



Issue 33

Summer 2017

Ales & Tales

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



**Welcome to our Pubs of The Year
more inside**

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



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For advertising, please contact Matelot Marketing through Neil Richards n.richards@btinternet.com

Stourbridge & Halesowen

Phil Zjalic chair@stourhales.camra.org.uk

Tony Morgan branch.contact@stourhales.camra.org.uk

Dudley & South Staffordshire

Ryan Hunt (Chair) Janet Parker (Contact)

email chairman@dudleycamra.org.uk

Jacqui Edwards

email socialsecretary@dudleycamra.org.uk

Editors Pam Stevenson and Lizzie Cadwell

editor@dudleycamra.org.uk

editor@stourhales.camra.org.uk

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

Welcome Back

Welcome to our summer edition of Ales & Tales! So much has happened since our last publication a number of months ago! Both branches have voted for their pub of the year, more details in the magazine. Both of which are worthy winners and have been judged by our membership as their choice of the best in Real Ale served locally.

Pubs are a valuable resource to the communities they serve and it is a 'Key Campaign' of CAMRA to actively seek to promote their use and benefits they have on the local community. By voting for your favourite pubs and the quality of their beer you are helping us achieve our goal.

By the time you read this, entries for Good Beer Guide 2018 will also have been submitted, but remain a closely guarded secret until the publication hits the shelves. Even for those who do not wish to attend branch meetings, grass roots CAMRA members still have an important part to play, namely the scoring of beer quality. Your local CAMRA branch relies heavily on this information as the committees cannot survey and sample each pub on a regular basis, although we do try our best! It helps a great deal with the selection for Good Beer Guide entries, and it's a very simple process to score, so we have included a short refresher guide to keep you up to date.

Whilst there are always regular pubs that always seem to make it into the Good Beer Guide, no pub is guaranteed a place and we start again with a fresh sheet of paper each year. With the number of new establishments in our areas, the pressure is really on to remain in the publication. Remember, we get to submit the same amount of entries each year, regardless of the number of pubs we have. Scoring is based solely on the quality of the beer, not whether it appeals to your particular taste.

Following the success of Dudley & South Staffordshire branch-organised Dudley Winter Ales Fayre, it is now the turn of Stourbridge &

Halesowen branch to hold their beer festival. Committee members have been busy choosing Real Ales, Cider and Perry, arranging staffing, catering and completing our usual duties. All this hard work by every CAMRA branch across the country is carried out by unpaid volunteers. Without our army of staff, these beer festivals would not be able to take place.

Many of you will enjoy attending beer festivals, but there is a huge amount of hard work that goes into organising them. Many CAMRA volunteers are not getting any younger, and a fresh wave of enthusiasm is always welcomed at both branches. Please take a moment to consider what your reaction would be if our beer festivals were not held next year? Agreeing to work behind the bar, for example, is a great way to start volunteering and in many cases will free up a committee member to ensure the festival is run smoothly. It's a great way to meet people with the same interests and is fantastic fun. Plus, you can choose when and how often you work; it couldn't be easier. The volunteer appeal will be in operation by the time you read this, so please take some time to contribute to a successful beer festival. However you decide to attend Stourbridge Beer Festival, we are very much looking forward to seeing you at Stourbridge Town Hall between 10th - 13th May.

Well as you can see the festival season is upon us. As editors we try to make this an "interesting" read about not only beer, but where it is available. If you have any information regarding new developments in your local, or have sampled an excellent ale that is brewed locally, let us know – we are always looking for news.

Lizzie & Pam

Pub News

Dudley & South Staffs

Old Dispensary, Causeway Green Road, Langley B68 8LS (just off the Birmingham New Road, heading towards Blackheath) - is a newly opened micropub. The premises were an old chemist's shop and have been transformed by old schoolfellows and proud owners, Will and Simon. This freehouse has Wye Valley HPA, Butty Bach, three guest Real Ales and five Real Ciders. Pork pies, scotch eggs, and sausage rolls can be purchased at all times but cobs are only available on Saturdays. Closed Mon-Wed; Open 7-10.30 Thu; 12-10.30 Fri & Sat; 12-9.30 Sun.

Plough & Harrow, Cradley Heath B64 5JR no longer has Worcestershire Brewing Co. beers - Mr. Attwood died and they are not brewing. It now has three regular Real Ales - Banks's Mild, Ludlow Gold, Wye Valley HPA plus two guest Real Ales.

Waggon & Horses, Wombourne WV5 0AQ has reopened after extensive refurbishment.

Union, Kingswinford DY6 7QB are holding a festival (13 Real Ales plus Cider) over the May Day Bank Holiday weekend from Fri 28th April to Mon 1st May.

Jolly Crispin, Upper Gornal DY3 1UL will be holding its annual Cider festival on Fri 19th & Sat 20th May, the proceeds of which are for charity.

Rising Sun, Tipton DY4 7NH will be holding a beer festival from Thurs 15th to Sun 18th June.

Old Bulls Head, Lower Gornal DY3 2NU will be holding a beer festival from Thurs 29th June to Sun 2nd July.

Queens Head, Wordsley DY8 5QS will be holding a Cider festival from Thurs 27th to Sun 30th July.

Red Lion, Amblecote DY8 4BA quiz nights held fortnightly - next one 30th April. Great chip butties for quizzers!

Stourbridge & Halesowen

The Crafty Pint, Halesowen B63 4JU Keep an eye on their Facebook pages for Health & Beauty events over the coming months and on a Sunday they now offer free cheese boards. Sunday opening 12noon till 6pm.

The Swan, Halesowen B62 9JY Beer festival is booked for 24th - 28th August there'll be 65 ales and 35 ciders- offering some ciders not seen in the midlands before!

The Maverick, Amblecote DY8 4BX are completing a sponsored charity walk from Borth to Amblecote on the 19th May to 21st May in aid of Mary Stevens Hospice. The post walk party will be held at the Maverick on the 21st.

Waggon & Horses, Stourbridge DY8 1AW 3rd Anniversary beer festival from Thursday 25th until Monday 29th May with live music from The Stangs on the Friday & Saturday evenings and Big Jim of the Red Lemons playing live on the Sunday evening.

The Red House, Stourbridge DY8 1EL After a successful 'Grape & Grain' Festival they are to introduce 'Red Factor'. A play on the theme!!!! Thursdays Jam night, musicians then get to perform on Sundays (2-6 live show) then the finale Saturday nights (9-11). The Thursdays & Sundays we will offer various casks at discounted prices.

The Foresters, Wollaston DY8 3PL are holding a cider festival 14th - 16th July in their garden marquee. Also, there will be cocktail and gin nights throughout the summer, dates are to be confirmed so please keep an eye on their Facebook page.

Graham's Place, Wollaston DY8 3PZ Dates for the diary are Monday 1st & 29th May will be family fun day and bookings are being taken for Sunday 18th June Father's day lunch. Over the summer they are hoping to have an Ale & Gin festival dates TBC so keep an eye on their Facebook page.

The Starving Rascal, Brettell Lane DY8 4BN have a newly refurbished kitchen so get down and try some food! May 6th a band called Highway is due to perform.

The New Wellington, Brettell Lane DY5 3LQ By the time you read this the New Wellington should be open again with new owners selling real ale and a carvery.

The Shovel, Lye DY9 7DX Thursday is now Mexican night! Served 6.30pm till 9.30pm. Still serving the classic Sunday roasts and pub grub classics on a Wednesday night too.

Sadlers Ales and the fabulous Waulkmill Cider (also available at Stourbridge Beer Festival) will be attending Halesowen Carnival on the 1st July 2017.

Serious Interview With A Landlord



Those of you who know Daniel James Wilkes will appreciate that the chances of a straightforward interview with him is probably as likely as Leicester City winning the European Cup this year!

(Ed. They won the league last year, remember!)

Anyway, the wife and I were in luck, Dan has been suffering from a horrendous bout of gout for a couple of weeks and was heavily 'tranquilised' and 'off the beer'. He is still in a playful mood though and finds answering the first question a boring challenge full name? (See above).

