

ALES & TALES



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

Issue 36
Spring 2018

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Welcome Back

A belated Happy New Year to our readers. Here's hoping that you had plenty of festive cheer drinking the tipples of your choice. And hoping that at least some of that festive drinking took place in that great British institution, The Pub. Hopefully you will continue to support the pubs of your choice throughout this year and for years to come.

Since our last edition Dudley Winter Ales Fayre took place and a big thankyou goes to the staff who gave their time so freely, and to the sponsors, Holden's, for making this event a success.

£1,500 was raised for charity (Prostate Cancer and Samaritans).

The beer of the festival was Kinver Full Centurion.

For more accolades, on Saturday 30th December 2017 a contingent of members from Dudley & South Staffs and Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA branches made the annual pilgrimage to that classic Victorian institution the Barton's Arms, Aston, to celebrate the outcome of a number of competitions where, throughout the previous year a selection of beers, ciders and perries had been pitted against each other in the hope of winning a West Midlands Regional award.

In addition to those 'liquid' contests, which take place at various beer/cider festivals, branch magazines and websites are also judged on their merit and winners presented with awards at this annual event.

The awards presented on that auspicious occasion, by Gary



Scott Povey, Fixed Wheel Brewery receives Bronze in the West Midlands Regional Beer of the Year Award

Timmins, Regional Director, culminated in the Regional Beer of the Year Award, where Gold was won by Beowulf Dark Raven, Silver by Salopian Oracle and Bronze by Fixed Wheel Blackheath Stout. Other awards received by those within our areas were as follows.

Fixed Wheel Blackheath Stout

Gold in the Stout category

Fownes' King Korvak's Saga

Gold in the Porter category

Holden's Black Country Mild

Gold in the Mild category

Kinver Half Centurion

Gold in the Strong Bitter category

Kinver Over the Edge

Silver in the Barley Wine/Strong Old Ale category

Sarah Hughes' Snowflake

Bronze in the Barley Wine/Strong Old Ale category

Kinver Khyber

Bronze in the Real Ale in a Bottle (light) category

Kinver Constitutional Club

Winner - Club of the Year

Magazine of the Year Merit Award - ALES & TALES

Dudley & South Staffs and

Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA magazine

Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA

Website of the Year - Winner.

Finally, whilst we are on the subject of achievements, the editors of Ales & Tales would like to thank all those who have contributed to the success of the magazine. We really appreciate the efforts of the article writers, interviewers, photographers, proof readers, and deliverers - and if you feel the urge to get involved, please get in touch.

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The Crafty Pint



The Crafty Pint is a micro pub in the Hasbury area of Halesowen. It opened in August 2016 and so it's been open for approximately eighteen months. The pub currently has six hand pumps, delivering a selection of Real Ales, alongside a Craft ale keg tap, 3 Real Ciders and a craft lager. The bar also offers wines and soft drinks as well as teas, coffees and traditional bar snacks; from crisps and nuts to cobs, pork pies and scotch eggs. There is an emphasis on supporting the community and so you will find work by local artists on display (and for sale) on the walls and the pies, cakes, etc. are from local producers. The pub is dog-friendly and child-friendly; generally friendly. This interview is a conversation between Mat Button, a Stourbridge & Halesowen branch member and landlord of The Crafty Pint, Andy Davies.

Name: Andy Davies
Age: 54

Mat: What Hobbies & Interests do you have?

Andy: Real Ale; I'm always working in The Crafty Pint!

Mat: What was your background before opening The Crafty Pint?

Andy: My background is in installations of Real Ale and other alcoholic products. I worked for Whitbread Brewery for twenty-two years and prior to that I worked for ten years at Bulmers Cider.

Mat: How did you get started in the trade?

Andy: When I met my wife, I changed areas with the brewery from Hereford to the Birmingham area and then we settled here. Unfortunately, my wife's grandmother passed away and left my wife a little bit of money. We decided to put it to good use and open up a micro pub.

Mat: What's next for The Crafty Pint?

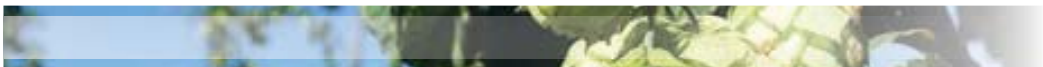
Andy: To carry on as we are, as we have just expanded into the premises next door. The expansion gives us a bigger lounge-style seating area, with a charity bookcase in aid of the Acorn Children's Hospice. The expansion has also allowed us to add a dedicated food preparation area and separate ladies toilet facilities. Hopefully this will help us to expand and draw in some new customers. One of our regulars has produced a custom printed window graphic of my grandad and uncle from back in the day; they were both coopers, making barrels for the H.P. Bulmer cider company.

Mat: What are your wider aspirations for the business?

Andy: Hopefully the business will go up and up; we'll carry on serving the good ales that we serve, now that we've put on a sixth hand pump and the Craft ale keg tap, frankly there's no more room left on the bar! Possibly expanding in the future, we might look into opening another micro pub. We're happy with our current opening hours and our customers and neighbours seem happy with what we do now.

Mat: What advice would you give to someone else who was thinking about opening a micro pub?

Andy: There's lots of different advice I'd offer; the main issue is choosing the right location. We've opened up in what is quite a large residential area, with houses all around; that or a busy high street is ideal for a micro pub. Where we are allows most of our regulars to walk, so we don't encourage drink driving. You also need to listen to your customers and make



sure you're offering the products they want to drink. When I first opened up, being from Hereford originally, I would have brought in a range of darker or certainly more bitter beers; but having asked potential customers on social media what they would like to see on the bar, our range is quite different. Judging by what I serve now, which is mostly pale ales with hoppy and citrusy flavours, if I hadn't listened to my customers, then I think by the third night after we opened then we probably would have been empty. About four weeks before we opened we asked for preferences on Facebook; it's definitely made a big difference to the success of the business. The difference in what we serve, to what I had planned has probably changed my own taste in beer too. You've got to keep listening to your customers and I always take on board the recommendations I'm offered.



Mat: What was your first alcoholic drink?

Andy: Probably a few mouthfuls of my dad's Ansell's Bitter or Double Diamond.

Mat: What is your favourite beer?

Andy: My favourite beer now is probably Salopian's Hop Twister or maybe Oakham's Green Devil IPA.

Mat: What food do you enjoy and what's your ideal food and beer pairing?

Andy: Probably a nice pint of Hop Twister with a crusty cheese and onion flavour cob.

Mat: What other alcoholic drinks do you prefer if beer isn't available?

Andy: I'm partial to a nice whisky; a Scottish malt. I quite like Glenlivet Reserve. One of my customers put me on to that one; as most of my customers tend to put me on the right track!

Mat: Where is your Favourite pub (other than The Crafty Pint of course)?

Andy: The Barrels Pub in Hereford; it's a Wye Valley brewery pub. Basically when I was a cellar service engineer, when he first started back in 1985, I used to look after him. So it's quite a bit of a turn around, because I looked after his cellar, keeping his ales right and now I actually buy from him and serve his ales in my micro pub.

Mat: How do you think CAMRA can help or be more supportive of your business?

Andy: I think a micro pub directory for CAMRA members to see what's opening or what's available would be useful and basically just supporting small businesses like mine. I think micro pubs are part of the future; unfortunately, a lot of the larger pubs seem to be closing down and I think this is a great way of keeping Real Ale going. We need the branch members to come in and support us with beer trails, tasting trips and so on. Obviously, I would love to make it into the Good Beer Guide.

Mat: Thanks Andy; this is a great little pub, good luck going forward!

During the interview I enjoyed a cracking glass of Oakham Nelson Sauvin Single Hop, a typically excellent Fixed Wheel Chain Reaction and a wonderful Titanic Plum Porter. Andy has had to double his cellar space recently to keep pace with the amount of beer he's getting through. Do go along to the Crafty Pint and feel free to tell Andy I sent you.

Mat Button

Brilliant Boozer Brings in Bronze

A local campaign group, 'Friends of Haden Cross', has scooped the Bronze certificate in the 2017 Pub Saving Award coordinated by national CAMRA. The Haden Cross, Old Hill, is an outstanding case study of pub protection where genuinely exercised stakeholders collectively fought to save an inclusive pub that reaches out to all corners of society.

The relationship between a pub and its neighbourhood will ultimately determine the extent to which locals are prepared to fight for its future. Elsewhere in the Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA branch area, there are examples of pubs responding well to local demand. For example, several pubs in West Bromwich have rebranded as bars with Indian Grills (of course, it is regrettable that some of these venues no longer sell Real Ale!).

Three years ago, NewRiver Retail requested planning permission from Sandwell Council to build a Co-op supermarket on the Haden Cross car park. At the time, the venue was a thriving wet-led community pub and locals were outraged. Tim Haskey and Jim Mumford were particularly determined to save the car park and initiated the 'Friends of Haden Cross' with the two gentlemen becoming Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively.

The group worked with the local authority to list the building as an Asset of Community Value and compiled a petition of more than 550 signatures to oppose the development. Due to the weight of objections expressed within the petition, Sandwell Council dismissed the application.

Then came Round 2. NewRiver Retail fancied residential development on the site which would have led to the demolition of the ACV-listed outbuildings. The Friends of Haden Cross mounted a press and social media campaign and further strengthened their relationships with local political figures. Having underestimated the potential of the group previously, NewRiver Retail did not make the same mistake twice and decided to withdraw their planning application.

