

ALES & TALES



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

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

**Issue 40
Spring 2019**



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Welcome Back

Milestones provide the perfect prompt to reflect on how well a project is fulfilling its objectives and I am proud that this edition of Ales and Tales is once again brimming with insightful opinion pieces and campaigning narrative. May I take the occasion of our **Ruby Anniversary** to thank our regular readership and committed contributors for generating the demand and content required for a successful publication. Welcome to issue 40 of Ales and Tales.

NATIONAL

In February, CAMRA's Directors released a Strategic Report for the year ending 31st December 2018. **National membership increased by 0.3%** to 190,918 (190,359 in 2017) but survey findings found that the number of drinkers reporting that they have at least 'tried' real ale decreased to 55% (57% in 2017). CAMRA will continue work to raise awareness of different beer styles and to encourage knowledge of real ale through its awards, publications, and digital media. Festivals are offering beers dispensed from a greater variety of vessels in the hope of tempting more drinkers; a necessary diversification decision in the context of declining festival income which fell to £8.33m (£9.61m in 2017).

The report also outlined that the **rate of pub closures has slowed** to 14-15 per week (18-19 in 2017). Whilst this is a welcome step towards 'levelling off', every single case of a pub/club ceasing trading is devastating for local communities. With that in mind, the campaign will continue to seek a reduction in the tax burden on pubs, and lobby for reductions in beer duty and reform of business rates.

This work will be led by a **new national Chair**, Nik Antona, who will be accountable for implementing the Strategic Plan (2018-22) which confronts the major changes called for by the membership through the emotive Revitalisation Project. I will use this opportunity to inform you that the NE has decided to **increase membership subscriptions** in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI). The revised costs will apply from 1st July 2019. A Single subscription will increase from £25 to £26.50, a Joint subscription from £30 to £31.50, and a Life subscription from £450 to £477.

REGIONAL

Fixed Wheel's Blackheath Stout has been declared the **Supreme Champion Beer of the West Midlands** for 2018. It is the third year in a row that a 'dark' beer has won the competition, following Beowulf Dark Raven (2017) and Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild (2016). Congratulations to brewer, Scott Povey.



Following a successful stint in Norwich, the **Great British Beer Festival Winter** will next year move to Birmingham as part of its three-year rotation around the country. The event, held in February, is being marketed as "A Festival of a Thousand Trades".

LOCAL

On home soil, both Dudley & South Staffordshire (D & SS) and Stourbridge & Halesowen (S & H) branches have completed judging exercises to identify their respective Pub of the Year for 2019. We wish both pubs the very best of luck as they are now judged in the West Midlands County competition.

The **D & SS Pub of the Year** is the Plough & Harrow, Cradley Heath. This 'off the radar' but remarkably consistent establishment – owned by Westbourne Leisure and managed by Gary Davies – serves six beers including strong guests. You can read about all of the D&SS awards later in this issue.

The **S & H Pub of the Year** is the Waggon & Horses, Halesowen. Retaining the accolade for the third year in a row, this popular pub – owned by Black Country Ales and managed by Dawn & Mick – serves up to 13 beers and a selection of ciders/perries. You can read about all of the S & H awards in issue 41.

Finally, I hope you will join me in wishing the utmost happiness to our wonderful Editor, Lizzie Cadwell, and her husband (and Stourbridge & Halesowen branch Chair) Tim, as they expect the arrival of their first child in May 2019. Lizzie is a focused, flexible, and friendly colleague who coordinates the production of Ales and Tales with great ability. I am delighted (and relieved) to learn that Lizzie will continue as Editor!

Ryan Hunt

Chair, Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA

Meet The Brewer Beat Brewery

It's our pleasure to introduce you to a lively new brewery that has recently moved to the area:

Beat Brewery
Old Forge Trading Estate, Dudley Rd,
Stourbridge DY9 8EL



Name, age, background before brewing?

Chris Willacy, aged 30

Originally from Telford, after leaving school I moved to the Black Country and started working at a local powder coating company where I was able to gain knowledge and experience in areas such as electrical, mechanical, plumbing and control systems through college courses and onsite practical work.

These skills came in useful when I discovered the art of brewing later in life.

Like most homebrewers, I started off with the 'just add water and yeast' type brew kits from the homebrew shop but I was soon hooked on the hobby and wanted to learn everything I possibly could about brewing.

I started work on building my own stainless brewing system and a fancy computer control system for it, as well as joining homebrew groups, online forums, reading lots of books, all with the aim of improving my beer making abilities.

It all started getting a little out of hand, I would find myself having to navigate my way past stacks of bottle crates and kegs to get into the living room or having to rearrange the brewing equipment in the kitchen to get to the sink to wash up. The girlfriend somehow tolerated all of this, so I married her as I realised no one else would put up with it.

What are your hobbies and interests?

Beer and brewing obviously, even though making beer is now my job I would still class it as a hobby as

well as it's something that I very much enjoy doing and there are always things to be learnt and new beers to be tasted.

Hydroponic fruit and vegetable gardening, a hobby I got into while living in a flat with a small balcony. I'd always been interested in gardening and enjoyed being outdoors but not initially having a garden obviously my options were quite limited, so I started looking into hydroponics.

The hydroponics systems were able to produce masses of big, strong fruit and vegetables in a small space without needing a great deal of maintenance. It's a great little hobby for the summer months and one I will be following on with more this summer now that I have a garden and a little person to help me.

What was your first alcoholic drink?

My first memory of drinking was sharing a pack of the little stubby bottles of cheap French lager with my mom during the World Cup back in 1996.

What is your favourite beer that you produce and favourite from another brewery?

Indie Rock is my favourite beer in our current range as it is the first of my own recipes that we have introduced into our range on top of the core beers which came along with the brewery when we brought it up from the Cotswolds to the Midlands. It is a little different to a traditional porter, having a good helping of chinook hops added early and during fermentation to give a bit more bitterness and hop flavour than you would expect from a traditional porter, without compromising on the deep dark malt flavours you would expect from this style.

I'm very much into drinking fruity beers at the moment, especially anything with a cherry flavour, one beer I buy whenever I see it is Kasteel Rouge brewed by Van Honsebrouck in Belgium, it has a lovely strong and sweet cherry flavour which always goes down a treat.

What food do you enjoy best with your beer?

My perfect food/beer combo would be a big messy burger fresh off the BBQ, eaten out in the sun with a nice cold beer and friends. Failing that, a bag of cheese & onion crisps will do.



What is your favourite pub and why?

Would have to be the Bull and Bladder in Brierley Hill, I've had many good sessions in there, and their turkey salad cob washed down with a pint of Bathams Best Bitter takes some beating.

How did you get started in the trade?

It started as a hobby, I would often take a crate of beers in to work to get a bit of feedback from the lads, and so that I could free up some space so I could get the next brew on. One day the Directors of the company approached me with the suggestion of opening up a brewery in the unit next door, obviously I jumped at the chance and we soon got started on the masses of research and work that was required to open up a commercial brewery and looking for one to buy of the right size.



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

So far, we have only introduced one new beer to the range, this one took around 6 weeks, tweaking one of my homebrew recipes and designing the labels for the bottles and pump clips. We have a couple more new beers in the pipeline which we hope to release soon, this should happen a little faster than last time as I did the label designing myself which involved getting to grips with the image editing software, but I have now got the hang of it so it should be a little faster with future designs.

What are your aspirations for the future?



Exciting times here at Beat Brewery now. We are well under way with the taproom and shop that will be located at the front of the building, which should be in a position to be opened to the public in the next couple of months, so getting this finished

to a high standard is our top priority at the moment.

Looking to the future, growing the brewery and expanding our customer base as well as raising our profile around the Midlands and further afield is what we wish to achieve in the long term for stability and continual improvement as the whole team at Beat is dynamic and enthusiastic.

In your opinion what are the best and worst things happening to the industry in the last 5 years?

On one hand it saddens me how many pubs have been closing down over the last few years, leaving some communities without a good local boozer, but then on the other hand this has helped to give rise to the smaller, more independent bars that seem to be popping up all over the place like micropubs and tap rooms, where the focus can be put more on providing great beer and a friendly environment for people to enjoy themselves rather than the larger tied chain pubs where the focus is put more on increasing profits for their owners and pushing food sales.

Also, I think this has helped breweries to now be able to push the boundaries of beer styles and produce beers which are a little more experimental, giving the consumer more options, rather than everybody just producing the same standard 4% pale which seems to be the norm now in most tied pubs.



How do you think/would like CAMRA to help you in your business?

I believe CAMRA is now beginning to see that the modern consumers' tastes and preferences towards beer have changed over the years and I hope that they will continue on the right track to encourage this and support small local breweries who do things a little differently than the traditional cask brewery. Since opening, CAMRA has supported us with promoting our brewery and keeping us informed of local events and beer festivals which we have been able to attend to get our beer out to more local people and to get recognised which is helping us to get a small foothold in a big market.