We ascertain that he was born in August 1980 in Wordsley and is of Anglo/Welsh extraction no, no jokes about leeks because I know his Mum and she's lovely and taught Dan how to play Rugby.

Dan had an education Ridge Primary and Ridgewood High are responsible for his above average knowledge of extortion, what actually goes on in the front row of a scrum and bike-sheds. Despite all this he gained 10 GCSEs, left school, spent 18 months working for a company of steel stockholders and then became a nurse. Dan took a degree course at Wolverhampton Hospital University for three years followed by 18 months nursing. He soon found out he wasn't suited to a life wearing 'sensible flat shoes', black tights and starched aprons; that was confirmed when someone at the Rugby Club published incriminating photographs.

A move from hospital to hospitality beckoned and Dan's personality and hard work came to the fore in

1999 when he joined the staff of The Robin Hood in Collis Street; that's where I first met him about 16 years ago and we've been buddies ever since. This is where Dan perfected the art of pulling a pint and shouting at the same time. His speciality was popping off to the kitchen and returning ten minutes later with a freshly made curry without pausing the conversation. Dan was left in charge of the Beer Ordering and frequently asked me and the 'wise old sage' Roly Collins what we fancied, never a dull moment and excellent beer.

Dan decided to move on and was tempted to Brewers Wholesale where he spent the next nine years keeping the customers happy with his non-stop banter sorry, customer service, in the sales department. It was during his time at 'Brewers' that Dan met the lovely Amy; they married and set up home.



Dan was then offered the chance to run the Waggon and he didn't hesitate, running a pub was obviously what he's cut out to do. They've been in the pub now for over three years and have totally revitalised it. The pub had had a chequered history during the previous twenty years after passing from Wolverhampton & Dudley to the 'freetrade'. The last ten years have been particularly 'hectic' with changes of ownership, at least three times, total renovation and extension and closure for nearly 18 months. The pub finally fell into the hands of the Lawson & Hedges property company; we all know Jerry Hedges, and the decision was made to put Mr. Wilkes in charge (Ed. Not many applicants then?). Dan & Amy have brought a friendly, lively atmosphere to the Waggon and have plans to expand the business particularly in the food line. Amy and her helpers currently supply a range of sumptuous rolls and cobs along with pork pies, samosas and her own delicious homemade pies.



The bar is fronted by a great team of youngsters including sisters, Jess and Lily.

The installation of extra lines in the cellar has



allowed for the dispense of up to 12 beers and four ciders at any one time with the prospect of many 'mini-beerfests' to come.

Currently Envile

Ale and Ginger along with Golden Glow are the regular ales, Simpkiiss is often the 'fourth' choice and two well chosen guests complete the selection at the bar. Dan has also expressed interest in craft beers and plans are afoot to install four fonts in the rear bar to expand further the choice. Cider is also readily available and the Waggon is a regular outlet for local Cider producers Wychelm, proper cider!

Dan has asked me to express his grateful thanks to all the regulars and visitors who carried on supporting the Waggon when it was recently attacked, twice, by mindless grudge-bearing morons, and looked a bit like West Bromwich on match days. (Locals even started a 'restoration fund' which has proved extremely helpful in replacing the windows complete with 'etched' designs).

Dan is looking optimistically towards the future, his ultimate aim is to own his own pub one day.

An Ales & Tales interview wouldn't be complete without a personal investigation into the licensee's likes, dislikes, fetishes and bad habits, so here goes.....

WHAT AND WHEN WAS YOUR FIRST ALCOHOLIC DRINK?

"I was 15 when I went with Dad to the New Inn (Cherry St.) and had a pint of Holt's Entire."

FAVOURITE NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINK?

Vanilla Latte..... (Hmmm)

FAVOURITE BEER?

"Difficult, so many to chose from, they're all good Thornbridge Kipling, Tiny Rebel IPA, Wild Beer Millionaire."

FAVOURITE FOOD?

"Fresh Crab Salad, any seafood!"

FAVOURITE MUSIC?

"I don't dislike much, anything from Blues right through to Britpop."

FAVOURITE SPORT? (This is a no-brainer!)

"Rugby Union, obviously and I likes a bit of Cricket."

FAVOURITE OTHER PUB?

"The Hand in Glove (Worcester) is a classic and the Robin Hood (Collis St.), good memories."

HOW DO YOU VISUALISE THE FUTURE OF THE PUB INDUSTRY?

"Fantastic, really positive, all the new Micropubs are great, good fun, continual appearance of new breweries and beer styles, new innovative pub design, craft-beers, it's all positive!"

YOUR OPINION OF CAMRA AND HOW IT CAN HELP YOU AND THE INDUSTRY?

"CAMRA has always supported me and my fellow publicans. It saved beer from total extinction back in the seventies and has carried on right up to the present day. I do feel the Beer Guide needs a total re-vamp as I can't understand why so many good local pubs can't get in it."

Personally I think the pub industry is in good hands with the likes of Dan & Amy at the helm.

Visit the Waggon & Horses in Worcester Street, Stourbridge for good ale, good food, good company and a loud welcome!

ADRIAN & JOY STEVENS

A date for your diaries... Beerfest 25th-29th May



Festival Focus

Stourbridge Festival will be the first festival for you to visit in May. It takes place at Stourbridge Town Hall, next door to Tesco and is a 5-minute brisk walk from the railway station. The festival opens its doors on Wednesday 10th May from 7pm until 10pm but this is a CAMRA MEMBERS ONLY preview session. The public sessions begin on Thursday evening at 7pm with a closing time of 11pm, Friday Noon until 11pm and Saturday Noon until 9pm. 100 Real Ales will be available plus Cider and Perry along with a range of Hot and Cold food.

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

Kidderminster Beer Festival takes place during the first weekend in June. The festival opens to the public on Thursday 1st June at 6pm but CAMRA members can join the preview session at 4pm. Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd the festival is open from 11am until 11pm. Entrance is £3 on Friday evening after 5pm and £2 at other times. CAMRA members get free entrance at all times. Entertainment will be part of this event on Friday and Saturday evening.

www.wyreforest.camra.org.uk

Wolverhampton Festival will continue at the Newhampton Arts Centre after its success at this venue last year. The venue is easily accessible by frequent bus services from Wolverhampton Bus station (number 6) or a 20-minute walk from the Railway Station, Bus station and Metro Terminus. The venue at Dunkley Street is ideal for a beer festival and will have 75 Real Ales plus Cider, Perry and foreign bottled beers. The festival opens on the evening of Thursday 8th June at 5pm until 11pm and continues Friday 9th and Saturday 10th from noon until 11pm both days. Admission is £3.50 on Thursday, £2.50 between noon and 5pm on Friday but after 5pm admission is £4.50. Saturday is FREE all day. CAMRA members get £1 worth of beer tokens Thursday and Friday. Entertainment Friday evening only and will be announced shortly.

www.wolverhampton.camra.org.uk

Nuneaton Beer Festival is the following weekend, the 16th and 17th June. It takes place in the Nuneaton Co-op Sports Club, 23 Dugdale Street, CV11 5QJ. This will be the fifth festival that this CAMRA branch has organised and it is going from strength to strength. The festival is open from noon until 10.30 on Friday and from noon until 9pm on Saturday. Admission is 50p for CAMRA members and £2 for non-members. Trains to Nuneaton run every 30 mins from Birmingham New Street.

www.nuneaton.camra.org.uk

Bromsgrove Beer and Cider Festival is the first of the summer festivals under canvas. The provisional dates are Thursday 29th June until Saturday 1st July. Thursday 29th June is a CAMRA MEMBERS ONLY night so if you turn up and are not a member you will be required to join CAMRA to gain admittance.

www.bromsgrovebeerfestival.org.uk

Stratford Beer Festival organised by the Shakespeare branch of CAMRA will take place at its usual venue at Stratford Racecourse on Friday 7th and Saturday 8th July. The festival opens on Friday from noon until 11pm and on Saturday from 11am until 11pm.