An ex-Marston's outlet, the Haden Cross has since been given a new lease of life by local father and son, Stan and Karl Gardner. Following a top-to-bottom refurbishment including the installation of a roaring real fire, the pub-cum-restaurant reopened to thankful

local punters in November 2017. Four locales and a "Gin Palace" menu are always available plus a diverse food offering that is sure to appeal to customers of all ages - ranging from toasties through to a speciality smokehouse menu. Please note and respect that children are welcome only when dining.

The Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA branch was so impressed with the relentless campaigning undertaken by Friends of Haden Cross that we nominated the group for the CAMRA Pub Saving Award 2017 – an annual, national competition with 12 commendable entries this year. The judging panel scrutinised all submissions closely and decided that the Friends of Haden Cross should be awarded the Bronze certificate! The Gold award went to the residents of Stockbury in Kent, 140 of whom became shareholders in order to save the Harrow from closure.



L to R: Jim Mumford (Vice Chairman, Friends of Haden Cross), Ann Shackleton (Cradley Heath & Old Hill Labour Councillor), Tim Haskey (Chairman, Friends of Haden Cross), Ryan Hunt (Chairman, Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA)

On Monday 8th January 2018, members of the local CAMRA branch and many of the original foot soldiers for the campaign convened to witness Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA Chairman, Ryan Hunt, present the award for 3rd place to Friends of Haden Cross Chairman, Tim Haskey. The certificate was then handed to the current manager, Matt Carey, before a photographer from a local newspaper, the Express & Star, got some snaps ready for a front page feature.

Ryan Hunt
Chairman, Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA

Mel's Farewell

More than 600 years have passed since the 'Father of Literature', Geoffrey Chaucer, penned the proverb "all good things must come to an end". Nowhere more than the pub sector does this ring true.

November 2017 marked the end of an era. After 28 years of reputation-building and standard-setting at the Vine, Brierley Hill, Melvyn Wood called time on his lordship. On the first day of November, Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA Chairman, Ryan Hunt, presented 'Mel' (as he is hypocoristically known) with a Long-Service Award to commemorate the occasion.

As summarised on the certificate itself, the local CAMRA branch were thanking and congratulating the outgoing publican for: "managing the treasured brewery tap of Bathams Brewery for almost three decades and achieving accolades, such as, uninterrupted Good Beer Guide status and Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA Pub of the Year 1996 and 2016".

Under Mel and partner Wendy's supervision, the Vine – which readers of Ales & Tales may also identify by the sobriquet "Bull and Bladder" – pulled in customers from around the country. Many were tempted by the legendary Best Bitter and generously-filled rolls whilst other returning customers adored the timeless interior of a former slaughterhouse and butcher's shop.



From L to R: Ryan Hunt, Mel Wood and Tim Batham

The presentation, which was attended by West Midlands CAMRA Regional Director Gary Timmins and some of Mel's close friends and family, was conducted jointly by Ryan Hunt and the brewery's director, Tim Batham. Tim extended a heartfelt thank you to the departing couple, presenting both with gifts including a stylish watch for Mel himself.

Mel's management of the Vine started back in 1989 – the year that English actor, Daniel Radcliffe, best known for playing Harry Potter, was born. The beer industry has changed beyond recognition in the decades since, yet, the Bull and Bladder has demonstrated that punters of all generations continue to buy into a traditional drinking experience: well-kept, keenly-priced Real Ale where conversation can flow without risk of being drowned out by pop music.

But fear not, the future is most definitely bright for the Vine. An excellent appointment has been made in Tom Comyns, who has the necessary experience having managed the Lamp Tavern, Dudley, which is also owned by Bathams brewery. Under Tom's stewardship, the Lamp Tavern was selected by Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA as an entry in the 2018 Good Beer Guide publication. The pub will continue to serve food between the hours of 12pm and 2pm on weekdays which includes daily specials as advertised on the Bull and Bladder Facebook page: [facebook.com/bullandbladder](https://www.facebook.com/bullandbladder).

On behalf of all local CAMRA members, I would like to wish Tom the very best for his stint at this marvellous brewery tap. I'm sure that your tenure will be just as successful as that of your predecessor.

Equally, we hope that our friends, Mel and Wendy, enjoy their futures wherever life may take them.

Ryan Hunt
Chairman,

Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA

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Hitchmough's Archives

Life Is A Bagatelle

Games have always been a part of pub life.

GREAT WESTERN, Bradley Lane, Tipton

Black Country Bugle 31/5/2001

'Old Princes End pub gone but not forgotten' by Reg Aston Jnr.

".....The **GREAT WESTERN** was also the only pub where I have ever seen a full size bagatelle table installed. It was located in the bar and the game was played with billiard balls on green baize. The table was laid out with numbered cups at one end and two side pockets....."

CRICKETERS ARMS, High Street, Stourbridge

Stourbridge Observer 15/5/1869 - Advert

"Notice! Notice! Notice!

H. Rowcliffe, of the **CRICKETERS ARMS INN**, High Street, Stourbridge, begs to inform the Public that he has purchased that splendid Pocket Bagatelle Table late the property of Mr. R. Roby, which is in first rate condition, and ready for play.

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OLD URN, Colley Gate, Cradley

Stourbridge Observer 10/12/1864

"William Oliver, landlord of the **OLD URN INN**, Colley Gate, was summoned by Superintendent Freeman, for having a bagatelle board in his possession, and allowing persons to play upon it, he not being duly licensed. The magistrates said it was a very serious offence. He was liable to £100 penalty, and £10 for every day he allowed playing upon it. Defendant pleaded ignorant of the law. He was fined 5s and costs, 16s 6d."

PROVIDENCE, Cradley Road, Netherton

Dudley and District News 7/5/1881

"Joseph Hill, landlord of the **PROVIDENCE HOTEL**, Netherton, was charged with unlawfully permitting gambling on his licensed premises. Defendant pleaded guilty.

Joseph Orne stated that on the 2nd of April he and three others played at French bagatelle for two pints of ale, defendant being in the room and keeping the score.

Being his first offence, defendant was fined 20s and costs, or a month's imprisonment."

OXFORD, Oxford Street, Bilston

Wolverhampton Chronicle 2/1/1861

"Yesterday at the Police Court, John Guest was charged with having stolen two bagatelle balls, the property of Daniel Parsons, publican of Bilston. The prisoner was the last customer in the room on Saturday night, and the gas was put out before he left. The balls were safe a few minutes before, and he was seen to put his hand towards the bagatelle board. Directly upon his leaving they were missed. The prisoner denied the charge, but was committed for trial."

OLD CROWN, High Street, Kingswinford

County Express 27/8/1921

"District Bagatelle League.

The committee of the Ensign Club, Wordsley, were recently approached with reference to reviving the Wordsley and District Bagatelle League which lapsed during the war, and various clubs were invited to attend a meeting to discuss the subject. There was a hearty response, and it was unanimously agreed to restart the League, the following clubs signifying their intention of joining.


ROSE AND CROWN (Wordsley), **SAMSON AND LION** (Wordsley), **TURKS HEAD** (Audnam), **NEW INNS** (Wordsley), **UNION** (Kingswinford), **RED LION** (Bretell Lane), and Ensign Club. At a further meeting on Tuesday at the club, the **CROWN** (Kingswinford) and **THULL GHANT** (Wordsley) offered their co-operation. This left a vacancy of three to make the total up to twelve. Names should be submitted at the next meeting on Wednesday, August 3rd, at the Ensign Club, at 7.30pm."



SLATE BOTTOMED BAGATELLE TABLES.

S. TWIST begs leave to request parties about to furnish themselves with the above elegant article, to wait and inspect his splendid stock of **PATENT CIRCULAR ENDED TABLES**, which will be ready for inspection in the beginning of the merry month of May.

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f i o t

IMBC Indy Man Beer Conference

These days barely an issue of Ales & Tales goes by where we're not at one beer festival or another. This piece bears no exception, though it's worth mentioning that this particular festival is not organised by CAMRA – that's no reason not to fully support might I add. It's a pleasure to take the opportunity to scribble my thoughts and experience on this independent beer festival. So, said beer festival is none other than 'Indy Man Beer Con' – now in its sixth year, yet to my own surprise only my second time attending the fantastic Mancunian craft gathering that IMBC put together each autumn.

A brief overview for those who might be unfamiliar with IMBC or worse still have instead chosen to watch England v's Lithuania game and one measly goal, IMBC showcases an extravaganza of the most progressive and forward-thinking breweries from across the UK, Europe & The States featuring the likes of Buxton Brewery, Lervig (Stravanger, Norway) and Other

Half Brewing (Brooklyn, NY), pouring them under one roof over the course of one weekend in October. Jonny Heyes festival founder recalls "IMBC was one of the first festivals to focus on modern British 'craft' breweries rather

than cask ale breweries. Before Indy Man came along most if not all of the big beer festivals were CAMRA-led which often meant the exclusion of most of the new wave of progressive, exciting breweries due to their tendency toward key-keg beer." – Ferment Magazine.

I can't help but emphasise that to me this is real on the edge hardcore bee-ry pornography, it almost feels like a separate division to the possibly more familiar CAMRA festival. The volumes go up, the styles of beer are more complex and some of the flavours they cram in get reckless! For example, the third of 'Cucumber' from Lervig was exactly what it says in terms of aroma and taste. I realise this is not everyone's cuppa tea but you kind of have to admire the craftsmanship that went into producing this 'hit the nail on the head' sour style beer. Another worth mentioning that completely sums up the diverse weird and wonderful array of beers at IMBC is 'Omnipollo's (Stockholm, Sweden) collaboration with UK based Buxton Brewery – 'Original Maple Truffle Ice Cream Waffle' an 11.5% Imperial stout that was even served with toasted yes toasted marshmallows and granola! As my pal Martin Clarke describes 'Ridiculous concept, perfect execution. Dessert in a glass'.

