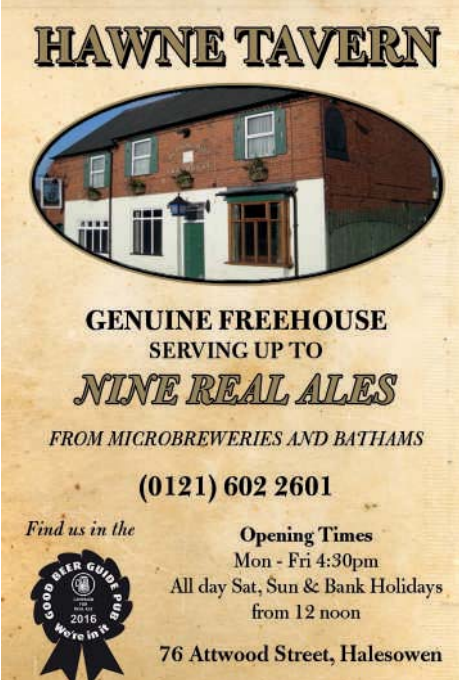
Coventry beer festival also takes place in March, on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, at its usual venue of Coventry Rugby Club, Butts Park Arena, Butts Road, CV1 3GE. 15 minutes walk from the railway station or buses 5,6,6A or 10 from the city centre. The festival is open on the Friday from Noon until 4pm and then from 6pm until 11pm. The Saturday session opens at Noon until 11pm or when the beers have been drunk. CAMRA members get FREE admission to

all sessions (except Friday evening which is £2). Normal admission is £2 and £3 on Friday Night. Job-lot entry package in operation includes glass hire and beer tokens.


More details [www.coventry.camra.org.uk](http://www.coventry.camra.org.uk) or email [contact@coventry.camra.org.uk](mailto:contact@coventry.camra.org.uk)

## BURTON BEER FESTIVAL

The end of the month sees the 38th Burton Beer Festival taking place. As usual this event takes place at Burton Town Hall which is only a short walk from Burton Upon Trent railway station. The festival opens on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> March at 6pm until 11pm, Friday and Saturday the festival is open from 11am until 11pm. Prices vary throughout the sessions depending on your time of arrival. Discounts for CAMRA members.




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# Awards Aplenty

Our local breweries did us proud at the CAMRA West Midlands Regional Awards Ceremony held on 28<sup>th</sup> December at the Bartons Arms, Birmingham. The Supreme Champion Beer of the Year 2016 was won by Sarah Hughes Brewery for their Dark Ruby Mild. The certificate and the Bob Jones Memorial Cup were presented to brewer Simon Massey by Sarah Edmondson at the Beacon Hotel, Sedgley.



*Beer of the Year*

This was the culmination of a judging process throughout the year. To begin with, CAMRA members vote for beers from breweries within their region to produce a shortlist in each beer-style category. The judging of each category, by blind tasting, takes place at various beer festivals around the region and the winner of each is then entered into the final round for the overall title. This last round took place in November at Dudley Winter Ales Fayre but the result remained a closely guarded secret until the announcement at the Awards Ceremony.

Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild won gold in the Old Ale/Strong Mild category and succeeded in the final round out of 9 beers across all the categories. The beer will now be going forward to take part in the national competition.

Simon said "This is a much coveted award and Sarah Hughes Brewery is honoured to have won. I'd like to thank all the brewery staff for their dedication and hard work. Also a big thanks goes out to all our customers and CAMRA members who keep Real Ales gaining in popularity year on year."

Sarah gave her congratulations to a well deserved winner, adding that she has been drinking Dark Ruby Mild since John Hughes resurrected the brewery and his grandmother's original recipe.

Other awards to our local breweries were:

**Bathams Mild**

*Gold in the Mild category*

**Bathams XXX**

*Silver in the Old Ale/Strong Mild category*

**Fownes King Korvak's Saga**

*Silver in the Porter category*

**Holden's Black Country Special**

*Silver in the Strong Bitter category*

**Kinver Over the Edge**

*Gold in the Barley Wine/Strong Old Ales category*

**Kinver Noble**

*Gold in the Golden Ale category*

**Kinver Black Ram**

*Silver in the Stout category*

**Kinver Edge**

*Bronze in the Best Bitter category*

**Kinver Khyber**

*Silver in the Real Ale in Bottles (light category)*

**Sadler's Boris Citrov**

*Silver in the Speciality category*

The West Midlands Regional Club of the Year Award went to Kinver Constitutional Club, for the fourth year in succession.

Dudley & South Staffordshire branch of CAMRA won the regional Website of the Year award, for the second year in succession.

Stourbridge & Halesowen Branch were runners-up in the West Midland Website Category.

Both websites are updated regularly with our branch diaries, brewery news and events. Maybe you have news or would like to suggest ideas for a social?

**Janet Parker**





# THE OLDE SWAN INN

(Ma Pardoes)

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**Dark Swan Mild 4.2% ABV**

**Olde Swan Entire 4.4% ABV**

**Bumble Hole 5.2% ABV**

**Ma Pardoe's Black Widow Brew 6.7% ABV**

**NPA 4.8% ABV**

**Opening Times:**

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**Food Available:**

Mon - Sun 12noon - 9pm

*(Menus vary throughout the day)*

**Upstairs Function Room Available**

*(up to 60 persons - No disco or any other form of row!)*

**Contact Tim Newey on 01384 253075**

# Black Country Ale Trail

Visit all four pubs within one calendar month, order a pint of Ale and get a stamp below. Once you have collected all four stamps, claim your next pint absolutely free!



Tipton

The Tame Bridge

A461



**The Tame Bridge**  
Great Bridge DY4 7JA



**Red House Boutique**  
Stourbridge DY8 1EL

Stourbridge

Little Chop House

A458

Red House Boutique

The Bird in Hand



**Little Chop House**  
Halesowen B63 2BZ

Halesowen



**The Bird in Hand**  
Stourbridge DY8 2JB



Flash Pub Co  
Unit 35 Bloomfield Park  
Bloomfield Road, Tipton  
West Midlands DY4 9AH  
0121 520 8899

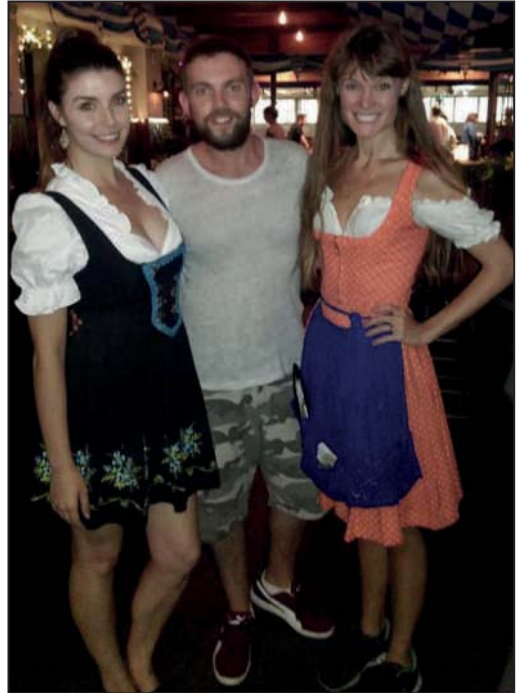
One per customer per day. We reserve the right to cancel without notice if required.

