

ALES & TALES



Campaign
for
Real Ale

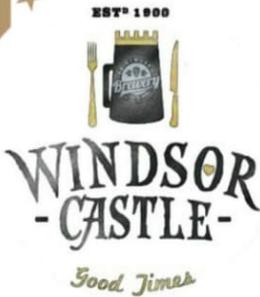
*The Newsletter for the Campaign for Real Ale in
Stourbridge & Halesowen and Dudley & South Staffordshire*

Issue 44
Winter 2021/22

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



Welcome Back

Welcome back to Ales & Tales. It's been a hard time over the last eighteen months or so, for pubs, breweries, and indeed the world. Now we are all allowed to meet again, face-to-face over a pint or two in familiar pubs and by attending beer festivals, we are gradually getting reacquainted with our favourite real ales.

Dudley & South Staffordshire branch are gearing up for Dudley Winter Ales Fayre 2021 (DWAF 21), opening on Thursday 25th November at Dudley Town Hall. It's been an odd couple of years. We should actually be celebrating 21 years of being hosted by Dudley Town Hall not the 20 years that we actually are. Everyone is well aware of why all beer festivals were cancelled last year so I won't go over old ground.

So, onto this year's offering. There will be even more seating, the usual locally loved breweries from the branch plus some hard-to-find beers from breweries further afield. There's real cider, a Key Keg Bar and even a few cocktails besides continental beers. For the first time we will be selling tickets online via CAMRA's own ticketing site plus tickets on the door. <https://tckty.camra.org.uk/e/23/dudley-winter-ales-fayre-2021-dwaf21> Look out for our new Sponsors plus the continued support of so many well-known names. We are trialling an "Early Bird" ticket for Thursday 25th from noon till 3pm for those that

can't wait any longer. We open fully at 5:30pm, more information can be found on our festival poster inside.

We continue to accept contactless payment and cash in the box office.

We are working closely with Public Health at Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council as well as the Town Hall and CAMRA Health & Safety to make sure DWAF 21 is COVID-secure.

We are one of only a few festivals taking place nationally this year and the region is lucky to have Kidderminster Beer and Cider Festival taking place in early November followed by DWAF 21. So please come along to your local festivals, support us, volunteer if you can, and spend some time with us or in one of our local pubs. As the saying goes "use it or lose it".

Happy Drinking and stay safe.

Karl Denning

DWAF 21 Festival Organiser
dwarf@dudley.camra.org.uk

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Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

The Seven Stars

Oldswinford, Stourbridge

The Seven Stars in Oldswinford, Stourbridge, reopened in late 2019 before Covid hit after an extensive refurbishment by Black Country Ales. However, the pub has a long and glorious history serving the drinking folk of Stourbridge and alighting rail passengers. The current building was constructed in 1907 as a flagship public house for Mitchells & Butlers Ltd (Cape Hill, Smethwick), shortly after the present railway station at Stourbridge Junction was built (1901). It replaced an earlier pub dating from before 1841, notorious for a murder committed by the landlord in 1852. Apparently, he shot at several people assembled around the pub, killed a lass called Mary Parlor and wounded several others. He ended up in an asylum and was eventually jailed.

The present building is listed Grade 2 by English Heritage, including its interior, after considerable efforts by the local CAMRA branch some years ago. It is also included in CAMRA's Historic Inventory of heritage pubs. The interior has an outstanding collection of M&B etched and painted windows, with an entrance hall and staircase full of fine light blue and cream tiles.



The original layout of the pub survives, with some alterations. The public bar, on the right-hand side, has its original counter and an ornately carved four-bay mirrored bar back with a (replica) clock on the pediment above.

Behind the public bar is a comfortable snug, previously the smoke room (as the original windows confirm), with a reinstated hatch from behind the public bar. Original bell-pushes remain, along with a benched seat and fine etched windows. To the left of the entrance, the restaurant occupies the former lounge bar/club room, with a couple of original etched windows.



Angus McMeeking, Director of Black Country Ales, has some very fond memories of the Seven Stars, going back a long way. Black Country Ales had been trying to purchase the pub for over 5 years and eventually bought it in August 2019. Refurbishment took 10 weeks to complete at a cost which was “too much, but it is a lovely building that we felt needed to be treated with great respect”. Black Country Ales’ designer, Bob Francis, has several old tradespeople to call on, but had to dig deep to find craftsmen capable of refurbishing the building, particularly the old stained glass windows and the magnificent tiles in the public bar and along the entrance staircase.



Upstairs, there was originally a function room, but Black Country Ales opted to provide four letting rooms, attracting those who wish to stay in a proper pub rather than in a local hotel. All the letting rooms are named after former Black Country breweries, including Springfield, Atkinsons and Holders. One of the rooms is even named after the Hipkiss Brewery, which used to brew beer at the Queen's Brewery behind



Black Country Ales' Queen's Head pub in Enville Street, Stourbridge. If the letting rooms are successful, another four rooms could be provided in the adjacent former stable block.

Throughout the refurbishment, Black Country Ales had great assistance from the local conservation and heritage officer, who was keen to see the pub back in public use. She produced a couple of photos of the pub at the turn of the 19th century showing some magnificent roof-mounted signs, which may be replicated in the future.



Black Country Ales has had some really delightful feedback from new and old customers about the refurbishment of the pub and is certainly pleased with the look of the building. Happily, the customers have been drinking and eating well and have given the old pub a really good re-launch. They hope to build on this good start, with a huge choice of real ales, open fires, good food and a warm welcome, hoping that the pub will go from strength to strength.

The current landlord is Paul Hicks, with his partner Liz. They have had many successful years at The Swan in Long Lane, Halesowen, where they won the local CAMRA award for both real ale and cider Pub of the Year. They hope that the Seven Stars will become a flagship pub for Black Country Ales. They are looking forward to welcoming everyone there and offering a wide range of excellent cask-conditioned real ales, along with tasty home-cooked locally-sourced meals in the restaurant, including the famous Sunday Roast.

And finally, one of the lesser known facts is that Robert Plant (of Led Zeppelin), had his first public performance at the Seven Stars Blues Club here in 1963, when, at 15 years old, he played harmonica and regularly sung with the Delta Blues Band, with Chris Wood (later in Traffic). The club was also the launching-pad for many West Midlands groups, including Chicken Shack, with Stan Webb, Christine Perfect and Andy Sylvester.



*Young Robert Plant
(holding the guitar)*

Black Country Ales have done a superb job refurbishing the pub and it is becoming popular with locals and new customers alike. There are more than 20 hand-pulls serving a range of Black Country Ales and guest beers, along with the famous filled cobs. But here you can also have a 3-course meal with your beer and even stay the night if you miss your train or bus! A new TV screen even displays live train times from Stourbridge Junction station to help you plan your journey home.

Steve James

*With acknowledgement to
Angus McMeeking & Tony Hitchmough*

Brewery News

STOURBRIDGE & HALESOWEN

BEAT BREWERY

Unit 9, Old Forge Trading Estate, Dudley Rd, Lye, Stourbridge DY9 8EL

During lockdown, Beat offered a take-away and delivery service for collecting their beers and is still delivering beer with free delivery within 5 miles when ordered on their website. The main news is that, during lockdown, Beat have converted one of the units next door to a large new taproom, complete with bar, upstairs toilets and areas for live music and other events. This, combined with the external seating area, makes it an ideal place for an afternoon/evening drink. More recently, live music events have been staged, and outside food caterers, with even a bouncy castle for the kids! Throughout this 18-month period, Beat has continued to brew its core range of beers, including Raver, Skaburst, Funk, Cosmic Pop, Metal Head & Jungle Drum Machine. More recent beers have included Analogue, a session-strength (3.8%) IPA with tropical aroma dry hopped with Simcoe and Mosaic hops, and the newest beer, Papa Loves Mango (4.2%), with aromas of fresh mango and orange zest and a bitterness that lingers on the tongue. Beat Ales' beers regularly feature in Black Country Ales pubs and other free-trade outlets, and are even shipped to Gibraltar!