www.stratfordbeerfestival.org.uk

Hereford Beer Festival takes place on the banks of the river Wye adjacent to Hereford rowing club. This is one of my favourite festivals, relaxing in the sun, drinking a few glasses of Real Ale or Perry and sharing good company. Taking place from Friday 7th July until Sunday 9th July this is a must go to event. Sunday is a family friendly day.

www.herefordcamra.org.uk

Shrewsbury Festival is moving, with new dates in July and a new larger venue. The former Wakeman School is the venue, which lies close to the English Bridge, and the dates are 20th-22nd July. Larger premises will give the opportunity for a greater range of beers and allow more people to visit. The new venue has a Post Code of SY2 6AA and is about 300 yards further from the station but there is a bus (number 1) which goes past the door. Further details closer to the event will be available.

www.swscamra.wordpress.com

Stafford Festival normally takes place at the end of July. Further information will be available shortly from:

www.heartofstaffordshirecamra.org.uk

Finally, the **Great British Beer Festival** will take place at Olympia in London from the 8th until 12th August. The festival opens on Tuesday evening from 5pm until 10.30pm; Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from noon until 10.30pm and Saturday from noon until 7pm. General admission is £11 a day (how much!!!) in advance and £14 on the door.

www.gbbf.org.uk

Steve Thompson

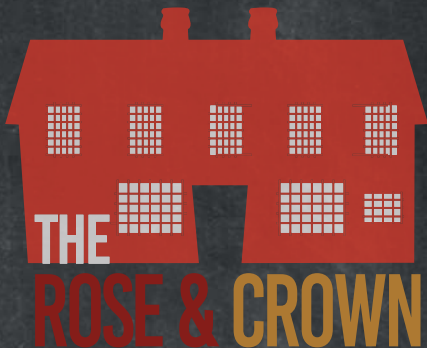
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The Road To PotY

If you are a CAMRA member you can make a real contribution to the pubs and clubs that are entered into CAMRA's Good Beer Guide, the UK's best-selling beer and pub guide and to help determine our own branch pub of the year. The journey to becoming the Dudley & South Staffordshire branch of CAMRA's Pub of the Year starts in February and takes a year. CAMRA members record the quality of the beer they consume in the branch area (and beyond) and these scores enable the branch to select the pubs and clubs that we recommend for inclusion into next year's Good Beer Guide. Beer quality scores for pubs inside and outside the branch area are submitted by going to Whatpub.com, and selecting the pub. In the last year there were over 4,500 scores for branch area pubs to help make the selections.

Below is the list of scoring descriptions (you can use half points). Please remember that Beer Quality Scoring is not about whether you actually like the beer, but what condition it is in.

0 - No Real Ale available.

1 - Poor: Beer that is anything from barely drinkable to drinkable with considerable resentment.

2 - Average: Competently kept, drinkable pint but doesn't inspire in any way, not worth moving to another pub but you drink the beer without really noticing.

3 - Good: Beer in good form. You may cancel plans to move to the next pub, you want to stay for another pint and may seek out the beer again.

4 - Very Good: Beer in excellent condition.

5 - Excellent: Probably the best you are ever likely to find. A seasoned drinker will award this score very rarely.

This is a great way to help the branch, get more involved with our work in promoting Real Ale but

above all to enjoy good beer and have a great time doing it.

Good Beer Guide Pub Nominations

Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA nominates pubs for inclusion in the Good Beer Guide by using a set of criteria:

- Average beer quality score
- Number of visits
- Number of people who scored
- Number of different dates when it was visited

Look for the meeting, usually in January, when this will take place.

Pub of the Year Competition

From the Good Beer Guide nominated pubs a short list for PotY is chosen.

Members of the Dudley & South Staffordshire branch of CAMRA, who have regularly entered Beer Quality Scores, defined as somebody who has scored a minimum of 10 different pubs in the branch area and somebody who has submitted a minimum of 30 scores in the previous 12 months (scoring window for the competition) are invited to be a judge in the competition for the Branch Pub of the Year. Every pub on the shortlist must be visited by the scorer. The shortlisted pubs are then scored on the following criteria:

- Quality Of Beer
- Style, Décor, Furnishing And Cleanliness
- Service, Welcome And Offering
- Community Focus And Atmosphere
- Alignment With CAMRA Principles
- Overall Impression

The scores (from 15 volunteer judges this year) are then collated and weighted and a branch PotY is chosen. The pub is then entered into the national CAMRA PotY Competition. The branch PotY entry hopefully will progress through the stages of the competition - County, Region, Super Regional and The Final.

Other branches may use other methods.



Pubs of the Year

Dudley & South Staffs Pub of the Year

This year Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA branch voted the **Beacon Hotel, 129, Bilston Street, Sedgley DY3 1JE** as their branch Pub of the Year. This is not the first time, it has won this award several times in recent years, and has been CAMRA West Midlands County Pub of the Year twice and in 2010 achieved the accolade of runner-up in the CAMRA National Pub of the Year competition.



The pub lies in the shadow of Sedgley Beacon, and has remained virtually unchanged for many years. At its heart is an extraordinary tiny glazed central servery with hatches where you order your drinks. The front door leads to a small comfortable snug on the left and a utilitarian tap room on the right. Past the servery is a large smoke room and a family room is on the way to the yard and the garden (with children's stuff) is beyond.

The building (pub and the brewery) was listed Grade II in October 2010, and it is on 'The CAMRA National Inventory' of pub interiors of outstanding historic interest. The Sarah Hughes Brewery lives in a tower out the back and supplies the pub. It has

won many awards over the years and this year its Dark Ruby Mild won Silver in the National Beer of the Year Competition in the Old Ale/Strong Mild category.

This pub is not only popular locally but is a fixture for the many CAMRA branches that visit our little corner of beer heaven. We wish Alex, the staff and the brewery team well and hope they make good progress in the National Pub of the Year Competition.

Stourbridge & Halesowen Pub of the Year

Like the mythical Phoenix rising from the ashes, the Waggon and Horses public house has risen to an acclaimed height since its closure in January 2016 and the refurbished re-launch in March 2016.



Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA branch members have recognised the hard work done by the wife and husband team of Dawn and Mick O'Neil in the promotion of Real Ale in the Stourbridge and Halesowen area by acknowledging the achievement with awarding the pub not only the Real Ale Pub of the Year but also Cider Pub of the Year.



Dawn and Mick previously managed the Court House in Dudley and prior to that the Red Cow in Coseley.



Dawn stated that she had welcomed the challenge of managing the refurbished public house, that was a landmark in the Halesowen area and with the support of the local people and others who have travelled from afar, she felt that she had reached a recognised achievement by being nominated and awarded Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA branch's Real Ale Pub of the Year and Cider Pub of the Year.

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Cask and Keg Comparing in Birmingham

The scope for beer crawling in Birmingham has improved a lot in recent years. I was fortunate to be invited to a tour of cask and keg bars on the fringes of the Jewellery Quarter on a Saturday afternoon in January. I was 'warned' that much of the beer will be keg but open minded to try well-crafted beer in all its forms. I'd never been to any of the places so this was a discovery tour in more than one sense.

Off the train at Jewellery Quarter and straight along Frederick Street to **1000 Trades**, a bar with a mix of 4 cask ales and 4 keg beers. So I began with one of each. A fine amber ale from Ilkley called Rombald and then God's Twisted Sister from Twisted Barrel. The comparison had begun.



Next, a few short twists and turns into Regent Place to spot the billboard that marks the entrance to the **Rock and Roll Tap House**. It's tucked away but well worth discovering. A small bar creatively decorated with music memorabilia from the 60s and 70s, with three vegan friendly ales available and brilliant music. The red walls and snug spaces brought to mind a speakeasy or a cellar music club. Anywhere that features a poster of Jimi Hendrix is good for me and the Voodoo Mild at 5% was excellent. A great atmosphere and friendly welcome, Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA took over the place for half an hour. No keg beer here.

