

ALES & TALES



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

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

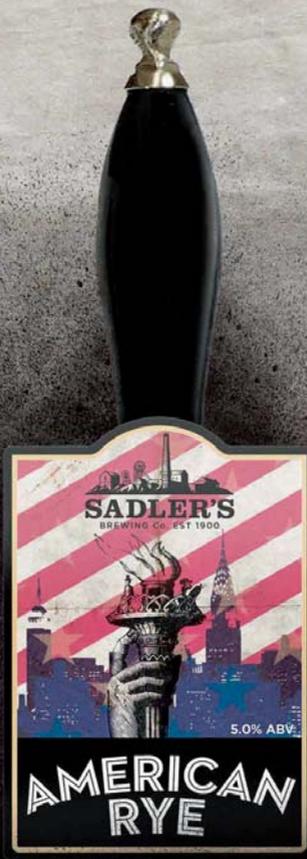
**Issue 39
Winter 2018**

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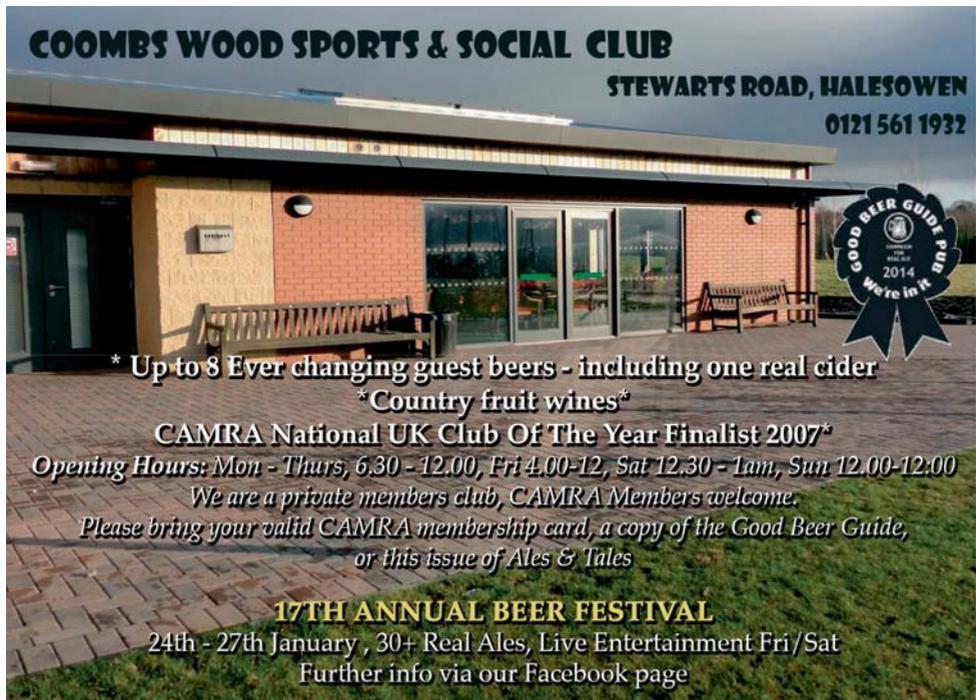
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Welcome Back

Welcome to issue 39 of Ales and Tales, and a Happy New Year to you all.

I was going to ask if you had a fantastic Christmas break, as it is a time that many of us finish work for the year and take a well-earned rest. However, this isn't always the case for those who work in the hospitality industry.

Let's take a moment to raise a glass to those in our industry who work on Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and throughout the holiday season, and ensure we are all fed and watered over this period.

Let's also take a moment to think about what December means to pub-goers, and what pubs mean to December drinkers.

For many, Christmas is a month where lots of people rely on being able to pop down to their local for a few pints. Many take it for granted that these pubs just exist, without ever visiting them for the other 51 weeks of the year. What if those pubs were no longer there? Wouldn't it be great to see some of this annual enthusiasm for pubs spread across the whole twelve months of the year? Pubs rely on year-round patronage to be able to survive. Sure, some pubs do better in summer thanks to a fantastic beer garden, but it's a luxury that not all pubs have.

The rise in Christmas-only drinkers in pubs has the potential to frustrate those of us who visit pubs all year round in the same way that regular gym-goers will see a number of extra people on their new-year health-kick, not to be seen again when February appears.

More often as we move into January, there is a feeling of starting the New Year in a healthy way, as a kind of antidote to what was experienced over the Christmas period.

Even amongst those of us who do visit pubs all year round, there are still some common themes with Christmas drinkers, such as the need to save a few pennies following a lavish Christmas, or lose a few

pounds, for the same reason!

Schemes such as 'Dry January' or any of the other charitable initiatives may be well intentioned in some ways, but have a negative impact on sections of our industry.

It's also an example of alcohol consumption being looked down upon, although giving up a case of mass-produced supermarket bought lager may not be such a bad thing! The benefits of moderate social consumption are often overlooked.

Even if people are still visiting pubs themselves on an alcohol-free basis, they may not be supporting small independent local breweries who are a lot more exposed to this type of fluctuation in trade.

One initiative that has been gaining momentum in recent years is 'Tryanuary', which aims to get people to try something different during what is normally a quiet month, when the temptation may be to join in with a detox.

As we go to press, there is a Tryanuary event in the pipeline encompassing some of the pubs and breweries in the Stourbridge area. Tryanuary can be found on their social media channels, so make sure you check there for an up-to-date calendar of events.

@TryWestMidlands

@Tryanuary

The print run of this magazine is intended to be available between January and March, so by the time you have read this, January may even have passed. Even so, the theme of supporting your local pub through moderate social drinking is something that most active CAMRA members will enthuse about throughout the year.

Tim Cadwell

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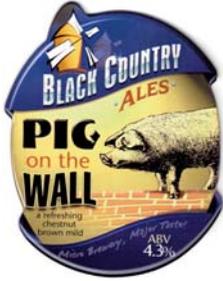
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Meet The Brewer

Black Country Ales



The Black Country Ales brewery is situated behind the Old Bulls Head, Redhall Road, Lower Gornal. After acquiring the pub in 1999, the remnants of an old brewery dating back to 1834 were discovered in the outbuildings. A

second-hand brewhouse kit was purchased and brewing on site recommenced in 2004, retaining the use of three oak fermentation vessels, each of 15 brewers barrel capacity. Black Country Ales now supply their estate of 34 pubs as well as the free trade.

Robin Shields has been brewing there since November 2011. Shortly after his arrival, the brewhouse was refurbished to a much higher standard replacing the old worn-out second

hand mash tun and kettle with new versions. Volumes have grown from an average of 4000 litres per week then, to around 9000 litres per week now. A further expansion adding four



more fermentation vessels is currently in process which will enable Black Country Ales to further double capacity, a remarkable feat in the tiny space available.

What is your background in brewing and before?

I started my career in brewing, after graduating from University, a long, long time ago in 1978 with

Bass Brewers, commencing at their Runcorn brewery as a trainee brewer. It was a great place to learn the challenges and pitfalls of brewing on a big scale. Since then, I have worked in Cellar Services with Bass (now Molson Coors) for some years, before leaving them to take up the position of Distillery Manager at Laphroaig on the Isle of Islay for a couple of years. I then set up my own business in distribution, but at the time when that failed, I was lucky that Black Country Ales were looking for a new brewer. It was a perfect fit for me looking to get back into brewing, and not to be saddled with having to do deliveries, sales, and a lot of administration.



What are the challenges of working in an old brewery?

Mostly physical ones, the uneven floors and lack of space mean a lot of hand-balling of materials.

What makes a brewer happy?

I think feedback that people are enjoying the beers that they brew is the most important thing to any brewer.

Have you any plans to expand the beer range?

You will need to ask Angus (the company owner) on that one. Up until now, the overwhelming majority of brews have been of our three core range beers to keep the domestic pubs satisfied.

The opportunity does now exist with the current expansion to put out something different into the free trade.

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

Very quick really, it just needs an idea, a bit of time to source the right materials, and time to develop a pump clip design – we only do cask beer, so no bottles or cans to worry about here.

What are your aspirations for the business?

I would like to continue being able to sell everything that I can brew, but I am sure a lot will depend on any changes to the HMRC duty regulations. We are now in a position to start brewing over the half-rate threshold where excise duty per pint starts to rise rapidly.

What was your first alcoholic beverage?

Probably a glass of wine with Sunday lunch, supervised by my parents.

What is your favourite beer (your own)?

Unquestionably BFG.

What is your favourite beer (someone else's)?

Twenty years ago, I would have said Wadsworths 6X, but since moving here to the Black Country, I would say Backyard Blonde, closely followed by Sarah Hughes Sedgley Surprise.