Tanya Rhead



Are You Keeping In Touch With CAMRA?

A member raised a valid question at a recent branch meeting: how can we improve the way we communicate with our members in order to encourage increased participation? It is perhaps the \$64,000 question!

Regrettably, it must be the case that many of our branch members only pay their £25 (single, direct debit) membership fee to receive their £20 of Wetherspoon vouchers. Now that is a whole article in itself, which I will not delve into too deeply on this occasion.

Many will join to take advantage of the preferential treatment enjoyed by members at CAMRA's own beer festivals, which none of us can complain about. Festival benefits include discount or free entry, and additional beer tokens to spend.

As a branch, Stourbridge and Halesowen has approaching 700 members in our catchment area; it is a source of anticipation at every meeting to see whether we can break this magic figure, though at the moment we are a little way short.

We can average anywhere between 10 and 30 at our branch meetings; we like to think that we are a well-attended branch but of course we would like to do better. In addition, there are also many people who we know that have previously volunteered for our Beer Festival, but don't want to get involved in the nitty-gritty month-to-month organisation of running the branch.

In terms of participation, we are lucky that the majority of our pubs are within relatively easy reach of the Number 9 bus route, as many branches do not have a similar luxury. Just think about branches with only a daytime only

bus service, or even worse, no bus at all. This means that when we organise meetings or socials, most venues are within easy reach.

You may be tired of hearing the same thing every couple of months, but it remains true that without a steady influx of willing volunteers, the future of your CAMRA branch is in jeopardy. Thankfully we have all posts covered at the moment, but rarely is there more than one person stepping up for each position, and many people hold at least one committee post or duty.

Communication is always a key theme and keeping in touch with our members will help to let them know what is going on within the branch. This is done currently via a number of methods, including e-mail, and social media, plus we also have our own website which displays a branch diary. You will also find a diary of events for both branches in this magazine, plus a selection of contact details, so don't hesitate to reach out to us.

As with all branches, the branch diary is also published in CAMRA's national 'What's Brewing' publication. Over the last year or so you will have noticed some communications from CAMRA HQ that they are scaling down production of printed materials and relying on online versions in a bid to reduce costs. In modern times the environmental and financial cost of printing and delivering a publication is hard to ignore.

Regrettably many of our members do not have an online presence at all, and some may not even have an e-mail address. It is an unfortunate side-effect that our communication channels with some of our members may be lost due to this reason. Some of you reading this will have no idea about what 'Facebook' or 'Twitter' is, let alone Snapchat or Instagram which this branch



has not yet delved into. Social Media is a vital marketing and communication tool for us and will only increase as time marches on.

For those without any form of electronic communication avenues, free magazines such as this may now be the only physical way to connect with our members, and non-members of course, so it is a vital resource for the branch. It is however restricted by issues of print deadlines, and information being out-of-date as soon as it has gone to print. As a quarterly magazine, give or take, we also sometimes struggle to look three to four months into the future to put together magazine content.

I mentioned the financial cost of printed matter earlier so you may be wondering how this magazine is funded, as you will be reading this free-of-charge in your local pub, bar or brewery-tap. It will come as no surprise that the answer is 'advertising', so producing it comes at no cost to the Campaign.

As you may have heard, GDPR regulations have recently been introduced and branches have to be very careful about any information held. CAMRA has a central communications tool which permits the branch secretary to contact branch members without seeing the centrally-held database of email addresses.

So, we get to the point of this piece - if CAMRA HQ does not hold your email address, if you have one, you may be missing out on being contacted by your local branch. To remedy this, enter this address into your web browser: <http://www.camra.org.uk/login>. If you are not registered, you will need your CAMRA membership number and follow the on-screen prompts in order to join up. Here you should be able to access your own membership details, including making sure you have given CAMRA your email address, or updated it if it has changed. There are various other preferences you can set too, so don't forget to tick the box which says you would like to hear from your local CAMRA branch!

Don't forget, if you have moved to a new house recently, even only a short distance, you may have fallen under the catchment area of another branch, so it's vital your address records are also up to date. It is even possible to change your CAMRA branch! If you feel more affinity with one branch area than another, then you can request a change through membership@camra.org.uk. We have to draw our branch borders somewhere, and occasionally branch boundaries throw up a few anomalies!

Rounding off this article, the branch is always keen to make sure our membership is kept up to date, where it is wanted, and we would urge you to come along to a branch meeting or marking social event, and we can only do this if we have your correct contact details.

Tim Cadwell

Chair, Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA

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Titanic Tap Takeover

On Thursday 31st January publican Jo Cundale of the Queens Head, Envile Street, Stourbridge arranged a tap takeover with Stoke-on-Trent's Titanic Brewery. Alliteration-wise possibly the best tap takeover of all.



Titanic's West Midlands sales executive George Hawbrook hosted the event which was attended by a packed pub including more Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA members than ever seen together before in one pub.

Most of us had got stuck into their beers before George arrived, we had never seen such a collection of dark beers on a pub's bar, other than at beer festivals.

When George arrived, he introduced himself and gave us the background on Titanic Brewery. John Pazio founded the brewery in 1985. He decided to call the brewery after the famous ship, whose captain, Edward Smith was a Stoke man. Unfortunately, the business eventually went under, pardon the pun. It was taken over by Keith Bott and his brother Dave. Keith had worked as a brewer for John in Titanic's early days, they now employ about 150 staff but are still very much involved in the day to day running of the business. Their most popular beer, winner of many awards, is Plum Porter. George explained

this was made as an afterthought when they realised they had promised to produce a new beer but had overlooked the deadline. They had just brewed a porter so they added some plums to it and Plum Porter was born. It proved to be their most successful beer and is now 60% of their production. The talk went down very well, pardon the pun again. George concluded with a question & answer session and explained we would get a raffle ticket with our beer purchases, with the chance to win, bottle openers, bottles of beer, a t-shirt and a brewery tour. He drew the raffle towards the end of the evening, Andy Koszary being the only winner from our group, now the proud owner of a Titanic bottle opener. My suggestion that all CAMRA members should get a free brewery tour fell on deaf ears.



Of the 8 Titanic beers on offer, 6 were dark. There was Iceberg, White Star, Black Ice, Cappuccino, Chocolate & Vanilla, Cherry Dark and Plum Porter.

One of the best CAMRA socials we've had, a great night. Many thanks to Titanic, George and of course Jo and her staff.

If anyone would like to contact Titanic here's their details:

George Hawbrook
07791 750 526

George.hawbrook@titanicbrewery.co.uk

Brewery number - 01782 823 447

<https://www.titanicbrewery.co.uk/>

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Advent Ales

(a tour by bus of some of Dudley's pubs in December 2018)

Each pub was announced on social media – look out for the 2019 advent calendar.

Bus 1 - Mount Pleasant, Sedgley

The first pub on this year's advent calendar used to be one of my favourites, unfortunately the smoky atmosphere on too many occasions turned me off. On the few visits I make here the beer is always very good. On my visit an excellent choice was available with Oakham Bishops Farewell and Wye Valley Butty Bach being my choices. As usual, the Xmas decorations are a delight although the front bar was a little cold when I arrived.

Beer: 6/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 6/10

Bus 2 - Rose & Crown, Brierley Hill

Pleasant urban pub with only 2 customers at lunchtime. Nice fire burning in the bar. Welcome was minimal. Obviously NOT Xmas in this pub, no decorations or tree although 2 hampers appear to be raffled although not obvious what for. Usual drivel of Christmas music.

Beer: 5/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 5/10

Bus 3 - Britannia Pub & Brewery, Rowley Regis

A quiet Wednesday night in the 'Britt' but an excellent range of local beers to choose from alongside ciders and an extensive gin list. A range of good value food supplements the drink offering. Service was polite if a touch under enthusiastic. Xmas decorations need a bit of work this year.

Beer: 5/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 5/10

Bus 4 - Waggon & Horses, Old Hill

This was a surprise when announced on day 4. When it first opened, I thought the pub would be a brilliant addition to the pubs around Cradley Heath/Old Hill. Sadly, it has never quite managed it.

Beer: 6/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 6/10

Bus 5 - Cottage, Kingswinford

On the outskirts of Kingswinford this pub should be on everyone's radar. A fine selection of 4 real ales always on offer. A selection of 6 Country Wines and a good food menu all served by friendly attentive staff. The wood burning stove in the front of the pub made for a pleasant lunchtime. Pleasantly Christmassy.

Beer: 7/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 7/10

Bus 6 - Dog & Lamppost, Brierley Hill

I had heard so much good news about this pub I was extremely disappointed when I visited. No decorations apart from lots of Union flags. No tree. The welcome was pleasant enough but the atmosphere uninspiring. Enville Ale and Sadlers Peaky Blinder Black IPA had seen better days.