CRADDOCKS BREWERY

107 Worcester St, Stourbridge DY8 1AX

The brewery is up and running after the tribulations of lockdown, producing the tried and trusted range of Cradocks beers for its five pubs in Stourbridge, Droitwich, Worcester and Birmingham. The newest addition to the range is Riptide, an IPA at 4.2% with a hazy, fruity and hoppy profile.

ANGEL ALES

Furlong Lane, Halesowen, West Midlands. B63 2TA

It has been a while since we last enjoyed any Angel Ale at our local pubs. Worry not because owner and brewer Andy Kirk has been very busy over the last two or three years revamping the brewing kit and generally clearing a space for a visitors centre and possible tap room. Andy assures me that he will be brewing again before the year is out so we can enjoy Angel Ale, Ginger Stout and the new brew Krakow and look forward to visiting the brewery in Furlong Lane.

PRINTWORKS

Windsor Castle Stourbridge Rd, Lye, Stourbridge DY9 7BS

Have some very exciting news that a new bottled beer range will be coming out soon! Starting this September they have produced some small batches of bottled craft beer. They have hand bottled previously and produced bottle conditioned ales but this time round it will be a far superior product which they hope their supporters will enjoy. Bumblebees will be ready from September, a pale honey ale, which has been produced for bottle (a slightly different recipe) & very lightly carbonated. Geneva will be the next to be ready. Gareth is also working on their first stout recipe which will be out over the next month or so, so watch out for that one plus a few more specials too. They will be hosting a Halloween themed event at the Windsor Castle Saturday 30th October, a real ale & craft cider festival with live music, mulled cider, and foot long hot dogs.

FIXED WHEEL

Long Lane Trading Estate, 9, Long Ln, Blackheath B62 9LD

The brewery recognised the changing face of the licencing trade and its customers, and rather than sitting, watching and waiting until some sense of normality returned, they faced that challenge. They have invested in a canning production machine, to enable a more varied client base to access the beer range. Also, investing for the future in the Blackheath Brewery they have taken on an apprentice brewer, who as well as being taught with 'Hands on' experience, is undertaking a formal brewing education at Nottingham University on day release. On 27th August 2021, they opened a new Micro Bar in the town of Cradley Heath – the Handle Bar. All these things have happened because Fixed Wheel had the support of its loyal customer base and new customers, who have discovered the Fixed Wheel brewery and its beers.

GREEN DUCK

Gainsborough Trading Estate, Rufford Rd, Stourbridge DY9 7ND

Like all breweries, Green Duck have had to adapt and survive during the pandemic, and seem to have done remarkably well. Of course, with pubs closed, the market for cask beer dried up very quickly.

Their canning line, jointly crowd funded with Twisted Barrel in Coventry, was working overtime to supply



both local deliveries and an increase in trade from specialist bottle shops. The aforementioned delivery service made sure that they could get all forms of beer to local customers and this continues at the time of writing.

The brewery has showcased a number of new beers across all formats with more lined up for the coming months. They have also taken the opportunity to expand and renovate the taproom bar which now looks even better. Their brew system now allows for 20HL and their fermentation capacity has now also been upgraded to 185HL of capacity so there is no danger of running short of beer any time soon. Looking forward, the taproom itself is now fully reopened and they will be welcoming live music acts again in the coming weeks and months. In the pipeline is a beer festival showcasing locally brewed beers along with Christmas events (TBC) towards the end of the year.

DUDLEY & SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

BLACK COUNTRY ALES

Redhall Rd, Lower Gornal DY3 2NU

There have been several new additions to the Black Country Traditional Inns pub estate this year. This includes, the Bridge Inn Kingswinford, the Starving Rascal Amblecote, the Harp Albrighton, and the Uxbridge Arms Chasetown. The 10th Black Country Ales Real Ale Trail has just completed with punters challenged to visit 25 of the pubs by the deadline. Such heroic efforts are rewarded with a limited edition Polo Shirt. The full range of bottled beers including Chain Ale and Plum Pig are available to purchase online.

DAVENPORTS BREWERY

New St, Smethwick B66 2AJ

The various pubs and restaurants across the wider region are enjoying high levels of custom and customer satisfaction – namely, the Coach House in Stratford-upon-Avon and the recently opened Port House in Stourport. Development work is currently underway to launch an online webshop.

ENVILLE BREWERY

Hollies Ln, Stourbridge DY7 5LG

This year, the brewery has utilised its online shop platform to diversify their drinks offer. This has included the introduction of Enville Honey Gin and, more recently, Enville Spiced Honey Rum. These are keenly priced and make great gifts for the Enville lover

in your life. In September, drinks from the brewery were available to purchase from the real ale bar at Black Country 'Musicom' Festival at Himley Hall.

FOWNES BREWING COMPANY

Talbots Ln, Brierley Hill DY5 2YX

The Tap Room at the 'Dwarfen Beer Factory' (address above) continues to open on a monthly basis and details of this are proactively shared on the relevant social media spaces. In September, the brewery produced a one-off Korvak's Coffee Rum Porter (5.2%) which was supplied to the Round Oak, Wombourne, for their Gin and Rum Festival. In fact, the guys have been heavily concentrating on their dark offering with other new brews including Korvak's Ascension Coffee Porter and Korvak's Burden Breakfast Stout.

HOLDEN'S BREWERY

George St, Woodsetton DY1 4LW

After much anticipation, the Great Western (near Wolverhampton Train Station) reopened on 26th July 2021. Under the Woodsetton Pub Company umbrella, devoted fans of the Great Western can now purchase branded coffee mugs on their next visit! Unfortunately, the Fellows in Dudley will not be reopening so with good news follows bad. On the beer arm of the business, a new seasonal ale has been brewed. Williamson's Algorithm (4.7%) is double hopped with Citra and Cascade and has been available across the pub estate since September.



KINVER BREWER

Compton Rd, Kinver DY7 5NW

Production at Kinver has been busy across all of the familiar lines in 2021 and Carol and Dave have been delivering their casks far and wide including a trip to former branch members Mark and Cheryl at the Three B's Micropub in Bridlington. A new malty brew was launched earlier in the summer called Nova (4.5%). Along with other local brewers, Kinver beers will feature at this year's Dudley Winter Ales Fayre. As Kinver Brewery we managed to keep our heads above water during the last 18 months (or above beer in our case!). We celebrated a new addition to the Kelly family in 2020 and launched our new beer Seren 4.7 named after our little granddaughter, her name is Welsh for star. Another granddaughter Nova arrived during lockdown followed by another new brew in 2021, most of the beer from these brews went out in bottles.

DUDLEY WINTER ALES FAYRE 2021

Dudley Town Hall St James's Road, Dudley DY1 1HP
Thu 25 Nov 12noon -3pm (ticket only) & 5.30 -11pm • Fri 26 Nov 12noon -11pm
Sat 27 Nov 12noon -11pm or when the beer runs out

63+ Real Ales • Key Keg Bar

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LAST ENTRY 10:30PM

**COMMEMORATING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE MILLENNIUM PEGASUS MONUMENT**

**DWAF
2021**



Over 18s only
will be admitted
on Thursday
and Friday



To buy tickets, for more
information or to volunteer to
help at the event please visit
www.dudley.camra.org.uk



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**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**



We produced Sweet Sixteen for our 16th Anniversary, sadly that didn't make many pubs due to restrictions, so we are hoping that our Edge of 17 brewed to mark 17 years of brewing will reach more outlets, now that things are beginning to return to near normality.