When you're sat on the fence, it's hard to compare the independent style craft beer festival with that of a CAMRA festival, maybe that's the point? There's no direct competition between the two, and rightly so as I witnessed the typical old school bitter drinker present, rubbing shoulders with the typical 20 something fuzzy facial haired beer geek who's likely to be of the 'Untappd' contingent. It's also at this point that maybe just to clear up any misconceptions of bias I should mention that cask will always be my first love, but as a young beer lover in the 21st century it's easy to appreciate all forms of dispense methods, styles of beer and flavours – put away those pitchforks if you think that's a dig at the old-school elbow-bender.

Another thing I've picked up on is the ethos of the splendid little geniuses behind IMBC. It's all good and well having an amazing beer line-up but people need to know it's a good gig.





Which brings me on to the venue, Indy Man is hosted within a partially renovated Edwardian bathhouse, so expect high ceilings, decorative stained glass and mosaic tiles, it really adds to the whole experience and sets up the festival for a unique atmosphere. It's undoubtedly played a key role in the festivals success.

I was impressed that Indy Man organisers (a team of barflies from establishments such as Common & Port Street Beer House) included the city throughout the 4-day long festivities, claiming that IMBC isn't just within the walls of the Edwardian baths. In an ingenious move to really push things forward the festival organisers teamed up with a handful of local favourites on the Manchester beer scene with the likes of Pilcrow a contemporary Scandinavian style bar and its sister pub the aforementioned Port Street Beer House both hosting a tap take over/ meet the brewer events with 'Weird Beard Brew Co' & 'Burning Sky' respectively whilst IMBC

was happening just a short walk away, both of which of course we checked out during our overnight stay, as the saying goes, it would be rude not to right? Also, receiving the pleasure of our Black Country

presence was Marble Arch brewery tap, Café Beermoth, The Smithfield Hotel and Tavern, Crown & Kettle and finally before boarding our train back to Birmingham the Albert Schloss bohemian beer palace for a hearty stein of Paulaner Munich lager...DAS IST SO DAM GOODE YAH!



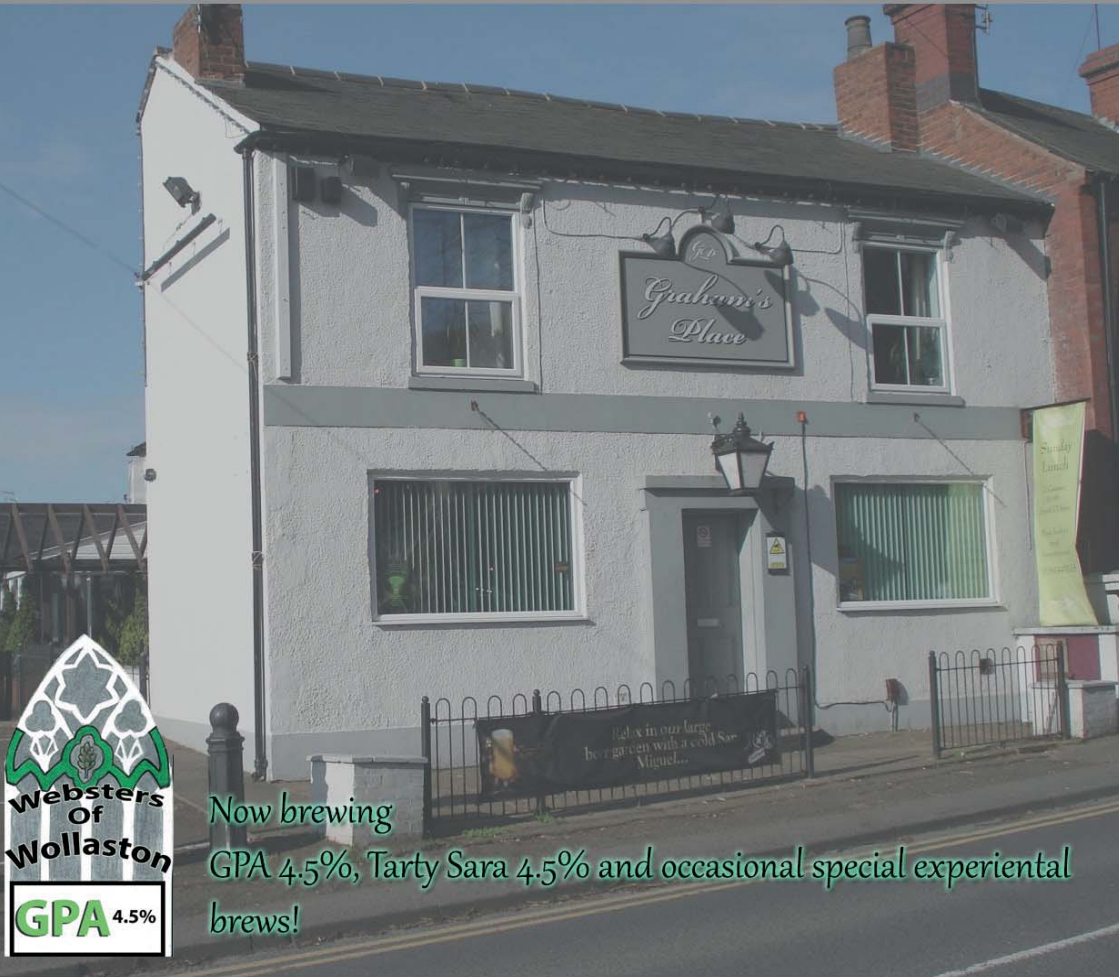
Over the course of the 2017 I've spent a little time in Manchester, as a result developing a keen fondness for the city, I now find myself pondering when my next visit will be. Manchester's beer scene is buzzing right now, surely, it's the diversity that makes it an exciting one? Evidently there is a perfect balance of supporting local brewers and attracting breweries from far and wide here in this metropolis. If you're a fan of the Stone Roses then you'll know Manchester has got everything...except a beach!

In truth I would love to take snippets of IMBC and implement those for the soon to be approaching Stourbridge Beer Festival. Whether those are realistic wishes are probably as likely as West Bromwich Albion winning the FA Cup! Not that I'm digging ourselves out, because we have made so much headway despite a much more limited capacity and budget when compared to IMBC, the sheer scale and quirkiness as you've probably gathered was pretty epic. Most notably cast your mind back to 2016 and in particular our introduction of 6 key-keg served Real Ales from local craft breweries. Fast forward 12 months we doubled the quantity purely thanks to how well you lot received this new addition to the line-up.

It's all about rolling with the times, something we as a branch are keen to highlight and thankfully Stourbridge Beer Festival goes from strength to strength each year and is hugely popular in the local community. At the time of reading this, organising for #SBF18 will already be several months in motion and as always, we've taken on board your comments from last year to hopefully ensure we deliver a successful beer festival, I'm certain we can count on your support come April 25th - 28th. For many of you, I will see you there!

Matt Merrick

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Beer instead of Chocolate

December for many children brings the opening of the first advent chocolate but Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA Chairman offered us a pubs advent Calendar on Twitter and Facebook. As each window opened a new pub to visit was revealed and what an interesting variety there was.

A - Abraham Darby, based at the Merry Hill shopping centre and part of the JD Wetherspoon company, was its usual uninteresting pub. Sadly, the two banks of 5 handpumps had the usual suspects on offer. Greene King Abbot, Greene King Ruddles Best Bitter, Sharps Doom Bar being the regulars alongside a Daleside and Hook Norton Christmas themed beers.

B - Beacon Hotel, situated on the edge of Sedgley, is a classic pub with classic beers from Sarah Hughes brewery alongside a couple of independent guest beers. Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA Pub of the Year for 2017 and a regional finalist the pub is well worth a visit. My choice here was a pint of Pale Amber, a beer brewed in the attached brewery and a much easier drink than the Dark Ruby. My second drink was Oakham Below Zero, 4.1% ABV and my style of beer.

C - Cat Inn, Enville, on the edge of the Enville estate on the main A458 road, sells a large range of the Enville brewery beers. Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA Pub of the Year for Staffordshire in 2017 shows how highly this pub is rated. My favourite beer was the Enville Old Porter but I also tried the Gothic Stout, a rich full-bodied beer. The pub offers 7 ales, nearly always from local breweries and 2 traditional ciders.

D - Dog, situated on the main Hagley road travelling in to Birmingham, this pub is part of the Ember Inns chain and features 6 Real Ales. Generally thought of as a dining pub it is keen to showcase its range of beers. Monday night Cask Ale club offers beers at a reduced price and throughout the rest of the week it offers CAMRA members a discount on all cask beers. On my visit the beers were Purity Ubu, Ember Inns Pale

(brewed by Black Sheep), Shepherd Neame Rudolf's Reward and Adnams Ghost Ship.

E - Elephant & Castle, situated close to Cradley Heath but technically still part of Netherton, this pub was a former Holt, Plant & Deakin pub for those of you who remember them. Holden's Golden Glow is nearly always available and generally there is only one Real Ale offered. The pub has a good reputation for its food with generous portions on offer. Most tables are reserved and drinking space tends to be standing only.

F - Five Ways, Lower Gornal is a cracking little pub situated on the junction of Cinder Road and Himley Road, easily reached off the 257 bus from Dudley or Stourbridge. Bathams Best Bitter was available here and as usual was excellent. A recent expansion of this pub has created a real friendly atmosphere.

