ALES & TALES

CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

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

Issue 37
Summer 2018

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Welcome Back

It feels like only 5 minutes since the last one but here we are again, welcome to the Ales & Tales Summer edition!

So much has happened over the last few months; the members of Stourbridge & Halesowen are recovering from their successful beer festival and planning the thank you trip to Nottingham on the 9th June.

Dudley & South Staffordshire branch have been awarding certificates and steadfastly crawling around their local pubs, it's a hard life being a CAMRA member.

It's always good to get feedback from attendees to any of our events so please feel free to get in touch by email to let us know your thoughts.

It's been a controversial month at CAMRA HQ, our annual AGM and members' weekend was held at the University of Warwick in April. This saw some local friends voted into new roles so congratulations to them.

As you may have heard, over the last two years or so, CAMRA has been undertaking its 'Revitalisation' initiative, aimed at deciding the way forward for the Campaign. The proposed outcomes of this initiative, and the changes involved, were being voted on by the assembled members.

Importantly, all but 1 of the proposed changes to CAMRA's Articles of Association were passed. The key element that was not passed, was the motion to support (to paraphrase) 'All pub-goers'.

If you're a CAMRA member, you'll find more details regarding this subject in your copy of 'What's Brewing'. It's covered in much better, and more accurate detail that we can here. If you're not a member, it's one of the many benefits of CAMRA membership!

A vote of 75% was needed, but it was backed by 72% of voters, meaning than the motion was denied. Some have spoken of the lack of a plan following either outcome, coupled with poorly worded resolutions which may have confused voters. In fact, one brewery even refused to supply Stourbridge Beer Festival as a direct consequence of the vote!

The dust has now settled a little since the major furore immediately following the vote and in some ways, little seems to have changed. There will be those reading this magazine on both ends of the fizz-ometer who will have to agree to disagree on the validity of KeyKeg. Like all walks of life, we are all entitled to our own opinions, however unappealing they may be to someone else.

Speaking for Stourbridge & Halesowen branch only, we think we were the first branch to award a 'Beer of the Festival' accolade to a KeyKeg beer a few years ago. Branch breweries Fixed Wheel, Sadler's and Green Duck are all brewing some excellent, tasty beers across all dispense methods. Where possible, they will continue to receive our support, as will the pubs, bars and clubs that serve them.

Some say that the Campaign for Real Ale has been fought and won; certainly, across both branches there is an abundance of pubs that serve great cask conditioned Real Ale. However, some pubs remain under threat, whilst the number of tap-rooms and micro-pubs is growing week-by-week. It is for sure that the characteristics of drinking beer are changing! Branch meetings are always a great place to discuss these issues, so why not come along and join us?

Back on to more light-hearted topics we hope to see you at one of the upcoming festivals or events listed inside. Let's hope the good weather continues. Drink responsibly and drink REAL!

Lizzie & Tim Cadwell

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Feline Good at the Pub of the Year

For some local beer drinkers, the branch 'Pub of the Year' competition may look like a 'bit of fun' had by a certain clique. However, the Dudley & South Staffs Branch proudly boasts an increasingly democratic, transparent, and rigorous process for finding that number one boozer.

Throughout the calendar year, CAMRA members score the quality of the beers they are buying in pubs and clubs. Note the emphasis is strictly on quality – which refers to the condition of the product rather than any personal preferences for certain beer styles or strengths. Scores are on a sliding scale between 0.5 and 5 and are inputted at **www.WhatPub.com**.

In the 2017-18 scoring year, 5,170 individual beer scores were submitted for the 215 pubs and clubs selling Real Ale across the Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA branch. That's an average of almost fifteen scores every single day, thank you!

The Beer Scoring Officer regularly undertakes forensic, line-by-line analysis of the scores in order to spot and investigate anomalies and also to remove duplicate scores or scores which are made void by a pub closing down or changing hands. Of the 5,170 aforementioned scores, 7% were dismissed before the branch's Good Beer Guide selection meeting. The amount of 'cleansed data' remaining was up 300 scores compared to the previous scoring year.

Having identified our entries and reserves for the next edition of the Good Beer Guide, a shortlist of pubs to be considered for the Pub of the Year accolade is determined. The candidates for the 2018 title were:

- Beacon Hotel, Sedgley;
- Britannia, Upper Gornal;
- Cat Inn, Enville;
- Old Dispensary, Langley;
- Plough & Harrow, Cradley Heath;
- Red Cow, Lower Gornal.

CAMRA members of any branch that have submitted a minimum of 30 scores for a minimum of 10 Dudley & South Staffordshire pubs/clubs are then invited to judge the Pub of the Year competition. Each judge is required to visit the candidates to assess the beer quality, décor and cleanliness, welcome and offering, community focus, and alignment with CAMRA principles. We are delighted that, this year, 20 judges from four local branches judged the competition which gives us more confidence than ever before in the results.