Dave was glad to return to Charles Faram hop walk again this year and meet up with other brewers. He brought back fresh green hops to brew King & Barrel 4.5 celebrating our 40th wedding anniversary. King & Barrel being the name of our house pub when we couldn't go out to our favourite hostelrys.

Thanks to all who have supported us during lockdown buying bag in box and bottles, we have met a lot of new people and made new friends along the way.

Good Luck to all the pubs, clubs and festivals ... celebrate good times! #Letsavadrink.

SARAH HUGHES BREWERY

Bilston St, Sedgley DY3 1JE

There is not much to report from the brewing operations at Sarah Hughes – with regular brewing continuing to meet demand of the established cask range. There is some terrific personal news, however, with the manageress of the Beacon Hotel, Alex Marchant, welcoming a beautiful baby girl to the world on 22nd August 2021. Congratulations to you all.

The Church Tavern



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Pub News

STOURBRIDGE & HALESOWEN

CRAFTY PINT

8 Wassell Rd, Halesowen B63 4JU

Will be holding pub quizzes and a Christmas Fayre to raise the final bit of cash needed to fit a defibrillator outside the pub. Please keep an eye on their Facebook page for confirmed dates and give them a hand raising money for a good cause.

GREYHOUND

168 Norton Rd, Stourbridge DY8 2TA

Has been saved from development! The team at the pub and local supporters rallied round to help save this pub from closure. It was earmarked to become yet another care home on the road but thankfully the council saw sense and rejected the application, which proves sometimes they do listen to us!

HOP VAULT

9 Market St, Stourbridge DY8 1AB

They supplied us steadily throughout lockdown and now they will hopefully have their tap room open early October - 12+ craft taps, 3 cask hand pulls, wine and cider.

LABOUR IN VAIN

59 Red Hill, Stourbridge DY8 1NG

Along with the good news there's always some sad. The Labour in Vain has sadly closed its doors and by now will have been turned into flats. At least we still have the Seven Stars just up the road.

OLD WHITE HORSE

South Rd, Stourbridge DY8 3XZ

Is another pub undergoing an extensive refurbishment and rebranding as an Ember Inns (currently Stonehouse). At time of writing some lovely looking outdoor seating areas are in place and work is progressing quickly.

SWAN

10 Brettell Ln, Amblecote, Stourbridge DY8 4BN

Has been taken over by the owners of the the Red Lion opposite and will have undergone an extensive refurbishment. Fingers crossed this little gem of a pub will be open by the time this magazine is published. It'll definitely be worth a visit!

WAGGON & HORSES

21 Stourbridge Rd, Halesowen B63 3TU

Has a new licensee! After the sad departure of Mick and Dawn who have moved on to pastures new, Dave Randle has taken over this iconic pub. Dave continues to supply us with quality ales and ciders, let's show him support by paying him a visit!

WAGGON AND HORSES

31 Worcester St, Stourbridge DY8 1AW

Belated congratulations on winning CAMRA's 2020 Cider Pub of The Year and Runner up in 2020 Pub of The Year. Sadly, COVID-19 had delayed our plans to present Dan and Amy with their certificates which were finally handed over at our September branch meeting. Well done guys! Keep up the good work which we all appreciate!



DUDLEY & SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

BEST WESTERN HIMLEY COUNTRY HOTEL

School Rd, Himley DY3 4LG

Will be demolished and replaced with eight houses including the conversion of the former school building into a bungalow. The hotel had been hit with a temporary closure notice by Staffordshire County Council for breaching coronavirus rules and had been used to accommodate early release prisoners during the pandemic.

BRICKMAKERS ARMS

36 Mount Pleasant, Quarry Bank DY5 2YZ

Has been heavily modernised – inside and out – with considerable investment from Punch.

BRIDGE INN

110 Moss Grove, Kingswinford DY6 9HH

A recent addition to the ever-expanding Black Country Inns portfolio of public houses. Refurbished to the standard and style that we have come to expect from this regional empire. Open all day, every day, the Bridge offers a broad range of cask beers, real ciders, and of course generous crusty cobs.



BRIER ROSE INN

High St, Brierley Hill DY5 3BD

Revamp works are progressing well by Amber Taverns at the former HSBC bank which closed in 2017.

FIDDLERS ARMS

Straits Rd, Lower Gornal DY3 2UT

Has suffered countless, well-documented fires during June and July 2021. A planning proposal to demolish the pub and erect 12 residential properties had been withdrawn in May 2021.

HANDLE BAR

95A High St, Cradley Heath B64 5HE

Is a new outlet operated by Fixed Wheel Brewery in what was formerly Presley's and 95 Bar & Lounge. Open (at the time of writing) Thursday-Sunday from midday, there are the usual staple beers from the brewery itself on both cask and keg and some guest beers.

OFFICE BAR & RESTAURANT

Castle Hill, Dudley DY1 4RA

Is a new Peaky Blinder themed venue at the Station Hotel on Castle Hill



servicing meals including Sunday carvery. Up to two cask beers are expected to be available. During opening week, Davenport's Original Bitter was being poured.

PENS ALE

High St, Pensnett DY5 4RP

Began trading on 20th September 2021 following a frustrating delay in light of the pandemic. The sister bar of Tivi Ale in Tividale, the premises is adjoined to Pensnett Fish Bar.

ROYAL OAK

Causeway Green Rd, Langley B68 8LD

A planning application has been submitted to convert the premises into 21 flats/apartments.

SIR ROBERT PEEL

1 Rowley Village, Rowley Regis B65 9AT

Planning permission has been granted in July 2021 for conversion of the first floor function room into five rooms for Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

SPRING MEADOW

255 Halesowen Rd, Old Hill B65 6NP

Reopened to the public on 17th September 2021 following careful restoration of the property. You'll find real ales, real fires, and a real pub experience.

UNION

54 Water St, Kingswinford DY6 7QB

There has been a change of operator from Marston's to Admiral Taverns in August 2021. The premises is due to undergo a refurbishment throughout September and October 2021.

WAGGON & HORSES

57 Dudley Rd, Tipton DY4 8EB

Was acquired by 'Red Lion Bar Ltd' back in January 2021 after the property went to auction. The future purpose/status of the premises still remains unclear.

WHEATSHEAF

379 High St, West Bromwich B70 9QW

Now only opens from Thursday onwards due to low demand at the start of the week.



THE OLD WHARF INN

FOOD - BEER - WINE

“Really love this pub! The friendly welcome, ambience, great music, open fires and delicious food/drinks. You’re doing it right! Can’t wait to return.”



Gemma Cope



THE OLD WHARF INN
78-80 High Street Stourbridge DY8 4LY



Interbranch Interactions

The Blackheath Boundary

For highbrows within the Campaign for Real Ale movement, the cardinal topic of branch boundaries provokes lively and impassioned debate. The exact science of dividing the United Kingdom into 216 semi-autonomous zones is not a purposeless administrative exercise to occupy colleagues in St Albans. Rather, the meticulous demarcation of the land into precise pockets of postcodes has tangible implications for the entire membership and all stakeholders.

First and foremost, your residential address will determine the stamp printed on your plastic card by central IT systems on day one of your direct debit. As you become more involved with branch business, your automatically assigned area will probably influence which meetings and socials that you choose to frequent. You will then begin to notice that branch boundaries have deeper and more fundamental consequences, such as, which pubs are surveyed by whom for database (WhatPub!) and literature (Good Beer Guide) tasks.

Like all national voluntary organisations which operate locally, most discussions and ‘outputs’ generated at branch level are tinged with silo mentality and this remains as true today as at any other point in CAMRA’s half-century existence. That said, this mindset is often parked when opportunities arise for cross-border collaboration. Anecdotal examples include volunteering at neighbouring CAMRA beer festivals and this very publication. Without such interoperability between branches, the campaign would undoubtedly fall flat on its face.