G - Green Man Inn is in the pleasant village of Swindon. Situated close to a canal lock this is an unusual pub in our area as it focuses on beers from Ringwood brewery. Ringwood 49er and Boondoggle were on offer alongside Thatcher's Stan's Big Apple Cider. The Boondoggle was very pleasant. The front bar is very dog friendly.

H - Hinksford Arms is only a few minutes away from the Green Man but a very different style of pub. It offers 4 local beers, 2 from Wye Valley brewery, Holden's Golden Glow and Enville Ale. I had the Wye Valley Butty Bach and the Enville Ale, both were pretty good. The 255 bus stops across the road from the pub but you need to guess where the bus stop might be.

I - Interceptor is in the middle of the New Square West Bromwich. It is a Greene King pub and sells only Greene King beers, don't be conned by other forms of branding on the pump clip, they are all brewed by Greene King. Mind you, there was little chance of getting conned as from the range of 10 handpumps across the bar there were only 2 beers available. Greene King Abbot was advertised on the pumpclip



so I ordered, only to be told “we ay gorany”. I eventually ended up with Greene King IPA.

J - Jolly Crispin situated in Upper Gornal is one of my favourite pubs. Rob, the Gaffer always has a friendly welcome. A couple of ciders supplement the 9 beers on offer with the regularly available Oakham Citra and Bishops Farewell on excellent form.

K - Kinver Constitutional Club set in the midst of Kinver village and supporting a host of different beers. This club has been the local CAMRA branch Club of the Year for years now with its constant excellence and support of Real Ales. It features up to 15 beers with the vast majority from local brewers. Enville Blizzard was particularly good although a trifle sweet.

L - Lawnswood is a 10-minute walk just off the High Street in Wordsley. It is a family friendly pub and was doing a roaring food trade on my visit. Brains SA, Wychwood Hobgoblin, and unusually Holden’s Black Country Special were on the pumps.

M - Malt Shovel, Dudley reopened in November as a freehouse with 5 beers available. An excellent addition to the Real Ale drinking scene in the town. Abbeydale Deception was excellent alongside Holden’s Bitter and Enville Ale.

N - New Inn, Wordsley is a fine Bathams pub. The Best Bitter was in fine form but like many Bathams pubs the Bathams XXX was not available.

O - Old Dispensary in Causeway Green is a relatively new Micropub. It offers a large range of cider, a few Keg taps and up to 5 cask beers. Wye Valley Butty Bach and HPA are regular, alongside 3 guests. I chose Salopian Firkin Freezin.

P - Park Tavern in Kingswinford is a delightful 2-roomed pub with a comfortable lounge and a sport driven bar. Bathams Best Bitter and Enville Ale were beer choices here and both were on good form.

Q - Queens Head in Wordsley is a Black Country Ales owned pub and offers the usual choices of ales and cider. Very few (2) customers on

my lunchtime visit where I had the Lister’s Limehouse Porter.

R - Rising Sun in Tipton is another Black Country Ales pub offering a selection of ales and ciders. I chose the company’s own BFG which was pleasant enough.

S - Summer House in Gospel End was bedecked in its annual Christmas finery. Thwaites (Banks’s) Wainwright was on offer and surprisingly good.

T - Tame Bridge close to Great Bridge Bus station is another pub I don’t get to often enough and on my visit it seems everyone else does the same. As the only customer I drank the Church End brewery’s Vicar’s Ruin.

U - Union in Kingswinford had recently had new folks looking after it after the previous tenants moved on. Fairly uninspiring Banks’s Mild was consumed.

V - Vine near to Junction 1 on the M5 is another favourite pub of mine. Well known for its Curries and Indian BBQ it is a place everyone should visit at least once. A Christmas beer from Mallinsons was on the bar, unfortunately I was too early for the BBQ Chicken Tikka.

W - Waggon & Horses in Oldbury lies next door to the Wetherspoon pub. It was very busy in the front bar but unfortunately the Marston’s Pedigree needed to be returned as it was very (very) hazy. The beer was changed for what was pumpclipped as Hobgoblin but when the beer was pulled it was light gold in colour – Hobgoblin Gold.

X - (Royal) eXchange in Kinver, a poor choice. The X (Cross) in Kinver would have been better for this advent booze cruise. Banks’s Mild was ok.

Y - Ye Olde Foundry is generally regarded as Dudley’s best late night music venue. It offers 2 regular ales with Castle Rock Harvest Pale being the most interesting.

Z - Zions bar in Great Bridge. No Real Ale so no visit.

Look out for the tweets next year!

Steve Thompson

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THEN AND NOW

The Isle Of Man 1977 - 2017

We got married in 1977 and spent our honeymoon on the Isle of Man, staying in Port Erin. 40 years later we decided to return. This is a beautiful island but maybe not everyone's choice as a holiday destination. The weather is variable, the ferry takes nearly 4 hours and the crossing can be rough plus it adds considerably to the cost of the holiday. However, for lovers of scenery, dark skies and quirky transport systems, it is perfect. Of course there is also the most famous tourist attraction, the TT – the spectacular but dangerous motorcycle race staged on the IOM roads.

CAMRA was still in its infancy in 1977 and we were committed members then, even staying at a hotel featured in the Good Beer Guide. We managed to visit all but one of the GBG pubs that year and were curious to see the changes after 40 years. The comparisons between the 2 years reflect the influence of CAMRA and the challenges faced across the UK and IOM by brewers and pubs, not to mention the general trends in the industry over the years and our own choices of beer styles rather than just ticking off pubs.



Station Hotel 1977

Beer is somewhat protected by an old 'purity' law stipulating that only pure ingredients (barley, sugar and hops) may be used by breweries on the island. In 1977 there were 2 breweries and

most, if not all, the pubs were tied to either Okell's or Castletown. So choice was limited but in 1977 this was true of most of the country. Unfortunately we didn't take many photos of pubs and beer in 1977. Another change we often fail to consider – the growth of digital photography via cameras and phones, means we tend to snap away quite happily, recording every moment, every beer.



Mitre Hotel

Unfortunately, Castletown Brewery no longer exists but there are now 4 Manx breweries. CAMRA was in its infancy in 1977 and the brewery section comprised 11 pages only. Compare this with 2017 edition – 284 pages. The Isle of Man now has 4 listed breweries: Okell is well established and has outlets in England, e.g. at Chester and Liverpool. Then there is Bushy's, Hooded Ram and Old Laxey – see later for further information on each.



Prospect Douglas





1977	2017
38 pubs in the Good Beer Guide, covered on just 2 pages.	28 pubs described over 4 pages
Breweries – Castletown based at the island's ancient capital and Okell in Douglas.	Bushy's at Braddan Hooded Ram, Douglas Okell – still in Douglas but in larger premises Old Laxey – Shore Hotel brew pub in Laxey
Okell (founded in 1874) brewed 2 beers, Best Bitter at 1035.9 and mild at 1035.2	In 1994 the brewery moved to a new, purpose-built plant at Kewaigue, due to expansion. The beer range has also expanded to 6 regulars (according to 2017 guide), OG's ranging from 1035 for the bitter to 1052 for the dark gold Steam.
Castletown (founded 1906) also brewed 2 beers in 1977, bitter and mild, both listed at 1036 OG	In 1986 Castletown merged with Okell & Sons Limited and the brewery was closed. Okell's brew a seasonal cask pale, Castletown Ale in memory of the old brewery.
	Hooded Ram – brewing began in 2013 with an increase in production the following year. 7 regular beers are listed in the guide.
	Old Laxey – one regular beer listed, Bosun Bitter, OG 1038.
Pubs – of the 38 listed in 1977, only 7 appear in 2017.	Additionally, the Shore Hotel in Laxey is included in the brewery section, being the brewery tap for Old Laxey.

Pubs	
Station Hotel, Port Erin - This is where we stayed in 1977. No longer a hotel offering accommodation, it has undergone a tasteful refurbishment and serves an excellent range of Okell's beers. We visited the week after the TT and were fortunate to be able to sample some of the beers brewed for the occasion. '1907' was Okell's very tasty offering.	
The Mitre at Kirk Michael. The guide describes this as "reputedly the oldest surviving inn on the island" and "a good place to be marooned when the roads are shut for the TT races".	Not present in 2017 guide but this iconic inn is still going strong, serving 2 real ales. 17 of the 38 pubs featured in the 1977 guide are still listed on Whatpub.

GBG Description of IOM	
The choice of real ale on the Isle of Man is restricted to the products of two breweries, but in all other respects the island is a beer drinker's paradise.	No general description of the island, although there is more detail in the brewery section.
All but one of the 106 tied houses owned by Castletown or Okell's serve unpressurised beer, though many holiday hotels serve only keg beers from the mainland.	One of the pubs in both guides is the Prospect Hotel in Douglas. This is a good example of changing times. In 1977 the guide notes that draught beer is only available in the concert room. 40 years later the hotel boasts 14 handpumps and holds mini beer festivals throughout the year.
Beer brewed on the island is protected by the 103 year old Manx Brewers' Act, known affectionately as the Pure Beer Act, which forbids the use of ingredients other than malt, hops and sugar.	In common with many breweries in the 70's, beer choice was limited to mild or bitter. Nowadays the trend is for breweries to produce new and diverse beers.
The guide at the time employed a few symbols to indicate facilities available at the pubs. It also included an indication of the method of dispensing the beers, mainly hand or gravity.	Much greater detail of the pubs with more comprehensive symbols.