What food do you enjoy with your pint?

A nice rump or sirloin steak, or fish and chips, I am not really a foodie person.

What is your favourite pub (non Black Country Ales)?

Locally it has to be The Beacon Hotel in Sedgley, there's a nice crowd go in there early evening, but overall my favourite is The Cattie of Yorke, in Holborn, closely followed by The Blackfriar at Blackfriars, two pubs that I always try to visit on trips to London when I can take advantage of cheap advance fares with Virgin Trains.

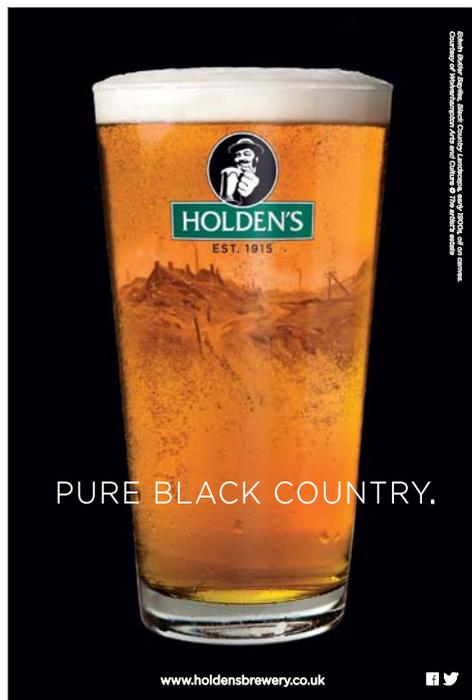
Are you into any particular sort of music?

Quite diverse really, but there is a lot of old school rock from the 1970s in my CD collection, and my absolute favourite is Bruce Springsteen. I have probably seen him live a dozen times or so.

What are your hobbies and interests?

Indoors, I have been delving into family ancestry of late. I have only just discovered that I have Irish great great grandparents, who came to London around the time of the potato famine. I also like to keep abreast of Formula One motor racing, and I am slowly ticking off circuits that I have been to for the Grand Prix, currently up to five with a possibility of going to Spa for the Belgian GP next year.

Outdoors, I am getting back into cycling. I've got to do something to keep in trim, what with all these pints!



The Eight That Dominate

Analysis of drinking habits in the Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA branch area has uncovered that 2 of every 5 pints of Real Ale purchased in local pubs and clubs come from just 8 breweries, despite the well-documented resurgence of the brewing industry which has seen the number of producers surpass 2,000.

The research, which studied almost 5,500 beer scores from over 200 CAMRA members for the year September 2017 to August 2018, identified the incredible dominance of the following 8 breweries which collectively account for 40% of all Real Ale consumed in branch venues: Oakham (6.1%), Holden's (5.9%), Salopian (5.6%), Bathams (5.2%), Enville (4.6%), Marston's stable (4.4%), Wye Valley (4.4%), and Olde Swan (3.9%). The remaining 60% of beer consumed in branch pubs and clubs throughout that period was stretched thinly across 300 other breweries and microbreweries.



Wye Valley HPA and guest beer Abbeydale Moonshine at the Tame Bridge, Tipton

The findings beg the question of whether CAMRA is yet to fulfil one of its key campaigning missions of improving the choice and not solely the quality of Real Ale with less established breweries still lacking the financial clout, wholesale contacts, and consumer demand to infiltrate the beer scene. Anecdotal evidence from branch beer scoring socials reaffirms the

ubiquitous availability of drinks such as Wye Valley HPA and Holden's Golden Glow which this research shows account for 1 pint in every 25 and 1 pint in every 30 purchased in local pubs and clubs respectively.

Such common brews also tend to enjoy permanent availability in pubs that are free-of-tie which suggests that a considerable proportion of drinkers must typically stick with 'safe' and 'familiar' beers with little urge or temptation to explore new breweries and alternative beer styles. For example, Wye Valley HPA continues to have enduring status at the Tame Bridge, Tipton, whilst there is a constant supply of Holden's Golden Glow at Tivi Ale, Tividale. Yet, these are ultimately voluntary, commercial decisions by the landlady of the Tame Bridge, Kim Degan, and the owner of Tivi Ale, Del Sharpe, who both have complete autonomy to determine the range of Real Ales put on sale.



Holden's Golden Glow and guest beers from Roosters and Salopian at Tivi Ale, Tividale

This research has also looked at patterns within the beer score data to attempt to measure the standard and reliability of each brewery's Real Ales. Of course, it is necessary to emphasise that beer scores submitted by CAMRA members are strictly a reflection of how competently a beer is kept by the venue visited where 1 is poor and

5 is perfect. The National Beer Scoring System (NBSS) is not a tool for CAMRA members to report whether they personally liked or disliked the taste of a brewery's beer – after all, there is RateBeer and Untappd for that kind of navel-gazing.



Highest scoring branch brewery, Sarah Hughes, and highest scoring out-of-branch brewery, Bristol Beer Factory, share the bar at the Beacon Hotel, Sedgley

However, the data clearly shows that there are certain breweries which are habitually scored greater than 3 whilst there are also poorly performing breweries from which the beers are consistently scored less than 3. Coincidence? Purely the fault of the pub? Or a sign of a brewery producing mediocre beers which even the most adept cellar manager of a Good Beer Guide pub couldn't present well? I know what I

think, but keeping subjective interpretations out of this, I shall instead provide you with the facts!

The highest scoring branch brewery is Sarah Hughes and the highest scoring out-of-branch brewery is Bristol Beer Factory – two undeniably exemplary producers with an average score of 3.7. Ossett, Rat, Saltaire, and Titanic beers are all scored, on average, 3.5, whereas, Sharp's and St Austell beers are only scored, on average, 3.

Locally (and aside from Sarah Hughes), Bathams is typically scored 3.5 and beers from Black Country Ales, Enville, and Fownes Brewing Company tend to be scored 3.4. Fixed Wheel

beers are on average scored 3.3 whilst Kinver beers are on average scored 3.2. Beers from Toll End, Holden's and Green Duck are more likely to be scored 3.1 whilst Olde Swan and Sadler's beers generally receive the lowest scores with an average of 3 – but this is still classed as "Good" according to NBSS!

Enough of the "Good". What about the bad and the ugly? The brewery from which beers are most harshly scored is the Marston's stable. That probably didn't come as the biggest surprise of the century. Of 237 beer scores included in the study, the average was just 2.7. Digging a little bit deeper into the data, it is interesting to see that whilst Banks's Mild is scored, on average, an uninspiring 2.4, the Sunbeam (which many regard to be one of the better session brews) is scored, on average, 2.9. Maybe the popularity of Sunbeam means that the barrels are being emptied quicker and drinkers are more likely to be sold a fresh and satisfying pint?

Joining Marston's on the naughty list of poorly scored breweries is Robinsons which recorded an average beer score of 2.8 for the year in focus and Greene King which recorded an average beer score of 2.9. The controversial Greene King 'IPA' tends not to impress with an average score of 2.4. One explanatory theory for the poor condition of Marston's and Greene King beers could be that they are readily available in food-led pubs where less TLC is often granted to the cellar. Also, many customers frequenting these pubs choose to drive and thus drink soft drinks whilst lagers and ciders are perceived to be a more convenient option when "just having the one". In addition, pubs where these beers are stocked tend to experience a high turnover of management and new managers are appointed based on their ability to hit targets under pressure rather than their affection for Real Ale.

This research raises 3 critical discussion points:
1. beers from smaller regional and national breweries are on sale across the Dudley &



South Staffs area but there are much fewer opportunities to drink these alternative beers because 40% of the market offering is occupied by just 8 dominant breweries;

2. the commitment to having 'ubiquitous' beers, such as Golden Glow and HPA, is in part 'optional' and potentially a response to customer preferences for 'safe' and 'familiar' beers but this is inevitably preventing (or at least disincentivising) drinkers from 'stepping out of their comfort zone' and trying beers from the 300 other breweries which make it into our area;
3. CAMRA members frequenting pubs in the Dudley & South Staffs area are being exposed to a lot of beers from the Marston's stable e.g. Banks's, Ringwood, and Jennings (1 in every 23 pints of Real

Ale sold) but those beers are generally in poorer condition than any other beers on sale in the branch. Therefore, it can be deduced that the availability of Real Ales is not directly shaped by consumer demand (although that is seemingly one of many influential factors) but drinkers are in fact having no choice but to drink substandard Real Ale when visiting what are often food-led pubs. Crumbs!