# New York, New York

There's no shortage of New York bars to cater for the hustle & bustle of 'the city that never sleeps'. With an ever-growing population of near 20 million – you'll find most bars stay open till 4am 7 days a week. In this article I shall be discussing my samplings, a modest total of four bars on a recent holiday (or should I say vacation) ... you never know, we may have American readers amongst us here in the Black Country!

Our first pit-stop is a real step back in time – McSorleys Old Ale House. Enter the sawdust strewn floors and history patched walls in New York's oldest operating saloon established in 1854. The single greatest novelty of McSorleys is that it has served just two beverages in its 162 year history. Getting served here you'll be asked by the bartender simply if you want a light or a dark beer? An Irish pale ale, more golden in colour though if you ask me, and an Irish black lager to be more precise. McSorleys is currently brewed by Pabst Brewing Company, but this hasn't always been the case. Originally Fidelio Brewery was credited as originating the McSorleys brand until prohibition forced the brewery out of the industry. With alcohol of any sort outlawed, brewing switched to the basement of McSorleys Old Ale House where it remained business as usual until prohibition ended. With prohibition coming to an end, Fidelio returned as official brewers. Now there are some do's & don'ts, well mainly don'ts actually, if you happen to have any non beer geeks amongst you you're in real trouble. Don't get ordering a spritzer, you'll be lucky to get a diet coke, or worse still possibly asked to leave the premises by one of the barmen providing table service with 8 glasses clenched in each hand ... you get the picture! I also get the impression that asking for a 'top up' would be greeted by a look of bemusement in here. By now you're probably needing to pay a visit to the little boys room, I was pre-warned about the toilet situation prior, I would pass on the same advice that was given to me which is to try and use the single cubicle, DON'T use the urinal, unless of course you don't suffer from stage fright and okay with the whole bar seeing you take a leak as the gents door flies open. Ladies, now there's another

story! Women have only been allowed to enter the establishment since 1970, as one barman tells me the ladies was only built in 1990 simply because "we had to!"



From Irish to a German themed bar next as we embarked on the first of two visits during our stay to the Hofbräu Bierhaus conveniently located less than a block away from our hotel on Third Avenue. We stumble up the staircase, to be greeted by two Bavarian bar wenches in full attire and steins dangling down from above the bar – the scene is set. It's a quiet Monday afternoon here as we seek crisp traditional Munich style refreshment to quench our thirst after a busy day sightseeing. There were four regular Hofbräu beers on tap – The Original (premium lager) 5.2%, Hefe Weizen (wheat beer) 5.4%, Dunkel (dark lager) 5.5%, Dunkel Weizen (dark wheat beer) 5.1% & one seasonal beer – aptly the Oktoberfestbier 6.3%. I decide to start with the dark wheat, a darker variant of the Hefe Weizen, yeasty all the same but with an

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**Bar Snacks**

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guest ale or  
tea and coffee!

Free Entry



extra malty backbone to it. At this point we have the bar all to ourselves, allowing us to really eyeball the place. Imagine the beer chalet at Birmingham's Frankfurt market and that is how I would describe the outside of the bierhaus from the opposite street view, as you can undoubtedly imagine in the middle of Manhattan it's sure to stand out! Inside the appearance and ambience remains traditional throughout with many flags and vintage beer prints. Time to try the big hitting 6.3% Oktoberfestbier (it would be rude not to in September with the infamous festival looming). Full bodied and very crisp, this beer didn't drink like a 6.3% making it ever more quaffable. Our return visit would be Thursday evening, this time finishing the job, sampling the rest of the beers on offer. It was to be much busier, with a five piece brass band playing to a packed house, authentic German cuisine flying out the kitchen and Yankee highlights on the sports screen. With a clink of the glass and a wink at the barmaid ... PROST!

The Ginger Man – if you like beer then this boozier is a must, but come early to grab a table! Ranked as one of the top 50 bars in NYC according to Trip Advisor it's easy to see why with its awesome range of many styles of beer. After both my brother & I were ID'd at the door (coughs James is 31!) the first thing you notice is the vast amount of taps on the back wall of the bar. Slightly daunting, a beer menu & table was needed to study the wide variety of beers on offer, with about 60 on draught and well over 100 bottles, the Ginger Man is a beer lover's beer sloshing paradise and has something for everyone's palate. There's even two cask ales available, a rare find during our trip! We opt to slosh down a few on tap, I started with a 'Schnicklefritz' by Urban Chestnut Brewing Company, an American take on a German wheat beer with notes of clove, nutmeg and vanilla with banana on the nose. James goes for the Mango Wheat by Free Will Brewing Co. Expect to pay on average \$7-\$9 dollars depending on the measure, typically being served in 13 or 16oz. Soaking in the rustic walls, vintage posters and low lit chandeliers we kick on, a Jai Alai from Cigar City Brewing is consumed by yours truly a big hitting 7.5% IPA, bitter at first leading to a sweet finish, the

brother orders a Mosaic Promise by Founders, the hop that's currently ticking his notoriously hard to please palate! The evening is drawing to a close but time for one more there is, fighting our way through the city slickers in casual suits with loosened ties our choice is to end on something dark, "two coffee milk stouts when you're ready!"

Our final watering hole is none other than Tørst, a Scandinavian themed bar located in Brooklyn. Like the Ginger Man it's modern, hip, and full of thick-framed glasses and woolly beards – another refuge for beer geeks for sure. Unlike the Ginger Man however the settings are, how can I put this ... like a Danish sauna, wood floor, wood seating, wood tables, from the outside you 'wooden' expect it ... oh c'mon you 'axed' for it! Tørst is the Danish for 'thirst' a good start if you ask me, but look carefully or you'll walk past the door to this gem. A little digging and I discover that the bar is co-owned by Evil Twin mastermind Jeppe Jarnit-Bjergso, which answers for the four Evil Twin brews on the 20 draught menu. So Evil Twin is where we begin, with 'Erase & Rewind #2' a 7% IPA. On this particular evening there's an emphasis on imperial stouts and sours as we study beer menu, two styles which are neither our favourites so a little disappointing although James did stumble across a 9% pumpkin beer spiced with nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger & cloves, unfortunately he couldn't detect the pumpkin and is quoted saying "it's like drinking a liquid Christmas cake" oops. It's at this stage of the evening coming to a close that my memory draws a blank as to our remaining tipples, certainly not a Daiquiri that's for sure. And so bed was calling & so too our flight back to Blighty. A list of 30 tried & tested bars were given to us by a friend, we managed just four! So what's the current state of the New York City beer scene? Well, (craft) beer is easy to find anywhere you go here, with access to beers from all over the world, and since craft beer is now a "thing" that's "cool" it's all very New York!