2017 Breweries

Bushy's

Bushy's – originally a brewpub in 1986, has been very successful, moving to larger premises in 1990 when demand outgrew capacity. They boast a 'refinement' of the Manx Pure Beer Law, excluding sugar. 4 regular beers are listed in the 2017 GBG ranging in strength from the Ruby Mild at 1035 to the Old Bushy Tail at 1045. Interestingly their core range also includes Castletown Bitter at 1035 OG – presumably another homage to the old brewery. The Bay Hotel at Port Erin is Bushy's flagship pub. Enjoying a beautiful position on the seafront, it offers a great choice of beer and also the excellent local Manx cider.



Hooded Ram



The latest addition to the beer scene on the IOM, Hooded Ram is embracing the key cask scene and the quality is excellent but prices to match.

During our holiday we heard that the brewery had opened a pub in Wolverhampton, at the site of a former bank. It will be interesting to see how this enterprise fares. We assume the name of the brewery is a homage to the local rare breed of double horned Loughtan sheep.

Old Laxey, Shore Hotel, Laxey

The beer, Bosun Bitter at 3.8, was reminiscent of the old 1977 days. Lovely pub in the picturesque sea front area of Old Laxey. We fell victim to the irregular transport system and had a long climb back to catch the electric tram.

Favourite pubs – old and new

Finally these are a few of the pubs we frequented – some for the first time, others re-visited.

Creek Inn, Peel – if you want to try Manx kippers, this is place to go. Beers and food excellent with one of the Manx ciders too.



The Whitehouse Inn, Peel – worthy winner on several occasions of the IOM pub of the year. We really felt like locals here, with Adrian receiving copious abuse for his bright shirt – well we were celebrating our Ruby wedding.



The Sidings at Castletown Station – great choice of beers and we bumped into the owners of "Hail to the Ale" plus some friends from our local CAMRA branch, Chris and Karen Santry. Good place for some train

spotting on the IOM steam railway.

Conclusions

It is quite easy to draw comparisons between the Isle of Man and the UK mainland. I started this comparison before our visit to the island and it was therefore quite analytical. However, after visiting it is impossible not to rekindle the sentiment attached to this special place. Looking back to 1977, the choices seem very limited and indicative of the state of beer and breweries in the UK generally. It is impossible to remember whether any draught ales were available from the mainland but this is doubtful. At the time, we were concerned with 'ticking off' pubs in the guide. Breweries were fairly manageable – not so today with an explosion in the trade plus the vastly increased beer diversity.

Overall the island retains its magic despite changing times and fortunes. This was our 4th holiday on the Isle of Man, the first for twenty years, and we have vowed not to leave it so long till our next visit.

Joy Stevens



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Day out in Gdansk

Poland has long been known for its beer and, as in many European countries, has experienced an explosion in smaller craft and micro-breweries. With the advent of cheap flights from Birmingham and elsewhere, it is now readily accessible and deserves a few days of your time, since there is a wide range of light and dark beers available in most of the towns and cities.

We decided to check what is on offer on a recent day-trip to Gdansk. An important seaport on the Baltic Sea, it is the capital of Pomerania and the fourth largest city in Poland. Strategically placed during the Second World War (then known as Danzig), it was to become important as the headquarters of Solidarity which led to the end of Russian domination and Communist rule in Poland. Much of the historic Old Town has been reconstructed in traditional style which, with its river setting, offers a pleasant walking tour, interspersed with interesting bars and beer cafés.

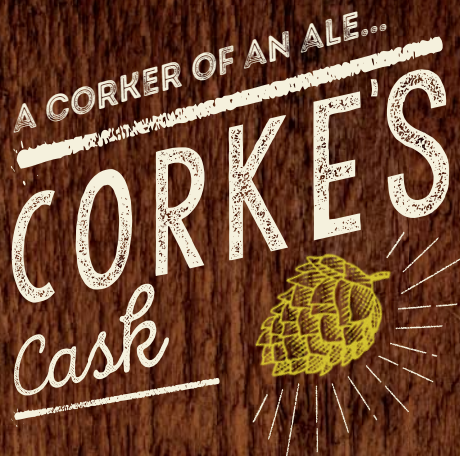
We started our exploration at the **Café Lamus** in Lawendowa, with its 3 taps offering craft beer from Poland and the Czech Republic. We then walked alongside the river to the **Browar Piwna**, in Piwna next door to St Mary's Basilica, a friendly micro-brewery/restaurant with three draught unpasteurised and unfiltered beers, including Hadra (American IPA), Pszeniczne (Hefeweizen) and Milk Stout, to wash down an excellent meal in the hot sunshine. Seasonal beers also include Dunkel, Altbier, Dark Wheat Beer, March beer, Bohemian Black Beer and Baltic Porter. Close by is the **Old Gdansk Beer Pub & Caffé**. Then back to the riverfront to visit the newly opened **Cathead** bar in Powroznicka, with its 12 taps offering beers mainly from Polish micro-breweries, complete with music from the 1950's and 1960's. Here we sampled Browar Kormoran Jasny Niefiltrowany Pilsner and Pracownia Piwa Mr Hard, an English-style barley wine. Finally, to the basement craft beer bar at **Labeerynt** in Szeroka, with its 12 taps offering Polish craft beers.



Unfortunately, we did not have time to visit the brewpubs at **Pub Browar Spoldzielczy** in Grunwaldzka, located in the basement of a former military garrison, **Browar Trojmiejski Lubrow** at Karmelicka (now the Restaurant Barbados), the **Browarnia Gdansk** in Szafarnia, with its choice of micro-brewery beers, or **Pulapka** and **Lawendowa** craft beer bars in Straganiarska and Lawendowa. Perhaps there are enough for another visit!

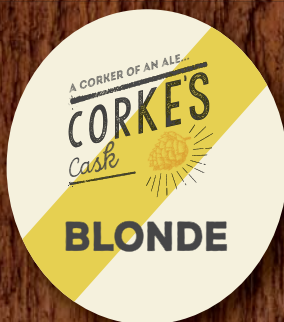
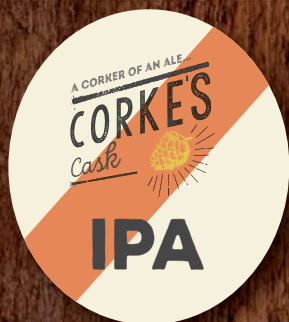
Piwa i wiwaty – Na zdrowie! (Beers and cheers)

Steve James



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Pub Company Changes

How Do They Affect Your Local?

CAMRA is investigating the impact of changes to our pubs as the big pub owning companies react to the Pubs Code, put into force in 2016 after years of campaigning by licensee groups and CAMRA.

In the last two years, the number of pubs run on traditional long-term tenancies has fallen, as some tenants are replaced by managers. Licensee campaigners are concerned that this may encourage management turnover, all to avoid pubs being covered by the Code. The impact on customers is less clear.

Our Pub Campaigns Committee is looking, confidentially, for information. It is particularly interested to see if changes in management to pub company pubs result in more or less choice

for pub-goers. Has your local pub increased or reduced its range of real ale and cider after a change of tenant? Or do you work in a pubco pub and have seen changes? The Committee would also like to know about any changes in prices and in the quality of the beer being served.

Please send information to the Committee's Chair, Paul Ainsworth –

paul.ainsworth@camra.org.uk

Further Information If you need any further information or background, please let me know.

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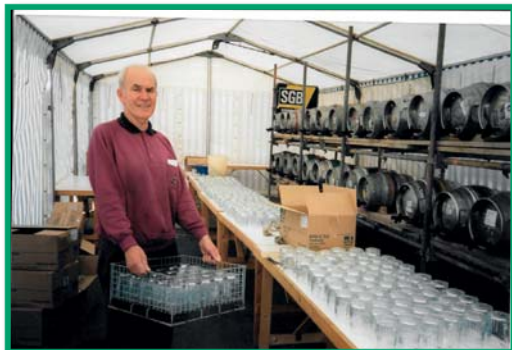
Happy Memories of Jim Brook

(recalled by John and Janet Butler)

On a dark day in October 2017, Stourbridge and Halesowen Branch learned of the passing of one of its longest serving members – Jim Brook.



We first met Jim at a folk club in 1979 where, typically, he was helping others by ferrying them to and from the venue. As we got talking, the topic of Real Ale came up and we soon learned that Jim was a member of CAMRA and had been since the mid 1970's. He took us along to our first branch meeting and, not long after, the campaign had two more members!



Jim was one of the founder members of the Stourbridge & Halesowen Branch, following the split from Dudley & South Staffs. Over the years he held many committee posts, including Treasurer. He will be remembered by the “older”

branch members for his diligence in looking after the pennies of the branch – how many of us were named and shamed at committee meetings when we failed to meet the deadline for GBG payments! Jim knew the whereabouts of every one of the 150+ copies of the Good Beer Guide sent out yearly to the pubs.

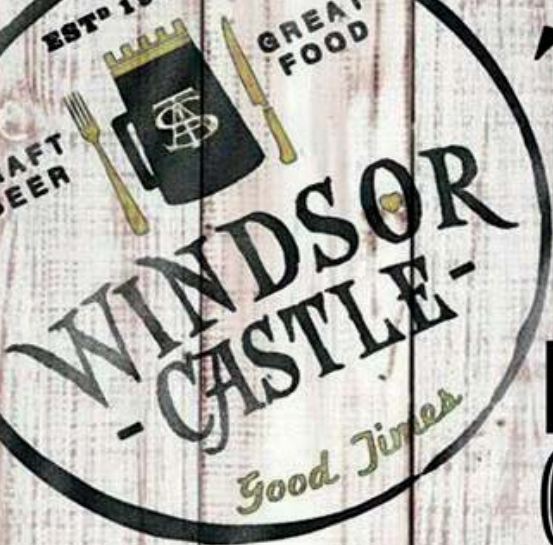
We also spent many happy times at Sunday socials, games/members' nights at pubs, “away day” trips and cycling events. Camping weekends were memorable for Jim and his one-man orange tent. As his kettle was always on, his tent was generally the first port of call and, if an item or tool was needed, he seemed to be prepared for any eventuality.