Then on to **Burning Soul**. Head for Great Hampton Row and turn right into Mott Street. The brewery is in the first unit you see in Mott Street Industrial

Estate. This was the keg beer challenge, after a lifetime of avoiding them and now worrying about the scorn and accusations of traitor from diehard Real Ale drinking pals. Other friends are showing me that there are some very tasty beers available. So I enter this highly rated new brewery with an open mind to see what the fuss is about, having already tried a few good keg beers in Barbridge and a great many in Canada where the nearest decent Real Ale was a thousand miles away. Here I was impressed with the range of eight keg beers. Certainly a very good atmosphere in a strictly beer only venue, it's a working brewery after all so minimal comforts. Halves of No World King Fist IPA and Ahtanum Chinook followed the 7% Coconut Porter. I didn't get around to the sour beers this time, it would need another visit to do the whole menu justice.

Then on to the newly opened **Indian Brewery Bar** at Snowhill, located in one of the Queensway Arches units in Livery Street. A bright open space with rows of wooden tables and benches. There were five real ales from Indian Brewery and guests, plus a range of the brewery's beers on keg. I tried the Indian Brewery's Peacock, then the renowned Tiny Rebel Fubar. Then time to try their Shandour Stout on keg. All excellent and the food was very appealing. It is well worth dropping in for something different, and easy to reach with an entrance to Snowhill station alongside.



Finally, for me, the tour moved on to **Tilt**, in the City Arcade on Union Street, off Corporation Street.



Another keg beer heaven for the initiated, the bar contains a bank of pinball machines. I drank a half of Rocketman IPA from Arbor. I was 'kegged out' by now and happy to quit when the others headed for Clink. How do these young people do it? This was an interesting and varied crawl that I am happy to recommend for a Saturday afternoon diversion. I enjoyed dipping my toe (tongue) in the icy waters of keg beers and found them to be full of flavour, strong and interesting, but not for session drinking.

More expensive for one thing, though I suppose a strong half of keg costs similar to a cask pint. So many beers, so little time, but good to see a healthy variety on the fringes of the city centre. I'll be happy to try more in future but remain a fan of well-conditioned Real Ale any day.

Cheers

Geoff Mills



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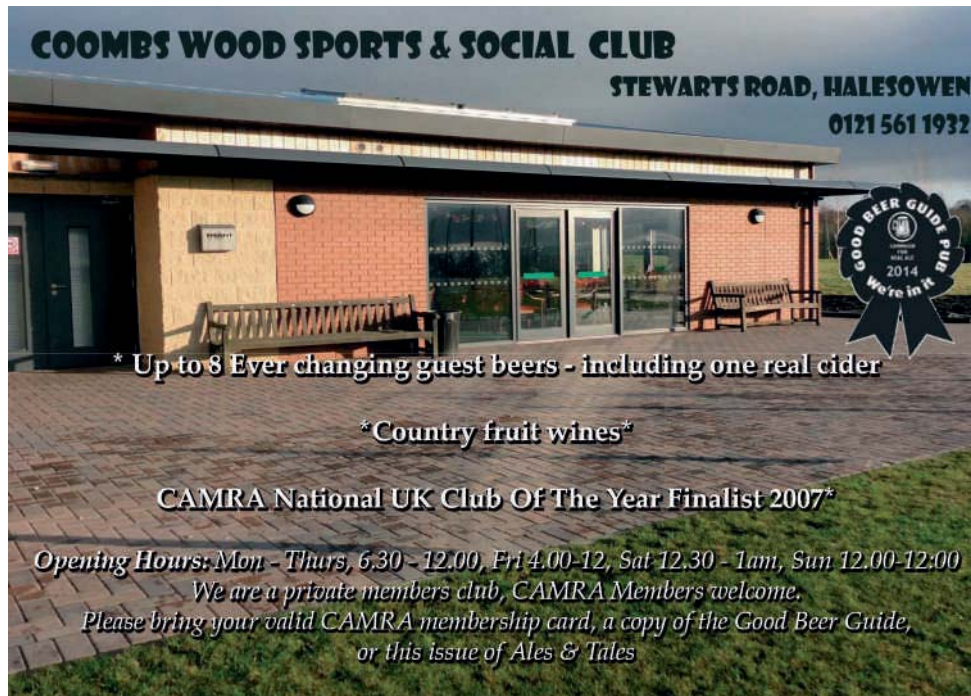
Back Room Tales

He came through the door like a ghost, the size of an outhouse, and as ugly as sin, I managed a smile and a nod; Wizza looked scared; Robert, however, was as usual face down in his phone, probably searching for the meaning of life, and was oblivious until two hands that would not have looked out of place on a yeti landed on his shoulders. He froze, and turned his head slowly, and said, 'My God! It's Billy the Butcher, how bin ya?' Billy smiled, and said, 'I've bin away, let me get a drink,' and headed off to the bar. Wizza looked puzzled and leaned forward and said, 'Who's that, and why's he called the butcher?' I smiled and said, 'Well if I said new patio, Broadmoor, and he's paid his debt to society...' I was rudely interrupted by Ginny punching me hard on the arm, who said, 'Pay no attention, he wouldn't know the truth if it bit him, Billy was a butcher, got done for not having a TV license, and has been up his caravan at Rhyl.' Wizza looked a bit happier. Billy came back

loaded with pints, sat down next to Robert, and said, 'Nice dress.' Robert looked pleased, and replied 'Do you like it?' Billy said, 'Yes, it really matches your beard, any particular occasion?' Robert said, 'I've been invited to Clever Dickie's fancy dress do at the Pig & Bap'. Billy nodded knowingly, and then the door opened and there was Tarby, obviously wearing pyjamas under a jacket and trousers, the slippers were a bit of a giveaway, and Billy said, 'You off to Mr. Clever's party?' Tarby replied, 'No, I've been bad in bed, the missus said I needed lots of liquid, so I cum here,' and shuffled off to the bar. The conversation surrounded Robert's lack of expertise in applying make up for a bit, until Tarby grumped 'Moron,' at which point Robert got up ... and put a shovel of coal on the fire.

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

(some names have been changed to protect the innocent)



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Come along and join the Dudley CAMRA day trip to the Great British Beer Festival (GBBF).

GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL 2017 8-12 AUGUST OLYMPIA LONDON

For those of you new to CAMRA you may not have yet travelled to the GBBF held annually in August. Most years it is held at Kensington Olympia in London where it now occupies two or more halls plus gallery space and is for at least a week the largest 'pub' in Europe. Dudley branch has always tried to run a coach trip on the Thursday of the event. This year will be the 4th trip I am organising as Social Secretary. For some members it is one of the first events that they put their name down for! What does it offer? Well, with hundreds of beers, ciders, perries and now craft beers, as well as foreign draft and bottled beers, no one goes thirsty! There are also traditional and new pub games to participate in; games of chance and so many food stands if you indulge in one food for each continent you would have no room for any beer! Each year the stands for the beer are sorted into some type of order, by region or by style but as the event has expanded it has become a little more random. However, obtain a programme showing the complete layout and beer listings and you're ready to go.

If you are a collector of breweriana there is a large shop plus auctions held on one of the stages for your delectation. T-shirts, CAMRA books and other

items are also on sale and badges, hats, jewellery, a crèche, membership and confectionery are all found as you move around the halls.

At the festival we tend to congregate around 2-3 tables so coats and bags etc can be left attended by some of the group while others come and go around trying the beers etc. It also ensures that new members quickly get to know everyone. In fact the trip now has the feel of a large family outing as you may set off as an acquaintance but will return with friends.

Travelling there on the Thursday not only ensures as wide a choice of beers as possible but ensures that the competition winners have already been chosen and are available to try.

Now to the details, the date is 10/8/17.

Currently the cost is £28 as per last year, inclusive of entrance ticket (so no waiting to pay at the door). Pick up points so far are Dudley, Flood Street, and Stourbridge by the bus station, however if there is a large number from another local area pick up elsewhere may be possible.

Return from the festival is at 7pm to ensure last buses can be caught.

Interested? Then contact me on either 07939480746, or jedwards31@btinternet.com.