All that's really left to say, New York, until next time, bottoms up – it's been a pleasure!

**Matt Merrick**

# Craft Beer in Portugal

Most European countries are waking up to English style beers though mainly due to the influence of American hops. When researching a holiday in Porto, Portugal there seemed to be little beer available except Super Bock lager. However, we were pleasantly surprised when we visited Catraio Craft Beer Shop. Here we expected to find a selection of world beers and indeed we did. More of a bar than a shop, there were a dozen beers on tap as well as a 100 or more bottles. Such favourites as Rochefort, Orval, Tripel Karmeleit, De Molen, Beavertown, Brewdog, Sam Smiths, Mikkeller, Anchor, Flying Dog and many more.

However, it was the first 4 pages of the beer menu that caught our attention. They were all Portuguese beers. There were wheat beers, stouts, smoked beers, porters, barley wines, Belgian dubbels and tripels, saisons, fruit beers, red ales, IPAs, quadrupels, Imperial IPAs, mead, black IPAs, gueuze, cider and more. Rarely have we seen such a range in one place, let alone all made by Portuguese breweries.



Catraio had only been open a year and on the two occasions we visited it seemed to be little known, as we always found seating. Great place, wish it was local to us. They don't appear to have a website yet but their face book page is <https://www.facebook.com/catraio beershop/>

In case you want to find good beer in Portugal the breweries were Alma De Monge, Burguesa, Colossus, OPO74, Post Scriptum, Sovina, Buri, Giria, Amphora, Letra, Dos Diabos, Maldita, Vadia, Luzia, Praxis, Toira,

Lu Citaena and Mean Sardine. Google them and you may find one close to where you travel to.



We didn't keep a record of which beers we drank but we kept to Portuguese IPAs and stouts and they were very enjoyable. The one that stood out for Bridget was Letra F an 6.5% IPA as it was the only beer she had twice.

Tony Skirving

## The Vine Inn

We serve a variety of homemade food on a Friday and Saturday between 12 - 6

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# Back Room Tales

It was the quiet after the storm, and what usually passes for normality had descended like a warm blanket. It was quiet, and the company seemed in a reflective mood, but Robert seemed strangely occupied with a beer mat, he had been staring at it for a considerable time. Wizza said, "What, you doing, with the beer mat?" To which Robert replied, "Reading it," Wizza said, "Gis a look," and Robert handed him the mat. Wizza closely inspected both sides of it, and passed it to Ginny, who stared at it, and who passed it to me. I have to say, and I'll be blunt, it was dull, and I handed it back to Robert, who once again stared at it. No one said anything for a time, and then the silence was broken by Wizza, who said, "I don't get it, there's hardly anything on it, a brewery name and a picture." Robert said, "Don't you see it?" We all exchanged puzzled looks, and finally Wizza, said "No; where did you get it?" to which Robert replied "One of the people from

that camera club, that came on the bus, gave it to me." Wizza said, "They were from CAMRA", and Robert said "I know that, Vera was offering to get her kit off and pose for them two lads, although they didn't seem very happy about it." I had to ask, "So what's with the beer mat? I can't see anything interesting about it, there's hardly any writing and the picture is a bit ordinary." Robert said, "Can't you see it...", but was interrupted when in came Tarby, who plonked himself down, and said, "Have you seen this?" reached into his pocket, and produced another of the beer mats....

Jeffrey Hudson writes about the doings in his Black Country local.  
(some names have been changed to protect the innocent)

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# Brewery News

## KINVER

As well as their success in the West Midlands Regional Awards, Kinver's Over the Edge won the beer of the festival at Dudley Winter Ales Fayre. Bottling has proved a success and Christmas saw all stocks sold. Look out for some new brews in the next year.

## HOLDEN'S

Holden's have launched the first of their seasonal beers this year with Toffee Porter. Toffee Porter is a traditional Dark Railway Porter with the addition of carefully selected toffee added during the brewing process. A 4.1% beer, black in colour with a rich roasted malt and toffee aroma and rich smooth sweet flavour. The pump clip commemorates Great Western Railways 4091 Dudley Castle engine built in July 1925.



## BLUE BEAR

Blue Bear brewery in Smethwick is the brewer of the Highgate and Davenport's range of beers. Currently available in their range is Highgate Mild and Highgate Old Ale along with the Davenport's brands of Pale Ale, Original Bitter, Red Baron, Imperial IPA and Top Brew DeLuxe.

## GREEN DUCK

The first couple of months of 2017 will see Green Duck continuing from where they left off in 2016. A highly successful Christmas Beer Festival will be followed up by a spring event commencing 16<sup>th</sup> March. Look out for more details nearer the time! As always Green Duck will be brewing a year's worth of monthly specials throughout 2017. Keep your eyes peeled for the Little Green Book of Beer around the area in the coming months. Of course, you should be able to find it at Badelygne Bar as well! Their 2016 specials such as 'Sweet Caroline',

'Genners Gargantuan' and 'Tim's Double Barrel' proved popular again.

The brewery will continue to host a number of themed charitable events and initiatives as it did in 2016, and you will find more details on their Facebook and Twitter pages. Surely there is no better way of supporting good causes than with a pint of locally brewed ale! Or for those who like Gin, the bar is now well-stocked with a wide range of juniper delights!

## SADLER'S

Sadler's have strengthened their brand by separating the 3 new keg products as stand alone Keg offers, making sure that the cask range is clearly visible as cask. The keg products are also available in 330ml cans. They have a full calendar of monthly specials that focus on new and exciting styles. The focus for 2017 will be to push ahead with both ranges and to seek to acquire some more strategic Sadler's venues locally.

## FIXED WHEEL

Christmas has been a great success with additional opening hours until 10pm Saturdays, they are now back to 6pm. Fridays still remaining 4-10pm. A new range of mini kegs specifically for December, sold out entirely before Christmas week and they will be looking to continue to offer these with core beers after February. A new beer brewed for and with 'Charles Farams' (supplier of hops) with a new hop designated 'CF173'. It is a single hopped 4.5 ABV pale ale and it is a limited production. A new single speed 'Kazbek' hop will be ready in February along with other, soon to be announced upcoming specials. Following the popular vote at the Waggon and Horses, at the 'Meet the brewer night' the brewery is looking forward to welcoming back the very popular Mild Concussion, as a permanent beer within the core range.