In the spirit of partnership, Dudley & South Staffordshire branch and Stourbridge & Halesowen branch recognised that the most appropriate way to bounce back from the frustrations and limitations of the COVID-19

pandemic was to come together for a joint social at one of our shared perimeters. Accordingly, on the afternoon and evening of Saturday 4th September 2021, delegates from both patches were accompanied by pub enthusiasts to explore the booming scene of Blackheath.

Proceedings began at the **Britannia Pub & Brewery** (*pedants may interject here to advise that this is technically located in Rowley Village... Bell End to be precise*). The impressive cask offering boasted staple beers from the onsite Britt Brewery alongside regional guest beers including Fownes Brewing Co., Ludlow Brewery, and Church End Brewery. The premium strength Fallen Angel from the latter was in fine condition which triggered a 4 via the National Beer Scoring System (NBSS). Here we exchanged pleasantries with a contingency from Tewkesbury branch that were completing a tailored version of the planned trail.

After a short downhill stroll, we arrived at the **Sir Robert Peel**. As the former headquarters of the Rowley Regis and Blackheath Horticultural Society, it was fitting that the group naturally gravitated to the rear garden of this no-frills boozier where the decking is covered by a sturdy marquee decorated with Black Country flag bunting. A safe but acceptable cask range included Holden’s Golden Glow (NBSS 3.5) and Banks’s Amber (NBSS 3). Stourbridge & Halesowen branch Secretary, Tony Morgan, observed the use of the classic Banks’s Bitter pump clip in an act of defiance following the July 2016 cosmetic rebrand where the recipe remained unchanged.

Continuing in the same direction down the B4171, the group had intended to visit the **Shoulder of Mutton**. Regrettably, those leading the march and first to arrive at the premises



discovered that this ex-Holt, Plant and Deakin pub no longer stocks cask beer.

We therefore jumped ahead of schedule and flooded in to one of the branch's youngest venues – **Cyder and Cobb**. Several attendees were keen to take advantage of the economical



meal deal which (at the time of writing) includes a crusty cob, a packet of crisps, and a pint of cask ale for just a fiver. The beers sampled included Oakham Citra (NBSS 3.5) and Enville Ale (NBSS 3). Towards the end of our visit, the heavyweight Thornbridge Jaipur IPA made a welcome appearance (NBSS 4).

It took tremendous willpower to depart this terrific example of a micropub, but we (eventually) did and headed for the town's JD Wetherspoon outlet, the 'other' **Britannia**. We encountered a diverse clientele of diners and families and the available beers included 'West Coast Baby!' (a tropical Session IPA brewed by Coventry-based Byatt's – NBSS 3.5) and 'Dissolution IPA' (a classic hop-forward IPA brewed by Leeds-based Kirkstall Brewery – NBSS 2.5).

All of the afore visited establishments fall within Dudley & South Staffordshire branch and, to counterbalance this, the second half of the outing was dedicated to venues 'belonging' to Stourbridge & Halesowen. Naturally, we were



all excited to hit Long Lane and to taste the reliable cask and keg offering at **Fixed Wheel Brewery Tap**. The reasonable

weather enabled the crawlers to gather outside on the recycled plastic firkins and wooden pallets. The cask highlight was the quaffable Through & Off (NBSS 3.5) which contrasted well with an intensely hazy Simcoe and Amarillo pale ale from Worcestershire's Nothing Bound Brewing Co. called 'Dandelion'.

Shell Corner (as in 'artillery shell' – a nod to those who perished in World War One), has two excellent bars; the first of which is an aptly themed micropub with military memorabilia that is wittily named **Shell-ter**. Trading since 2017, Oakham Inferno was the beer of choice on this visit (NBSS 3.5). A short stagger is all that's required to access the first floor pool hall and members bar called **Snooks**. Located in Sydney House, this is a deceptively comfortable wet-led bar with a staunchly loyal customer base – so much so that many participants of the crawl had to skip this part of the itinerary due to it being full to capacity. The omnipresent Wye Valley HPA was served well (NBSS 3).

Now 7pm, the interbranch social was 'wrapped up' at a popular Black Country Ales drinking hole which has achieved many well-deserved accolades including regular Good Beer Guide status and, above all else, the Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA Pub of the Year 2016. The **Swan** is a bright and spacious pub and it was useful to find a floral seasonal Salopian beer on the bar – 'Looks Great on a Spreadsheet' – which tasted equally great (NBSS 3.5).

This was a hugely successful event that brought together approximately 25 to 30 drinkers of all ages and genders. As reported, the beer was of a consistently high standard but there were other key ingredients in abundance too – laughs, storytelling, and of course group photos. Check out the Branch Diaries page for future socials.

Ryan Hunt

Holmfirth's Craft Keg Scene

Unable to travel abroad we have been having two or three days at different places in England. When we found out Magic Rock had opened a new taproom at Holmfirth it was an obvious destination for our next trip. Their new taproom was in an old bank and the kitchen was in a vault behind a steel door about a foot thick. There was also a safe in the wall next to it. There were eight keg and three cask on offer most of which we were familiar with. We started with a flight of six different beers; Murk-Life Balance 5% pale ale, Salty Kiss 4.4% Gose, Saucery 3.9% IPA, High Wire 5.5% pale ale, Magic Lager 4.2% pilsner, Chameleonic 6% American IPA. All OK but no wow factor. We felt they weren't moving forward compared to some of the new breweries on the scene such as Polly's, Deya and Glasshouse. Maybe it's because of the takeover by Lion - Kirin Holdings. We then had Cannonball 7.4% American IPA and Fantasia 6.5% IPA which were much tastier. Magic Rock is at 28 Victoria Street, HD9 7DE



Holmfirth is famous as the location of "Last of the Summer Wine" so we spent some time viewing the filming locations such as Sid's Cafe and Nora Batty's steps. We were surprised to find the graves of Bill Owen (Compo), and Peter Sallis on a hill in St. John's church graveyard, though neither of them lived there. When Bill Owen died it was his wish to be buried in Holmfirth and

when Peter Sallis (Clegg) died, it was his wish to be buried next to his old friend.

It was during a stroll around the town we spotted O'Briens Bottle Shop. I always check with the Good Beer Guide, WhatPub, RateBeer and Untappd to find recommended bars where ever we go, but O'Briens hadn't appeared on any. We were to find out later it had only opened the previous week. It was closed at the time but we returned next day.

It is owned and run by Elena & Luke O'Brien. It was while being on furlough in lockdown that they used their combined skill sets of marketing and graphic design to start an online beer shop, which proved successful. In December 2020 they ran a pop up in nearby Honley, which went well so they decided to find permanent premises. They found their present build in Holmfirth which was ideal as Magic Rock was attracting craft beer drinkers. The building was formerly a butchers and they took it back to its former glory exposing original tiles. It's all finished to a high standard with a lovely spiral staircase to the first floor which they hope to bring into play eventually.

We were delighted to find eleven keg, thee cask and three ciders on offer, some of our favourites amongst them. Three tap lines dedicated to Deya Brewery and two to Fyne. There were about five or six tables which were all taken. Luckily for us there was also shelving around the room with high chairs for the overspill, seating for 25 in all. We settled in and chose our first beer. Bridget was attracted to the name of Abyss brewery's, Dank Marvin, a hazy IPA 5.8%, I chose Verdant's, Unlike Stars IPA 6'5%.

As a Belgophile I wondered if there were any Belgian beers in the fridges, there wasn't but Luke pointed out quite a few Belgian style beers

by British brewers I didn't know about. One fridge was dedicated to Mikkeller beers.