And if you've been living under a rock since March, having held the title of South Staffs Pub of the Year 2013-17, the Cat has gone from strength to strength and is now deservedly declared the Dudley & South Staffs Pub of the Year for the very first time. Our congratulations are extended not only to Aimee and Dan Hicks but to all of the other finalists.

In the closest of contests, the Cat's decor and alignment with CAMRA principles impressed our 20 judges. This could be put down to their availability of Real Ciders, support for local breweries, and maintenance of beer boards displaying both ABVs and prices. A large CAMRA contingency and plenty of regular punters piled into the country pub on Monday 12th March to witness Dudley & South Staffs Chair, Ryan Hunt, make the presentation.

If you have any questions about beer scoring, the selection of pubs/clubs for the Good Beer Guide, or the Pub of the Year judging process, please email **pubsofficer@dudley.camra.org.uk**

Ryan Hunt
Chair, Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA

Meet The Brewer
Toll End

Name: Gary Pinney
Age: 62

What was your background before brewing?

Before trying my hand at brewing beer, I was a Hazardous Waste Manager for a chemical company. It's pretty self-explanatory. I oversaw the safe disposal of chemical materials. I was in that particular role for eight great years although I worked in the same department prior to that.

What was your first alcoholic beverage?

Like many of my generation, the first beer that I tried was M&B (Mitchells & Butlers) Mild at the Lost City pub a.k.a. the Drayton in Tipton.

What are your hobbies and interests?

Until recently, I was a drummer in a band. I also follow the local cricket teams – mainly Worcestershire County Cricket Club and Warwickshire County Cricket Club. On the football front, I'm gold and black whilst Keith, the owner of the Waggon and Horses, is of the blue and white striped fraternity.

What is your favourite:

- Beer (of your own)?

Phoebe's Ale (P.A.) at 4.7%. Although it's still a cracking brew today, I really wish I could remember where I put that original recipe as I've since had to improvise!

- Beer (somebody else's)?

Oh so many! I really like the Cannon Royall Brewery in Droitwich but I think my 'go-to beer' would otherwise be Holden's Golden Glow. We have it on permanently here at the Waggon & Horses and I've had a lot of support over the years from Jonathan and all of the team at the brewery.

- Drink that's not Real Ale?

Either a cool Gin & Tonic, when it's hot, or a smooth Irish whiskey, when it's not. Preferably a splash of Jameson's.

- Food?

A traditional full English breakfast in the AM and Chinese in the PM. I mainly go for rice dishes, yum!

- Pub (that's not the Waggon & Horses!)

I'm going to go for a nostalgic nomination and say the Crown & Cushion, Ocker Hill (or the Top House as I used to call it). Keith, now the gaffer here at the Waggon & Horses, used to run it when it was a Holt, Plant and Deakin pub.

How did you get started in the business?

Back in the early 2000s, I was having a chat with my good friends Penny McDonald and Jackie Walker who were then running the Rising Sun on Horseley Road. They 'planted the seed', so to speak. With the support of my good wife and with Keith's permission, of course, we converted several of the outbuildings (the old toilets and coalhouse) here at the Waggon & Horses into

what was then “the biggest brewery in the smallest place” measuring 17’ x 6’6”. We were brewing beer by the winter of 2004.

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

As little as a fortnight. I tinker with recipes, or make entirely new beers, based on customer feedback in the main. Whilst I’ve got a core seven brands or so, we do make changes – especially to the ‘Oss’ range of beers.

What are your aspirations for the business?

We have a loyal customer base here at the Waggon & Horses which we refer to as the “Toll End Fan Club”. As things stand, 95% of the beers brewed here go on to be sold in the brewery tap. It would be excellent if we could grow those sales regionally (and even nationally) which would potentially allow me to take on and train an assistant brewer.

What’s the best and worst thing to happen in the industry in the last five years?

I’m chuffed with the explosion of micropubs mainly in little villages. Most of them are genuine freehouses that showcase the small guys. On the flipside, it’s so frustrating to see the struggle of so many tied houses. I also think that cheap beer in supermarkets has changed people’s drinking habits. I could moan on forever!

How do you think CAMRA could help you in your business?

We don’t have a salesperson and rely entirely on word-of-mouth for our sales so a little promotion here and there wouldn’t go amiss! We’d like to see a lot more CAMRA members in the Waggon & Horses, too. Pop in and say hello!

Ryan Hunt
Chair, Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA

Stourbridge Beer Festival 2018

Wednesday April 25th until Saturday 28th saw the 21st Annual Stourbridge Beer Festival being held at Stourbridge Town Hall, organised by the Stourbridge & Halesowen branch of CAMRA. This has always been noted on the beer festival circuit as an event that offers beer and ciders not just from local breweries and cider producers, but from all over the country. As usual we ran a beer, cider and perry of the festival competition, based on votes submitted by our customers.