# Dudley Winter Ales Fayre 2016

Wonder how many of you remember Netherton



Arts Centre? Freezing in the cold to get in, paying cash for your beer and enjoying a sausage cob. Glasses were all one shape and featured some iconic local figures, Joe Darby

and Jeff Astle to name but two. Then there was Big Ade!

When we moved to the Town Hall, lots of people said it wouldn't last, it would change it or how could it be the same. But it was the same - but better - as more people could get in, the range of beers grew and the volunteers still worked hard to keep everyone happy.

Not this year though. This year we nearly lost our festival. Many of us on the branch and festival organising committees had been working at providing an annual festival for many years and were all getting older and some were now experiencing health problems. With so few new or younger members coming forward to help or take up posts it was felt the task was too much for so few so the festival was cancelled. However, (and this is where the phoenix came in), with support from other branches and a few old stalwarts a committee was formed and the festival went ahead.

Beer choice was increased as the beer committee selected a variety of beers to be served in pils. It worked well and comments on the beer selection were excellent. So much so that there was very little beer left at the end of the festival, always a good sign.

We again played host to the West Midlands Barley Wines and Strong Old Ales competition, plus the competition where the winners of each style of ale

categories go head to head to arrive at the overall Champion Beer of the West Midlands. 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 opens 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, the Beer of the Festival was Kinver Over the Edge. Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild won the Strong Old Ale/Strong Mild category. It went on to compete in the West Midlands overall Champion Beer contest, the result of which was announced as the Champion Beer of the West Midlands at the Christmas Regional Awards.



Although our numbers were down slightly on previous years our charities were once again well supported. With your donations of unused beer tokens, the proceeds from the breweriana stall and



auction, this year's charities will share £1,400. The charities were:

### **MAYOR OF DUDLEY'S CHARITIES**

[www.dudley.gov.uk/community/councillors/mayor-of-dudley/charities/](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/community/councillors/mayor-of-dudley/charities/)

The Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Mohammed Hanif, has chosen to help three charities in his year as Mayor...

Friends of Alfie Johnson (helping children with disabilities)

Diabetes UK - Dudley borough local group

Dudley CIL (physically and visually impaired with mental health and learning disabilities)

### **BLIND VETERANS UK**

[www.blindveterans.org.uk](http://www.blindveterans.org.uk)

Blind Veterans UK believe that no one who has served our country should battle blindness alone.

On their behalf can we say thank you for your generosity.

We also need to say thank you to 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 was the brilliant band of CAMRA volunteers who decided that Dudley was a festival worth saving who deserve the most thanks. To them and all the other volunteers cheers and thank you.

There were several new members who signed up at the festival and, in order for the festival to go ahead next year, they and anyone else who wants to keep Dudley Winter Ales Fayre as one of the premier Real Ale festivals in the region need to come along and volunteer. It's great fun and a great way of supporting CAMRA.

**Pam Stevenson**

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# Weekday Warrior

## GOING ROUND IN CIRCLES

Birmingham's number 11 bus route mainly follows the A4040 outer circle, a 27-mile route linking the suburbs. I'd fancied doing the No.11 ale trail since it launched in September 2016 with much fanfare to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the route. I decided to do it the 'wrong way round', clockwise as opposed to anticlockwise shown in the leaflet, so that I could finish in Harborne, which in my opinion has the best of the pubs in the trail.

### THE MIDLAND, Bearwood

Starting at the familiar Black Country Ales pub The Midland, I had a very good pint of Black Country BFG, although they'd run out of both the Ale Trail leaflets and stamps.

### THE FARCROFT, Handsworth

The Farcroft was a new pub for me. I was a little deflated to see only Greene King Old Speckled Hen and GK IPA Gold pump clips, but was spared either as they were both not available, leaving no real ales on sale at all. At least the barman set me up with a fold-out leaflet and my first (undeserved) stamp. For the next leg the bus closely follows the A4040, passing close to Villa Park, Witton station and Witton Cemetery (which can be seen from the M6 between J6 and 7), taking almost half an hour from Handsworth. Anyone needing relief (or beer) can break their journey at Perry Barr and make the five minute walk to the Arthur Robertson, a JDW pub in the One Stop Shopping Centre.

### THE VILLAGE GREEN, Stockland Green, Erdington

Third stop was The Village Green which I couldn't place in my mind until I arrived, and I realised it's the pub dominating the busy junction - what used to be the Stockland Green, and more recently a Chinese buffet. It's been in its current Flaming Grill incarnation for a couple of years. The Cask Marque sign is proudly displayed on the entrance, so I was more than a little disappointed to find that this pub too had no real ales, just three turned round pump clips showing they had previously sold Greene King

IPA, Rocking Rudolph and Caledonian Deuchars IPA. All was not lost however as the barmaid said the beer would be back on shortly. I didn't fancy Carling for the wait, so enjoyed a very tasty cup of Twinings tea (it's not often I drink tea on a pub crawl). After my cuppa there was still no beer available and so I admitted defeat and continued on my way. They were very apologetic (manager dealing with an unforeseen urgent matter) and they were kind enough to sign my leaflet (the stamp machine was broken).



### THE HORNET, Stechford

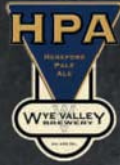
The top-deck bus ride to my next watering hole in Stechford was a rather noisy 25 minutes continuing round the northern half of the outer circle, as by now it was school chucking-out time. The Hornet

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is a suburban 'spoons (the only JD Wetherspoon's pub on the trail), so you know to expect decent beer (it's Cask Marque accredited) and good value pub grub. Avoiding the bland national beers, I opted for Goff's White Knight, a 4.7% ABV pale golden bitter, which was in good condition and very welcome after the previous two pubs with no beer. Still thirsty I decided on a second here, a Slaters Black IPA, single hopped with Cascade, giving an unusual hoppy/roasted barley mash-up. The ale trail stamp machine was again lost/broken, but the manager kindly signed my leaflet.

### **THE INN ON THE GREEN, Acocks Green**

Next up was probably the highlight of the ale trail, the Inn on the Green, an imposing genuine free house in the centre of Acocks Green. I had not been here for a couple of years, and it's been transformed from a community sports bar into a stylish suburban ale house; it's amazing what a lick of paint, some good beer and a bit of vision can do to a place. My Bad Seed Summer Ale, Reunion Beardtongue and Pig & Porter Porter (yum) were all good. For craft ale lovers, at one end of the building is the new Bottle Shed, an off-licence-come-tasting-room with a large selection of modern bottled beers, seven craft taps and retro games. It's currently (Nov '16) open Thu eve, Fri/Sat all day and Sun afternoon. I'm sure I'll be back very soon (much sooner than another two years).