Beer: 5/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 5/10

Bus 7 - Saltwells, Netherton

This has been a great family friendly pub for donkey's years. I used to bring my son here 30 years ago. Children's fun park outside. Friendly service, great atmosphere and nice Xmas decorations. Wye Valley Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout was excellent.

Beer: 7/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 7/10

Bus 8 - Garrison, Waterfront

A new pub near the canal. Themed as a Peaky Blinders pub it has an excellent range of cask ale. Beers from Enville, Fixed Wheel, Green Duck and Salopian regularly appear. Xmas decorations subtle but pleasing to the eye.

Beer: 7/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 6/10

Bus 9 - Sadler's Tap Room, Quinton

This relatively new bar has become disappointing. After an early flush of good quality beer my recent visits have become poor. Hop Bomb was hazy and yeasty. The Mud City Stout, normally a favourite of mine was better. Hopefully improvements will be made. Not a lot of Christmas spirit in this pub either.

Beer: 4.5/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 5/10

Bus X10 - Haden Cross, Old Hill

Saved from the blight of New River Retail and its attempts to cover the country in supermarkets I have always had high hopes for this pub. Sadly, my visit resulted in probably the least inspiring beer I have had in the first 10 days of this advent tour. Enville Ale was warm and flat, the Wye Valley HPA was marginally worse. Not much Christmas cheer here. I've heard more positive reviews from other CAMRA members so perhaps consistency is missing here.

Beer: 3/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 4/10



Bus 11 - Fountain, Tipton

This is a great little community pub on the side of the canal in Tipton with a good selection of beers and often offering something a little unusual – Wadworth Horizon. Fuller's (Gales) Seafarers Ale was excellent. The service and welcome were good and a great atmosphere helped the beers go down. Warm and cheery and a good Christmas feel.

Beer: 6.5/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 7/10

Bus 12 - Crosswells, Langley

A warm welcome in this pub as usual although the Crosswells itself looks in need of a bit of a makeover. Sharp's Doom Bar and Atlantic on the bar along with Enville Ale. Xmas décor minimal.

Beer: 6/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 6/10

Bus 13 - Midland, Bearwood

Probably one of the tallest Xmas trees I have ever seen. Size does matter. Little else to cheer the Christmas spirit apart from the landlady's Xmas jumper. Pleasant welcome with a good atmosphere from the lunchtime drinkers. Lovely real fire in the corner with a view of the beer casks.

Beer: 6/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 6/10

Bus 14 - Tivi-Ale, Tividale

A great welcome from one of the warmer micropubs. This place is a great suntrap early afternoon when the sun streams in through the front windows. Beers from Holden's, Kelham Island and Serious were on the bar on my visit with the Serious Prime particularly good. A lovely range of gins also available. Pretty Christmas tree but the decorations were minimal.

Beer: 7/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 7/10

Bus 15 - Hinksford Arms, Hinksford

A good welcome from the busy barman and a fine offering of mainly local beers with a guest from Castle Rock brewery. The dog owners in this pub are well-behaved as all dogs are on leads. A great Christmas atmosphere on my visit as the pub prepared for its Xmas market and carol singing.

Beer: 6.5/10 Atmosphere/welcome: 7/10

Bus 16 - Bird in Hand, Wordsley

Great atmosphere in this pub with lots of good conversation amongst locals. Interesting range of 3 guest beers to supplement the 3 fixed pumps. A delightful Xmas tree created a nice Christmassy feel. Only downside was a local was served before me.

Beer: 6.5/10 Atmosphere/Welcome 6/10

Bus 17 - Five Ways, Lower Gornal

I reckon I was the first customer at 1pm, receiving a minimal welcome. The decoration consisted of tinsel draped around pictures and mirrors. Pity about language from the two old codgers sat next to me. Nice wood burning stove.

Beer: 5/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 5/10

Bus 18 - Plough & Harrow, Cradley Heath

The usual warm welcome from this great pub. Pleasantly decorated and a cracking Christmas atmosphere. Regular darters occupy the oche. An outlet for Ludlow Gold which was excellent and Welbeck Abbey Jazzy Jumpers was also on good form.

Beer: 8.5/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 8/10

Bus 19 - Olde Swan, Netherton

A pub that is a shadow of its former self. Welcome was okay once the staff had finished with their mobile phones. Christmas decorations satisfactory compared to the dismal efforts last year.

Beer: 5.5/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 5/10

Bus 20 - Old Dispensary, Langley

Beer in this pub is always very good but it is a shame that the bad language from a number of customers is sometimes intolerable. Christmas decorations were adequate supplemented by the olde worlde feel from the cobwebs in the lights.

Beer: 7/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 5/10

Bus 21 - Bear Tavern, Bearwood

For a Greene King owned pub this place offers a great selection of beers, Granted, you get the usual GK IPA and Abbot but on my visit, Hook Norton Gasping Goose, Fixed Wheel Century Gold and Oakham Scarlet Macaw were also available. Service was a bit slow but not unreasonably so. Lots of Christmas meals being served and a good atmosphere was created.

Beer: 7/10 Atmosphere/Welcome: 7/10



Bus 22 - Old Chainyard, Coseley

A good atmosphere and pleasant welcome as usual in this pub. Two nicely decorated trees along with snowy winter scenes in all the windows gave a good Christmassy feel. St Austell Proper Job was pretty good but rather disappointingly and unusually no second beer available.

Beer: 7/10

Atmosphere/Welcome: 7/10

Bus 23 - Gospel Oak, Tipton

This would have been a great bus from somewhere to nowhere but unfortunately it does not run on Sunday but with good advance research I managed to do this pub early. Pity, the Banks's Sunbeam was pretty mediocre and I might still be waiting for the Banks's Amber. Plenty of Christmas activities with a meal and entertainer for local care homes.

Beer: 3/10

Atmosphere/Welcome: 4/10

Bus 24 - Waterfall, Blackheath

A very good choice of beers in this pub where the Holden's range is supplemented by guest beers from other local brewers. Bathams Best Bitter was fairly good but unfortunately the Holden's Golden Glow had just been changed and looked and tasted like it needed changing again. Tasteful silver and white decorations matched the delectable distressed furniture.

Beer: 5/10

Atmosphere/Welcome: 7/10

Best Beers of Advent:

Plough and Harrow, Cradley Heath

Best Atmosphere/Welcome:

Saltwells, Netherton

Must Try Harder, Joint Winners:

Gospel Oak, Tipton

Haden Cross, Old Hill

Steve Thompson

The Church Tavern

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The Best Of The Branch

We officially entered 'British Summer Time' at the end of March which means Christmas is now a distant memory. That said, many pubs and breweries will still be recovering from a January/February sales *slump* and will now be looking forward to a much-needed sales *jump*.

A YouGov poll in December 2018 discovered that a record-shattering 4.2 million drinkers intended to adopt temporary teetotalism at the start of the calendar year. Meanwhile, CAMRA members up and down the country were hard at work completing Good Beer Guide (GBG) 2020 nominations and Pub of the Year (PotY) 2019 shortlisting. In this edition, we pay tribute to those establishments which scooped ale accolades in the Dudley & South Staffordshire branch. The top of the hops in Stourbridge & Halesowen will be documented in edition 41 – Summer 2019.

Current data compiled and maintained by Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA shows that, within our branch boundaries:

- a) 300 pubs are trading, of which:
 - 63% sell a minimum of one real ale;
 - 15% sell a minimum of one real cider;
 - 85% are in metropolitan areas (Dudley and Sandwell);
 - 15% are in rural villages (South Staffordshire).
- b) 60 clubs are trading, of which:
 - 41% sell a minimum of one real ale.

Statistically, in our branch, pubs and clubs have a one-in-ten chance of being picked for the GBG (29 pubs) and a one-in-fifty chance of being shortlisted for the PotY competition (6 pubs). Both processes are entirely evidence-based and transparent. For example, it is current branch policy that only those CAMRA members which have submitted a minimum of 30 beer quality scores via WhatPub! (www.whatpub.com) for a minimum of 10 pubs across Dudley & South

Staffordshire are invited to *participate* in the Good Beer Guide Selection Meeting. This year, with over 6,000 beer quality scores (up 1,000 on 2017/18) submitted by over 200 CAMRA members, we can now have an unprecedented level of confidence in the results. Any questions or comments regarding the GBG nomination and/or PotY shortlisting systems are welcome and should be sent to:

pubsofficer@dudley.camra.org.uk

Our GBG nominations are subject to a press embargo until the book goes on sale in September 2019 so I will keep our entries hush-hush. Our PotY 2019 shortlist, on the other hand, included:

- Beacon Hotel, Sedgley
- Bell Inn, Trysull
- Bird in Hand, Wordsley
- Cat Inn, Enville
- Cross Inn, Kinver
- Plough & Harrow, Cradley Heath

22 judges from Dudley & South Staffordshire, Stourbridge & Halesowen, Birmingham, and Wolverhampton visited all 6 pubs in January/February 2019 and scored the watering holes against criteria, such as, beer quality, décor, and alignment with CAMRA objectives.