Ryan Hunt

Chair, Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA

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Real Ale Diet

The Proof Is In The Pint

It's lovely to get emails from our readers especially success stories like this one. It's thought that the social aspect of pub going is good for our mental health and wellbeing, and here's a guy who has now found it beneficial to his health!

Here's Jonathan's journey...



Before at over 20 stone

Motivation is massively important when you are trying to downsize your body shape. So when I discovered a typical pint of draft beer was only 150 calories, it was obviously sensible to favour my "local" over staying at home drinking bottled beer at 200 calories per 500ml (which in my opinion has less flavour). Working at home meant that often I went days without any exercise whatsoever. Therefore, walking up the hill to my nearest pub is a wise healthy action. The new friends I have made there even resulted in my business becoming more prosperous, an unexpected bonus too.

Stories of failures in losing weight are boring, and those who are successful appear smug, this put me off the denial ethos, which is the basis of most calorie counting schemes. Instead I wanted to embark on a long-term strategy of enjoyable self-indulgence that might continue for years rather than weeks. There is no noble reason to compel anyone to rid himself of a

fat stomach, indeed it's rather rude to even mention it. My shallow goal was simply to be able to play my double bass instrument that I bought back in January last year for more than a few minutes without giving myself a bad back through bending over an enormous belly. The real ale selection at my local bar is always varied, of reliable, excellent quality, and something to look forward to, so I will forgo empty calories from other carbohydrate sources and enjoy the great beer instead. I have a proper well-balanced main meal every day with all the nutrition to keep me healthy, this is 400-850 calories, the rest of the day may add 300 calories. So, there is plenty of scope for a few pints of ale and still consume less than required to stay fat. It has worked! If you want to know more find me sometime in the Robin Hood Inn, Collis Street, Amblecote as I aim to continue enjoying improving my body shape thanks mainly to great English pubs serving excellent beer.



After at 11.5 stone

Pictured before at over 20 stone and after at 11.5 stone.

Well done Jonathan!

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Hitchmough's Lost Pubs

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



The solution to last issue's lost pub is the Waggon and Horses, Lower Gornal, situated on the corner of Furlong Walk and Ruiton Street. Our earliest mention of it is 1823 when there was a licence transfer. It closed in 2008 and was converted into housing.

Wolverhampton Chronicle 4/4/1838

"An inquisition was held on Wednesday, and by adjournment on Monday last, before H. Smith, Esq, coroner, at the Waggon and Horses, Lower Gornal, to inquire into the circumstances attending the death of Joseph Eades, a collier, about twenty years of age, who lost his life in a pugilistic contest with a man named Joseph Beardmore. The deceased and Beardmore were drinking together at a beer shop in Lower Gornal, kept by Zachariah Guest, on the 20th ult till after midnight, when some words ensued between them, and the deceased several times challenged Beardmore to fight; this challenge seems to have been for some time declined, but at length the deceased stripped to his skin, and throwing a shilling upon the table, told Beardmore, with aggravating language, that he would fight him for £5. Beardmore replied he had got no money, but still the deceased kept

taunting him, and he at last stripped, and jumped up to fight. Guest, the landlord, however, got between them, and prevented their fighting in the house; yet while he was pushing them towards the door the deceased kept sparring at Beardmore over the landlord's shoulder. At length they agreed to go out to fight. The combat took place in the peg alley behind the house, and after several blows had been struck by each of them, the first round terminated by the deceased falling, or being knocked down by the prisoner. He got up and they prepared for a second round, by approaching each other with clenched fists and in a fighting attitude; they went at each other, and were close together, when the deceased suddenly fell upon his belly, and lay without speaking or stirring. On picking him up he was found to be dead. The body was taken into the house, and a surgeon, Mr. Browne, sent for. At the inquest Mr. Browne stated that he immediately examined the body, and had subsequently made a post mortem examination, the result of which was that he considered the immediate cause of death to be inflammation of the stomach, produced by some external violence on the chest, such as a blow or fall. The inflammation, he stated, would come on instantly after the injury was inflicted, and some of the smaller vessels in the stomach were ruptured. The jury after a short deliberation returned a verdict of Manslaughter, and the coroner issued his warrant for the prisoner's commitment. An application to bail the prisoner will, it is stated, be made to the Magistrates."

[At the Staffordshire Summer Assizes, in July 1838, Joseph Beardmore, charged with Manslaughter, was fined £1 and discharged. The judge considered that he had received sufficient punishment already, having been in gaol nearly four months.]

Hitchmough's Black Country Pubs
longpull.co.uk

Roberto Brings His 'Tasting Club' To Lye

It's always a great opportunity for an 'Ales and Tales' article when two events collide on the same night, and importantly, in the same bar! It also lends the opportunity to cast the spotlight on an area of the branch.



Fixed Wheel Brewery have recently opened their first Micropub in Lye, West Midlands. Named 'Wheelie Thirsty', it's a clever play on words around a bicycle 'wheelie' and promises to create a whole new sub-brand of 'wheelie' clever ideas.

Lye itself is an interesting place, housing a diverse population culture, a myriad of Asian restaurants, and more relevantly a number of public houses. The Windsor Castle now seems like one of the original real ale houses, also hosting a fabulous restaurant, and of course famously featured Oz Clarke and James May pulling pints of Sadler's behind the bar on TV. Sadler's then opened their own Brewhouse venue two minutes' walk away, offering weekend live music and brewery tours. There is also The Shovel close-by, which again offers great food and is a previous Good Beer Guide entrant.

Anyway, back to Wheelie Thirsty (WT). Initially only stocking their own beers on draught, they have since added additional keg lines, which at the time of writing were pouring Twisted Barrel beers. Of course, the can-and-bottle fridge has been a fixture since day #1, where you can also get hold of Fixed Wheel's first canned beer – No Brakes. In fact, as we go to press, WT were about to host their first ever 'Tap Takeover' from 'Wild Beer'.

Friend of the branch Roberto Ross is a beer sommelier who runs his 'Tasting Club' events at various places in the region, from 'The Coracle' in Ironbridge, to 'Beer Gonzo' in Coventry. A fan of the best beers in any format, Roberto can take a good portion of the credit for introducing KeyKeg beers into Stourbridge Beer Festival a few years ago, resulting in a KeyKeg beer winning 'Beer of the Festival' that year. He held his first event at WT during November, and I popped along to see what it was all about as I had not been to one before.

The idea behind the event is simple: to try a number of different beers in one sitting. We're not talking about pints and pints of beer here: the majority of the beers on this occasion were from 750ml bottles, so sharing one amongst a few people has to be the way forward.

A 750ml bottle may be a considerable investment for one person, considering the strength, rarity and diversity of the brews on offer. Of course, afterwards you may be able to seek out the beers yourself, if you can find them, as Roberto uses his extensive knowledge and network of contacts to source rare beers that would otherwise simply not be available. Roberto told us that he has many regulars at his events, and prides himself on having never repeated a beer. Beers are from his own personal collection, so

you can be sure that whatever the style, you will be getting a quality product.

On this occasion there was a wide variety of styles on offer, from Saison to DIPA's and much more besides. As well as sampling the products, Roberto provides an in-depth discussion of the beer, analysis of the style and plentiful anecdotes to keep everybody entertained.

It was a great coincidence that WT's 'Wheel Meat Again' night was being held on the same evening! A selection of cured meats were laid on for customers, all free of charge, and followed a cheese tasting night held a few weeks ago. Sorry, it definitely wasn't a night for vegetarians or vegans on this evening, despite the availability of Twisted Barrel, a vegan-only brewery.

Lye is served by a mainline train station between Birmingham and Worcester, as well as the Number 9 bus between Stourbridge and Birmingham so there are good transport links to enable a visit. Lye isn't a regular stop, so just check trains before you board as a change at Stourbridge or Cradley Heath may be required. If you can't make it to Lye anytime soon, keep an eye out for the next Roberto's 'Tasting Club' event on social media at other venues, as it is definitely worth attending.

Tim Cadwell

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Dudley Winter Ales Fayre 2018

So November might have started with a bang what with Bonfire Night & Diwali, but in Dudley, for Real Ale & Cider drinkers, the month certainly ended in style. Dudley Winter Ales Fayre (DWAFF) opened to CAMRA members and the public on 29th November 2018 at 5.30pm to a flurry of eager drinkers. But the DWAFF story begins back in June when a committee of around fifteen Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA members start the planning.



Health & Safety, liaison with our friends at Dudley Town Hall and deciding a theme for the Festival to name but a few items on an ever growing agenda. The Committee meets once a month, with email and phone contact in between as needed. The Committee decided to nominate two hyperlocal charities this year: Woodsetton Charitable Trust & Friends of Wren's Nest. Both groups aim to raise enough money to make a memorial to Abraham Darby.