For our second beer we both had Deya's, Into the Haze IPA 6.2%. Like many of these microbars, they are full of like minded people and it is easy to start up a conversation in the friendly atmosphere as we did with the couple on the next table. We were enjoying ourselves so much I rang up the restaurant we were going to and



delayed our visit for half an hour so we could have another beer. A Zapato Delegate Zero Baltic Porter 6.3% for me and a Wilderness, Sound & Vision Saison 5.7% for Bridget.

We will probably never stay at Holmfirth again but would definitely visit just to go back to O'Brien Bottle shop if staying anywhere nearby. There are regular buses from Huddersfield for instance. The address is 67 Huddersfield Road, HD9 3AZ

Tony Skirving

HAND CRAFTED ALES

BACKYARD BREWHOUSE

BLONDE
ALE 4.1% VOL
ESTD 2008

JIGGER RED
ALE 4.5% VOL

GOLD
ALE 4.5% VOL

I.P.A
ALE 5.0% VOL

BITTER
ALE 3.8% VOL

BITTER
ALE 3.8% VOL

I.P.A
ALE 5.0% VOL

GOLD
ALE 4.5% VOL

“ We love ale and we brew it with the care and attention we believe it deserves! ”

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following of local people. Customers were able to come to the pubs and breweries to get their fresh beer, and some even extended their range to include craft beers, Belgian beers, ciders, wines and spirits.

When pubs first reopened in April 2021, capacity was restricted due to outside-only drinking, and around 20% of pubs couldn't reopen at all because they had no sizeable outside areas. And even when allowed to open inside, their capacity was slashed by a half. Customers had to get used to new ways of serving their drinks – no longer standing and ordering at the bar, but waiting to be served at individual tables. Some thought this was the exact opposite of the traditional British “pub experience”; others thought it reminded them of drinking in bars in Europe and other parts of the world where bar service is not usually available. But this procedure incurred more costs for the pub, having to employ more staff to provide table service, particularly in large, busy pubs. And venues have had more costs to ensure that customers were safely protected, with screens, sanitisers and other anti-Covid measures.

Not only were pubs and hospitality venues uncertain of the next set of ever-changing rules, opening, closing and partially reopening during lockdowns, but they also suffered intense competition from local supermarkets, open all hours and selling beers at ridiculously low prices. Some former pub customers even changed their habits of a lifetime, swapping the conviviality of the pub for drinking with friends at home, causing losses of trade for local pubs and breweries. It was sometimes difficult for pubs to enforce the ever-changing rules, particularly the limitations on social distancing and mixing people from different households. And it was almost impossible to control the enthusiasm of customers when watching the Euro football games!

Some small micro-pubs may have enjoyed the break, with Government grants and loans meaning that they may not have suffered as much financially. But others have been hard hit by the need to keep paying rents and other overheads

with no trade coming through the door. Some pubs are financially hanging on by a thread. Overall, they have seen reductions of between 40%-80% of their usual turnover, coupled with further losses linked to pouring gallons of beer down the drain, sometimes costing between £1,000-£3,000 for each lockdown. Town centre pubs may have suffered even more due to the lack of a strong customer base because of the absence of shoppers, visitors and office workers.



But as in Monty Python – “Always look on the bright side of life”. Pubs and breweries have reopened and are getting strong support from their regulars. Many former pub customers are returning and others are eager to start to mix again with family and friends. Campaigns like CAMRA’s “Great British Beer Festival at Your Local” and local pub trails are encouraging folks back into pubs again. Drinking habits may have changed, but the one thing we have all missed during lockdown is human connection and social interaction, which is exactly what the Great British pub provides. There is certainly some pent-up demand and I’m sure the punters will eventually return to enjoy the familiar, traditional “pub experience”, a warm, happy and friendly place for people to drink and eat.

Steve James
© August 2021

*With acknowledgement to
CAMRA, British Beer & Pub Association, Society
of Independent Brewers, Night Time Industries
Association & Economies of Ale*



Krafty Krakow

A short crawl around the Jewish Quarter

In this time of uncertainty maybe it would be nice to plan a beery break away next year to look forward to?

Last Autumn (or was it the one before? Covid hit and time stopped), my wife and I went on a short holiday to Cracow staying in the centre of the city halfway between the Cloth Hall and Wawel Castle.

As an aside, if you walk down the left hand side of the Cloth Hall, roughly opposite the centre of the building is a street called Szewska (look for the McDonald's on the left!). If you walk down this street, cross the road and on your right will be the Multi Qlti Bar. We walked down an alley and up a flight of stairs. They had 25 taps plus numerous bottles. Beers were available in three measures 150ml, 300ml and 500ml. Most beers were priced at 6z, 11z and 13z but, obviously, the stronger beers were more expensive – a De Molen 10.5% Imperial Stout cost 14z for 150ml. I won't bore you with the beer list but, basically, there is something for everyone, which is true of all the bars I visited.

Starting the Jewish Quarter trip proper, walk down the main road with the castle on your right until you get to Jozefa Dietla, a dual carriageway. Cross the road and turn right and the Tea Time Brewery is at the end of the block. It might seem incongruous to visit an English-style pub when in Cracow, but the beers were dispensed by handpump with 6 to choose from including a Porter, a Weissbier and an English IPA amongst others. Prices ranged from 10z to 15z per "pint". As it was a late Saturday afternoon, I was able to watch the football results on BT Sport. Just like being at home (but not having to worry about catching the last bus back to Kinver!)

When you leave Tea Time Brewery, retrace your steps but continue to walk down Jozefa Dietla until you reach the junction with Krakowska (the major interchange) Cross the road and turn right. On your left you will see a bus stand behind which there is a small patch of greenery with some trees. Turn left and, once you pass the trees, on your right is Beer Street, a craft beer shop with 8 draft beers at the ground level bar at the back and another 7 draft beers in the downstairs bar which has another room with five dartboards! They had some Zagvor beers from Russia on tap, but I stuck with the "local" beers – a Piwojad Blanka Witbeir and an Odkocznia Mango Wheat.

Leaving Beer Street, turn right and walk down the road as far as you can go and there will be a circular building in front of you. Look to the left and right in the corner there is the Nowy Kraftowy bar – 25 beers on tap plus cans and bottles. Despite being downstairs, whilst the bar itself is dark, there is a courtyard at the back. I had a Deer Beer Chocolate Factory Chocolate Milk Stout which was just to my taste.

Returning to the surface, walk down the street keeping the round building to your left. When you come to the end of the road, turn right into Jozefa and, after a short walk, on your right is Strefa Piwa. Unfortunately, the bar was closed for refurbishment on the day I chose to visit so I retraced my steps along Jozefa until I reached a car park and turned right down Waska. At the bottom of this road, turn left into Swieteco Wawrzynca. Ignore Duffy's Irish Bar and, on the next corner at the junction with Dajwor, is Craftonia, another tap house with an array of beers to choose from. I had a New England IPA (6.2%) and finished off with a Zboczenic Imperial Stout (9%).



In order to get back to the Cloth Hall, I walked to the end of the road to Starowislna turned left and simply followed that road until I came to the main square.

If you are a culture vulture you can walk past the Jewish Synagogues in the area although they are only open at certain times and on certain days, if at all.

In general, all the bars I visited were excellent, the staff friendly and the beers good. I suspect most of the beers were on key keg and did not taste at all gassy. Thanks to Steve Pratt and Sarah and Mark Terry for their help and advice in advance of my visit. There are many other bars outside the city centre which I will leave for another time.

Tony Morgan

CALLING ALL FROTH BLOWERS

DO YOU GOLLOP YOUR BEER WITH ZEST?
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Outstanding Pub Conversions and Restorations

CAMRA is dedicated to supporting pubs, as well as promoting best-quality beers and ciders. In particular, we are widely regarded for our work on identifying and helping to protect the UK's most important heritage pubs through the compilation of our inventories of pubs with historic interiors – the most precious survivors.