The Dudley & South Staffordshire Branch Pub of the Year 2019 is the Plough & Harrow, Cradley Heath. Landlord Gary Davies and his team came out on top in 4 of the 6 categories: beer quality, décor and cleanliness, service and offering, and overall impression. The pub serves 4 regular beers (Banks's Mild, Ludlow Gold, Wye Valley HPA, and Wye Valley Butty Bach) and 2 changing beers (typically Abbeydale, Bristol Beer Factory, and Kelham Island). On the evening of the presentation, the beer of choice was 'Russian Hill' (Bristol Beer Factory); a 5% bitter pale showcasing the Lemondrop hop.



Upon receiving the award, a characteristically modest Gary was quick to spread the praise to his regulars and staff.

Pub ploughs ahead as top Camra choice

Report by John Currow

A PUB is celebrating after being named the best around by judges at the Campaign for Real Ale.

The Plough and Harrow, in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, has been named the best pub in the region for the 2019 award. The judges praised the pub for its range of ales, its atmosphere and its staff.

Journey

The Plough and Harrow had previously won the award in 2017 and 2018. The pub has been named the best in the region for the 2019 award. The judges praised the pub for its range of ales, its atmosphere and its staff.



Mr. Jones, chairman of Dudley and South Staffordshire Community Pub, presenting himself Gary Jones with the pub of the year award. The Plough and Harrow offers a choice of ales, from the local to the international. It is open daily from 11am to 11pm. Regulars are welcome to the pub. The pub is located in the heart of the town.

Express & Star, 11th March 2019



L:- Bird in Hand Owner, Paul Jones
R:- Landlady, Paula Herbert

The Dudley & South Staffordshire Community Pub of the Year 2019 is the Bird in Hand, Wordsley. A bittersweet prize for this transformed pub as it was just millimeters away from winning the Branch Pub of the Year competition, despite featuring on the shortlist for the very first time. Nevertheless, this feels like the right award at this time for a landlady, Paula Herbert, who has brought a buzz to the business with an active social media presence and by accommodating a growing number of mutual interest groups. On the evening of the presentation, the beer of choice was Salted Caramel Stay Puft (Tiny Rebel); a fun, flavoured variation of one of my favourite porters. Owner, Paul Jones, has vowed to take feedback on board and has set his sights on the 2020 PotY award.



L:- Cross Inn Landlord, Andy Clark

The South Staffordshire Pub of the Year 2019 is the Cross Inn, Kinver. As part of the Black Country Ales portfolio, landlord Andy Clark serves a rotating range of ales which often includes rarer beer styles. It was a pleasure to see the company's director, Angus McMeeking, attend the presentation and engage in topical debate with members of Dudley & South Staffordshire, Stourbridge & Halesowen, and Wyre Forest CAMRA. On the afternoon of the presentation, the beer of choice was 'American Pale Ale' (Hartlebury); a 4.5% beer resurrected in December 2018 by this born-again microbrewery which was originally established as Atwood Ales in 2011 before rebranding as Worcestershire Brewing Co in 2014.



M:- Britannia Pub & Brewery Manager, Pete Walker

The Dudley & South Staffordshire Cider Pub of the Year 2019 is the Britannia Pub & Brewery, Rowley Regis. A bustling wet- and food-led pub

since reopening in September 2017, this Tap Room for Britt brewery (a subsidiary of Pig Iron) serves up to 5 ciders/perries. The manager, Pete Walker, was delighted to be recognised by CAMRA and the kitchen were hospitable by putting on some chip butties. Not all of the ciders on sale here are recognised as 'Real' by CAMRA as they include concentrate juice and, as mentioned beforehand, only 15% of branch pubs stock one or more real ciders or perries which highlights the extent of campaigning work ahead of us in this field.



L:- Kinver Constitutional Club Steward, Steve Hadley

Last but not least, the Dudley & South Staffordshire Club of the Year 2019 is Kinver Constitutional Club. Our Press Officer, Stanley Stephens, informs me that this is the thirteenth year in a row that the Club has held this title! A familiar but firmly warranted award. Collecting the award, Club Steward, Steve Hadley, cheekily commented on his decision to take down some of the older certificates to make space for the current and any future awards – of course, I would rather he start constructing a new wall! On the afternoon of the presentation, the beer of choice was Heart & Soul (Vocation); a fruity session IPA brewed near Hebden Bridge.

That concludes the Dudley & South Staffordshire awards for 2019. Be sure to make time to visit these establishments – you won't be disappointed.

Ryan Hunt

Chair, Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA



**As our farmers
know all too well:
no pain, no grain.**

They say nothing worth having comes easy. Unfortunately for our farmers that's true of the barley we use to brew our beers. We use a classic variety called Golden Promise, grown to our own unique specification. The biscuity, golden malt it produces is the perfect partner to our natural spring water, and is vital to Landlord's depth and delicate balance of flavour. It's also a type of barley that's notoriously hard to grow, and our exacting specification makes it even more difficult. Which makes it a costly ingredient and a real challenge even for experienced farmers. Luckily we can offer some liquid therapy.

All for that taste of Taylor's



LONDON

Well Worth A Summer Visit

Nowhere in the UK reflects the current diversity of beers and changes of drinking establishments better than London. Our trip in February with several local CAMRA members sought to explore all different aspects of the beer scene in the capital.

We stayed at the Premier Inn in Chiswick and it was no surprise to find the pubs in the area dominated by Fuller's, given the proximity to the brewery. Adrian and I were keen to find a few traditional London pubs. One of the first on the 'list' was the Tabard Inn, located right by Turnham Green underground station. This proved a busy, noisy place which housed a theatre on its upper floor. The interior of the pub itself boasted wooden alcoves in the lounge and an impressive tiled wall in the bar. The pattern depicted was colourful in the William Morris style, featuring birds, exotic greenery and edged with snakes winding their way around the scene. The beer range was also impressive with a good selection of both cask and craft ales. The Tabard is also featured in a book of ghostly walks around London. It is reportedly haunted by an old lady, dressed in black, who sits in silence at the tables, appearing to whistle soundlessly to herself. Unfortunately, we didn't see her and it would have been impossible to tell if she was making any sound in such a noisy environment.



Our second evening excursion was to The Italian Job where Tim had booked us all a table.

This is one of a small chain of Italian restaurants, offering a good range of craft keg ales, an interesting place appealing to those wishing to combine great food with beer.

We spent Friday visiting the Cutty Sark. The weather was atrocious, forcing us to abandon plans to explore Greenwich. Instead we caught the train back to Borough to meet up with Mike, who was on a birthday pub crawl with a QPR fan and friends. It was late into the crawl when we met up at The Royal Oak, a Harvey's pub in Borough. This



was another typical, old fashioned London pub with two separate drinking rooms united by a central 'U' shaped bar. Lots of wood and glass screens. Between the rooms was a small off-sales serving hatch. The Royal Oak offered a full range of Harvey's beers, the pick being their Old Ale.



Saturday proved a much calmer day with sunshine. We had promised ourselves a visit to the Imperial War Museum near Waterloo Station. Chiswick also has an overground station with a direct link to Waterloo and it's a pleasant walk



from the Premier Inn, through the grounds of Chiswick House – another establishment with a ghost or two.



After a morning admiring the fantastic exhibits at the IWM, we set off to find a pub where we could dine and watch the rugby. We headed for the King's Arms in Waterloo, another traditional pub located in a pleasant residential street. This also boasted two separate drinking areas with TV screens in evidence. To the rear of the pub was an excellent Thai restaurant – another example of the need for pubs to offer something different.

The range of beers was inviting with an excellent mild from St. Peter's and Kent Cob Nut. We were also delighted



to see Worthington White Shield on draught. Back in the day this was one of the few bottle conditioned beers on sale, at a time when their beers were much maligned by real ale fans. Thus, we were able to settle down for a relaxing afternoon watching rugby, enjoying Thai food and making the most of the rare treat of White Shield.

We finished our day with a venture to the modern London phenomenon – the railway arch micro-pub – visiting the Hole in the Wall and then the

Waterloo Tap, both located near the station. The first one proved noisy and popular, partly due to the very competitively priced food. Here our ears were assailed by the constant rumble of overhead trains.

Thus, to our last pub, the excellent Waterloo Tap. All the beers were displayed on a blackboard over the bar, clearly differentiating between cask and craft. The barman was actually from Sheffield and proved extremely helpful and knowledgeable. Favourite here was the Siren Breakfast Stout.

A walk across the Thames, enjoying the spectacular night scene along the river, took us to the District Line and back to the Tabard for one last drink and a serious football discussion with Mike. Another enjoyable, if tiring trip to London.

Joy Stevens

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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 Black Cock, Guns Lane, West Bromwich.