Hope to see you there

Cheers

Jacqui Edwards
Dudley CAMRA

www.gbbf.org.uk

Brewery News

Dudley & South Staffs

Sarah Hughes Brewery - Sedgley

Dark Ruby Mild has won Silver in the National Champion Beer of Britain Competition in the Old Ale/Strong Mild category, which was held at the National Winter Ales Festival in Norwich.

Pig Iron - Brierley Hill

Pig Iron have launched a new beer, Round Oak Stout, look out for it in the usual Pig Iron Outlets. Their pub, Weavers Ale House in Kidderminster won the Wyre Forest CAMRA Pub of the Year (POTY) title again this year.

Olde Swan – Netherton

After quite a while without a seasonal brew the Olde Swan brewery team have re-brewed Pit Head.

Enville Brewery - Envile

A new brew, American Pale Ale, is creamy, smooth and bursting with citrusy hops. This 4.3%ABV beer has been late hopped with a trio of America's finest; Magnum, Cascade, and Chinook combine to intensify aroma and provide an awesome flavour. The result is a bold, refreshing, fully-flavoured, hoppy session beer. Brewed and distributed under the Stourton Brewing Company brand using square pumpclips to accentuate the differences between this brew and the more sweeter Envile brews..



Kinver Brewery - Kinver

Have brewed a special - Sixty per Centurion - a 6.0%ABV golden ale and Full Centurion 10.0%ABV which will be appearing at several pubs and beer festivals around the region and beyond.

Bathams - Brierley Hill

2017 is the 140th anniversary of Bathams. They have a new limited edition logoed glass celebrating this. These have been seen in the Bull and Bladder. A new pub in Worcester Road Hagley currently called Palladium House has a Bathams banner on the façade but no opening date as yet.



Fownes – Upper Gornal

Have brewed two new pale ales, The Pale King 4.0%ABV, and Broddr's Swan Song 5.0%ABV. Visions Of Heresy, a rye IPA 5.7%ABV will be coming soon.

Stourbridge & Halesowen

Craddock's - Stourbridge

The brewery is now an eight barrel plant brewing six regular beers – Saxon Gold, Crazy Sheep, Troll, River Steam, King's Escape and Monarch's Way – leaving capacity for two others. Recently this has been Hop & Glory, and Victorian Mild @ 6% was introduced in February. Some of the beers have appeared under the Bridgnorth trade name but this has now been discontinued. Craddock's beers are available at their four pubs. There are plans to lease the King Charles in Worcester to the current manager.

Webster's of Wollaston – Graham's Place

Have restarted brewing in March so get along to Graham's Place to check out their new brews!

Angel Ales

Should be seen again in pubs anytime soon! They are hoping to supply the GBBF with their Tainted Love Cherry Stout (4.6%). Don't forget that you can purchase bottles of their ales from Brewmonkey Homebrew Supplies on Cradley Hill High Street (<https://www.brewmonkey.co.uk/bottled-beers>).

Green Duck, Stourbridge DY9 7ND

Summer Festival: June 15th, 16th, 17th. They have got a busy brew schedule planned with just the cask brews on offer below, not to mention planned brews going into keg and bottle. Bottles are being launched in the summer months ready for everyone's BBQs etc. May Specials- Little Giant – Breakfast Stout – 3.8%, Figgy Mild – New Age Mild – 4.0%, Keep On Dreaming – Summer Ale – 4.5%, June Specials - Flame of the West – American Pale Ale (Mosaic, Simcoe, Citra) - 4.8%, Shaky Stevens American Stout – American Stout – 5.0%. July Specials - The Great Divide – American Pale Ale (Citra, Equinox) – 4.2%, Steeltown - Black Country Sweet Ale – 4.0% - Being brewed for Black Country Day.

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On My Travels....

My travels regularly take me to Cardiff with grandad duties and babysitting the usual reason. I regularly spend one night in Cardiff where to my way of thinking the pubs and the Real Ale scene has been improving over the last few years.

Many years ago, when Wembley was closed for demolition and redevelopment many major sporting events were transferred to the then Millennium Stadium, now re-badged as the Principality Stadium. At the time the Glamorgan Council Staff Social Club was opposite gate 3 and was also in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide and as such we were allowed entry. Two bars on two floors and an excellent choice of beers.

So why the history lesson you may ask. After a period of closure the establishment is now in the hands of the Tiny Rebel brewery based in Newport, initially known as the Urban Tap House but now simply Tiny Rebel. Offering an extensive range of ales on handpump and a selection of Newkeg beers it's seriously worth a visit. Internally it's had a few walls knocked out but it's basically the same layout but the decor is totally Tiny Rebel.

12 hand pulls on the downstairs bar offering a range of their own beers and guests. The upstairs bar offers the core range of Tiny Rebel beers. On my visit the day after Wales played England in the Six Nations Tiny Rebel Fubar, Beat Box, Altered Beast, Fuggy Life along with a few other beers from their own brewery were available and guests were Burning Sky Porter and Vibrant Forest Chinook. I had the Beat Box as it was a new beer to me. The porter was excellent even though I felt there was rather too much roast



barley for my palate. The Chinook was thick and mucky, yes, you have guessed, it was un-fined. (There should be a mandatory code of practice for pubs and breweries to indicate when beers are un-fined as I am sick of being served yeasty crxxx). On reflection, it could have been a superb beer if someone had fined it.



Real Cider is also available with Orchard Pig Explorer and Thistly Cross on the bar and all of this is supported by two large bottle fridges full of interesting worldwide beers.

A much newer pub is the Hop Bunker, an underground cellar bar that's a short walk from the entrance to Cardiff Castle near the Hilton Hotel. Modern scrubbed tables, malt sacks from Weyermann in Bamberg Germany and Warminster Wiltshire and Charles Faram Hessian hop pockets form part of the decor. 15 handpumps on the bar and a host of Newkeg taps against the back wall make for an impressive choice.



I chose the Hopcraft beer after asking advice for a hoppy beer. (Sadly, it wasn't). As a beer, it was



perfectly drinkable, perhaps the barman needs a bit of training. I then moved on to a Chocolate Stout. Not my type of Chocolate Stout, not in the way that Saltaire Triple Chocoholic and Sadler's Mud City hit my taste buds but still very good.

My return to the train station along Westgate street took me past the Tiny Rebel pub again but this street has loads of places to visit. Zero Degrees have a brewery bar, Brew Dog are represented, along with the GBG listed City Arms on Quay Street making this a fine drinking area.

Steve Thompson

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Beer Festival Organiser 2017

It was my birthday. At a branch meeting the Chairman sidles up and asks for a quick word before the meeting. 'We need a Beer Festival Organiser.

I know you don't want to do it but we just need someone to help coordinate things so that it all goes smoothly'. It was with some trepidation that I agreed, on the understanding that there was a great deal of knowledge and experience among the committee members who have been involved with this successful festival for years. So, a steep learning curve for me, but once the key decisions were taken I soon discovered that our dedicated team is delivering all the actions on schedule.

It has been an eye opener as to just how many things have to be considered and planned well in advance.

Fortunately our generous sponsors are willing to support us again. Of course it hasn't taken place yet but I am confident that it will more than live up to Stourbridge's reputation for successful festivals, offering an excellent range of beers and ciders that you may not have tried, and featuring our great local breweries into the bargain.

It's going to be a cracker! Please come and help drink (responsibly) the festival dry!

Geoff Mills
Stourbridge & Halesowen

A New Lease of Life for The Old Bank

After almost ten years The Old Bank in Stourbridge on the corner of Coventry Street has been abandoned but it now has a purpose again. The Old Bank has been transformed to an amazing stylish real ale pub with a fine selection of whiskies from around the world and a great selection of gins.



The historic building has been an iconic feature of Stourbridge since it was built in 1927. However this building sits on the same site where there has been a bank since the early 1700s. This site has been witness to some monumental events such as the merger between Birmingham and Midland bank and the contracts and arrangements that created all the of the local canal systems.



The bank is now a stylish modern real ale pub with a

selection of ten real ales on draft ranging from Wye Valley, Hobsons, Salopian, Ma Pardoes and local favourites such as Enville and Sadler's. "It has been an honour and a privilege to restore this iconic and beautiful building for the people of Stourbridge" said Mr Ian Bullock the owner.