CAMRA defines heritage pubs as those that are wholly or mostly unchanged or retain important historic rooms or features from before 1970. Since then, huge numbers of pubs have been expertly refurbished and many have been established in buildings previously used for other purposes. And, contrary to popular belief, a lot of new pubs in both urban and rural locations are really good. They deserve to be recognised and applauded.

We have therefore begun a project to identify, preserve and protect pubs that are **Outstanding Conversions and Restorations (OCR)**. These are the best examples of pub owners taking care to present a pub for modern times whilst respecting the origins of the building in which it is located. Or, they have taken care to refashion a pub so that it has a genuinely historical feel and/or has design to admire. All pubs included have that essential quality of, well, pubbiness.

Why is CAMRA doing this?

1. To raise awareness of examples of outstanding pub conversions and restorations, thus stimulating interest in visiting and enjoying them.
2. To inspire pub owners and others to pursue excellence when converting or restoring buildings for pub use.
3. Thereby to establish yardsticks against which future pub conversions and restorations can be judged.

4. To help protect identified pubs from unsympathetic changes.
5. To contribute to CAMRA's wider objective of generating enthusiasm for pub-going.

In our Branch area one pub has so far been identified as worthy of listing – the Bottle & Glass is a wonderful re-creation of a Victoria era pub which was originally located in Brierley Hill but moved brick-by-brick to the Black Country Living Museum.



You can find out more about the project and see the full national listing by going to the CAMRA website and clicking on <https://ocrpubs.camra.org.uk/> Go and enjoy as many as you can. This is a live project so if you know other pubs that you think should be included as outstanding conversions or restorations, please let us know at: info@ocrpubs.camra.org.uk

Enjoy!!



Homebrew... Quality Beer or all Froth and Bubble?

Mention 'Homebrew' to real ale fans and you will get as many different reactions as there are beers. There is a long-held belief that it's a lot of hard work and hassle to achieve mediocrity. If you grew up in the 1970s then you will have witnessed and may well have been a part of the Self Sufficiency revolution which saw a rise in the popularity of home brewing from tins of malt extract. They were proudly advertised to brew beer from 8p a pint. These kits and basic brewing equipment were "Available from all good Chemists!", how times have changed! Tins are still available and make up a significant part of the homebrew beer market. They represent value for money and are a lot of fun without the faff of steeping grain and investing in equipment in order to brew. The home beer and winemaking industry has experienced turbulent trading conditions through the years and first peaked in growth during the 1980s. A number of people saw an opportunity to develop beer and wine kits during this time (some of which were of dubious quality).

Enthusiasm waned in the 1990s as cheap beer and wine imports made it less attractive to brew beer at home. Home brew had a long and hard ride during this period. As the millennium turned, so did the fortunes of the hobby. The growth of micro-breweries, "craft beer" and downturns in the economy (more people turn to home brewing when the economy shrinks) coupled with internet information, the availability of affordable equipment and most importantly the exponential increase in the quality of ingredients have now lit a fire under home brewing that will not be easily put out.

There are three popular ways to brew beer. The first is from tins or Extract brewing, as it is called. The Second is Partial Mash which is a halfway house between extract tins and all grain brewing. The bulk of the sugars come from malt extract and speciality grains create colour, mouthfeel and deeper flavour. These grains are steeped (mashed) before adding to the boil. It is favoured by those with a lack of space to brew but who want a more

professional result than tins can provide. Many homebrewers prefer this method and it is possible to get very good results. Finally, Full Mash or All Grain brewing. It mimics commercial brewing and depending on how much you wish to invest in your hobby, it can replicate it - even if it is on a much smaller scale. All the grain is mashed to create wort (sweet liquid that the yeast converts to alcohol). This method is the most expensive, takes the most time, preparation and cleaning up. But, if it is done right, will create excellent, competition quality ales. In fact, this is the way quite a few local brewers started their brewing journey. Scott Povey (Fixed Wheel), Dave Kelly (Kinver), and Karol Kawecki (New Invention) all started as homebrewers.

So where to start? Homebrew Shops are a good source of information, equipment, ingredients and recipes. We are lucky in Dudley to have Dark Rock Brewing (Harris Homebrew) in Gornal and Brew Monkey in Cradley Heath. They stock a wide range of extract, partial mash and all grain kits. They have a range of fine kits and quality ingredients to design your own recipes if you wish. There really is something for every price range. Also, let's not forget Button Brewing in Halesowen, who sell quality All Grain kits online.

Dark Rock Brewing is being developed by James Harris (a third-generation family member). He has spent time working in commercial breweries and visiting craft breweries and hop suppliers in New Zealand and Australia, in order to bring fresh ideas into the business. James has purchased Punchline Brewery (Wolverhampton) and is developing part of the Gornal premises, to create a taproom and brew school facility. A small scale brewery operation is soon to begin in Lower Gornal. This is an exciting opportunity and will allow them to merge the space between home and commercial brewing. It will be great to have such a resource in the branch.



Ingredients have been one of the biggest changes in the past few years. Quality and freshness are the keys to a good beer. A good variety of grains, fresh hop pellets and viable yeast are paramount. When I first started home brewing, I had the choice of a hand full of malts, about four hop varieties and two yeasts. Now there are scores of different malts, up to 80 different hop varieties and over 300 yeast products available to home brewers. Not to mention flavourings, herbs, spices and enhancers to provide just about every style of beer you can imagine. That's what the micro-brewery boom has brought to home brewing and to Real Ale. Indeed there are more micro-breweries in existence now than there ever has been in the UK. Their innovation and ever-changing offerings have captured the imagination of a new and growing army of home brewers who are demanding new malts, hops and yeasts. Popularity soared during lockdown. Many home brew suppliers are working flat out seven days a week to keep up with demand.



So you have brewed a beer. How do you know when your beer is any good? Well, you certainly won't find the answer from giving your beer to family and friends for free. But if you want your ego massaged then by all means give it a go. A better way to get an objective view on the quality of your beer is by going along to a Homebrew Club. Like minded people will give you objective feedback on your beer. Most clubs will have members that have trained and as beer judges under the BJCP (Beer Judge Certification Program). So they will not only tell you whether your beer is good or not. But will also tell you why. You also get to taste lots of free beer that is mostly good – lucky you! Regular advice talks on all things homebrew and trips out to breweries too. Local clubs include New Invention Brew Club, Harborne Home Brew Club, Midlands Craft Brewers and Worcestershire Homebrew Club. Such is the popularity of home brewing at

the moment there are new clubs springing up all the time. Some of these are run by breweries themselves.

So why brew Beer at home? It's certainly more expensive than 8p a pint. Once you have bought the equipment and given up your time I guess it can be quite expensive. Well that question is asked over and over again in online forums. Unsurprisingly many people want to emulate the modern “craft” side of beer. Hoppy hazy beers. Chicken gravy beer I hear someone shout! Clone recipes for beers like Punk IPA abound. In fact, BrewDog even give away the recipes for almost every beer they have ever brewed. It is available in a free download called DIY Dog. 415 recipes to browse through and plenty of opportunities to shout, “How can they put that in a beer!?”. Hoppy beers were the reason I started home brewing. I am still amazed by the amount of flavour a brewer can pack into one glass of beer. For some, one type of beer is enough. Brew a beer you like, keep brewing it until you nail it. Then brew it again and again. But for most brewers it becomes an ever-changing journey. Picking up bits of knowledge and understanding about how every different variety and amount of malt, hops and yeast alters your final brew and how the mineral composition of your brewing water changes it too. You gain a knowledge of different domestic and



international beer styles, how to describe flavours and recognise off flavours in beer and, more importantly, how to manage, reduce and eliminate them. Balance is what all good home brewers strive for. A real respect for the ingredients and the history of the style you wish to emulate. But that is not for everyone. There is more than a splash of ingenuity too. Any flavouring that an inquisitive home brewer can think of has gone into beer. Fruits, sweets, chocolate bars, flowers, flavoured syrups, biscuits. It beggars' belief but it also drives



innovation in the micro brewery market. One home brewer dips his socks in a brew one week. The next week there will be someone selling a take on that beer somewhere. On a serious note though, traditional styles get more than a look in too. With a resurgence in Milds, Bitters, Porters and Stouts all proving more and more popular. With such a generous and sharing community that home brewing is. Historic beers, Wood aged Beers, Lagers, Lambic and Farmhouse beers are all being brewed, talked about, shared and loved - which has to be good for the consumer. Knowledge is power. So the more people that know more about beer, the harder it is for commercial beer to be average and in some cases poor.