It was featured as Pub of the Month in the Black Country Bugle newspaper in March 1984 where it said that legend has it that the original beerhouse on the site was financed by the proceeds of a special breed of fighting cocks, Smacker's Black Uns. An early licensee was William Beddoes. The Beddoes had long been known as the Smackers. Their famous breed proved extremely profitable and enabled the conversion of their humble beerhouse into a sizeable tavern.

The lease, licenses, goodwill and possession of the pub was put up for sale in January 1883. The advert stated it to be a well-frequented and genuine home-brewing beerhouse, with large and convenient premises, containing three bed rooms, large club room, smoke room, well fitted-up bar, kitchen, modern brewery, capital cellars, stables, and all necessary outbuildings. Net rent £34 per annum.

In 1901 there was a show of homing pigeons in the assembly room with 235 entries.

In 1908 Sarah Clemson was the licensee, a widow, who continued to run the pub for a couple of years after the death of her husband. In August that year she was charged with keeping the pub open and selling ale during prohibited hours. She maintained that she was entertaining some guests after having closed the pub. One man claimed to be courting her daughter. The other man, Mrs. Clemson told the police officer, was the husband of her sister. However, the policeman knew that this other man was single – and he was found sitting on a sofa 'nursing' the married sister. This scandal was reported nationally. Eventually Mrs. Clemson was let off, having to pay court costs of £2 16s.

Evening Despatch 24/10/1939

"The Black Cock Inn, Carters Green, West Bromwich, isn't forgetting men now with the Fighting Services who used to go there for a peace-time half-pint. A fund for these former customers has been started and coins are stuck on a picture behind the bar. So far £2 8s has been contributed."



The pub closed in 2002 and by 2003 had been converted into a house.

Hitchmough's Black Country Pubs
longpull.co.uk



Why not try a pint or two in our newly crowned CAMRA Pubs Of The Year:

Mick & Dawn O'Neill at the **Waggon & Horses, Halesowen**
Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA Pub of the Year
2017, 2018 & now 2019.

And now Andy Clark at the **Cross Inn, Kinver**
South Staffordshire CAMRA Pub of the Year 2019.



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A Fined Beer Is A Finer Beer

For a couple of years now I have been trying to get my head around the attraction of un-fined beer and failed miserably. Perhaps someone will respond to my article and educate me on a few issues. Are un-fined beers a short-term craze, will they die a natural death like alcopops?



From my own point of view, I have tried a few and decided they are not for me. This now creates a massive problem for me. I now find that I need to ask each time I order a new beer whether it is un-fined or hazy. This issue was a particular problem at the recent Manchester beer festival where over 100 of the beers were listed in the programme as Vegan friendly or un-fined. Unfortunately, a significant number of others were not identified in this way. Eventually I was asking for a sample not as a "taster" but as a "sighter".

It was also the case at Manchester festival that bar managers had been told not to mark any beers as hazy on barrel end cards as the

brewers might be offended. Surely, if brewers are confident about the products they are brewing then they should be confident enough to indicate this on the pumpclip. If a pub is happy to serve un-fined beers then the licensee should be confident enough to indicate on a beer board that the beer is un-fined or Hazy. Give me the information and I can make an informed choice before purchase.



Of course the variation in the amount of debris in this type of beer is also a problem and generally more associated with pale beers than dark beers. I considered that something that is only faintly tainted may be acceptable. This led me to thinking about degrees of clarity and I came up with the following definitions:

O-Opalescent, a beer whose clarity is such that one can easily see two fingers through the glass.

H-Hazy, a beer whose clarity is such that only the outline of two fingers can be seen through the glass.

C-Cloudy, a beer whose clarity is such that two fingers are hardly visible through the glass.

G-Chicken gravy, a beer that looks like your mother's best chicken gravy and thick enough for a spoon to stand up in it.

Love these beers or hate them, each person should be able to know at the point of purchase what they are buying.

Steve Thompson

Hitchmough's Archives

COOKSEYS HOTEL, Halesowen Road, Old Hill Stourbridge Observer 25/2/1865

On Thursday evening a grand ball was held at COOKSEYS HOTEL. Upwards of 60 lovers of the dance assembled, and moved on the 'light fantastic toe' to the melodious strains of Collier's String Band, of Brierley Hill, till the clock struck the wee hours, and then they parted, well pleased with the evening's pleasure.

OLD MOGUL, Mogul Lane, Netherend, Cradley Brierley Hill Advertiser 30/5/1857 - Advert

Grand Entertainment, at the OLD MOGUL INN.

Mr. Thomas Fellows begs respectfully to inform his Friends and the Public of a Grand Ball and Concert at the above house, on 3rd June. Dancing to commence at three o'clock, when some of the most popular music of the day will be performed by the Old Netherend Band, with a variety of Madrigals, Glees, Trios, Duetts, and Songs.

Admission Sixpence, returned in Refreshments.

KINGS HEAD, Hagley Road, Bearwood Smethwick Telephone 10/1/1964 - Advert

Twist and Twitch. Wednesday 15th January at the KINGS HEAD, Bearwood. 8-10.45pm. Licensed Bar. Admission 2s 6d.

Smethwick Telephone 28/1/1964

Frenziered teenagers twitched and twisted the night away in a Bearwood Hall on Wednesday, watched by skeletons and ghouls from black painted walls.

It was the opening night of The Morgue – Bearwood's first underground twitch and twist club for the over 18s. So far more than 500 members have applied to join the club – converted at a cost of around £300. Many more applicants have been turned down, because the applicants were under 18 years of age. Explained the licensee Mr. Bert Hammnett, whose son Mike has helped provide the club's morbid setting, 'We are compelled by licensing laws to restrict the age of the members because the club is fully licensed.'

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Branch Diaries

DUDLEY & SOUTH STAFFS

APRIL

Wednesday 17th 7.30pm

Tividale Beer Scoring Social.

see dudley.camra.org.uk

Monday 29th 8pm

Branch Meeting, High Acres, Kingswinford,
DY6 8PF

MAY

Wednesday 1st 7.30pm

Lower Gornal Beer Scoring Social.

see dudley.camra.org.uk

Saturday 11th 11am

Branch Social, Regional Mild Crawl, Shrewsbury

Wednesday 15th 7.30pm

Blackheath Beer Scoring Social

see dudley.camra.org.uk

Saturday 18th 12pm

Branch Social, Kinver Craft Beer and Cider
Festival

Monday 20th 7.30pm

Branch AGM, Tame Bridge, Tipton, DY4 7JA,
see dudley.camra.org.uk for nomination forms

JUNE

Wednesday 5th 7.30pm

Sedgley Beer Scoring Social

see dudley.camra.org.uk

Wednesday 19th 7.30pm

Waterfront Beer Scoring Social

see dudley.camra.org.uk

Monday 24th 8pm

Branch Meeting, Plough & Harrow, Cradley
Heath, B64 7BT

STOURBRIDGE & HALESOWEN

APRIL

Wednesday 17th 8pm

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

20th April 12 Noon

Branch Social. Fixed Wheel Beer Festival, Long
Lane, Halesowen

MAY

Wednesday 1st 8pm

Branch Meeting, Waggon & Horses,
Stourbridge Rd, Halesowen Branch Pub of the
Year presentation

Thursday 16th 8pm

Amblecote Marking Social Meet New Talbot
then New Wellington, Swan, Starving Rascal
and Robin Hood (presentation of Joint 3rd
place Pub of the Year award)

JUNE

Wednesday 5th 8pm

Branch Meeting, Coombs Wood Sports & Social
Club, Stewarts Rd, Halesowen Branch Club of
the Year presentation

Thursday 20th June 8pm

Brierley Hill Marking Social. Meet Birch Tree
then Raven, Roebuck, Corn Exchange and
White Horse, Cradley Heath.

JULY

Wednesday 3rd July 8pm

Branch Meeting, Stourbridge Royal British
Legion, Enville St. Stourbridge (Bring CAMRA
Membership card)

Thursday 18th July 8pm

Short Cross Marking Social. Meet Whitley then
Hawne Tavern, Edward VII and Waggon & Horses

Saturday 27th July

Annual Branch Real Ale Census. Please let us
know if you are able to help us out.