So after five months of planning, meetings, and beer selection nights, the day of 26th November 2018 finally arrives. 20 able-bodied volunteers turn up along with 200+ pieces of shelving, 4 pallets, 2 fridges, 79 barrels, 7 Key Kegs and 21 types of cider. So once a year in Dudley we turn a Town Hall that holds Tea Dances and hosts Comedians into a mecca for Real Ale drinkers. This year, DWAFF was opened by the Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Alan Taylor. We also hosted three competitions, our Beer of the Festival,

West Midlands Old Ales & Strong Milds, and West Midlands Champion Beer of 2018. Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild won Beer of the Festival much to the delight of Mark (Dark Ruby's brewer) who was serving behind the bar. Punchline Baboon took the title of best Key Keg beer.

So all those that came and drank the festival dry we'd like to thank you all, you were great customers and helped us host such a successful festival and helped us raise £950 for our two charities. We had customers from far and wide, the furthest being from Norway this year. The Bathams XXX was the first beer to go on Friday at 1pm quickly followed by Sarah Hughes Snowflake. We were delighted to be joined by Caroline Martin and her team on Friday who broadcasted live on BBC WM including interviews with customers and volunteers.

A special thanks needs to go to all our local breweries who supplied such great beer especially Holden's who were our main sponsor and also Bains Wines who sponsored the beer tokens.

So every CAMRA Beer Festival is staffed by volunteers, DWAFF this year was staffed by over 50 volunteers. We were lucky enough to have a gentleman named Brian Wilcock from Malvern, he caught 2 trains and cycled from Cradley Heath to work just two hours! Quite a few of the volunteers did quite a few more hours than that, members from neighbouring branches swelled our numbers which we are always grateful of. See the later article in this edition of Ales & Tales – "Cheers for Volunteers!" – to read how one of our newbie volunteers found the experience.

So to every customer & volunteer we'd like to thank you all, DWAFF just wouldn't happen without you. DWAFF 2019 is already in the pipeline and we are looking at dates around the end of November as normal. Once we have a firm date we'll let you know.

Happy Drinking

Karl Denning

Festival Organiser, Dudley Winter Ales Fayre

STOURBRIDGE & HALESOWEN ARMISTICE CRAWL

Saturday 10 November 2018



On Saturday 10 November some members of Stourbridge & Halesowen Branch spent an afternoon visiting some of our “WW1 pubs”. It was an act of Remembrance on the centenary of the 1918 Armistice. The selection was based on pubs on the No 9 bus route, being the connection between the two towns in the Branch. Out of over 50 of our real ale pubs that existed in 1918, we selected six where the existing building operated as a pub in 1914-18, which had some link to WW1. Thanks to Tony Hitchmough for some of the historical information that helped us plan the day.

We imagined these pubs as the locals which our servicemen frequented before the war; where their parents & friends drank whilst they served in the trenches and where those that survived, returned to celebrate their safe homecoming and to remember their comrades that did not.

We started at the Duke William in Coventry Street, Stourbridge at lunchtime. It's a fine old building dating from 1903. The Licensees in WW1 were Henry Wake (1912 - 1917) and Edward Woodcock (1917 - 1920). We could not trace any direct WW1 link, but it had already been publicised as the start point. We all enjoyed a selection of

Craddock's beers. Unfortunately, we were too early to sample their famous pies, so we made our way to the nearby Wetherspoons for lunch.

The Chequers at the top of the High Street was previously known as the Checkers. The WW1 licensee was Alphonse Smets (1912 - 1930). In the days of the old Stourbridge to Halesowen turnpike route, the Birmingham mail coach left from here every morning at 7.30. It is also next to the original site of the Stourbridge war memorial, unveiled in 1923, which was moved to Stevens Park when the ring road was built in 1969. The usual Wetherspoons menu with a good selection of food was available. It is a pub that, as a branch, we do not often visit but a good selection of beers was on offer. The Enville Ale was very good, but the Exmoor Gold just average.

We then took the No 9 bus to Lye and walked to the Shovel on Pedmore Road. One of my favourite pubs with a great beer selection, served in top condition. It included a special edition beer “Flanders Fields”, a 3.7% fruity ale brewed by Greene King. The Licensee was William Hill from 1914 to 1920 and 11 of the 254 names on the Lye war memorial outside Christ Church on the High Street are “Hills”. We were joined here by some other members and after an enjoyable pint, some of us went to the War Memorial for a few moments of reflection & remembrance.

Our next stop was the Little Chop House in Colley Gate. The licensee was George Albert Roper from 1896 to 1916 and a George Frederick Roper was killed in action in October 1918. He is commemorated on the Halesowen and Cradley war memorials. We were unable to trace a direct family link. He was not a son but may have been a nephew or cousin. A new barrel of Holden's Golden Glow was on offer and enjoyed by all.

A short hop to the Waggon & Horses in Halesowen was next. Although we could not trace a direct link, the pub is the closest to the Halesowen war memorial erected in 1921 and there are six WW1 war graves in the nearby cemetery. Our current Pub of the Year, the Waggon had 9 beers and 4 ciders on offer including "Funk", a 5.5% dry hopped IPA from our newcomer, Beat Brewery from Lye. The beer board also included "1918", a commemoration beer from Mr Grundy's Brewery

Back on the No 9, the final pub on our trip was the Black Horse on Manor Way, Halesowen. This was a canal-side pub until the old Lapal tunnel collapsed in 1917 after subsidence caused by the nearby Manor Colliery. It is close to the site of the last bomb in the war to



be dropped in the Midlands from a Zeppelin. A bomb fell on Leasowes golf course on the night of 19/20 October 1917. It is believed the target was Coombs Wood or Hayward Forge. After the war the golfers turned the bomb crater into a bunker. Sadly, the pub closed just a week after our visit and is now up for sale.

Whilst some of the WW1 links were a little tenuous it was nevertheless a memorable and enjoyable trip.

*They shall not grow old as we that are
left grow old.*

*Age shall not weary them, nor the
years condemn.*

*At the going down of the sun and
in the morning,*

We will remember them.

Andy Koszary

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Novel Name Needed For 'Branch Bear'

Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA has acquired a 'Branch Bear' who will travel with members to the bigger social activities in the diary. The unnamed mascot was bought for £10 by branch Chair, Ryan Hunt, at the 2018 Dudley Winter Ales Fayre (DWAf).



The branch is now calling upon local members to 'get creative' and to think of a catchy but appropriate name for the bear. If you have a suggestion,

email your name, the proposed name for the bear, and the context behind your recommendation to:

chair@dudley.camra.org.uk

The deadline is Friday 22nd February 2019 and the winner will win £10 off our coach trip to the Great British Beer Festival at Olympia, London, on Thursday 8th August 2019. Naturally, the branch bear is looking forward to representing Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA in the capital city for the first time. The winning name will be selected, on merit, by the branch committee at the branch meeting on Monday 25th February 2019 which ironically will take place at the 'Bear' Tavern, Bearwood. Both male, female, and unisex names will be considered.

The yellow and red teddy – which sports the Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA logo – was the first of four which featured in the annual auction that always occurs on Saturday at DWAf. The other three bears included two which featured the logo of Holden's brewery and one which read "CAMRA Staff".

The auction, which saw a DWAf 1995 Jeff Astle glass, bottle, and flyer collection sell for £32, raised a total of £225 for the two festival charities. When combined with the cash and unspent tokens donated by the festival's generous punters, £950 was raised for the Woodsetton Charitable Trust and the Friends of Wren's Nest. All of the bears were kindly handmade by Denise Smith, Dudley, who used recycled CAMRA polo shirts.

Ryan Hunt

Chair, Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA

An advertisement for Irving & Co. Brewers Ltd. The top part features a blue anchor logo with the text 'IRVING & CO. BREWERS LTD.' in large white letters. Below this, it says 'Invincible Ales from Portsmouth' in a script font, followed by 'Brewery Tours and direct sales to the public available. Please contact us for more details.' The bottom part shows two beer labels: 'FRIGATE GOLDEN BITTER 3.8% ABV' and 'INVINCIBLE PREMIUM CASK ALE 4.6% ABV'. Both labels include the text 'PORTSMOUTH HAMPSHIRE'. At the very bottom, the address 'Unit G1 Railway Triangle, Walton Rd, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO6 1TQ' is listed, along with the phone number 'Tel: 02392 389988', the website 'www.irvingbrewers.co.uk', and the email 'email: sales@irvingbrewers.co.uk'.