There are also competitions. Would you believe there are competitions for home brewing? They also happen to be very popular. There are local, regional, national and international competitions running throughout the year, the largest of which have in excess of 500 beers judged over a weekend. Conventions on home brewing also take place. 2019 saw Brew Con at Beavertown Brewery in London. Northern Monk in Leeds also played host to a previous event. Fingers crossed for this year's convention which has sadly been cancelled twice. Nevertheless. When it returns there will be lots of varied talks on everything from water chemistry, brewing sour beers, advances in equipment, hop pairing, choosing the correct malts for your beer, packaging..... It is a great opportunity to learn from commercial brewers and equipment manufacturers, with loads of freebies thrown in.

Home brewing is shortly to be on television too. James Blunt, yes that James Blunt, is to host a home brewing show on Amazon Prime. Maybe home brew is to be come the new Rock 'n' Roll. Brewtiful!

Home brewing is not easy. It takes reading, good practice, time and lots and lots of cleaning and sterilizing. Did I also say it takes lots of cleaning? But now more than ever you have a very good chance to brew quality beer. What you certainly won't get any more is "That Home Brew Taste!!" Which incidentally is only talked about as a

commercial beer off taste these days. The journey is most definitely worth it. Get down to your local Home Brew Shop, contact your local Home Brew Club and get brewing!!

Stuart Betts
Dudley & South Staffordshire
*With thanks to Robert Harris of
 Dark Rock for information*



Is your local pub under threat?

CAMRA has the tools to help you save it



camra.org.uk/saveyourlocal





Branch Diaries

STOURBRIDGE & HALESOWEN

NOVEMBER

Wednesday 10th November 8.00pm

Branch Meeting Waggon & Horses, Stourbridge Road, Halesowen.

Thursday 25th November 8.00pm

Branch Social at Dudley Winter Ales Fayre, Dudley Town Hall.

DECEMBER

Wednesday 8th December 8.00pm

Branch Meeting Queens Head, Enville Street, Stourbridge.

Thursday 16th December 8.00pm

Lye Marking Social Meet Beat Brewery then 8.45pm Shovel, 9.30pm Windsor Castle.

JANUARY

Wednesday 12th January 8.00pm

Branch Meeting Robin Hood, Collis Street, Amblecote.

Thursday 27th January 8.00pm

Wollaston Marking Social Meet Foresters then 8.45pm Plough, 9.30pm Unicorn, 10.15pm Kingsbridge.

FEBRUARY

Wednesday 9th February 8.00pm

Branch Meeting Duke William, Coventry Street, Stourbridge.

Thursday 24th February 8.00pm

Blackheath Marking Social. Meet Swan then 8.45pm Snooks, 9.30pm Shell-ter Bar.

DUDLEY & SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

OCTOBER

Monday 25th October 8.00pm

Branch Meeting Cottage Spring, Brook Street, Woodsetton.

Friday 29th October 7.00pm

Branch Social at Spooky Beer Festival Jolly Crispin, Clarence Street, Upper Gornal.

NOVEMBER

Monday 1st November 8.00pm

Dudley Winter Ales Fayre Planning Meeting Bird in Hand, John Street, Wordsley.

Wednesday 10th November 7.30pm

Delph and Quarry Bank Social.

Thursday 25th - Saturday 27th November

Dudley Winter Ales Fayre 2021 Dudley Town Hall, St James's Road, Dudley.

DECEMBER

Monday 13th December 8.00pm

Branch Meeting Tame Bridge, Tame Road, Tipton.

Friday 24th December

Sedgley and Upper Gornal Social.

Foresters Arms Cider Festival, Wollaston

Another date for next year's diary....

Thank goodness for social media, it was after seeing an ad for Foresters Cider Festival on Facebook and spreading the word on our branch's WhatsApp group that a few of us agreed to meet at the festival at 2pm. Tanya, Rob, Mike, Geoff, Bridget and I met up in the bar as we were all beer drinkers by preference and lined our stomachs with Titanic Plum Porter, Ludlow Gold and Enville Ale before moving into the Marquee outside.



The six of us managed to get a table together. The cider was being served from a refrigerated van next to the marquee. Geoff insisted in buying us all a drink to celebrate his daughter's wedding which started us buying in rounds, which is always deadly. There was a choice of 7 ciders and a perry. Between us I think we tried all of them, my personal favourite was Broadoak Premium Perry. While we worked our way through the ciders we enjoyed a hotdog from the food tent and were entertained by two bands. First band on was Room 7 a really enjoyable diverse set of music from across the decades that we all knew. They were followed by Housewives Choice who also played some

great music. Good cider, good music and good food, well done the Foresters, roll on the next one.

We decided to finish off the afternoon with some more beer and walked down to the Kingsbridge. Passing the Plough on the way we popped in for a Marston's 61 Deep and a Lancaster Bomber. At Kingsbridge there was a choice of both cask and craft keg, including Vocation's Pride & Joy, Mad Squirrel's \$umo, Twisted Barrel's Walking the Dog and St. Austell's Proper Job. Great afternoon, our first social for 18 months, lovely to get together again.



Tony Skirving



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 Falcon Inn, which stood at the junction of Messenger Road and Baldwin Street, Smethwick, and could be seen from the Soho Way dual carriageway until demolished about 8 years ago.

One respected landlord was George Simpson who took the pub in 1912. He served in the Great War, during which time his wife Lily held the licence. Following his death in 1921 a fund was set up to provide a headstone for his grave.

Smethwick Telephone 1/12/1923

**GEO. SIMPSON MEMORIAL FUND.
TO THE EDITOR.**

Sir,—Will you kindly allow me through the medium of your popular journal, on behalf of the Secretary (Mr. J. Robinson) and Committee of the above Fund to express to the following subscribers our sincere thanks for their hearty support and generosity: Messrs. Mitchells & Butlers, Falcon Inn Sick and Dividend Society, friends at the Falcon Inn, Smith's Beehive Foundry, Old Chapel Inn, Staffordshire Knot, Spon Croft Tavern, Moiliet Arms, Station Hotel, and relatives and friends of the family. The total amount collected was £18 6s. This amount has now been expended in the erection of a memorial stone which has now been installed over the grave of the late Mr. George Simpson, at the Uplands Cemetery.—Yours, &c.,
E. JENK, Chairman.

Birmingham Mail 16/4/1941 - Deaths

“George William, age 23 years, son of George and Gertrude Hudson, the Falcon, Smethwick, laid down his life for his friends whilst serving his country as air raid warden in April.”

Birmingham Daily Gazette 9/6/1941

“The names of the following have been brought to notice for brave conduct in Civil Defence.

Joseph Thomas Beardsmore (deceased), leader, registered street fire party, Smethwick; Harold Rolph Cade, Special Constable, Warwickshire Special Constabulary; George William Hudson (deceased), ARP warden, Smethwick.