Over the years Jim could always be relied upon to fight the cause of the campaign, be it pub or brewery closures (plenty of these in the 80's and 90's), recruiting new members or setting up and serving at our festivals in addition to running the financial side of matters.

Jim's dedication, organisation and people skills will be greatly missed by our branch but, above all, Jim the gentleman and good-humoured friend to all will be missed even more.

Thanks Jim for letting us know you and be your friend for the past 38 years.

John and Janet Butler



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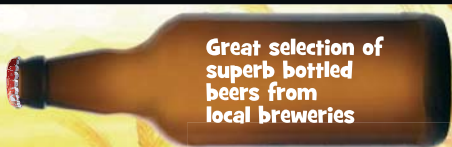
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Branch Diaries

Dudley & South Staffordshire

FEBRUARY

Monday 26th

Branch Meeting 8.00pm
Cottage Spring, Woodsetton

Wednesday 28th

Scoring Social
Holly Hall/Pensnett
Meet King William 7.30pm

MARCH

Saturday 3rd

Cider Pub of the Year Presentation
Old Dispensary, Langley 12pm

Wednesday 14th

Scoring Social
West Bromwich
Meet Vine 7.00pm

Saturday 24th

Dudley Winter Ales Fayre Thankyou Trip
Chorley, Lancashire
£10 for non-volunteer
Contact Jacqui Edwards 07939480746 or
socialsecretary@dudley.camra.org.uk

Monday 26th

Branch Meeting 8.00pm
Tame Bridge, Great Bridge, Tipton

Wednesday 28th

Scoring Social
Sedgley
Meet Cabin 7.30pm

APRIL

Wednesday 18th

Scoring Social
Brierley Hill

Monday 30th

Branch Meeting 8.00pm
Old Swan, Netherton

MAY

Saturday 12th

Regional Mild Campaigning Day 11am
Inn on the Green, Acocks Green, Birmingham

Monday 21st

Branch AGM 8.00pm
Lamp, Dudley

Stourbridge & Halesowen

MARCH

Thursday 1st

(Note: Thursday Meeting) – Branch Meeting
8.00pm. Fixed Wheel Brewery, Long Lane,
Halesowen

Thursday 15th

Social at Green Duck Brewery DY9 7ND during
their spring festival running from March 15th - 18th.

Thursday 22nd

Wollaston – Stourbridge Marking Social Meet
Britannia 8.00pm. then Graham's Place, Katie
Fitzgerald's, Queen's Head and Royal Exchange

APRIL

Wednesday 4th

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

Wednesday 25th - 28th

Stourbridge & Halesowen Beer Festival -
Stourbridge Town Hall DY8 1YE

MAY

Wednesday 2nd

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

Thursday 17th

8.00pm Pedmore Marking Social.
Start Foley Arms then Crown, Crabmill, Bird in
Hand and Shrubbery Cottage

Festival Focus

I make no apologies for starting this edition of festival focus with details of a festival well outside our area. This event last year probably saved me from very serious injury. As I travelled to Norwich a significantly massive tree collapsed on my allotment. The medieval City of Norwich hosts the Great British Beer Festival 2018. From popular light ales to ruby and dark ales, foreign beers and ciders, all served in magnificent medieval friary halls in the heart of Norwich, where pubs also host The Fringe, with special events 1st-24th February. Enjoy the music nights and sample winners of the National Winter Ales competition. <https://winter.gbbf.org.uk>



A new year brings a new round of local CAMRA beer festivals. On the horizon in March is Rugby festival. This festival has moved to a March date from its usual summer slot. The festival opens on Friday 2nd March at 2pm until 11pm and continues on Saturday with an opening time of 11am. The event takes place at Arnold House (Masonic Hall), Church Walk, Rugby, CV21 3BA and for those of you who know the pubs of Rugby the venue is just behind the Merchants Inn. This will be

the 32nd beer festival hosted by Rugby CAMRA.

www.rugbybeerfestival.com

Burton on Trent hosts its beer festival towards the end of March. The event will take place at its usual venue of Burton Town Hall, a short walk from the railway station. Opening night is Thursday 22nd March and it continues until Saturday 24th. This is the 39th beer festival that Burton & South Derbyshire CAMRA have organised. <https://burtoncamra.wordpress.com>

Coventry beer festival also takes place the same weekend. This festival has been at Coventry Rugby Football Club, part of the Butts Park Arena, for many years. The venue is about a 10 minute walk from Coventry Rail Station. The opening day is Friday 2nd March from noon until 4pm and then from 6pm until 11pm. Saturday's opening hours are Noon until 11pm.

www.coventry.camra.org.uk

Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA have their festival April 25th – 28th. Put the dates in your diary and more information will be available on the Stourbridge & Halesowen branch website shortly.

<http://stourhailes.camra.org.uk>

Steve Thompson

Brewery News

Stourbridge & Halesowen

FIXED WHEEL

December was a very busy month for everyone at the brewery, which was topped off by Fixed Wheel being awarded:

- Blackheath Stout wins Champion Stout of West Midlands at CAMRA regional awards.
- Blackheath Stout wins Bronze in the overall Champion beer of West Midlands at CAMRA regional awards.
- Blackheath Stout now heads to the Winter Ales Festival for the National Stout competition.

Well done guys, keep up the good work!

GREEN DUCK

A new year means a new range of special beers! The last few weeks and months of 2017 were spent formulating what the brewery would offer in 2018. A full production schedule for the year ahead is now in place, so keep your eyes peeled for new brews both in Badelynge Bar and in your local pub too. Of course, Green Duck's core range will be available throughout the year. The first Green Duck Beer Festival of 2018

will be held in March to coincide with the 6 Nations.

CRADDOCK'S BREWERY

Dave Craddock reports that they have just had their most successful Christmas yet. The brewery will be 7 years old in March, and will soon be brewing in collaboration with Toast Ales, with profits going to charity.

Dudley & South Staffs

BATHAMS

After a lengthy period of conversion from former houses/offices to a public house (contrary to the more usual reverse process) The King Arthur, Worcester Road, Hagley (named after the late Arthur Batham) was opened in the Autumn, "completing their estate" in the words of Tim and Matthew Batham. It got off to a flying start, the demand for Best Bitter being so great that additional brews to satisfy the desire resulted in a delay to the production of their Winter warmer XXX, such that it was too late to appear at the Dudley Winter Ales Fayre. Boo hoo. The brewery is otherwise flourishing as usual.

Pub News

Black Country Ales brewery have again established an ale trail that visits the majority of their pubs in our area. The trail began in January and continues until the end of March with prizes for those who complete the trail. The first thing you need to do is visit a BCA pub close to you and collect a card which lists all the pubs that are part of the trail. There are 30 to visit and some are just outside of our region, so a visit to Stafford, Shrewsbury and Burton will be needed. When you have collected all 30 stamps just fill in your details and decide where you want to claim your prize from. BCA Rugby shirts are up for offer.



DUDLEY & SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

Fountain, Lower Gornal DY3 2PE – has closed indefinitely.

Old Dispensary, Langley B68 8LD has extended its opening times to 11.30-3 Mon-Wed; 11.30-11 Thu & Fri; 12-11 Sat; 1-10 Sun. It serves 5 Real Ales and 8 Real Ciders. In addition, it opens at 9am Mon-Fri for the sale of hot drinks and croissants.

Old Priory, Dudley DY1 1LU – now serves 2 changing Real Ales. Following a refurbishment, the handpumps dispensing cask beer now sit centrally on the bar.

Olde Swan, Netherton DY2 9PY – is undergoing a makeover. Redecoration of the lounge is currently taking place. The work is being done in stages to try and keep all parts of the pub open as much as possible. Mrs Pardoe might turn in her grave at the new, light, bright interior that is being created. The dark maroon shades have been lightened with a pleasant shade of post office red, supplemented by an almost white ceiling; you can almost believe you are drinking in a Caribbean Island bar.

Union, Kingswinford DY6 7QB – has new managers called Simon and Cynthia.

Wall Heath Tavern, Wall Heath DY6 0HA – has reopened since edition 35 of Ales & Tales. Matt Adams (of the Hinksford Arms) is running the pub and serving Holden's Golden Glow, Enville Ale, Wye Valley HPA, Wye Valley Butty Bach, and 2 changing Real Ales. There is no food service and no sports television.

STOURBRIDGE & HALESOWEN

The Foresters, Wollaston DY8 3PL – are holding their famous cheese and wine evening. Sunday 1st April (Easter Sunday) £12 for as much as you can eat and drink from 7.30pm. Tickets available from 1st March.

Keep an eye out for development of a new micro pub in Lye! Planning permission has been spotted to redevelop the old Blacks Vet building on Lye High Street.

Note to our readers – our news pages might look a bit sparse this time around but as we compile this our pubcan and brewery friends are still recovering from Christmas so please keep an eye on our Facebook and Twitter feeds as we'll promote events and news as they happen.



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The 'Ten to Target' Trip

In recent years, the month of January has become increasingly associated with the public health campaign “Dry-anuary”. The phenomenon is bad news, plain and simple. Not only do tens of thousands of people adopt a teetotal lifestyle for 31 days, but some of those, presumably, find new means of socialising and new ways of spending their disposable income. Perhaps some may never step foot in a public house ever again?