BEER STYLES

Pray Silence for... Beer

Belgian brewing owes much to the fame and style of its bottled beers. Of these, the Trappist-style beers are one of the most well-known. They have a long history, dating from the 6th century when St Benedict's Rule, written for fellow monks, included provisions for charity and hospitality, including making beer and wine. St. Arnold, the patron saint of hop-pickers and Belgian brewers, wrote in the 11th century that beer was safer to drink than water. Abbeys and monasteries began making beer in the Middle Ages, and in 1892 the Belgian cloisters of the Cistercian Order of Strict Observance (founded in La Trappe Abbey, Normandy) – better known as Trappists (who have a vow of periods of silence) - began making beer their speciality. Until 1962, anyone could claim to brew “Trappist” beers, but then a law specified that it must be brewed within a Trappist monastery. By 1992 the official designation of “Authentic Trappist Product” was bestowed on the abbot who made anything from fruitcakes to shampoo, including beer.

So, the first definition of Trappist beer is that it should be brewed within the walls of a Trappist abbey, under supervision of the Order, with the proceeds going to the upkeep of the monastery and the monks' way of life. Often professional brewers are employed, but the monks like hard work and assist, regularly drinking their beers. Although originally focused on Belgium, by the 21st century Trappist breweries had sprung up in the Netherlands, Austria, Italy and even in the USA. Until June 2018, there were 11 Trappist breweries, protected through the International Trappist Association, but now they have been joined by Mount St Bernard Abbey in Leicestershire, and San Pedro in northern Spain may join this elite group in the future.



Westmalle, in northern Antwerp, was the first modern Trappist brewery, beginning commercial brewing in 1856. St Sixtus Abbey near Westvleteren began brewing in 1839, but only commercially from 1946. Monks from here founded an abbey at Scourmont, south of Chimay, in 1850 and opened a brewery in 1862. Monks from Achel reoccupied the abbey of St Rémy near Rochefort in 1887 and were brewing by 1899. A new abbey was commissioned in Villers-devant-Orval in 1926, and commercial brewing started here in 1931. The cloister at Achel, near Limburg, restarted brewing in 1998. Outside Belgium, there are Trappist breweries at La Trappe (1984) and De Kievit (2013) in the Netherlands, Engelszell (2012) in Austria, Spencer (2013) in the USA and Tre Fontane (2014) in Italy. The breweries with the largest outputs are La Trappe (145,000HI/yr), Westmalle & Chimay (120,000HI/yr) and Orval (71,000HI/yr), and the smallest, Engelszell & Tre Fontane (2,000HI/yr) and Achel & Spencer (5,000HI/yr).

There is no specific definition of Trappist beer; it could be a cheap tinned pils, but it does imply quality. An old Belgian Trappist saying states that "beer should be liquid bread, not coloured

water”. They are top-fermented beers, with the emphasis towards estery, fruity flavours from unique yeast strains, generally of high strength, low on hop impact and utilising specialist malts and candi sugars to give warm, spicy flavours of great complexity. With their high ABV and malt characteristics, they are excellent for long-term keeping and improve with age when kept in a cool dark place.

There tend to be five basic styles:



Patersbier: these are generally “table” beers, often only available for the monks in their own monastery; low-strength, quaffing beers.

Enkel: the single standard beer from which the scale grows to.

Dubbel: containing twice the amount of raw materials; strong (6-7%), dark and with low bitterness, heavy and fruity flavours.

Tripel: with even more raw materials, producing stronger (7-11%) and golden beers.

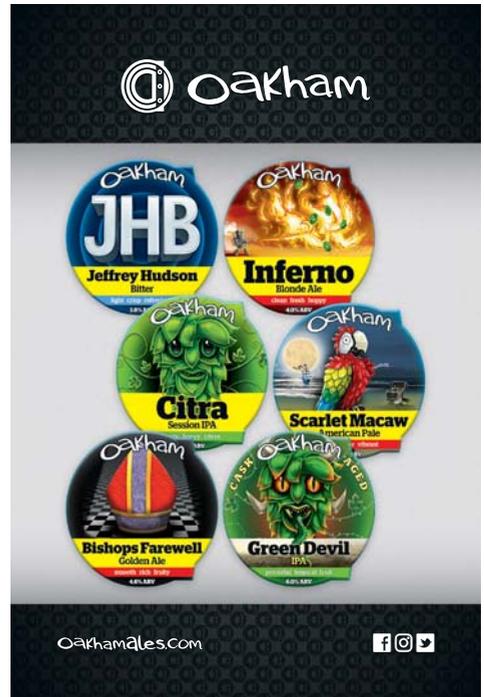
Quadrupel: the strongest (8-12%) dark beers, which are made for sipping slowly.

Some Trappist breweries use these beer styles, although others tend to use numbers (eg. 6, 8, 10 or 12) or colours (eg. Red, Blue, Gold) to indicate the strength of their beers. Some brew specific blonde or bruin beers, and a few brew lagers, bock bier, Imperial stout and even wheat beer. Mount St Bernard currently brew Tynt Meadow, an English Trappist strong ale (7.4%) with aromas of dark chocolate, liquorice and rich fruit and tastes of chocolate, pepper and fig, using their German 20hl brewing kit.

To savour the beer, the correct glass is essential; a goblet or chalice style glass is best, so as to enhance the aromas and flavours. Many are bottle-conditioned beers, so be careful when pouring, to allow the sediment to settle. These are beers to savour, rather than quaffing. Many are not cheap, but as St Benedict said all those years ago, “In the prices, let not the sin of avarice creep in, but let the goods always be sold a little cheaper than they could be sold by people in the world”. Pay a few more pence or euros for these beers, and you will enjoy them.....slowly and taste the silence.



Steve James



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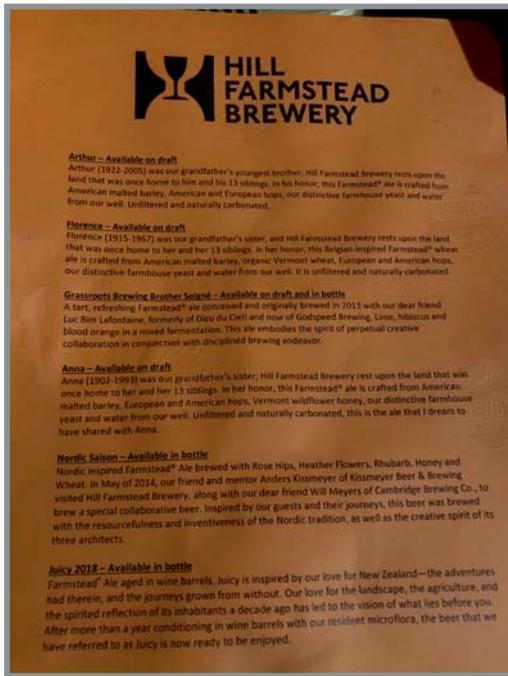
CIDER

TAP TAKEOVER

When Brewdog Met Hill Farmstead

When it was announced Brewdog Birmingham were having a tap takeover of Hill Farmstead beers at the end of November, it got my attention.

Hill Farmstead beers are seldom seen in the U.K., so having a selection of them near home seemed a must visit. It is a brewery from Vermont in the USA, founded in 2010 by Shaun E Hill. In 2011, Hill Farmstead was awarded the title of 'Best New Brewery in the World' by review website Ratebeer, after which were acclaimed best brewery in the world in 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017 finishing second in 2013.



Firstly, Brother Soigne. Slightly darker than the others and quite a lime cordial flavour which removed some of the saison effect from the beer and was very palatable.

Anna, a smooth saison, hints of lemon and having a Belgian yeasty taste. I thought it also had elements of a Brut IPA.



Florence, who was Anna's sister, was also, in my mind (and taste buds!) Anna's sister. It was very similar, except for me, had a bit more of that saison feel which I think I preferred.

Finally, Arthur. This was my favourite. It was a light saison, quite sessionable both with ABV and taste, with a peachy finish. It was very refreshing.

I think if you're not familiar or just unsure about trying saison or sour beers, these beers would represent a very good introduction to the style. While being slightly expensive, I thought the cost was worth it for the quality and uniqueness of the experience.

The choice available were of their Ancestral series, all having personal connections and stories. It was also notable that there were saisons.

Martin Clarke

Boats and Beer

The Black Country Boating Festival is a boat gathering and community festival held during September each year in the Bumble Hole Nature Reserve, Windmill End, Netherton, Dudley. Now in its 33rd year, the event is organised and run totally by volunteers.



With more than 200 boat, trade and charity stalls to browse, canal-side entertainment, boaters' competitions, a funfair, live music, and regular boat trips along the Dudley No. 2 canal, there is always something for everyone in the family.