Cade, of Lea Marston, was on duty near some buildings around which about 250 incendiary bombs were dropped. He dealt so smartly with the bombs that he extinguished them all before any damage had been done, despite the fact that one fell in a straw barn and another in a granary. He was ably assisted by his wife.

Hudson, of the Falcon Inn, and Beardsmore, Oakfield Road, were concerned together in the same incident, during which they lost their lives. During an air raid a bomb badly damaged the basement shelter in which 13 people (4 women and 9 children) were trapped. Gas and water were escaping into the cellar. Part of the steps had been dislodged. Hudson groped around and got the children one after another to the foot of the steps, where Beardsmore assisted the children up the steps. Hudson then succeeded in getting three of the women to the steps. By this time the gas in the cellar was so dense that the remaining woman collapsed and died from gas poisoning. There seems every reason to believe that Hudson tried his utmost to get her across the cellar to the steps, but was unable to do so. After the third woman had been rescued there was a fall of debris which had the effect of pinning Beardsmore by his feet. Both Beardsmore and Hudson were overcome.

When the bodies were recovered it was judged that from the position in which that of Hudson was found he must have been trying to free Beardsmore when he collapsed. Hudson had been lame all his life.”

Hitchmough's Black Country Pubs
longpull.co.uk

Perry's Cider Mill

The Cider Mills, Dowlish Wake, Ilminster TA19 0NY
www.perryscider.co.uk

If you are planning to travel down to the south coast for your summer holidays next year then we highly recommend a stop off at Perry's Cider Mill. I'd booked a short weekend break for the whole family in Lyme Regis and hinted that it would be nice to stop off at a few cider farms on the way there/back to stock up, as my box of Wychelm at home was beginning to feel worryingly light. We'd previously visited a few farms along the coast including Dorset Nectar and Cranbourne Chase, so I'd envisaged quite a shopping expedition to keep stocked up but sadly (and probably a good thing for the old bank balance!) we only managed to get to Perry's. We were not at all disappointed. We decided on Perry's as it wouldn't deviate us too far on our route home, so with two very tired big dogs and a chatty nine-month-old baby girl we navigated the country lanes in search of cider.

orchards are visible just as you pull up into the car park of the cidery. Perry's are very proud that they try to use all of their own grown apples in their ciders topped up with a small proportion from local farms. Once we'd parked the car and tied the dogs up to an appropriately sturdy picnic bench, we could see the shop and café, but also the museum and warehouse. We were the only visitors there, but it was offseason and very early for a Sunday morning, I can picture the place being packed with tourists during the summer months - all using the picnic benches sat amongst the apple trees sipping on cider. The lady from the shop (I feel terrible that we didn't get her name) came out to meet us and welcomed us inside. She was very friendly and knowledgeable; she was the perfect sales rep being informative and not sales pushy in the slightest, yet we felt compelled to bring back more with us than planned.



The first thing to say about Perry's is that make sure you visit with a responsible designated driver. The farm is situated in a small village with not much else around it, I can't imagine it being covered by Uber and it would be a shame to miss out on the samples on offer. Some of the

There's bottles and boxes stacked up as far as the eye could see, along the wall were huge barrels tapped ready for take outs. I had to smile when we were warned the 5 litre cartons would only last a week to ten days once opened, it



wasn't going to last us 5 minutes once we'd got home and unpacked. I'd got my eye on a box of their 5.6% Dabinett but with their full range available it was a hard decision to only bring one box back - my excuse is that we didn't have that much space in the car sadly. Feeling generous I picked up a flagon as a present for my parents, which I was hoping they would let me have a taste of. We were encouraged to sample the ciders from the barrels, hence why a sober driver would be needed, and they even offered us an apple juice for the little one. It was an equally tough decision to decide which take out to bring home and unusually for us we decided on a Medium Sweet. It was smooth and sweet but not sickly, and most importantly it was very drinkable!



Being an animal lover and art buff, I love the branding on Perry's. It's a quality product enhanced with some quality marketing perfect for a quintessentially English brand. Perry's started up back in the 1920's as a side line project working next to a blacksmiths. Refreshingly you won't find a fruit option or any concentrates, just pure, fresh, tasty apples. Their core ciders are Puffin at 6.5%, Barn Owl at 6.5%, Grey Heron at 5.5% and a Vintage at 7.2%. At our last Stourbridge beer festival we had the Grey Heron and it was just as tasty today as I remember it.

Unfortunately, our dogs were getting restless outside so we only had chance for a quick snoop around the museum, I noted they can do organised tours and there's plenty of history to go through. There's the old machinery and info boards, set up in readiness. I did sneak a peek into their warehouse that was floor to ceiling with pallets of bottles all filled up and ready to go.



At this point we did consider making the detour to Rich's Cider but we thought we would be pushing our luck. The dogs were eager to get home and the baby had already been woken from a nap once, she'll have to learn some patience with us as she grows up and we continue to drag her around all these places. We were thoroughly pleased with our goodies and we left thinking how many can we fit in our camping trailer...??

Lizzie Cadwell



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Gloucester Quay, City & Beer

We booked in at a Travelodge on the newly built Gloucester Quays which is a canal side complex of shops, restaurants and bars. Two of the bars we had targeted were nearby and we visited the first, called Tank. It is Gloucester Brewery's first pub with both cask and keg from their own and guest breweries. The pub was where the brewery was before it moved to its new premises nearby. Historically not sure what this dockside building started out as but is now a spacious bar that is well worth a visit. We drank Gloucester's NEIPA, Cascade, American Pale Ale and Bristol Beer Factory Badlands.



After a meal at Bill's Restaurant we wandered up to old town by the Cathedral to the Pelican Inn. It was a very warm evening and everybody was outside in their attractive beer garden. This was a Wye Valley pub. We drank Fandango, a 4.8% blonde ale, which made a change from HPA and Butty Bach, which seem to be everywhere lately. There was table service at the time we were there and the publican and the barmaid were really friendly and joined us for a chat between serving customers.

The following day we went sight seeing starting with the Cathedral. Buried here are William the Conqueror's eldest son Robert, who was a great benefactor of the cathedral and King Edward II, the first English Prince of Wales who led the English army at Bannockburn against Robert the

Bruce. The encounter was to go down as one of the most resounding defeats in English history.

Later in life he was imprisoned in Berkeley Castle and killed.

According to the rather gory traditional belief, Edward was murdered in a bestial manner on the orders of Mortimer and Isabella on around 11th October 1327. A red hot poker was inserted into his entrails by means of a horn, to leave no outward marks on his body. The people of Berkeley were said to have heard the agonised screams of the dying king outside the castle.

Following lunch, we explored the National Waterways Museum on Gloucester Docks, which we found rather disappointing for a national museum. We'd hoped to see a variety of narrow boats from various periods but there was only one exhibit inside the museum of a narrow boat cabin.



That evening we visited the Turk's Head, Gloucester's first micro pub, we didn't know this at the time and thought it was really old. The swinging pub sign of a Turk's Head had 1620 on it. The gaffer told us later that that was the time he opened! It was a lovely evening and everyone was sitting outside drinking cider. All the drinks were on gravity, there were three real ales



and seventeen ciders. We decided to follow everyone example and drink cider. We tried Gert Lush Traditional, Cotswold's Voodoo Pulp and Sandford's Devon Scrumpy. Loved this place, especially the House Rules.

We had booked a meal at the Brewhouse and Kitchen so headed there. These are mainly situated in the south and we've been in a couple before. The meal was very nice and we started to work our way through

the beer list while we ate. The staff were really friendly and knowledgeable and seeing that we were interested in beer, while nearly everybody was drinking lager, mentioned us to the Head Brewer, David Quin, who was on duty that night.

He came over and joined us for a most enjoyable evening. We tried Batsman IPA, Massachusetts Pale, Nervensis, Delirium Tremens, amongst others which I failed to record.

Tony Skirving



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