Let us also deal here with the fallacy that pubs are well-positioned to endure a downturn in sales at the start of the year because of a Christmas boom. Whilst footfall and purchases naturally peak in December, so do the outgoings. Landlords are expected to pay staff a ‘bonus’ for working unsociable hours, for example.

In this cold calendar month, Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA prefers to promote “Try-anuary”. In the spirit of supporting local pubs, we scheduled a mini bus trip for the first Saturday in the month to visit a number of venues which required additional beer scores before we made selections for the 2019 Good Beer Guide. The ‘Ten to Target’ Trip encompassed an anti-clockwise route around the branch area.

Our starting point was the **Chapel House**, Lower Gornal. I sense that Donna and James were caught by surprise when 15 thirsty CAMRA members were queuing on the doorstep on the stroke of midday but we were soon inside and Donna began to serve a range of Holden’s classics to get us underway. This is a particularly small, L-shaped bar compared to other pubs in the Holden’s estate. Whilst the Special and Golden Glow were both scored well, the Old Ale received a number of poor scores. It would be interesting to see how the same beer would be scored later in the day when we were set to visit a sister Holden’s establishment.

Once greetings and good wishes for the year ahead had been exchanged between old and new friends, we boarded the mini bus and made our way to Wall Heath where we would be calling at the **Horse and Jockey**. Michelle and her team were convivial upon our arrival and the beers

across the bar – which included two permanents Enville Ale and Banks’s Sunbeam – were well received by the group. We headed straight for the rear lounge which is smart and spacious.



As lunchtime arrived we were looking forward to some sustenance at the **Cottage**, Kingswinford. The sarnies were made with home-cooked meat fillings from the carvery and the freshest bread whilst a constant supply of chips instigated what resembled a ‘Man vs Food’ challenge (that’s an American reality TV reference). As a 2018 Good Beer Guide pub, our expectations were rightfully high and the beer quality didn’t disappoint with an average beer score of 3.1. The beers on offer were St Austell Tribute, Exmoor Gold, Enville Ale, and Three Tuns XXX.



All feeling slightly heavier, we resumed our seats on the mini bus and made our way to a nearby South Staffordshire pub called the **Fox** in Stourton. This multi-roomed rural pub has two permanent Real Ales – Wye Valley HPA and Bathams Best Bitter. Some of the appleheads indulged in a drop of the house cider, Robinsons



hazy Flagon. On this occasion, the average beer score fell the wrong side of 3 coming in at 2.9. At 3pm, we made the 5-mile journey to John Street in Wordsley. Here we scored a characterful terraced pub called the **Bird in Hand**. This 2018 Good Beer Guide listee neighbours the Red House Glass Cone which is a heritage site for the glassmaking industry. The pub has a central bar serving a cosy lounge and a lighter bar where a dartboard can be found. Unfortunately, the Olde Swan Netherton Pale Ale had a wince-inducing tart tang but other Real Ales were better. We had now visited the first five pubs as per the itinerary, collecting a lot of useful data (both beer scores and Pubzilla surveys) and we were keeping our fellow CAMRA members updated with regular social media posts. Our next destination would be Brierley Hill where a trio of pubs would be visited.

First up, the **Rose and Crown**, where Jodie and co. were dispensing the usual array of Holden's beers including the fruity golden ale 'XB' which four of the drinkers scored an average of 3.6. Sadly, having been disappointed with the Old Ale at the Chapel House, the same fate befell the Rose and Crown, although, credit to the staff who immediately removed it from the bar. This charming pub – to which a conservatory was added at the turn of the millennium – continues to impress with its homely feel and friendly service. Second, we headed to a once-bustling business park where a JD Wetherspoon outlet by the name of the **Waterfront Inn** has outlasted some of the original co-locators. We were delighted with the range of Real Ales on offer which included the glorious Salopian Hop Twister and the cult beer Thornbridge Jaipur. With the use of the new batch of 50p CAMRA discount vouchers, the Hop Twister was reduced to £1.79 and the Jaipur to £2.45.

Our final pit stop in Brierley Hill would be the **Black Horse** (or Black 'Oss if yow'm local). Ross Bayley has great vision for this modern bar which was extensively refurbished in 2016. There is a mixture of high and low seating and a rectangular pillar in the heart of the pub which is suitable for the standing drinker. There are numerous high

definition flat-screen televisions around the pub showing sports fixtures on Sky and BT. At the rear of the pub there is a cosy, heated, sheltered extension with another television. Here you will find the kitchen where fresh pizzas are prepared and priced between £5-£7. As we enjoyed the three permanent ales – which are Enville Ale, Holden's Golden Glow, and Wye Valley HPA – we tucked in to some delicious Margherita, Pepperoni and Spicy Beef pizzas – YUM.



After an enjoyable afternoon in Brierley Hill, we travelled across the branch to Cradley Heath where we were naturally looking forward to a good beer at the **Plough & Harrow**. Now a freehouse, there are four regular beers – Ludlow Gold, Banks's Mild, Wye Valley HPA and Butty Bach – and two rotating guest beers which are always north of 5%. On our visit, the hoptastic Twelve Apostles from Bristol Beer Factory and Kelham Island's Pale Rider were just too tempting. The average beer score of 3.5 smashed that of the other pubs.

The trip concluded at the **Britannia** in Blackheath where the range of Real Ales was arguably a little limited compared to previous experiences. This was partly due to a number of handpumps being inactive but also due to a number of beers being from the same brewery – Slater's of Stafford. That said, what was served up, which included Ultra and Rye IPA from the aforementioned local brewery, were both scored favourably.

Ryan Hunt

Chairman, Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA

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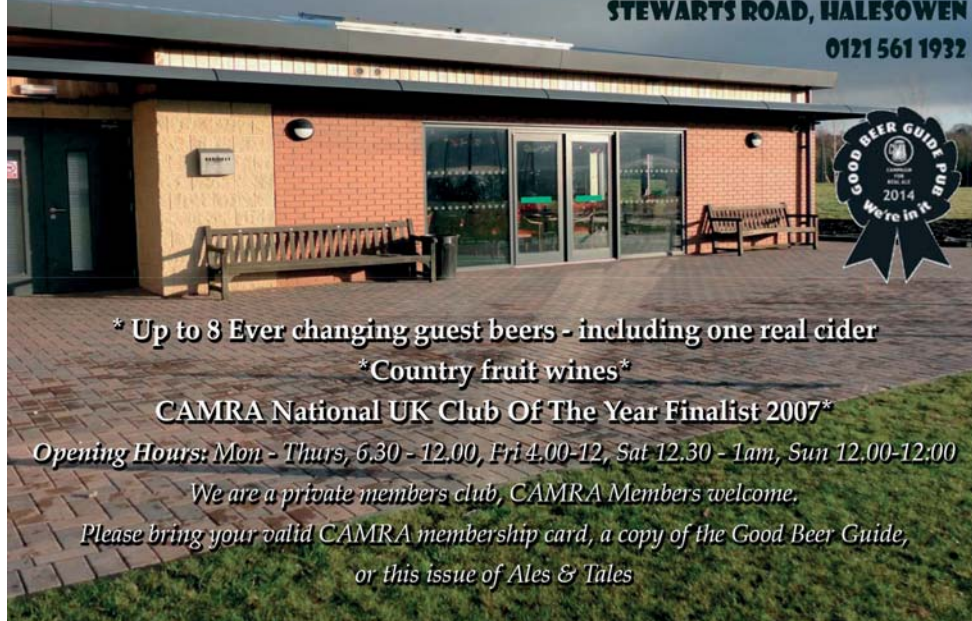
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Hitchmough's Lost Pubs

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



The solution to last issue's lost pub is the FOUNTAIN, Albion Street, Brades Village, Oldbury.

Thomas Babbs, our first recorded landlord, ran the pub from at least 1841, for over 30 years; he was also a steel cutter.

The pub, owned by Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries since around 1914, closed and was demolished in 2008.



On the morning of 1st April 1913 events transpired which caused a great sensation in the district. At about 11 o'clock, in the tap-room of the pub, Lilian Wharton, aged 21, daughter of, and assistant to, Mr. John William Wharton, licensee of the Fountain Inn, Brades Village, was shot by Thomas Fletcher, aged 28. The couple had been engaged to be married at Easter, but had argued and Lilian had called it off. After shooting Miss Wharton, Fletcher turned the revolver upon himself, and 'blew away part of his forehead.' In West Bromwich District Hospital it was originally thought that the girl might recover, whereas the condition of the man was so serious that he was not expected to get better. However, Lilian Wharton died on 8th April, from peritonitis 'due to the entrance of the bullet into the abdomen'. Fletcher recovered and was charged with murder.

On 7th June 1913, at the Assizes held at the Shirehall, Worcester, before Mr. Justice Bray, Thomas Fletcher was indicted for 'feloniously, wilfully, and of his malice aforethought, did kill and murder Lilian Wharton'. He was found guilty and sentenced to hang.

Fletcher maintained until the end that the shooting had been an accident, and he did not mean to kill the girl. A petition was organised for a reprieve, which reputedly contained 8,000 signatures. It was delivered to the Home Secretary, but did not illicit any response. The execution took place at Worcester Prison at eight o'clock in the morning on Wednesday 9th July, 1913, performed by John Ellis, the hangman, assisted by Thomas Pierpont. The press reported that Fletcher had slept soundly, and walked at a vigorous pace across the yard, showing no fear or nervousness.