For many years Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA branch has managed and run a Real Ale bar in the entertainment marquee, staffed by local CAMRA members with support from Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA and Birmingham CAMRA. Real Ales on offer at the 2018 event were from a host of local breweries with Black Country Ales, Davenport's, Enville, Kinver, Fixed Wheel, Green Duck, Bathams, Fownes, Holden's, and Netherton's Olde Swan brewery all represented. Just under 3000 pints of Real Ale were supped

by visitors supplemented by 1080 pints of cider and wine.

The festival is open to the public from 10am to 5pm Saturday and Sunday; admission to the site is free. Entertainment in the marquee on both days provides for a great atmosphere.

In addition to moorings for those visitors attending by boat; caravans and campers are equally welcome.

Put this year's dates in your diary now – September 14th and 15th.

Steve Thompson
Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA



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Food Available:

Mon - Sun 12noon - 9pm

(Menus vary throughout the day)

Upstairs Function Room Available

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

Contact Tim Newey on 01384 253075

Branch Diaries

Dudley & South Staffordshire

JANUARY

Saturday 5th 12 Noon

'Ten to Target' Mini Bus Trip; visiting contenders for Good Beer Guide 2020;
e-mail: pubsofficer@dudley.camra.org.uk

Monday 14th 8pm

DWAF 2018 Inquest Meeting; Park Inn, Woodsetton

Monday 23rd 8pm

Good Beer Guide 2020 Selection Meeting; Brierley Hop House, Brierley Hill; (this meeting is open to all CAMRA members but only regular scorers may vote);
e-mail: pubsofficer@dudley.camra.org.uk

Monday 28th 8pm

Branch Meeting; Sedgley Conservative Club, Sedgley

Wednesday 30th 7.30pm

Netherton Scoring Social

FEBRUARY

Monday 25th 8pm

Branch Meeting; Bear Tavern (upstairs), Bearwood

Wednesday 27th 7.30pm

Tipton Scoring Social

MARCH

Wednesday 20th 7.30pm

West Bromwich Scoring Social

Saturday 23rd 9am

Thank You Trip for DWAF volunteers to Wigan. Open to non-volunteers for £10

Monday 25th 8pm

Branch Meeting; Court House, Dudley

Stourbridge & Halesowen

JANUARY

Saturday 5th 12 Noon

Tryanuary Brewery Tap Social
Meet Fixed Wheel Brewery then Sadler's Brewhouse, Beat Brewery (if open), Green Duck Badelynge Bar and Duke William

Wednesday 9th 8.00pm

Branch Meeting, Crafty Pint, Wassell Rd, Halesowen
(Note: 2nd Wed of month)

Saturday 19th January 12 Noon

Buzz Marking Social. Meet Duke William, Stourbridge
(Itinerary TBC)

FEBRUARY

Wednesday 13th February 8.00pm

Branch Meeting, Duke William, Stourbridge (Note: 2nd Wed of month)

Thursday 21st February 8.00pm

Clubs Marking Social – Meet Coombs Wood Sports & Social Club, Stewarts Rd. Halesowen then Snooks, Somers Club and Halesowen Athletic & Cycling Club.

MARCH

Wednesday 13th March 8.00pm

Branch Meeting, Hawne Tavern, Short Cross, Halesowen (Note: 2nd Wed of month)

Thursday 21st March 8.00pm

Stourbridge Marking Social Meet Mitre then Royal Exchange, Queen's Head and Katie Fitzgerald's.

APRIL

Wednesday 3rd April 8.00pm

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

Wednesday 17th April 8.00pm

Norton Marking Social Meet Gigmill then New Inn, Longlands, Garibaldi and Plough & Harrow



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Cheers For Volunteers!

Having been a CAMRA member for a few years, my husband, Matthew, persuaded me to join him in volunteering at the 2018 Dudley Winter Ales Fayre (DWAF). Having booked two days off work, I arrived at Dudley Town Hall at midday on the Thursday not quite knowing what to expect but keen to help out in any way I could.

Another volunteer, Chris, took me under his wing and between us we helped get the hall ready, putting up posters and distributing leaflets and materials.

Just before the doors opened at 5.30pm I donned my yellow volunteer t-shirt, grabbed a marker pen and, being a cider drinker, I made a beeline for the end of the bar to start serving the 20 ciders and perries on offer.



DWAF Entertainment Organiser, Matthew Sparks, and volunteer, Jo Sparks

I was fortunate to be partnered with Tony, a cider maker whose very own Abraham's Apple carbonated cider featured in the festival. He gave me a mini master class on the different ciders and I really enjoyed sharing this new-found knowledge with the festival goers. The opening day was really busy and the time just flew by.

There's no denying that my feet ached after a while (I have an office job so it's been a while since I've stood up for that long!) so the request to help on the glass and token returns later in the evening was a welcome break! That said, after a while I was missing the cider so headed back there to finish the evening service with Tony. It's fair to say that I slept well that night! Friday's stint started with another session on the cider bar but I was keen to try out other roles so I turned my hand to welcoming guests and taking entrance

payments at the door. I was given a quick run through of the process by (a different) Tony and spent time getting to know him and another volunteer, Colin.

The first of the 79 cask and 8 keykeg beers to sell out was the seasonal brew from Bathams – XXX (6.3%) – which lasted just 6 festival hours. The Beer of the Festival was judged to be Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild (6%) followed by Fernandes Blonde Squirrel (4%) in 2nd place and Arbor Summit IPA (6.5%) in 3rd place.

We anticipated the peak arrival time would be around 5pm with people coming to the festival after work but I wasn't quite prepared for the queue and the manic stream of guests that we had over the next few hours. In fact, we soon ran out of glasses which meant a manic washing up session by other volunteers.

The entertainment across the weekend included a violinist and vocalist, Delly Bright, a funk band, Chronicles of Zee, a pop/rock group, Doc Brown Trio, a blues duo, Paul 'n' Jeannie', and perhaps most popular of all was the enchanting soprano, Tóra Wilson (photographed), who wowed the crowd on Saturday lunchtime.



It was great to see so many people at the festival enjoying themselves and it was an honour to be part of such a great volunteering team. Everyone made me feel really welcome and, despite the very achy feet, I'm definitely up for doing it again. If you're not quite sure whether to give volunteering a go, I'd say just try it. There's lots of different roles to get involved with and lots of lovely people to meet!

Jo Sparks
Dudley Winter Ales Fayre volunteer

Another Belgian Travelogue... Maybe 2019 Is The Year For You?

'OH NO, ANOTHER BELGIAN TRAVELOGUE..... BUT ONE WITH A DIFFERENCE'. 'THE BOTTLE OF WATERLOO'

A few years ago, the 'beloved' and I decided to do our bit for the community and take a couple of waifs and strays on holiday with us to the wonderful place that is Belgium, the lucky couple being Chris & Nigel, both Belgium Virgins at the time. On a Sunday morning we packed the 'Yeti' with crates of empty beer bottles (?) and set off into the sunset, which in June is near Folkestone..... not a good impression, two GBG-listed pubs and one of those was closed, thank the Lord for Wetherspoons and 'The Samuel Peto', possibly the finest example of a 'Spoons' conversion in the land. A former chapel of monumental proportions with a central bar and impressive staircases winding up to an all-enveloping balcony and, of course, down to the 'loos'. Worth a visit is the 'East Cliff' Tavern', a friendly back-street local. Our hotel for the night, 'The South Cliff, was spartan with rather a lot of dodgy looking 'guests', probably due to its proximity to the channel ports; the car was still where we left it the following morning.



An early start enabled us to catch the 08:00 Ferry from Dover to Dunkirk and a smooth crossing and hearty breakfast put us in the right frame of mind to invade 'le continent'. From Dunkerque a short drive gets us to Adinker (Jct.1) just over the Belgian border, a short stop here introduces Chris & Nigel to the wonders of Belgian beer warehouses (XL) albeit a relatively small one but with a good range of the better quality 'standards' at very good prices (eg. St. Bernardus 12 @ €1.40 or £1 !!!).

Another short drive and we are in one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, Bruges, where we check into the Ibis Centrum Hotel. Built about eight years ago the hotel is excellent value for money, basic, very clean, comfortable rooms and a buffet style breakfast for less than £60 a night per couple. The city is a brisk fifteen - minute walk away through the quaint winding back-streets, alongside Bruges' famous canals, past a monastery and part of the university all built from the wonderful 'pink' brick that is prevalent throughout most of Belgium. Through tree-lined squares bordered with cafes and bars we eventually enter 'The Markt', the centre of the city and former market place very popular with tourists as a meeting place and start for the many guided tours that hamper your visit.