The restoration took over a year but the results are very much worth it, keeping its original features and also adding to them in a sympathetic way. Licensee and manager Jackie Bullock also commented saying "This is what the people of Stourbridge have needed for a long time and the public have been so supportive towards the pub". The Old Bank pub is open weekdays and weekends, also available a lunch time menu.

Cal



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Hitchmough's Archives

Tipton Herald 3/10/1903

TIPTON.

It is generally understood that the outlook for Tipton is brighter than any other manufacturing district in the Midlands, and that the immense works about to be started, which will employ several thousands of men, will make Tipton boom.—Vide Press, and no doubt the best Licensed Inn in the Township is

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Further particulars may be obtained from Messrs. Wall and James, Solicitors, Stourbridge, or the Auctioneers.

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 RED LION, Careless Green, Wollescote, Lye.

It was owned by John Mason and Co. in 1891, by the Home Brewery of Quarry Bank from 1905, by Smith and Williams from 1920 and by Julia Hanson and Son Ltd. from 1934.

The building still stands and is occupied by J. & L. Electrics.



2007

Craft in St Lucia

Leaving the frosty January mornings behind I headed off to my cruise of the Caribbean and temperatures in the high 20's – low 30's. The prospects of good beer looked a bit thin on the ground but having discovered a brewery on the Cayman Islands two years ago, my advance research had spotted a brewery on St Lucia. A little more internet scouring showed a brewery bar in Castries near to one of the two Cruise Port Terminals.

The Antillia brewing company brews in Rodney Bay and produces beers designed for the region's climate and taste. Founded by Canadians Greg Potten and Andrew Hasley from a decommissioned operation, they are now producing some super brews.

My day in Castries arrived, unfortunately at the wrong terminal, but it looked to be little more than a 20-minute walk and having visited this place before I felt fairly secure.

The bar is on the Odsan Industrial Park at Pointe Seraphine. Odsan Industrial Park is a lovely place overlooking the waterfront surrounded by local craft shops, diamond and jewellery stores and bars. The Antillia Brewing Company bar is a ... Shed. Granted, it is a prettily painted shed with excellent

views, but hey, who cares when it's 29 degrees in the shade.

Welcomed by a really friendly waitress I was offered samples of the four beers on offer. Who needs dinky sample glasses when you have been drinking keg Heineken for 3 days.

The first beer I tried was simply called Pale Ale. A light refreshing ale, not as hoppy as I was expecting but very pleasant indeed. The beers were not as carbonated as I expected either, overall a good start. I then ordered the Golden Wheat, again not what I expected. This was a pale-yellow beer and not a cloudy wheat beer that I had imagined it would be. Soft on the palate and very easy drinking.

My third beer was listed as a Passion Fruit Ale. Again, I expected a bold hoppy full bodied beer packed with loads of passion fruit flavours but it was light and subtle with gentle fruit flavours and very enjoyable.

It was at this point I noticed the 2 guys sitting close to me and taking great interest in my sampling and discussions with the table waitress. I discovered it was the two owners of the company who had been giving me the once over.

Following quite a long discussion about their beers I moved on to the Chocolate Stout. Similar in style to Sadler's Mud City Stout it was full-bodied and rich. The roast malts and chocolate flavours were well-balanced and provided robust beer to finish with.

Sadly, the 'Winter Brew', a 7.2% Barley Wine, was due out of the brewery the day after I left. Having seen the photo of the beer in the fermenter I was really disappointed. Looks like another cruise to St Lucia.

Steve Thompson

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Today marks a historic win for pub goers, consumers and CAMRA members.

After years of campaigning led by CAMRA's membership, the Government has today announced a historic change in the law to protect all English pubs in the planning system.

This removes a longstanding loophole that has enabled developers to demolish pubs or convert them to another retail use without applying for planning permission.

This is a huge success which could not have been achieved without you. Together, we have sent over 8,000 emails to politicians in the last three months alone. The voice of CAMRA members like you was essential in securing this win for pubs.

All pubs in England will now be given the protection they deserve, and owners will always have to apply for planning permission before they can convert or demolish a pub.

Although this change comes too late for the thousands of pubs already lost, it will be crucial to supporting all the great pubs which remain for generations to come.

This is a huge win for pub goers and consumers and helps secure a thriving pubs industry for all to enjoy.

Why not head to the pub this weekend to celebrate?

This was a message that CAMRA members received from our Chairman. It's part of our work in trying to save pubs. If you want to help us, why not join CAMRA, after all it may be your local that could be targeted next!



**CAMPAIGN
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Subsidising other Drinkers

I need to be perfectly honest, I don't drink Cider. I don't mind an occasional glass of Perry, particularly the Lilley's Bee Sting Perry, but Cider does nothing much for me. This article is not about taste as we are all different in our likes and dislikes. This article is about fairness and equitability on what we all choose to drink and what we ought to be paying.

Consider HAIRY FERRET Cider, ABV 6%. A local wholesaler advertises a 20l box of this Cider at £40.60. This means that the relative cost to the pub is £6.73 ($£40.60 \div 6\%$) per degree of ABV (alcohol). Most pubs normally sell this Cider at about £3.30 a pint, which as a ball park calculation means that the customer pays roughly half of the relative cost to the pub ($£6.73 \div 2 = £3.36$) per degree of alcohol.

Now consider HAIRY FERRET Cherry Cider, ABV 4%. The same wholesaler advertises this product at £55.25 for a 20l box but remember this is only 4%. So, the relative cost to the pub is £13.81 ($£55.25 \div 4\%$) per degree of ABV (alcohol). Most pubs also sell this product at £3.30 a pint which again as a ball park calculation means that the customer pays roughly a quarter of the relative cost to the pub ($£13.81 \div 4 = £3.33$).

This comparison can only mean that the Hairy Ferret Cherry Cider is being subsidised. I am sure that the landlord, Brewery or Pub Owner will not be subsidising the product so that can only mean the purchasers (of all drinks) will be subsidising the fruit cider.

Let's look at this situation another way. If a pub sells a pint of Cider at £3.30 a pint from a 20l (35 pint) box then this will generate £115.50 in the till. At a cost price of £40.60 prior to VAT and a cost of £48.72 after VAT for a box then the markup that the pub is using could be deemed to be a multiplier of 2.37 ($£48.72 \times 2.37 = £115.50$)*.

So, what about the Cherry Cider? Generally, a pub also sells this product at about £3.30 a pint which

still puts £115.50 in the pub's till. But now the cost price of £55.25 prior to VAT and £66.30 after VAT giving a multiplier of 1.74 ($£66.30 \times 1.74 = £115.50$).

So, why does the pub use a different pricing formula for fruit cider compared to Real Cider. If the same markup was applied to fruit ciders that was applied to Real Cider the selling price would be incredibly different.

Considering the cost price of the fruit cider £55.25, plus VAT making £66.30 and using the Real Cider markup of 2.37 then the selling price of the fruit cider should be £4.49 pint ($2.37 \times £66.30 \div 35$).

Would YOU pay £4.49 for a pint of 4% fruit cider? **No, does that mean all the other drinkers in the pub are subsidising the fruit cider drinkers?**

But now consider a normal Real Cider at 6%, costing £40.60, with VAT is £48.72 but now apply the fruit cider markup of 1.74 would only generate £84.77 for the pub and you, the customer, would only pay £2.42 per pint from a 35 pint box.

Would YOU be over the moon at paying £2.42 for a 6% Cider? I think you would.

I am sure that licensees and pub owners would argue that the fruit ciders sell really well and are part of their successful business at what cost to other drinkers.

The reality of the situation from my point of view is that we should all pay appropriate and fair prices for what we choose to drink.

The mathematical comparisons are my own!