### **THE BILLESLEY, Kings Heath**

Next stop the Billesley, an enormous Greene King Hungry Horse pub. My Old Speckled Hen was poor, (I gave it my lowest score of any beer in 2016) but on the plus side, I got my ale trail stamp, so I never, ever need to come back. Avoid!

I'd just missed a bus, as in the evenings they only run every 20 mins. I walked the 3/4 mile to the centre of Kings Heath and the Pear Tree, a JDW pub also on the bus route but not on the ale trail.

There are a few other watering holes in Kings Heath including Cherry Reds, Hare & Hounds, Red Lion (which is pub no. 4 on the trail). I decided to crack on as it was now after 8 pm, so I continued on the 11. I left the trail again for a quick stop at

Cotteridge Wines and tasting rooms for an overdue hop hit, and a half of 'craft' Kernel IPA Centennial a 7% ultra-hoppy IPA was spot-on (easily the drink of the day). The tasting rooms close at 8.30 pm, so I had no choice but to carry on back on the 11 to my last trail pub of the day.

### **THE JUNCTION, Harborne**

At the western end of Harborne High Street and a few minutes' walk from the bus, this was easily the most upmarket pub of the day (it's next to a Waitrose!), with a smart corner bar area and a much bigger dining room at the rear serving posh pub grub. All this finery has to be paid for and you will find eye-watering 'London' beer prices. My Roosters Nelson Sauvign IPA was a wonderfully hoppy modern English style IPA. They also have a decent bottle selection and a few craft beers.

If I was doing the route again, I'd miss out the northern section, and just do a half moon of the southern section starting at Bearwood and finishing at either Acocks Green or Stechford. The southern half of the route has many other good places to drink. I'd also do it on a day when the Bottle Shed is open. The 11 bus route is operated by National Express. It operates every 10 mins daytime, every 20 mins evenings and every 15-20 mins Sunday. A Daysaver is currently £4 after 09.30 am - buy it on the bus, exact fare only - allowing unlimited hop-on/off travel for the day on all National Express West Midlands buses in Birmingham, the Black Country and Coventry. Railway stations close to the route are Kings Norton, Acocks Green, Hall Green, Stechford, Erdington and Perry Barr. If you're on the Midland Metro tram, Winson Green Outer Circle is the stop to choose.

**Will Westbury**

## Brierley Hill Advertiser 25/9/1858

"On Wednesday last, Mr. Phillips, chemist and druggist, of Holly Hall, married Miss Rowley, of Harts Hill. The happy pair – to use a stereotyped phrase – were united in the holy bonds of matrimony at Dudley, and after that ceremony had been performed which in the vernacular is said to tie a knot with the tongue which cannot be undone by the teeth, the bridal party processed on their way to the bride's residence at Harts Hill, the bride and bridegroom in one carriage, and the two bridesmaids – sisters of the bride – with two gentlemen, in a second carriage, each being drawn by two horses. All went 'merry as a marriage bell' till they arrived at Queens Cross, when the horses in the latter carriage, from some cause or other, took fright, and ran away, the driver completely losing all control over them. They passed the carriage containing the bride, and ran on at a furious rate to the ROUND OAK, where, by the aid of shouting and throwing up of caps, they were brought to a standstill. The bridesmaids were assisted out, and conducted in a fainting state to Mr. Wright's, the ROUND OAK INN, where by the aid of proper restoratives and kind attention they speedily recovered from the effects of the fright. No one sustained any injury, and the question how they were to get home naturally arose. Then came the fun play of chivalry which is so well worthy of notion. The horses were by this time quiet, and it was proposed that the party should proceed home in the carriage, as no danger was then to be apprehended. The bridesmaids expressed their perfect willingness to do so, but the gentlemen, who apparently had more respect for their necks than for the antiquated principles of knight-errantry, declined again to ride in the vehicle, even if the ladies did. The two bridesmaids ultimately were driven home in the carriage alone! and the two gentlemen followed in a dog cart which had been hired from the STAR HOTEL."

## Hitchmough's Lost Pubs

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



The solution to last issue's lost pub is the LONDONDERRY, which was situated on the corner of Basons Lane and Queens Road, Smethwick. This M&B roadhouse-style building was opened on 16th July 1930 and was demolished in February 2011. Hitchmough had his ticket from here in the 1970s. The war brought a severe staff shortage here (as elsewhere).

BAR-GÉNÉRAL; live in; M. and B.; references.—London-derry, Basons Lane Langley.

BAR Help & 2 Waiters at once—App. Londonderry Hotel Basons Lane Langley nr. Oldbury

BAR-GÉNÉRAL live in or out—Londonderry Basons Lane Langley Oldbury

*Adverts 1939, 1940, 1943*

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# Carry on Campaigning?

In its 45th year CAMRA has embarked on a major revitalisation project to ensure it is relevant and addressing the needs of members ready for the next 45 years. Following on from e-mail communications to members etc, a series of meetings which concluded at the end of September were held around the country. The outcomes of these meetings will be analysed and added to the data already collected by the HQ committee responsible for the project, led by CAMRA founder Michael Hardman. Having been a member for more years than I care to remember, I thought I might add my thoughts to the mix on the issues facing CAMRA.

Prominent amongst which I think is complacency. Most CAMRA members do very little actively to support our Campaign, and many cask ale drinkers don't bother to join us, because, looking at rising cask ale sales and rows of hand pumps adorning lots of pubs, they think we have won the fight to save Real Ale and so CAMRA's fight is now over.

Nothing in my view could be further from the truth. The main reason cask beer in Britain was threatened in the first place, the gravitational pull of the market towards keg fizz, is as strong now as it was when CAMRA was formed in 1971. The problem from the point of view of those market forces is that, unlike keg, Real Ale is alive and needs tender loving care. Each cask needs to be cellared at the right temperature, and racked for the right time, and poured through clean lines to give of its best. When we drink it, only around half of the flavour we enjoy - or not - is the work of the brewer. The other half is down to cellaring - how the beer is kept in the pub. Then the ale has a limited lifetime, after a few days at most the wretched stuff goes over and turns into acetone and ultimately vinegar. Careful stock control is needed to ensure the ale is neither unsold for too long and wasted nor does it run out and leave the pub with no beer. The landlords/ladies of the pubs in the new Good Beer Guide can

rightly feel proud of their skill and judgment, and deserve our heartfelt thanks.