Usually the first bar for Joy and me is 'Le Garre', first and foremost to see if it's actually open, the Belgians are renowned for just closing their bars completely when they want to go away for a few days, no thought of putting in a 'relief'. However, due to the warm weather and the

fact that the Brugse Zot Brewery is en route we 'dived' in for a quickie. The brewery trips are excellent. Humorous, well-informed guides take you through the brewing process and also the history of Bruges' brewing industry. You pass through a fascinating museum of brewing artefacts on your way to the roof where you get an incredible view over the city centre.



De Garre is wonderful, almost impossible to find, the staff very aloof, the music classical and the house beer incredibly powerful at 11.5%! Customers are limited to three glasses and will only be served if they are seated, it pays to stay downstairs if you're going for the 'three' as the winding narrow steps to the mezzanine level could prove 'fatal'. De Garre was open and up to its exceptionally high standards as usual.

Daisy's was next. Daisy's is the place to go if you want intelligent conversation about beer from foreigners..... the whole world passes through this pokey two-roomed back-street shrine to Belgium's finest product. We've met Danes, Dutch, Germans, Spanish, Americans, a cycling club from Hampshire, we've even conversed with Australians, without a fight breaking out! The staff are well versed in their knowledge of 300+ items listed on the 'beer menu' and are only too glad to advise or recommend. Food is simple and limited but good value, also essential as you may find yourself in Daisy's for some time!

We managed to tear ourselves away after a good meal and moved on to Poatersgat, another bar that is easily missed located at the foot of a short flight of stone steps leading from the pavement to the crypt of a former church, tall people beware, low headroom! This dimly lit bar is oozing with atmosphere, you'd expect to find coffins or implements of torture, the roof consists of beautifully formed vaulted arches and the place is full of rickety old furniture, brilliant.

Moving on we decide on one more before bed. The choice was a new one for Joy and me, @ The Pub, a modern cafe style bar in a small courtyard. The place lacks the character we've come to expect from Bruges bars and the visit is swift. Back to the hotel for some kip..... Tomorrow is a new day!

(The wife is leaning over my shoulder.....
"you gonna tell 'em about every bar we went in?")

To précis, the main purpose of the trip was to attend the 200th Anniversary Celebrations of The Battle of Waterloo and 'do' a lot of bars!

Day 2 was a Rail trip to Ghent, handy as our hotel is about 50 yards from the station! Usual sort of day in Belgium, bar, canal trip, bar, look at the castle, walk along the canal towpath, another bar followed by a couple more bars, back on the train to Bruges just in time for a night-cap. Simple. (Ghent is a wonderful city, a bit like a big Bruges!)

Day 3.....on the road again. Joy and I are lucky enough to have an old school friend who lives with her hubby in a 'mansion' just south of Brussels to which we are regular visitors, usually house-sitting for them when they go away. Occupying just the 'West-wing' the four of us used the house as our touring hub for the next week. Several days out were



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planned, the first taking in the wonderful city of Leuven only a dozen miles or so from 'base', marvellous architecture surrounds the Market-place, as in so many Belgian cities, including the Cathedral, Town Hall and Merchant's houses. Nige, being an 'architecture freak' was in his element and his camera was steaming as he snapped away at virtually anything that didn't move. On a previous trip the town was hosting its mid-summer festival, when the procession enveloped the guests as a wedding was leaving the Town Hall..... fancy having clowns, men on stilts and jugglers in your wedding photo album? Enough to drive the Groom to drink, fortunately there are a few bars in Leuven, including one of our faves, Domus, good eatery as well.



Other trips took in Beersel, yes that's right, home of the wonderful Drie Fonteinen brewery, makers of some of the finest Lambic beers, cheek-creasing Gueuze and krik leave you wanting more and more, once you have developed the taste. The beers are accompanied by plates of bread, cheese and meats all locally produced which complement each other brilliantly. There are other bars in the town, apparently.....

Mariembourg, is a great day-out, if you like Steam Trains! Fortunately everybody likes Steam Trains so it was a great day-out. Even more fortunate, the Super de Fagnes Brewery is just up the road, which was handy as they do

an excellent lunch to accompany your 'tasters' of five different brews. Also, on 'Trainspotting Day' the wife and I take in Fondrie des Chiens as a matter of necessity, she needs her 'fix' of butterflies and as it's just up the road it would be silly not to. Nige and Chris like butterflies as well so that was fortunate, they also like walking over rocky limestone outcrops, even more fortunate as that's where the bl.....essed butterflies are. We all had a wonderful time thirsty work though!

The Battle of Waterloo 200th Anniversary re-enactment 2nd Half now this is a day I can strongly recommend. Shame you've all missed it though unless you went, of course then you'll know what I'm on about. ("Get on with it.....")

Seriously, this was some day-out, an early breakfast, jump in the Yeti and off. Seriously worried prior to going, though I didn't let on, hope the others didn't notice, would we get there in time, could we park within forty miles of Waterloo, were the tickets valid, lot of 'naughty websites' about, would we get shot by a stray bullet, sorry 'ball', would there be any bars????? My fears were unfounded, hardly any traffic about, blimey was it the right day, calm down.....

We parked about 400yds from the Battlefield, no problems with the tickets, they were valid. The bars? They were just beyond the 'village' of tents, not the campsite of the 6200 re-enactors, more like the Merry Hill Centre, you could get everything from a Waterloo Baseball Cap to a set of Isle of Man commemorative stamps..... I got both! There were antique stalls selling war memorabilia and thousands of antiquarian books, all about the battle. You could kit yourself out as a Prussian Infantryman complete with jute underpants and a tube of Savlon, if you had enough money. To be fair there was a lot of really good quality commemorative ware and the bar was just beyond it all!

Typically the Belgians try to be different, so to help with the flow of folks through the bar you had to get 'beer tickets' from a separate booth, the one with the huge queue. Stuff that, we ventured into the aptly named 'Wellington', always go for the winner I say, without tickets, sauntered up to the bar in a very British way and politely asked "can I pay cash".... "yah, sure" came the reply.... Sitting at a table outside the Wellington supping the local brew were two stalwarts of the B.B.C. History unit, Peter and Dan Snow, unfortunately they didn't recognise us so we wandered off and found our own table.



Earlier I said '2nd Half'..... The battle was re-enacted over two days and we had tickets for the Saturday night, we didn't fancy the Friday night as we knew 'the lads didn't do good in the first half'.



Fortunately our manager made a few changes at half-time and 'we done better as the match went on, bringing on the Prussian subs was pure genius. Bit of a rout in the end – Napoleon

ran away!' At first we were a little concerned, after the opening salvos of cannon from both sides, a huge, thick cloud of smoke settled over the battlefield..... couldn't see a damn thing! It eventually cleared and the battle unfolded before 64,000 spectators, nearly 6,200 'soldiers' and 350 horses marched and galloped backwards and forwards over the length of the battlefield, the Allied Forces (us) had 50 cannon alone. The noise was 'ear-splitting'; we all jumped clean off our seats when the opening volleys of cannon-fire rang out! The night was absolutely brilliant, the amount of planning and effort put into the whole event was beyond comprehension, congratulations to everyone involved. However, the Belgian Police were in charge of getting everyone away from Waterloo after the event..... it took two hours to get off the car park onto the road! Then we were directed in totally the wrong direction and inevitably got lost..... What a wonderful thing SatNav is. (Never thought I'd hear myself say that). After this incredible assault on our senses we spent the rest of the holiday 'recovering', taking it easy, eating and drinking, chilling out, drinking, reliving the battle, drinking and generally just..... drinking! It was, unfortunately, soon time to come home, every cubic inch of space in the Yeti was well utilised, the crates of empty bottles being replaced by full ones! A really wonderful holiday, good company, good food, great beer and..... THE BOTTLE OF WATERLOO!

Adrian Stevens

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Pub News

Dudley & South Staffordshire

FELLOWS, Dudley DY1 4QD, has a new manageress – Stephanie Brookes

GARRISON, Waterfront, Brierley Hill DY5 1XL, Free-of-tie 1920s-themed saloon bar, leased by Jason Montgomery and Spida Prince. This is a welcome addition to the Waterfront business park which was once a hotspot for drinkers. The seven Real Ales include Garrison Gold (Salopian Shropshire Gold), Garrison Pale (Fixed Wheel Chain Reaction), Green Duck Duck Blonde, Enville Ale, and three further guest beers. All cask ales are priced at £3.20. There are also four Real Ciders available, a number of keg beer and lager lines, and a large selection of top-shelf tipples. There's a Peaky Blinders mural, a jukebox, and a small stage to accommodate live acts.