Steve Thompson



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(Ma Pardoes)

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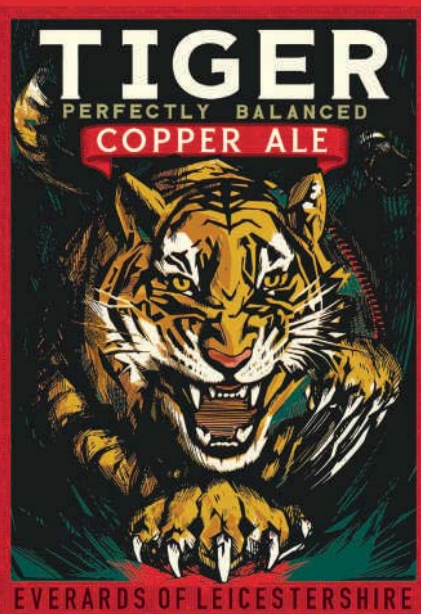
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The Tiger is synonymous with Leicestershire after the Royal Leicestershire Regiment were nicknamed 'The Tigers' in 1825 following long service in India.

It's also the name of our local rugby club, the Leicester Tigers. This is their Official Beer as it is for the many local teams and that's why our Tiger is roaring!

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Travellers' Guides

1974 Good Beer Guide

The other evening I found myself with twenty minutes to kill so, as usual, I decided to select a book to keep me company. The wife and I have an extensive reference library, situated on the landing close to the 'reading-room', so I duly perused what hadn't been perused for some time and my eyes settled on the 'top-shelf' containing 'Beer Guides – the Early Years', start at the beginning I thought, why not, let's see if anything's changed, eh?

Comfortable in my 'reading position' I began to flick through the pages, wow, things have changed! Any 'promising', young beer-drinker would easily become confused. The first place we 'experienced' beer-drinkers look for in a new guide is where we live, the West Midlands. The West Midlands was not invented until 1974. Those were the days, proper counties, not named after rivers, Mersey, Avon, Tyne & Wear or cities that thought they were superior to everyone else, Greater Manchester & Greater London, what's with the 'Great' bit, hmmm? I reiterate, those were the days, when Halesowen had only just been 'taken-back' from Shropshire and Dudley was still an island! So the West Midlands were not included in this, the first edition, of probably the most important Travel Guide ever devised. You had to trawl through Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire to find anything within a twenty mile radius of Stourbridge and what a surprising trawl it turned out to be more later.

I continued to read and came to the conclusion that the 'old' guide was just as useful as the 'modern' ones.

Several reasons, you could get it in your back pocket without giving yourself a hernia:

- It was lightweight so fatigue would not be a problem....
- It was arranged so our northern friends wouldn't get too bored trying to find out where they lived (North to South)....
- It doesn't include Scotland, there was no point in those days....
- The descriptions were short and succinct, no mention of the landlady's extensive Doyley collection....
- Priorities were a priority (Birmingham 1 entry, Kinver 8)....
- The compilers really didn't mince their words (if your beer was akin to body fluids they said so, well, almost)....
- The only symbols used indicated if you could drink, eat and sleep at the pub, no mention of Georgian fireplaces and reconstituted cardboard dado rails....
- It doesn't encourage the use of children or dogs to upset the regulars....
- No mention of cider (in the 'good ol' days' it was the Campaign for Real Ale, the clue was in the name !)....

The first Beer Guide was a beer guide, no frills or pretensions and by golly it got you to the parts other guides have failed to reach straight into the action, a brief introduction followed by an equally manageable description of 'Real Ale'. No section on 'Pub of the year', 'Club of the Century' or 'Regional Weekly Pub of the Season'. No articles by self-appointed 'Beer Afficionados' telling us what's good to drink, what food goes well with it and which 'Art Nouveau Bistro' will sell you a glass



of 'chef-recommended craft-ale' at £12.60 a pint! I don't know about you but I don't give the first thirty-five pages of the recent guides a second glance, straight to the 'West Midlands' and then the brewery section to see if Banks's are still going! The guide wasn't perfect, there are many inaccuracies and a distinct lack of continuity, some pubs got in twice under slightly different names, the maps left a lot to be desired and confusion reigned 'up-North' no roads on the map!!!!

Banks's beer was described as 'generally recommended' whereas Batham's was no more than 'a reliable brew' how things have changed! How research was carried out is unclear, obviously data was collected by a handful of dedicated members in their note-books, no lap-tops or tablets (whatever they are) were available, no internet or e-mail to transmit the info to the Master-Compiler, they must have used the Postal Service, God bless it.

Only one pub in the whole of Birmingham? My Dad told me you could get a good pint of Brew XI once upon a time, in Bristol! My father-in-law swore by Ansell's Mild! There must have been more than one pub in Brum! It was truly amazing that Kinver was credited with 8 pubs, (anything to do with John Salter? God bless him.) Mind you, the choice of beer in Kinver in those days was second to none. A few years later when the National Beer Festival was called off for some reason coach trips weren't cancelled, just diverted to Kinver. That was the 'power' of the Guide!

Yes, it was obvious the guide was to be a work in progress for several years to come, the accuracy and 'styling' soon developed into the more recognisable format yet it still managed to fit into the back-pocket until the early 80's when the wife and her handbag were entrusted with the Holy Book. The guide did get bigger, mainly due to the increase in numbers of pubs included and the improved info on the breweries, info on individual pubs stayed at a minimum through the 80's and then began to expand in the 90's although there were still three columns per page up until the early 2000's, that's

when the guide turned into a 'brick' that left a dent in the back seat of your motor! Far too much information on each boozer less info, more pubs, that's my mantra but I'm told it falls on deaf ears at HQ and the chances of a 'backward step' are virtually zip. All to do with keeping the industry happy rather than the people who actually buy the book interested to hear other peoples comments on this subject.

The use of expressions such as 'avoid like the plague' (referring to Watneys) whilst both accurate in its advice and humorous, caused a lot of valuable media attention, which no doubt enhanced the Campaign's standing in public opinion. The line was changed to read 'avoid at all costs' after threats of expensive barristers. Wish I had a 'first edition'. Recently a copy of the more politically correct 'reprint' sold for £156.29 on e-bay!!

Adrian Stevens



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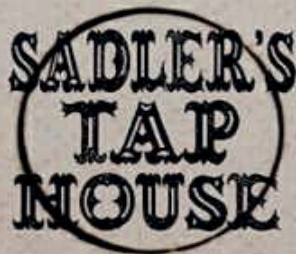
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MAY

Saturday 13th

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Cost £15

Contact: Jacqui Edwards

socialsecretary@dudleycamra.org.uk or

07939480746

Monday 22nd

Branch AGM - 8pm

Court House, 30 New Street, Dudley DY1 1LP

JUNE

Monday 26th

Branch Meeting - 8pm

New Inn, 35 Ward Street, Coseley WV14 9LQ

JULY

Saturday 8th

Branch Social by Minibus to Bishops Castle.

Cost £15

Contact: Jacqui Edwards

socialsecretary@dudleycamra.org.uk or

07939480746

Monday 24th

Branch Meeting - 8pm

Britannia, 109 Kent Street, Upper Gornal DY3 1UX

Stourbridge & Halesowen

MAY

Wednesday 3rd

Branch Meeting 8pm.

Waggon & Horses, Worcester St., Stourbridge

Thursday 18th

Colley Gate Marking Social, meet Vine, Lyde Green 8pm. then Rose & Crown (Potters), Gate, Little

Chop House & Round of Beef

JUNE

Wednesday 7th

Branch Meeting 8pm.

Fox, 8 Green Lane, Lye (TBC)

Tuesday 20th

Oldswinford Marking Social

Meet Foley Arms, Hagley Road, Pedmore 8pm. then Crown, Bird in Hand, Labour in Vain and Shrubby Cottage

JULY

Wednesday 5th

Branch Meeting 8pm.

Waggon & Horses, Stourbridge Road, Halesowen (TBC)

Monday 17th

Wollaston Marking Social

Meet Foresters, Bridgnorth Road, Wollaston 8pm. then Plough, Gate Hangs Well, Unicorn, Princess and Graham's Place

AUGUST

Wednesday 2nd

Branch Meeting 8pm.