None of this is true of keg. It is dead and simple and cheap to supply. You just have to plug it in, serve it up until it's all gone, and pocket the proceeds (or let the pubco do it). So from the supplier's point of view, keg is more profitable and less fiddly. If only they could get us consumers to shut up and swill it down!

That's where CAMRA came in, and still does. If complacency prevailed, CAMRA declared that our work was done and shut up shop, I am certain that inexorably market forces, the Invisible Hand of Mr Adam Smith, would act to favour keg in place of cask and we would end up back where we came in, in 1971. Only consumer pressure, mobilised by CAMRA, pushed that hand back then and needs to go on doing so now. The price of good beer is eternal vigilance: the struggle continues!

Look out for news from CAMRA regarding the Revitalisation proposals, respond via e-mail or go to the AGM in Bournemouth to have your say and cast your vote. Doing nothing and being complacent shouldn't be an option.

**Pam Stevenson**



# Wall Heath To Wordsley Crawl

Disappointingly West Midlands Travel have decreased the frequency of buses to Wall Heath from Dudley but efforts must be made to drink in the very diverse range of pubs in this area. The 205 bus from Dudley is ideal but now only runs once an hour on Saturdays.

My first port of call was the **Cottage** (DY6 8AW), on the High Street approaching Kingswinford. This pub has a nice cosy feel to it and supports a range of four beers. It has a good choice of food, available lunchtimes and evenings. Enville Ale and St Austell Tribute are regulars on the bar and on my visit I had the Enville Ale and also Exmoor Gold, both were in excellent condition.

Back to the bus stop across the road I took the 255 bus the short distance to Wall Heath. The **Wall Heath Tavern** (DY6 0HA) was my next pub, about 100 metres from the centre of Wall Heath. Offering a range of usually 8 beers the choices are spread across the two bars. This pub is often very busy and the small bar can get quite crowded often with the lounge/dining area quieter but laid out for food. On my visit the bar was full of people watching football. Beers on offer came from a range of local breweries with Enville brewery well represented. I chose Hop Twister from the excellent Salopian brewery.

I also popped in to the **Horse and Jockey** (DY6 0HA) which to all intents and purposes is a Marston's pub, but on each occasion I have visited, it has sold Enville Ale as a guest beer.

Back to the bus and a short journey towards Kingswinford for a visit to the **Park Tavern** on Cot Lane (DY6 9QG). This can be a very popular and lively pub. Generally, 6 beers are available including Bathams Best Bitter a permanent fixture along with Enville Ale and Enville Ginger. On my previous visit, I had the Butty Bach brewed by Wye Valley and Enville Ale; today I chose the Holden's Golden Glow. For those with a bit more time the Woodman is a short walk up the road and offers a range of five changing beers but I needed to move on.

The walk back to the top of Broad Street takes between five and ten minutes and then the bus stop (256, 257) across the road took me closer to Wordsley and the **Queens Head** (DY8 5QS), a Black Country Ales pub on the main A491 from Wolverhampton to Stourbridge. At one time this was multi-roomed, obvious from the internal layout, but is now a large open plan pub where service is from a central bar. The pub offers 3 beers from Black Country Ales plus a selection of changing guest beers along with some Real Cider. On a previous visit I had a superb Muirhouse Coffee Porter. Today, I chose Froth Blowers (a Birmingham Brewery) Riverside Stout and Red Willow Directionless (serious hops at last).

On the estate behind the Queens Head is the **Glasscutters** (DY8 5QL). This pub has recently been refurbished and the changes are quite impressive. It still retains its cosy atmosphere and with some excellent beers it was well worth the visit.

A gentle stroll back to the main road took me to the **New Inn** (DY8 5QR), a tied Bathams pub. This is very much a locals' pub with an L-shaped bar area and a small lounge to the rear. An extensive garden area is also available. Bathams Best Bitter was excellent as usual.

Across the road is another bus stop which will take us to the **Bird in Hand** (DY8 4AZ) on John Street, about a 10 minute walk when you miss the bus. This is a typical back street local offering an excellent range of beers. Near to the Glass Cone and former Glassworks the pub has a bar and separate lounge and the pub has a warm homely feel to it. The beers here are regularly from Hobsons, Holden's and Enville. Before Christmas I had a Wye Valley Golden Ale, this time I chose to have Hobsons Town Crier.

Steve Thompson

# Hitchmough's Archives

**OLD BUSH, 128, Level Street, Brierley Hill**  
*County Express 29/12/1900*

A very successful smoking concert was held at the OLD BUSH INN, Level Street, for the benefit of the widow of the late David Rowley, who is left with eight children. Mr. Thomas S. Brown presided, and made some very sympathetic and suitable remarks. The large club room was filled to excess, and the audience heartily enjoyed the entertainment provided for them. Mr. Evans gave a very clever performance with hoops and table spoons. Mr. James Isaac (violin soloist) and Mr. Garbett (amateur champion concertina player) gave some very good selections. Mr. Frank Garner delighted the audience with several humorous songs. Mr. W. McGill sang 'Queen of the earth' and 'Anchored'; Mr. John Davies (host) sang 'Alice where art thou?' and 'Ruby'; and Master Carl. A. Davies sang 'Good-bye daddy' and 'Welcome, C.I.V.' s.' Mr. Harry Davies was accompanist. The proceeds for the widow amounted to £7.

**BELL, 172, Delph Road, Brierley Hill**  
*County Express 6/4/1901*

There was a large assembly at the club room of the BELL HOTEL, Delph, on Monday night, to attend a concert which had been arranged for the benefit of Mr. George Price, aged 24, who for a considerable time had suffered from consumption. It was with sincere regret the Chairman Mr. H. G. Mantle Q.C., had to announce the postponement of the concert, consequent to the death of the sufferer, which event occurred on the previous day. The proceeds of the adjourned concert would be given to the widowed mother....

*County Express 18/5/1901*

The benefit concert held at the BELL INN, Delph, on April 29th on behalf of Mrs. Price has resulted in the committee being able to hand over the really handsome sum of £11 to her.

Hitchmough's Black Country Pubs [longpull.co.uk](http://longpull.co.uk)

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# A Day In The Life Of The C.A.M.R.A Operations Corps.

The C.A.M.R.A Operations Corps or COC for short, consists of a dedicated band of rugged, go-anywhere, do-anything, in almost any weather, men and women. Much of their time is spent away from their families, travelling on an often inferior Public Transport system to places totally foreign to them, accepting that illness and injury are part of the job and missing the last bus is accepted as the norm.