Hitchmough's Black Country Pubs
longpull.co.uk

A Visit to "Hail to the Ale", Wolverhampton

Hail to the Ale was the first micropub in the West Midlands. Opened in September 2013, it is located a few miles outside Wolverhampton at 2 Pendeford Avenue, Claregate, WV6 9EF. A micropub is a small venue where the focus is on cask ales (and cider) and, with an absence of music & fruit machines. Instead, conversation provides the entertainment.

A dozen members from Stourbridge & Halesowen paid a visit in early December, arriving by public transport via Wolverhampton. The last leg of the journey was the No 6 bus which took members past the "Golden Palace" and then through parts of the city that most had never frequented. We arrived around noon and were warmly welcomed by the owners, Gary and Angela Morton. Gary founded the nearby Morton Brewery in 2007 before branching out with this new venture.

Since opening, the venue has won an impressive list of CAMRA awards including the West Midlands County Pub of the Year in 2015 and 2017. The pub is comfortably furnished and has a very homely feel. A wide range of tasty snacks were on offer including locally produced cobs, sausage rolls, Scotch eggs and pies.

The beer range on the day included two Morton beers and two guests as well as four ciders. There were also a range of bottles

available including a Golden Pip cider produced just down the road at Wheaton Aston.

Gary and Angela shared with us a scrapbook of press cuttings, correspondence and photo's documenting the progress from the original plans to the successful pub of the present day. There's also a well-stocked bookshelf including some Good Beer Guides dating back to the 1970's.

After bidding our farewells, the group caught the "No 6" back to Wolverhampton to sample some Good Beer Guide pubs. With the Christmas lights in full seasonal glow the city centre was sparkling.



Our first stop was Slater's in Queen Square, run by Slater's Brewery. This is a contemporary style bar with a fantastic range of cask &

key-keg beers on offer. The landlady became Ade's best friend when she added to his pump clip collection with a dozen new ones. Joy was however less impressed. (Their house is already bulging at the seams with over a thousand different examples!!)

The Dog & Doublet is a short walk down the hill in North Street. A good range of beers were sampled including Shiny's Poetry In Motion. We also bumped into another group of drinkers who we had seen earlier visiting the Hail to the Ale. Next was the Lych Gate Tavern serving Big Hand's Spectre and Salopian Boomerang. The Lych Gate is a traditional watering hole, back up the hill in Queen Square, which was a bit more lively! The final stop was the strangely named Hooded Ram, operated by the Isle of Man brewery of the same name. Occupying a prominent corner site in Lichfield Street in what was a former bank, it offered great ales like Toasty Ram, as well as a café serving traditional Punjabi style street food.

The party then went their separate ways with some of the Stourbridge contingent nipping into the New Inn, Wordsley, for a sneaky pint of Bathams XXX to finish off the day.

Thanks from all of us to Ade & Joy Stevens for organising a memorable trip.

Andy Koszary



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Early Doors

Bartenders are the ultimate givers of both verbal and liquid empathy, but if you haven't been behind the bar yourself, it can be hard to understand that the job is more than being a pint-puller. I'm not here to clear up any misconceptions of a day in the life of a bartender, this isn't one of those 10 things you didn't know about.... blah blah blah that you see pop up on Facebook.

So yeah as I was stroking the fuzz on my chin I got the thinking cap out, we've interviewed the guys and girls at the top of the chain - we've heard from the brewers and the gaffers of our local watering hole, we've dug into their history and learnt about their hobbies & interests – but what about the un-sung heroes in the trade, the humble bar tender?

I stumbled across a quote which I'd not heard before 'People trust bartenders more than their therapists' – being in the trade myself (no no not a therapist) I couldn't help but relate, I also couldn't help but believe there might be some truth in that.

Anyhow, I felt, wouldn't it be nice for a change if we listened to our friendly neighbourhood bartender and put them into the lime light of local fame for 5 minutes. As it's a custom to be chatty and a patient listener in this game let's reverse the roles for a second, read here as I sit down with my fellow industry professionals to find out what makes them tick.

Name:

Stefanie Ashley

Age: 23

Public House: The Green Duck Beer Co.

Bartending since: About two years, too long to even remember the exact date, however I got thrown in at the deep end, starting on the day of one of our famous beer festival.

Current go-to beer: Sitting Duck!

Favourite pub: The Spencers Arms (Not known as that now) however it was a pub which I lived in for a couple of years and it was the best years of my childhood, what child would not love that lifestyle!

Desert Island Disc: The Wicked Musical Soundtrack (how sad) but I adore it, the song 'defying gravity' would make me think I would fly off the desert island.

Who would you be on 'Stars in their eyes': Tonight Matthew... Pixie Lott, just because we're both blonde



and I wouldn't have to wear an itchy wig, however I cannot sing at all, hence why I have never been asked to perform within the brewery... that would be shocking!

Room 101: People who don't say thank you when driving.

If 'Big Brother' was set in Green Duck who'd be the first to go: Difficult one as we all love each other at the duck, however we also get on each other's nerves a lot of the time. It would either be Louise (the bar manager) or one of the lads, as they like to wind each other up about different things, everyone knows what makes the other person tick, however we also know that we are a massive family and look out for each other, so we would all be winners no matter who left first or last.

I knew I wanted to work behind a bar when: I became a student and needed some 'down' time from looking at a computer screen, however my oldest sister also introduced me to ales and Alan (Green Duck owner) and I knew from then that I wanted to be part of the team and I have never looked back, even after finishing uni, I am in no rush to leave!

Favourite/least favourite thing about working within the pub trade: Favourite thing has got to be the amazing locals that I see every Friday and Saturday, I love already knowing what they are going to ask for and having the pint half poured for them, the conversations we have and just how much they do actually listen to what a barmaid may tell them, they always remember the week after! LOVE IT! Least favourite has got to be rude people, however the 'Duck Blonde' joke gets annoying after two years. "Can I have a blonde, oh and a Duck Blonde too" Ha Ha.

The best piece of bartending advice I've ever received: I had a debate with a couple of folks a while back as they told me that working behind a bar wasn't a real career, so I was told that they were wrong as the craft of bartending was a skill and we could even be known as mixologists!

The one thing I wish more people understood about bartending: Oi, yell or whistle and you will find yourself standing there a lot longer.

If I wasn't bartending: I would be the other side of the bar every weekend!

Name: Andy Franks

Age: 31

Public House: Red House, Stourbridge

Bartending since: 2005, I cut my teeth with Bob and Don at the Waggon & Horses, Halesowen.

Current go-to beer: anything with a bit of flavour...

IPA/stout/sour/smoked you name it.

Favourite pub: Sorry but It's impossible to pick just one, I'm happy anywhere with a good pint and good company.

Desert Island Disc: Anything by The Doors.

Who would you be on 'Stars in their eyes': Tonight Matthew...Bob Dylan, just for 5 minutes.

Room 101: Pretentious tossers.

If 'Big Brother' was set in The Red House who'd be the first to go: Me, definitely

I knew I wanted to work behind a bar when: I was lucky enough to discover cask beer at the Waggon all those years ago, I'd been spending my time drinking lager in crap pubs before that.

Favourite/least favourite thing about working within the pub trade: The hours aren't great but the people can more than make up for it (and the beer).

The best piece of bartending advice I've ever received: It doesn't matter how much money they spend, for every one idiot you get rid of you'll gain five more decent customers (I do know a few likeable idiots though).

The one thing I wish more people understood about bartending: It's not hard to do but it's not easy to be good at it.

If I wasn't bartending: I'd probably have a proper job.

Name: Liz

Age: 28

Public House: New Inn, Wordsley

Bartending since: I was old enough.

Current go-to beer: Bathams Bitter of course.

Favourite pub: Apart from the wonderful establishment I work in, I do enjoy a pint in the Robin Hood.

Desert Island Disc: There are a fair few but I couldn't live without a bit of Pink Floyd, Dark side of the moon, whilst chilling on an island looking at the stars.

Who would you be on 'Stars in their eyes': Tonight Matthew...Well I'd dream I could be Grace Slick, she's cool but I can't sing.

Room 101: Comb over's, stop hanging on just let it go.

If 'Big Brother' was set in The New Inn who'd be the first to go: This question is going to get me into too much trouble, If it was up to public vote it would probably be me!



I knew I wanted to work behind a bar when: I realised you got paid for it.

Favourite/least favourite thing about working within the pub trade: The people you meet and the friends you make, it's a great social job. Worse thing for me is working Saturday nights but its tough luck I suppose.

The best piece of bartending advice I've ever received: Not advice really but one thing I have learnt is you need patience of a saint, if you haven't don't work behind a bar.

The one thing I wish more people understood about bartending: Customers can be annoying and they are not always right.

If I wasn't bartending: Always fancied the idea of being a plasterer, something about getting that smooth finish I'd find satisfying.

Matt Merrick

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Address		Membership Number		Name		● If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request	
Postcode		Postcode		Instructions to your Bank or Building Society		● If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit by The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society	
Names(s) of Account Holder		Please pay Campaign For Real Ale Limited Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Campaign For Real Ale Limited and, if so will be passed electronically to my Bank/ Building Society.		Signature(s)		● If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when The Campaign Real Ale Ltd asks you to	
Bank or Building Society Account Number				Date		● You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.	
Branch Sort Code							
Reference							
Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.							



THE OLDE SWAN INN

(Ma Pardoes)

Halesowen Road, Netherton

6 Home Brewed Beers on offer

Olde Swan Original 3.5% ABV

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:

Mon-Sat 11am-11pm, Sun 12noon-11pm

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

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Brewers of Fine Cask Ales



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Tel: 01384 873728 Fax: 01384 873770

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