Crafty Pint, 8 Wassell Road, Halesowen (TBC)

Tuesday 15th

Amblecote Crawl

Meet New Talbot, Brettell Lane 8pm. then New Wellington, Starving Rascal, Swan and Robin Hood

SEPTEMBER

Wednesday 13th

Branch AGM 8pm.

Duke William, Coventry Street, Stourbridge (TBC)

Wychem Cider Visit

Did you know that we have not just one, but two real cider producers in Stourbridge? The first, David Millward with his 'Wrongbow' is already well known as it is an award winner not just at Stourbridge Beer Festival, but further afield as well.

The second is 'Wychem' which is crafted from a secret location in the grounds of Stourbridge FC by passionate cider-maker Nigel Bunn. He kindly extended an invite to our Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA's Cider Co-ordinator to watch him producing his nectar on a Saturday morning. This invitation was gladly and willingly accepted on a damp and miserable October day.



Cider makers will employ different assets and equipment during cider production dependent on their size. Firstly the apples have to be washed and 'scratted', which is pretty much mashing the whole apples into a pulp. This pulp is then pressed to release the lovely apple juice that will go on to be fermented into cider. Some may use a hydraulic press and some may use a manual press operated by hand, however Nigel's method is to compress using water pressure. We were very kindly given some samples to try which were excellent!



Nigel's main outlet in the area is The Waggon and Horses, Worcester Street, Stourbridge which usually stocks his 'Vintage' variety.

You may hear 'ciderists' within CAMRA talking about REAL cider, so what exactly is it? To find out

more visit <http://www.camra.org.uk/about-cider-perry> and read up as there is too much detail to be covered in one short article.

To many people though, a real cider is one that is served still or 'flat', either by a handpull or from a 'bag-in-box'. This is quite a generic description but not entirely accurate, but in reality anything from a handpull may be better than the usual fizzy keg varieties. If cider is made from apple concentrate, then it is not real cider. At CAMRA we demand a higher quality product than that. Fruit flavoured ciders may be a great way of introducing new people to cider, and can be a great summer drink, but a great many people believe that real cider should contain only apples. The fruit or fruit-flavoured drinks are often a good starting point for non-cider drinkers, but to my mind, if a pub is going to try stocking a single real cider or perry, a medium of between 4% and 6% is even better. Having said that, it is a good sign that people are starting to broaden their cider horizons, whether they fit into CAMRA's definitions or not.

CAMRA's main months for celebrating Cider and Perry are May and October. Recently CAMRA has chosen to focus on October, probably to avoid a clash with 'Mild in May' as you could argue that two drinks couldn't be more different! Another reason for this is to coincide with the apple harvest and the actual production of Cider and Perry. Let us not forget Perry! Perry is made from pressed pears in the same way that cider is made from apples.

Fast forward to mid-March 2017 and Wychem's 'Katy' cider variety was freshly available at the Waggon and Horses so no extra incentive was needed to pop in and try it. What a fantastic cider, with a really strong apple flavour so it definitely gets our co-ordinator's seal of approval.

Look out for your nearest 'real cider' pub by consulting your CAMRA 'Good Beer Guide' or 'Whatpub.com' and look for the apple symbol.

Tim Cadwell



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West Bromwich Ale-bion

In a nation of thrifty bargain hunters, CAMRA members are no exception to the rule. We are notoriously protective over our pennies; taking steps to minimise our travel costs in order to maximise our pin money.

Drinkers were therefore left salivating at the prospect of unlimited travel on specific National Express West Midlands bus routes for just £3 per day, as news emerged of a 'Sandwell and Dudley Low Fare Zone' in February 2017. That's a saving of £1.60, or a half pint of beer to you and me! Visit nxbus.co.uk/paylocal and you will be pleasantly surprised to see that many of your favourite pubs can now be reached for 35% less cost.

I admit that losing my cut-price day ticket virginity on our recent West Bromwich beer scoring social was not quite tantamount to the achievement of other life goals – such as, buying my first car – but it did put me in a cheerful frame of mind!

Our first destination of the evening was the **Vine**; a family-run Indian grill and 2017 Good Beer Guide listee located on Roebuck Street in the shadow of the M5. It really is a matter of pot luck whether you find one or whether your find two real ales on sale here and, on this occasion, the solitary Ludlow Blonde was a fine example of a dry and hoppy 4% session beer. 'Blonde' is still a relatively young beer from this decade-old, Salop-based brewery but the original Ludlow 'Gold' at 4.2% will have been regularly sampled by the readership of Ales and Tales.

Signage in the Vine encourages you to "browse while you wait for your food" using the free Wi-Fi throughout the venue. However, quite literally within minutes of ordering my Chicken Tikka Rajasthani and Egg Fried Rice, my dinner had arrived and technological distractions were not required. It was humbling to see four generations of one family enjoying a midweek meal on my left-hand side. The great-grandmother, who was presumably in her mid-80s, still boasted a remarkable naan-to-sauce scooping action.

After a short bus ride in the direction of the town centre, we walked parallel to Queens Square Shopping Centre and arrived at the **Globe**, Reform Street. We had received reports that this Victorian pub now stocks cask beer having reopened in 2016. The curtains were closed, the front door was locked, yet a handful of customers were perched on the bar. In an unusual turn of events, we were informed by the landlord that due to little trade he calls time at 7pm every Wednesday and cleans the beer lines. We were swiftly invited to return on a different evening.

We then entered the New Square shopping and leisure complex where a drink was planned in the **Interceptor** (a Greene King Hungry Horse outlet). Although there are ten handpumps, and four Greene King range pump clips were visible, by process of elimination we discovered that the flagship IPA was the only ale currently available. Consequently, the group opted to hit the road once more.

Having drunk no beer at two pubs, the gang were in desperate need of a pick-me-up ... cue the opening night of Wetherspoon's Spring Real Ale Festival! A broad offering was to be found at the **Billiard Hall**, where I was tempted by Oakham's seasonal brew 'Enough Rope'. Described as amber in colour, it instead appeared to pour as a typical golden ale and had a bold and lingering bitter finish. Most customers were drawn in by the so-called friendly between Germany and England which was being viewed on a large projection screen.



The penultimate port of call was the **Wheatsheaf** (above), where we were made very welcome by



the new manager at the helm, Ian. In addition to the core Holden's range, we were pleased to find the brewery's seasonal 'Toffee Porter'. This has a profoundly rich and sweet flavour – very much an acquired taste.

We ended the night directly opposite in the **Old Hop Pole**. The permanent Wye Valley HPA is usually accompanied by two guest ales from breweries like Oakham and Moorhouse's. Nevertheless, HPA's

sister beer Butty Bach made an appearance leaving the group split evenly for their final beverage.

There are, of course, other real ale pubs in West Bromwich, such as, the Three Horseshoes and the Sow and Pigs, but these watering holes are in fact Walsall CAMRA branch pubs.

Ryan Hunt

I'm Just Popping Out To The Pub...

It started in 1984 when Banks's brewery published a leaflet featuring 300 pubs. Pete Hill, from West Bromwich, and a few mates decided to visit them all. Ten months on, having achieved that, they just couldn't stop. Next came the Midland counties, and four years spent visiting the coastline of Great Britain, drinking in every county of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. For seven years from 2006 every holiday and trip out went to Wales.

This band of stalwarts call themselves the Black Country Ale Tairsters and wear distinctive jackets made from bar towels. Over the years members of the Ale Tairsters have come and gone, but Pete's constant companion on these expeditions was his father Joe, who sadly died in 2014, but did fulfil his ambition of conquering Wales, which, at the time, comprised 3,905 pubs.

In March this year pub number 20,000 was reached. Pete's had at least a half in them all, although not always is Real Ale available.

Pete logs every journey and keeps a record of each pub and leaves a calling card. He also collects money for charity on his travels around the country, having raised £24,000 so far.

Pete does not intend to call it a day at 20,000 though. One current ongoing theme is drinking on every island with a pub off the coast of Great Britain. His next itineraries are well underway and at 2nd April the tally is 20,075 not out.

Janet Parker



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