Members of the corps were recently (early December), involved in an undercover mission to the southern wastelands of the West Midlands. The COC 'team' assembled secretly in full daylight adjacent to Stourbridge Town Railway Station at eleven hundred and fifteen hours. After a brief discussion it was decided that a 'Group Ticket' would suit our needs best as the corps consisted of seven finely honed and seasoned operatives and a sniffy-dog.

The party was led by Captain Geoff 'Whiskers' Mills and his batman, former Rear-Admiral 'Mikey' Vaughan. The rest of the party consisted of two married couples, the 'Stevens' in charge of photography and Medical supplies (Rennies) and a crack team of Dog-handlers, the 'Heardmans', complete with 'Widget' the bouncing dog.

Lance Corporal Southall completes the team, his attributes have not yet been realised fully but his ability to sniff-out anything edible is legendary and will prove to be a valuable asset.

The 'sealed envelope' was opened and our destination revealed ..... Worcester ..... we all agreed to accept the mission impossible!



Capt. Mills had already reconnoitred the territory and his plan of action was swiftly and smoothly put into operation as we alighted the train half-an-hour later at Foregate Street station.

The terrain was littered with Christmas Shoppers and Parking Wardens but we deftly picked our way through them until we found the first objective ..... The 'Imperial Tavern'.

Now, the more observant amongst you will by now have realised that what the COC were doing amounts to little more than a Pub Crawl. This is in fact due to the misinformation we distribute to confuse you and the Government.

It must be pointed out that, joking aside, this really is a crack-team of 'ale-suppers' drawing operatives from as far afield as Middlesbrough, Bristol and Oldbury, in fact the 'Heardmans', now domiciled in Fort William (just North of the M6) made a special journey just to be with us ..... it is very lonely up there.

Back to reality, the 'Imperial' is a fine establishment with an extremely welcoming and chatty landlady, recently taken on by Black Country Ales the pub serves a wonderful selection of ales (10) including three from B.C.A. and a good selection of ciders.

Next stop was the 'King Charles II' now run by Craddocks of Stourbridge. A fine historically important building with all the ales coming from the Craddock Empire. Sustenance was taken in the form of Pie, Mash and Peas ..... very nice.

Onwards and back in time to Worcester's oldest pub the 'Cardinals Hat', another fine example of the 'historic pub'. Some fine beers and solid fuel stoves providing comfort from the biting wind outside!

The 'Plough' was next. Another listed building! A tiny bar serves beers, mostly local, to a room on either side, again with solid fuel stoves. There is also a fine selection of whiskey to tempt the connoisseur.

Over the River Severn to the district of St. John's and straight to the 'Bush'. Now run by Cannon Royall brewery of Uphampton the interior is another masterpiece of 'monumental' decoration with much wood and mirror. Only one beer from

C.R. but it was a very drinkable Chocolate Mild. Up the hill and left at the lights took us to the 'Bell', a bustling, noisy pub with a plethora of rooms including a skittle alley. Five beers to choose from. A light fitting in one of the side-rooms was strangely adorned with a model Junkers JU87 'Stuka' Dive-bomber! Hmmm ..... very interesting.



Back to the traffic lights and to the 'Bull Baiter's Inn' which is easily miss-able unless you're sober, probably. A micro-pub that has been in existence for about six months is a former shop. A fine choice of ales served by Chris who, after being in the industry for 30 years, has decided to downsize. The pub was quiet when we called but it could easily get busy judging by the choice and quality of its ales. The brewer from Three Shires was also a visitor. Beer dispense is interesting!

That was it, the train was beckoning, time to go, we said our farewells and assured the landlord that future visits are certainly on the cards.

The COC arrived at the station only to find that the next train was three-quarters of an hour hence ..... what could we do in three-quarters of an hour ?

I sense you're probably ahead of me here.

The 'Dragon Inn' seemed the obvious choice, only five minutes away, calculations were done and yes, it was possible! The pub has changed in the last few years and now is run by 'Church End Brewery', a wonderful selection of nine ales greeted us, mostly from C.E. but with a few Guests. We really should have allowed more time for the 'Dragon' ..... we'll be back.

Time to go, a fast-ish walk got us back to the station on time. Two platforms at Foregate Street, guess which one we choose? A dash through the underpass got us to the correct platform in time for our train 'back-home'.

But would we get back in time for the last bus.....? \*

'Care in the Community' have liaised with C.A.M.R.A. to come up with a marvellously exciting plan to keep their over-60's ('senior drinkers' section) active and out-there, so providing them with a list of pubs, a map and some of those fancy phones with built-in sat-nav helps promote reading, spatial awareness and exercise.

\*(Answer in the next edition)

Adrian Stevens

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### JANUARY

#### Monday 30th

Branch Meeting – 8pm  
Woodman, Wakelams Fold (off Straits Road), Lower  
Gornal DY3 2UD

### FEBRUARY

#### Monday 27th

Branch Meeting – 8pm  
Tamebridge, 45 Tame Road, Great Bridge, Tipton  
DY4 7JA

### MARCH

#### Wednesday 22nd

Scoring Social – West Bromwich  
See website for details

#### Monday 27th

Branch Meeting – 8pm  
Lamp, 116 High Street, Dudley DY1 1QT

### APRIL

#### Monday 24th

Branch Meeting – 8pm  
Vine (Bull & Bladder), 10 Delph Road, Brierley Hill  
DY5 2TN

### MAY

#### Monday 22nd

Branch AGM – 8pm  
See website for details

## Stourbridge & Halesowen

### MARCH

#### Wednesday 1st

Branch Meeting – 8.00 pm (TBC)  
Royal Exchange, Enville Street, Stourbridge

#### Thursday 16th

Clubs Marking Social. Meet Snooks 8.00 pm  
Then Coombs Wood Sports & Social Club,  
Halesowen Athletic & Cycling Club and Laurels

### APRIL

#### Wednesday 5th

Branch Meeting 8.00 pm (TBC)  
Little Chop House, Colley Gate

#### Thursday 27th

Norton Marking Social. Meet New Inn, Cherry St.  
8.00pm  
Then Gigmill, Longlands, Garibaldi and Plough &  
Harrow

### MAY

#### Wednesday 3rd

Branch Meeting 8.00pm (TBC)  
Waggon & Horses, Stourbridge

#### Thursday 18th

Colley Gate Marking Social, meet Vine, Lyde Green,  
8.00pm  
Then Rose & Crown (Potters), Gate, Little Chop  
House and Round of Beef

# Birmingham Beer Festival

A key event in October is always Birmingham Beer Festival, which is run by our colleagues over at Birmingham CAMRA. Held again this year at New Bingley Hall, it is a huge event with an excellent selection of ale, cider and perry to choose from.

A small change this year was that there was no Wednesday night session, so the festival opened to the general public at midday on Thursday. This meant that everyone, whether a CAMRA member or not, had equal chance to ensure they got to try the beers they wanted.