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Inferno
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Scarlet Macaw
American Pale
4.2% ABV

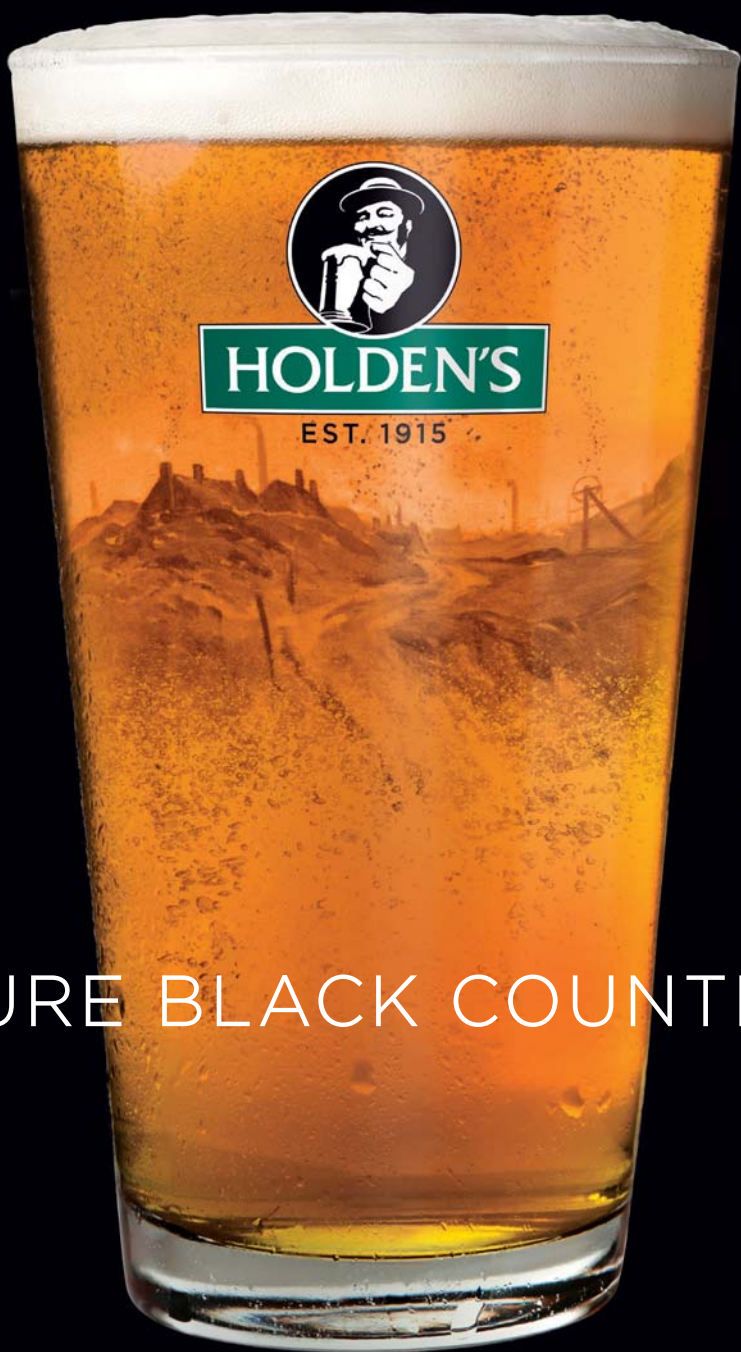
Green Devil
IPA
4.2% ABV

Bishops Farewell
Golden Ale
4.2% ABV

Oakhamales.com

f i t

*Edwin Butler Baylis, Black Country Landscape, early 1900s, oil on canvas.
Courtesy of Wolverhampton Arts and Culture © The artist's estate*



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2 Grumpies And A Spaniel Learn How To Make Cider

Finally we got to go to a Waulmill Cider workshop, and what a great time we had! We set off from Fort William on Friday as we had quite a way to go and had decided to take the motorhome so we could sleep overnight in Chris Harrison's of Waulmill Cider's yard in Langholm in the Borders of Scotland.

On arrival all we could smell was apples as we got out of the van. Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm and it was a lovely smell! The yard was already full of containers of apple juice that had already started fermenting and with loads of baskets of apples ready to be scrapped and pressed.

After a great evening with Chris having a catch up on what he had been up to since we last saw him it was early to bed as there was a lot to get through the next day.

Fortunately, the weather was being kind to us and although the sun wasn't exactly shining at least it wasn't raining, so after taking Widget (our Springer Spaniel) for a walk and breakfast we sat ourselves down in the Cider Bothy and waited for the other folk who were attending the workshop to arrive. There were supposed to be 6 of us but 1 person failed to turn up, shame as he really doesn't know what he missed.

So 5 of us, 4 ladies, and Nigel, were given a crash course on how to make cider.

In front of each of us on the bothy's table was a Demi-Jon, a short piece of tubing, a Hydrometer, an airlock, bung and several little packets of tablets/powder!!!! We'll come back to that later ... Chris Harrison has so much knowledge in his head that if I hadn't been taking notes I would have forgotten most of it.

So here is just some of it.

You need 80% eating apples, 20% cooking apples (He doesn't have cider apples where he is and honestly most of the cider makers I've ever spoken to don't use them either). You need a good blend of sweet and tart apples, Chris will usually blend his juice in the new year once fermented out. If the apple isn't black then you can use it, if it's gone soft and brown then you will get a better yield of juice, more sugar and so a higher alcohol content. (If you want to keep some of the juice just for apple juice then you can freeze it and it keeps very well this way).



So, you need the right mix of apples to get the right PH/Acidity level and if you don't have a little machine that tells you this then you can use Litmus Paper. Chris recommends that you have between 3.2-3.8 Acidity. Just as a guide Discovery Apples are usually 3.8, so sweet with a good sugar content and Bramley 3.0 sharp and acidic.



The apples in The Borders, Northumbria, and Cumbria where Chris gets his apples from (he keeps them in separate countries/counties as he makes different cider for each) don't have a lot of tannin in them and so his ciders are a champagne/straw colour, and he does not recommend to use of tannin powder to make the cider a darker colour, he says that it would be better to use a really cheap and nasty tea that had been simmered for ages to darken your cider.

It is best to mill/scratt your apples one day and press the next, this allows the apple pulp to macerate and so produce more juice when pressed. We didn't have that sort of time so after we had sorted our apples and tasted a few to see whether sweet or sharp we scratted them, and we were warned not to put too many apples in the mill at a time, but you know you just get excited to be making cider so yes we put too many in and blocked the mill, not once but several times!!!! And each time we had to turn the mill off, unplug it, take it apart, unblock it, put it all back together again and then off we'd go again. Finally, we had enough in the big blue bath and then we mixed it all up with a big scoopy thing and tasted it, then we added a few more sweet apples and by then it was ready for lunch.

Mrs Harrison (Chris's Mom) had made us a wonderful 3 course lunch, soup, and then cottage pie and chips followed by apple pie (no other pudding would do!) and custard. And of course, all this was washed down with a couple of glasses of Chris's Waulkmill Cider, well it was for us as we were staying overnight and so not driving:-)

Then totally full up with wonderful food we went back to our macerating apple pulp. It had by now gone a dark brown colour and when picked up to squeeze was already giving a lot of juice. We tasted it and it was sweeter than when we

had left it only an hour ago.

Next stage pressing, we weren't using Chris's big press but a smaller hand turning press. We made our apple pulp into 'cheeses' and stacked them one on top of the other and then turned the screw to bring the wooden press down onto them and let the juice flow, we sieved it as it was flowing and filled up our demi-jons, one for each of us.



Taking our precious cargo back into the Bothy we tested it to see what the specific gravity was. It came in at 1051 which would potentially give a mighty 6.4% ABV when fully fermented out.

Back to the little packets of tablets/powder. We had Camden Tablets, yeast, yeast nutrient. We decided to add $\frac{1}{2}$ a Camden tablet to each demi-jon to stop any mould, etc. better safe than sorry. Then we were told to do nothing for 24hrs, then if we wanted to we could add a little yeast, but only if we wanted to hurry the fermentation up,



otherwise the natural yeast in the air would be sufficient to get the juice to ferment into cider. We were also given instructions to do another hydrometer test after 5/6 days and we all wrote down what the reading would mean, as to whether it would be dry, sweet or medium. We were told to rack it after 2 weeks and then after another 3 weeks and to keep the airlock topped up to keep the nasties out. Questions were asked about how to get the right amount of sweetness, the answer for us as we were only making a small amount, was if you want it sweeter add a little honey to it as you drink it.

As I said at the start there was so much information that Chris can give you on how to make cider that it couldn't be squeezed into a short workshop, but we were all extremely happy with the amount we had received. It was a totally wonderful and informative day and we all went away feeling very pleased with

ourselves as to what we had produced and we're all looking forward to sampling our cider around about Christmas time and we can't wait.

Thank you to Chris Harrison for a great workshop and weekend, and it is with much sadness that I write that this will most likely be the last season of making cider for Chris as his business is up for sale as he wants to go on to other things. Needless to say, Nigel and I wish him well in all that he goes on to do, and oh boy will we miss his amazing ciders. We just have to hope that whoever buys his business keeps up the good work and continues to produce excellent cider that has brought Waulkmill Cider so many awards in the last few years.

We did buy a couple of small bag in boxes before we left but they won't last us long!!!

Chris Heardman

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BEER DESTINATIONS

Poland Revisited

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

We recently decided to check what is on offer at two of the lesser known Polish cities. We started at **Wroclaw** (formerly known as Breslau), one of Poland's largest cities and the capital of Silesia. There are many fine buildings in the Old Town and around the market square, including Wroclaw cathedral, dating from the 10th century, sited on an island in the middle of the River Oder. Wroclaw is also a major brewing centre, with several craft and micro-breweries, three brew-pubs and many other breweries, so it is not surprising that the Festival of Good Beer is popular in June.