MIDLAND, Bearwood B66 4BE, has new managers – Amanda and Charlie

SOHO OAK, West Bromwich B70 8PR, A new Desi pub, the Soho Oak was formerly Oakdale Social Club. Now the sister pub to the New Soho Tavern in Hockley, there is the popular combination of cask beer and Indian tapas.

WHEATSHEAF, West Bromwich B70 9QW, has a new manager – Stewart Parton

Stourbridge & Halesowen

BARBRIDGE VICTORIA PASSAGE, Stourbridge DY8 1DP, will be continuing with their tap take overs, please keep an eye out for confirmations of breweries involved and dates on their Facebook page.

WAGGON & HORSES, Halesowen B63 3TU have started to do a cheesy Tuesday offering and midweek quiz nights follow them on Facebook and twitter for upcoming dates.

WHEELIE THIRSTY, Lye Stourbridge DY9 8JT On September the 28th Lye High Street welcomed the newest Micropub on the scene. Before its transformation, the premises was previously the High Street's unoccupied vets, which was screaming out to be transformed into something that would help bring some life back into the street once again. Along with the close proximity to the Lye Train Station and supporting the existing ale trail that currently runs along the No 9 bus route. It's a complete no brainer that this would be the perfect spot for a Micropub! The brand-new ale drinking destination of choice for local beer enthusiasts was none other than the long-awaited Wheelie Thirsty Micropub – the first and most recent addition to the Fixed Wheel Brewery's soon to be expanding range of small and friendly local Micropubs.



With micropubs popping up here, there and everywhere at the moment, it's certainly a step in the right direction for the growth and awareness of locally produced beer, with craft beer currently experiencing a boom in popularity.

While you'll be sure to find some permanent lines on at the bar, aptly named as the Wheelie House beers. You'll find their Wheelie Pale, a 4.1% ABV beer, hopped with cascade and centennial hops, a refreshing and full of flavour Pale Ale. The first of many within the range, you can expect to find the next house beer to be released within the near future.



With plenty more events in the pipeline, such as the recurrence of the already popular monthly cheese night as well as several quiz nights that will soon be taking place, it's truly transitioning the town of Lye into a hub of local beer and entertainment. With its close proximity to other local hot spots for a good quality pint or two, all within a stone's throw of each other, this will only lead to more real beer drinkers visiting the area and supporting the local businesses and the community.

For details of opening days and hours, together with forthcoming events please check out the Wheelie Thirsty Facebook page.

Brewery News

Dudley & South Staffs

HOLDEN'S, WOODSETTON

The DY1 brewery reached an agreement with supermarket giant Aldi to stock 100,000 bottles of Woodsetton Pale Ale (WPA) nationwide in September 2018. As the main festival sponsor for Dudley Winter Ales Fayre, Holden's supplied two special brews for this year's occasion – Molten Glow (in recognition of local industrialist Abraham Darby) and Hop Rocks IPA (an uncharacteristically hoppy beer brewed by a young colleague).



TOLL END, TIPTON

The Ocker Hill brewery are proud sponsors of Tipton Town Reserves for the 2018/19 season.

looking forward to their Spring Festival which starts on Thursday March 14th 2019.

Looking back, Green Duck hosted the 2018 'UK Beer Debate' during December. A number of key industry figures were present to discuss the pressing issues concerning our industry, which was also streamed live on-line. Also, well-known author Roger Protz described his beer that day as 'delicious' on social media. A cracking endorsement!

Stourbridge & Halesowen

CRADDOCKS, STOURBRIDGE

Craddock's are planning to move the brewery back to Stourbridge from Bridgnorth to a bigger site - watch this space!



The festive brew - Yule Glow 6% - was in the pubs over the holiday, with a revised recipe that includes added orange peel, please let us know if you enjoyed it!

GREEN DUCK, STOURBRIDGE

Green Duck goes from strength to strength and is putting a big focus on monthly specials for 2019, upping their output from 1 to 3 per month! By the time you read this their Christmas Beer Festival will have passed, and they will be

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BEER DAYS OUT

Libations In Lichfield

Lichfield is a historic Georgian cathedral city in east Staffordshire, notable as the birthplace of Dr Samuel Johnson, who wrote the first English dictionary, and Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin. In older times, it certainly was a “*city of philosophers*”, as Dr Johnson said, and it is still an important ecclesiastical centre. But it was also a city of pubs and inns. In 1834, it had over 70 pubs, one for every 69 people! Like many towns and cities, the number of pubs has now dramatically declined, but there are still many well worth visiting. As Dr Johnson also said: “*There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn*”.

Arriving by train at Lichfield City railway station, we turned left along the main road and then right into St John Street. Our first port of call was the **Brewhouse & Kitchen**, on the corner with The Friary. This is one of a small chain of micro-brewery restaurants in some 20 towns in England. There is a regular range of 4-5 cask beers, with a couple of seasonal offerings and an extensive range of UK and imported bottled beers, along with some tasty meals. We sampled the locally-brewed Gatehouse and Spellman Sam English-style ales, Handy Man IPA and 3 Sticks, Lunartrick and Tricky Spires American-style ales. With more time (7 hours), we could have indulged in a Brewery Experience Day (£85), taking away a 5-litre mini-keg of our own beer! Or perhaps a Beer Masterclass (£20) tasting 8 different beers and nibbles, or even a Beer & Food Matching Experience (£30) with 3 beers and dishes.



Brewhouse & Kitchen, St John Street, Lichfield

Turning left into Bird Street and then into Sandford Street, we came across the **Horse & Jockey**, a lively city-centre pub with 8 ever-changing real ales and a good choice of snacks. Run by CAMRA award-winning licencees, we couldn't resist a glass of Bathams Best Bitter and Timothy Taylor's Landlord. Retracing our steps to Bird Street, we crossed over into Market Street to visit the historic **Angel Inn**, a popular pub, now operated by Joule's (Market Drayton). Here we sampled Slumbering Monk and Joule's Old No.6. Further along Market Street, we found **The Scales**, another traditional pub, formerly a coaching inn dating back to the 1700s, which serves a good range of hand-pulled beers, including Robinsons Overhang and White Rat.

Turning right into Bread Market Street to join Bore Street, we turned left into Tamworth Street, to pause briefly at **The Acorn**, the sole remaining Wetherspoon's pub in the city centre. We found it very crowded at lunchtime, but managed a quick glass of Wolf's Granny Wouldn't Like It. Then two real highlights of our day. First, **Beerbohm**, a micro-pub offering a good range of hand-pulled beers along with an excellent selection of Belgian & German bottled beers.

We sampled Heritage Masterpiece, The Great Ratsby and Leatherbritches Hairy Tossler.



Beerbohm, Tamworth Street, Lichfield

Just a couple of doors down is another CAMRA award-winning micro-pub, **The Whippet Inn**. This small real ale bar offers four ever-changing beers, including those from the owner's Hippy Killer brewery. We were lucky to be able to sample his Lemon Pie Saison ale, Fixed Wheel Domestique, Tiny Rebel Dutty IPA and Salopian The Bends.

Returning back towards the railway station, we paused at **55 Wade Street** (formerly the Malt Bar), just opposite the Garrick Theatre. A more up-market establishment, but offering an interesting range of draught beers, including Salopian's Lemon Dream.



Whippet Inn, Tamworth Street, Lichfield

Finally, we had been told of a new micro-pub that had just opened not far from the railway station, so we thought it was worth a visit before returning home. The **Bitter-Suite** is around the corner in Upper John Street, opposite a former brewery and next to one of the most "bashed" railway bridges in the country! In fact, it doesn't have a bar at all – glasses of beer and other drinks are served at your table, after having been drawn from barrels in the adjoining ground floor "cellar", all kept at perfect temperature. We sampled Maggie's Thieving Rogue, Dancing Duck's 22, Weetwood Anchor Ale and Mallinson's Sorachi Noir Black IPA.



Bitter-Suite, St John Street, Lichfield

So Lichfield is another good beer day-out. But please note that most of the micro-pubs tend to be closed on Mondays and Tuesdays. A good time to visit Lichfield is when the local beer festivals are being held in the Guildhall, normally in January and September/October.

Beers and cheers!

Steve James



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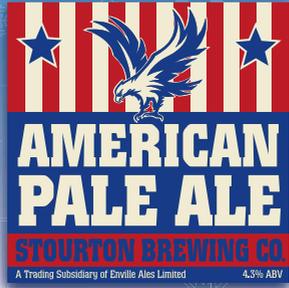
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