For our branch members it meant that we could choose our own times to attend, as many did, rather than stick to a set meeting time. I personally arrived around 18:00 to find our Young Members contingent already well into their beer token cards. Fair play to them, they were still there when I left!

With so much choice, it really does help to do a little research before you go. Friend-of-the-branch Jon Mather had done some sterling work and provided some of us with a list of the highest rated beers on 'Untappd'. For those who don't know what that is, it's a social networking app that allows drinkers to score beer by preference and taste. This differs from CAMRA's own 'Whatpub' NBSS scoring system which relies on the quality of beer in terms of its condition, rather than personal taste.

'Whatpub' and NBSS allows for a bland beer to be served in excellent condition by a pub, but also allows for a tasty beer to be served badly. After all, we all have different taste preferences! In some ways it's a shame the two systems can't be combined, but they do represent a fundamentally different approach. Anyway, I digress.

That earlier research paid huge dividends in sampling some truly excellent beers from brewers nationwide, so I think I will have to take a similar approach again in future. The only downside to this is that if everyone did it, there would be huge queues for a small number of casks, which would quickly sell out.

Two local breweries were on hand with their own brewery bars, namely Green Duck and Fixed Wheel. Green Duck had taken an innovative approach in offering 100% vegan beers at this festival. Their new 'beer machine' KeyKeg setup looked wonderful too. Scott, Alex, and Alan from the two breweries were present on the Thursday, serving their beer and answering questions from punters. Other local breweries picked up prizes in the SIBA Midlands competition being run at the festival, namely Sadler's, Holden's and Kinver.

As well as real ale, there was a huge quantity of real Cider and Perry available. Unfortunately I was not able to sample any on this occasion. So many drinks, so little time and capacity!

All in all a great evening out at this excellent festival which was made especially enjoyable by the volunteers, who all did an amazing job!

Tim Cadwell

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## Prague Re-visited

We have been to Prague on several occasions, visiting most of the classic city centre bars and micro-breweries, but this time, we thought we would try some other bars and micro-breweries more off the beaten track and in the suburbs. With increasing tourism, some of the city centre bars and beerhalls are becoming (relatively) pricey, and so our trips into the suburbs once again found beer at around £1 for 500ml.

Our trip actually started in Berlin, last August, where we sampled many beers at the Berlin Beer Festival, and met Tony & Bridget and their friends. We then travelled by train to Prague to sample some new and not so new bars and micro-breweries.

We stayed at the Old Town Clarion Hotel, which was within spitting distance of many of our old favourite bars. First we visited the **Beer Museum**, a specialist beer bar in Dlouha in the Old Town with an extensive range of beers, many from local breweries. We had two "flights" (trays) of 5 sample beers in 20cl glasses at varying prices and strengths, which wet our taste buds for the beers to come later. We particularly remember the Cornel 12 Red and the India Pale Ale. One of our favourite city centre bars is the **U Dvou Koček** (Two Cats), in Uhelny trh in the Old Coal Market District. This microbrewery opened in 2010 and offers two natural Kocka beers in the typical Czech style (dark and light). When busy, non-diners are discouraged from sitting at the tables, but this is OK when the restaurant is less crowded.

Another microbrewery in the Old Town we visited was the **U Medvidku**, in Na Perstýne, about 10 minutes walk from Charles Bridge. This bar and restaurant is set in a former medieval brewery dating from the 15th century. The original bar is now the hotel reception, and you can now drink your beers while sitting in something very much akin to a copper brewery kettle. The bar serves typical Czech-style unpasteurised beers, with lagers and dark beers, including "X" Beer 33, 1466 and Oldgott Barique (half dark lager). All very tasty.



Our first trip out to the suburbs was to the **Jihomestský Pivovar**, in Podjavorinske, in a new residential area, a 15-minute walk (half mile) from the end of Metro line C (Haje). The building was originally a boiler house which has been transformed into a restaurant with an on-site microbrewery and beer garden. It offers a choice of unfiltered beers, including lager, pils, blonde, dunkel and dark, at 11, 12 & 16 strengths. Good food is available, including home-cooked chips (crisps), but not fancy dining.

Another suburban brewpub we visited was the **Pivovar Hostivar**, in Lochotinska, reached via No 125 bus and Tram 26. This is a modern brewpub, opened in 2013, with good food and a wide variety of well-served beers, including seasonal specialties and Hostivar 11, 13 & 15 and Polotmava 12.

Sometimes the names chosen for these small bars is interesting. **Zly Casy** means "Bad Times", but this is a complete reversal of the experience here. Located in the suburbs, in Cestmírova and reached via Tram 11/18 or 7/24, this is an old building tucked in a side street. It stretches across three floors, with a cosy bar on each floor, all serving nearly 50 beers mainly from small craft breweries in Bohemia and Moravia, including pils, lagers, dunkels, !PAs and stouts, with a bottle shop next door. I remember sampling the Matuska Raptor, and far from being a "bad time", we stayed here instead of visiting another selected bar.





Back in the Old Town, it was time to visit a new micro-brewery, **Pivovar U Dobrenskych** is located in U Dobrenskych, just around the corner from Charles Bridge. It is a classy small restaurant with a small on-site micro-brewery (and classy prices). It offers three different beers, all infused with herbs, including a pils flavoured with lemongrass, Salvi stout flavoured with sage, and a house beer flavoured with herbal Viagra..... It didn't seem to work on me!



Another new city centre bar we visited was **The Craft House**, in Navratilova, focusing on craft beer (rather than tennis!), with unusual Swedish-style snacks. It has 27 taps, a bottle shop and an Imperial Bar, with porter, krik, saison, altbier, dunkel, IPA, APA, Imperial Stout and fruit beers from the Czech Republic and wider afield, along with a few ciders. The owner once served Brewdog beers and was hoping to get the franchise, but wasn't successful.

Back in the suburbs, we also visited the **Beznoska Minipivovar**, in Klicovska, Prosek, at the north-eastern end of Metro line C. This bar offers some excellent food and beer and a wide range of locally brewed Beznoska beers, including lager, weissbeer, dark dunkel and IPA.

One of our last visits was to another suburban bar, **Pivovar u Bulovky**, in Bulovka, reached via a Metro and tram ride. Here we found some good basic food

and 4 excellent beers, including weizen, IPA and stout from the Richter brewery and Holander.

So, there you are, another range of recommended bars and micro-breweries in the city centre and suburbs of Prague. Buses, trams and the Metro are frequent and reliable, and public transport is easy with day and multi-day tickets. So forget the tourist bar traps in the city centre and do some exploring – you know it will be worthwhile!

Steve James

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