Browar Stu Mostow

We started our tour at the **Browar Stu Mostow**, just south of the river, established in 2015. The first-floor taproom overlooks the modern brewery, and offers 10 draught beers, including 8 from their brewery and 2 guest beers. The range of beers is impressive, including Wrcwl

Hefeweizen & Pils, and Salamander American IPA, Black IPA & India Pale Ale, along with Art+ Oatmeal Chocolate Milk Stout & German Red Ale. From here we caught the tram back to the town centre, to visit the **Targowa** craft beer and food bar in the basement of the old market hall. 16 draught beers are available, mainly from local breweries, including Browar Nepomucen Black IPA, Browar Hoppy Lab Cascadian Dark Ale, Browar Piwne Podziemie Coffeelicious Special Chocolate Milk Stout and Browar Profesia Matador Cedar Milk Chocolate Ale. Tasty!



In the main square of the old town, we found the **Bierhalle**, one of a chain of similar German-style beer halls, complete with staff wearing traditional outfits. 4 beers are usually available, including Weizen, Marcowa, Altbier and a seasonal beer. On a nearby corner is **Zloty Pies** (Golden Dog), an excellent brewpub/restaurant opened in 2015, offering 5 beers in its 4 bars, including Golden Weizen, Pit Bull IPA, Bokser Lager & Setter Stout, along with Imperial Harrier from Browar Staromiesjski. Not far away, up an alleyway off Ofiar Oswiecimskich near the Galaria Dominikanska shopping centre, is **4 Hops**. This is a small craft beer bar, popular with students, offering a wide range of Polish beers from its 16 taps, including Palatum Fratres Simone (Belgian blonde Trappist-style beer) and Nepomucen Oldie (old ale), along with wheat beers, IPAs and stouts.





Other craft beer bars we visited included **Kontynuacja** (16 taps and 2 handpulls), **Marynka** (10 taps), **Ale Browar** (brewery tap for Hop Heads brewery with 11 draught beers), **Synkarnia** (3 bars, 14 taps and 2 handpulls), **Pogromcy** ("Meatbusters") brewpub (10 taps and good food) and **Doctor's Bar** (8 taps, including 5 from Dr Brewar and 3 guest beers). There is also a brewpub in the basement of the new City Hall (**Spiz**) and **Browar Rodzinny Post** has a beer hall with 6 draught beers in the north of the city.



Doctor's Bar

We then travelled north to **Poznan**, one of the oldest and largest cities in west-central Poland. It is a major centre of trade, sports, technology, tourism and education, with fine old and new buildings and several breweries. We started our tour, not surprisingly, at the **Ministerstwo Browaru** ("Ministry of Beer") in Ratajczaka. This is a simple downstairs bar with 10 craft beer taps from local breweries, including Pracownia Piwa Crack stout, Browar Gzub AIPA, Browar Zakeadowy Pierwska Zmiana and Lakomin Belgijsk Byk (10.5%). There is another Ministerstwo Browaru not far away in Wroniecka, with 14 taps, including stouts and IPAs.



Just 4 draught beers are on offer at nearby **Piwna Stopa** in Szewska, which is close to **Wsciekly Chmiel**, a cosy bar in Zydowska with 16 taps. In the old town in Ul Mokra we found **Dom Piwa**, with 12 taps offering a wide range of Polish micro-brewery beers, including Awaria Zasilania Black IPA, Czarna Wolga & Swiateczny stouts and a superb Baltic Porter. In the old square we spotted **Brovaria**, a brewpub with restaurant and hotel, offering draught pils, honey, wheat, milk stout and seasonal beers, but we found the most beers on offer at **Fermentownia** in Kwiatowa. 25 taps offer ever-changing beers, including Rock Mill CaliforniCATion West Coast IPA, Widawa Imperial Smoked Baltic Porter (11%), Browar Lotny Double Pan IPA and Kuriozum Magic Dairy Milk Stout. Without doubt, the best range of craft beers in Poznan!

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

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Pub News

Dudley & South Staffordshire

Bottle & Cork, Dudley DY2 8PB

Opened in Dudley town centre in December 2018. This microbar specialises in gins and cocktails but does not sell cask beer.

Clock House Cocktail Bar & Grill, West Bromwich B70 9QG

Opened March 2019 in what was previously 'Rai Function Hall' in the High Street.

Old Swan, Netherton DY2 9PY

Now offers the opportunity to partake in an indulgent Afternoon Tea. Available from Wednesday to Saturday from 2pm until 4pm, the teas must be prebooked giving a minimum of 24 hours' notice, parties of 6 or more will require one weeks' notice. The tea consists of a selection of sandwiches on a mixture of white and brown bread, a slice of quiche, homemade scones with clotted cream and jam accompanied by a selection of cakes and fancies. Unlimited amounts of tea and/or coffee is included in the price. For a really indulgent afternoon you can add a glass of Prosecco or a Pink Gin. For more information contact Liz on 07484 727501

Park Tavern, Kingswinford DY6 9QG

Has appointed a new manager, Ian Hillman, who is open to trying new initiatives and new beers in the pub in order to attract more real ale drinkers.

Port 'N' Ale Bar & Grill, Tipton DY4 7DS

Reopened in January 2019 serving Indian food but, alas, no cask beer.

Queen Inn, West Bromwich B70 7PU

Opened at the Premier Inn, New Square, in February 2019. It is part of the Cookhouse & Pub (Whitbread) portfolio and therefore has the feel of a casual restaurant.

Rising Sun, Tipton DY4 7NH

Has undergone a refurbishment in January 2019 including the installation of electronic beer boards. The pub has been operated by Black Country Ales since March 2013.

Roe Deer, Wordsley DY7 5QJ

Will open to the public during Summer 2019. An early 19th Century Georgian residence, 'Lawnswood House' has been sensitively adapted to become a classy food-led venue by the restaurant group Brunning & Price.

Rose & Crown, Brierley Hill DY5 3DD

Is now managed by Michael Dyer on behalf of Holden's. There are new opening times: 3-11 Mon-Thur; 12-11 Fri-Sat; 12-10.30 Sun.

Stourbridge & Halesowen

Queens Head, Stourbridge DY83TQ

Have a new Early Bird offer, Pig on the Wall & BFG at £2.60 & Carling £3.10, 12pm till 7pm Monday to Friday, Music every Friday night. From the 3rd of April from 12.30pm every Wednesday afternoon Senior Skittles so a Skittles social for the older audience to include stew or faggots with peas and a drink for £5 (on selected drinks). The Black Rabbit Band are returning on May 27th from 4pm. Skittle Alley free to hire. Next tap Takeover is TBA .

White Horse, Quarry Bank DY5 2BA

Newly reopened and serving Indian food, which comes recommended by our Branch Secretary! Real ales on offer include Holden's Golden Glow and Sarah Hughes Sedgley Surprise. The branch is including this pub in a crawl of outer-lying Brierley Hill pubs in our branch, check branch diary section for details. Welcome to the branch Mani!

Waggon & Horses, Halesowen B63 3TU

Hold a monthly cheese night on the first Tuesday of the month and monthly quiz nights with dates TBC so please check on their Facebook page for confirmation.

Waggon & Horses, Stourbridge DY8 1AW

Are continuing to have bands on every other Saturday as usual but most importantly they've got their annual Beer Festival 23-27 May (bank holiday weekend) consisting of at least 15 beers all on hand pull and 10 traditional ciders with entertainment and food all weekend.

Brewery News

Dudley & South Staffs

Black Country Ales, Lower Gornal DY3 2NU

This year's BCA Real Ale Trail has now finished. Drinkers that visited all 31 participating pubs on the map, collecting a stamp at each establishment, have received a commemorative rugby shirt. Congratulations to everybody that completed the challenge!

Enville Ales, Enville DY7 5LG

The pump badge for Old Porter has been redesigned to feature a gold rosette in recognition of being awarded West Midlands CAMRA Regional Porter of the Year 2018. The brewery has also been participating in an increased number of 'tap takeovers', such as, at the Chequers Inn, Stourbridge, and the Anvil, Shifnal. Keep checking social media for future tap takeovers.

Fownes Brewing Company, Upper Gornal DY3 1UL

Elephant Riders (4%), described as a "juicy sessionable new world pale", continues to be a permanent fixture at the Britannia Pub & Brewery, Rowley Regis. Tom and James Fownes are going the extra mile to see their beers spread across the region and beyond.

Holden's Brewery, Woodsetton DY1 4LW

Codsall Station will be holding its annual beer festival 2nd May – 5th May 2019. There will be over 40 real ales and ciders, live music all weekend, and on-site catering. Black Country Bitter was awarded West Midlands CAMRA Regional Bitter of the Year 2018.

Kinver Brewery, Kinver DY7 5NW

A new beer - 'Lunar Landing' (4.5%) - has been brewed. The recipe includes a bittering variety of hop called Apollo.

Stourbridge & Halesowen

Angel Ales, Halesowen, B63 2TA

Angel are working towards getting the Premises license, bottling line sorted, bottle labels designed and printed, and sorting the external areas to the brewery. They have been getting the plant back up to running order to guarantee fine quality ales again. They currently have some beer in casks to bottle, namely Halas and Angel Ale. The plan is to concentrate on bottling for local sales and a new website (under construction) with cask being supplied locally and hopefully to supply Black Country Ales for their outlets.

Craddocks, Stourbridge DY8 1EP



A monthly special Cast Iron Stout at 5%, has proved very popular and will be brewed again later this year. A collaboration with Green Duck Brewery took place on the 8th March creating an unfiltered tropical pale ale called Cradduck.

Fixed Wheel, Blackheath B62 9LD

The Fixed Wheel Brewery saw and will see a whole load of activity throughout March. The monthly special is currently 'King Kelly', which is a Hoppy Stout at 4.5% ABV that features light notes of roast and chocolate throughout. Another brand-new addition to the "Wheelie" range of beers, will be their "Wheelie Hazy" 4.3% ABV, hopped with Citra Mosaic and Cardinal. Out for sale now and was available on the bar for the first weekend of March. Range to feature alongside its sibling "Wheelie Pale" their 4.1% pale ale.

Loyalty cards have also been launched. With a stamp being given per transaction. First pint gives you the loyalty card itself from then on after 8 stamps the 9th beer is a freebie!



The Fixed Wheel have announced a second Micropub is currently in the process of being built. Based in Old Hill, situated on the high street opposite the post office. Further updates will be found on Social Media and the Website. Also, to come, as part of the monthly special releases will be 'The Sheriff' brewed just for April, this will be an Italian Grape Ale at 4.5% ABV, that will be racked up and ready to go in cask by the end of this month. With Spring on the horizon, they are getting themselves ready for the Annual Fixed Wheel Brewery Spring Beer Festival. Running from Thursday 18th April till Sunday 21st April. With live music on the Friday 19th with The Shambolics & Hot Street food from Disco Fries and on Saturday 20th Madi Stimpson Quartet will be playing along with hot street food by Little Urban BBQ.

Green Duck, Stourbridge DY9 7ND

By the time you read this, the Green Duck Spring Beer Festival will be done and dusted. As we go to press, dates for beer festivals are not yet available, but keep checking social media for full updates.

A range of 2019 cask beers are now listed on whatpub.com so they can be scored at both Badelynge Brewery Tap and in other pubs and clubs.

Canned beers are now available for purchase from newly refreshed website greenduckbrewery.co.uk where you can also download a copy of the full cask range brochure for 2019.

Between April and June expect to see monthly specials such as 'Fairground', 'Plum Dumb', 'Shaky Stevens' and 'Uprising' gracing a hand-pump near you. (PS - check out the new 'Uprising' artwork at Badelynge too!)

Collaborations with other breweries continue into 2019 with a second brew in conjunction with regional favourites 'Salopian' already in the bag.

Sadlers, Lye DY9 8ER

The Brewery is going from strength to strength. One of their favourite seasonal beers, Boris Citrov, is back and is out in cask now. A nice 4.5% pale with American hops and buckets of marmalade!

The biggest news is that Sadlers White 1861 Beer will be available in bottles in all Wetherspoons nationwide as part of their new menu. There is a full-page feature on this new wheat beer in the latest Wetherspoons News. This is a classic British interpretation of a German wheat beer, using British hops, barley and yeast, with a high wheat content creating a 5.3% full-bodied fruity beer.

As regards the micro-pubs, a new pop-up bar opened in Harborne before Christmas, joining the existing micro-pub in Quinton, which is now open at the earlier time of 12 noon every day, serving a new BBQ menu. Both pubs have recently hosted a "Meet the Brewer" event. Not forgetting either that all of their venues offer 20p/pint CAMRA discount on all ales.

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Sheffield Micropubs

On a recent trip to Sheffield Bridget entered "Any micropubs near here?" into Google and came across nine micros we knew nothing about, although we visit Sheffield several times a year. There was one, The Bar Steward, only 5 minutes' walk from our hotel so off we set. We were pleasantly surprised. There was an excellent choice of keg and cask beers from some of our favourite breweries. It was only 5pm so there weren't many in, but in true micro style everyone was friendly. I chatted to two brewers from Lost Industry brewery while ordering some drinks and one of them knew my face and I thought I recognised him too. Eventually he remembered where we had met, it was at the Bottle Shop, Acocks Green when Roberto Ross had organised a tap takeover by them. We only intended to have a couple, but the beer and company were great so were in there almost two hours.

I had booked a meal at Butcher & Catch, a couple of miles away, at 8pm so we needed to move on. Luckily another one of our new-found micros was just around the corner from the restaurant so we got an Uber taxi so we would have time to visit. The Itchy Pig was quite busy, but we managed to find a seat. Again, helpful and friendly staff and customers with a good mix of keg and cask. We managed a couple before moving to the restaurant for a Gilt Head Bream each accompanied by a couple of local beers. Finally, we made our way back to the Sheffield Tap for a final couple, it would be rude not to.

This is the article Bridget came across. It is a pub crawl from Peter Hudson's website www.sheffielddalepubs.co.uk which is well worth exploring, this was written in 2017.

Dorothy Pax – this is on the Victoria Quays in one of the units and this is the nearest pub to me selling ales, and now becoming a regular place and a good start for me when doing the Kelham Island area pubs, the owner is always on site and very friendly to chat to, he is passionate about

his ales, he has 3 cask ales on which usually are Sheffield ales, there is 1 keg line of Magic Rock. There is also a food van outside which I believe does pizzas, also they have bands on as well. (2019 – now has 4 casks on)

Guzzle – this is down at Woodseats and the best way to get there is from the last pub catch the 24/25 bus which stops right outside The Drink Inn. This is a fairly new place and a refreshing change for Woodseats, they serve 5 ales and all seem to be Sheffield breweries. Again, enough seats as well.

Itchy Pig – this is a bus back into town and then catch the 52/52a up to Broomhill. They serve 5 ales and have a few keg lines as well, a couple from Camden brewery, they also have a beer board showing what is on and what is to come. They also do food snacks. The ales do vary a lot so always guarantee something new when you go in. (2019 increase in keg lines and do a few tap takeovers during the year)

Beer House – now time to walk down to Ecclesall Road for 3 pubs in a row. Serving 6 cask ales and again a varied selection, plus 3 keg lines which seem to have Magic Rock on, they do food snacks as well, and enough seats and they have 2 benches outside the front.

Ecclesall Ale Club – keep walking down Ecclesall Road and you will find Sheffield's newest bar, this is a father and son run business from Brew Foundation, they have 5 casks on and about 6/7 keg lines, the ales do vary a lot, there are a couple of Brew Foundation on but majority is guest ales. They also have a couple of fridges with a vast selection of bottles and cans to take out or drink in. This is what was needed on Eccy Rd.



Portland House – keep walking down Eccy Rd and cross over to get to the final pub on this road. This has recently been taken over by 2 guys and they have 6 ale pumps, ales vary as well, I cannot see a theme here so always something on I would have. (2019 they have now a couple of keg lines and has changed hands again)

Bar Stewards – normally I would walk down to this pub but was feeling a bit tired so got a bus into town and walked down from there. Run by 2 guys who are usually in the place and they love to have a chat, they serve 4 cask ales and about 7 keg lines, the selection always changing and never disappointed with the choices. Also there is a fridge of cans and bottles you can drink in or take out. In the summer there will be a beer garden at the back to give even more space.

So that is my micropub & new venues walk, this takes about 7/8 hours with the bus journeys, I was drinking halves and I didn't visit any other pubs.

Many thanks to Peter Hudson for permission to publish the above pub crawl. He tells me these micropubs have opened since: Two Sheds, Pour, Chapeltown Tap House, Brass Monkey Craft Ale, Jabeerwocky, so keep an eye on his excellent website for further crawls.

Also opening soon is the Hop Hideout in Angel Street, right opposite the Premier Inn.

A new pub is opening up around April 2019 called The Crow which is going to be run by the people who run Rutland Arms, this pub is between Three Tuns and Shakespeare.

Tony Skirving and Peter Hudson



Old Workshop – a short walk to this venue which is near to Pedler's Market and Yellow Arch. This is owned by the same people as Beer Engine and is a daring pub to not serve any cask, instead they have 9 keg lines which you can buy in 1/3 if you are like me and want to sample a few. They do food snacks as there is a kitchen in this venue. Personally, I don't think a keg only bar in Sheffield would work but they have proven me wrong.

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