Real Ale

First place was awarded to Brass Castle for 'Bad Kitty' (also first to sell out!). This was followed by Fixed Wheel in second place with Mule Kick V2 (a KeyKeg / KeyCask beer!), and Coco Cocoa from Thornbridge.

The most Northerly beer served was Tempest Brewing Co (Kelso, Scottish borders) with their Armadillo Vermont Session ales. The most Southernly beer was Staggeringly Good (Portsmouth) with their Dawn Shelter and ThaiRannoCitrus. The most Easterly beer was Gritchie Brewing Co (Dorset) with their English Lore. The most Westerly beer was Wilderness from Powys (Wales) with their Southern Passion Pale.

Cider

Cider of the Festival for what seems like the umpteenth year on the trot was 'Wrongbow', made by a local producer from the metropolitan borough of Wollaston.

The first to sell out was 'Jibber Jabber' from Hurst View from Wheaton Aston, Staffs, who also were represented as the most northerly cider-maker. We also had ciders from Hallets from Caerphilly, Wales and Tutts Clump from Berkshire. Our Perry of the Festival was 'Two Trees' by Gwynt y Ddraig from Wales.

Attendees at the event commented on the vast array of beer, ciders and perries which numbered in excess of 100 and the choice was deemed second to none.

The event was well attended throughout the whole of the 4 days and judging by the vibrant atmosphere, everyone enjoyed themselves, with numerous promises of attending next year's festival.

The success of the event was enabled by the willing volunteers, not only the Stourbridge & Halesowen branch of CAMRA, but from branches across the regions who not only served behind the bars, but carried out the 'behind the scenes' task of setting up all of the equipment prior to the event and the taking down of the equipment after the event.

Without their support and that of the many sponsors, the event could not and would not have taken place and made it the success it was.

To all those people and sponsors, a big thank you from the Stourbridge & Halesowen branch of CAMRA. Photo courtesy of the Express & Star.

Phil Zjalic

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

BRIERLEY HOP HOUSE

Beers · Burgers · Cocktails

Formerly the Brewers Wharf, this large canalside pub has recently undergone a profound transformation in both name and nature. Now called the "Brierley Hop House", this is a trendy wet-led establishment with dim lighting and plenty of hideaways to enjoy a drink with friends or to mark a special occasion.

Brierley Hop House is an all-encompassing Black Country Pub. Home to the famous Bostin Quench, the views are something to be seen with a full gin and cocktail menu in addition to the large range of keg and cask products. With quaint but quirky corners, a good selection of ales, classy cocktails and good pub grub you can't go far wrong.

Weekly entertainment is hosted with a function room for private hire – so all in all why not pop on down to the "Hop House" and grab yourself an ale in this Cask Marque Accredited pub. Hosting all occasions bring along your family, friends or even just yourself.

Brierley Hop House, Level Street, Waterfront, Brierley Hill. DY5 1XD

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Branch Diaries

Dudley & South Staffordshire

JUNE

Monday, 4th 8.00pm
Dudley Winter Ales Fayre Planning Meeting Park Inn, George St, Woodsetton
Saturday, 9th 12.00pm
Branch Social Kinver Beer & Cider Festival, Sports & Community Association, High St, DY7 6ER. Meet Stourbridge Bus Station, Stand B, Bus 228 at 11.35am, arrive at festival for noon followed by tour of Kinver pubs/clubs
Monday, 11th 8.00pm
Branch Social Tivi Ale, Regent Road, Tividale
Wednesday, 13th 7.30pm
Wordsley Scoring Social Start Lawnswood, Lawnswood Rd, then Glasscutters, Queens Head, New Inn
Tuesday, 19th 8.30pm
Branch Pub of the Year 2018 Runner-up Presentation (and Metropolitan Pub of the Year) Beacon Hotel, Bilston St, Sedgley
Monday, 25th 8.00pm
Branch Meeting Hop House, Level St, Brierley Hill

JULY

Monday, 2nd 8.00pm
Dudley Winter Ales Fayre Planning Meeting Park Inn, George St, Woodsetton
Wednesday, 4th 7.45pm
Cradley Heath Scoring Social inc. Community Pub of the Year 2018 presentation
Start Plough & Harrow (presentation approx. 8.00pm), then Moon Under Water, Swan, Liberal Club
Monday, 30th 8.00pm
Branch Meeting Bird in Hand, John St, Wordsley

AUGUST

Thursday, 9th
Coach trip to Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, London. Cost £30 inc. all-day ticket Contact Jacqui Edwards on 07939 480 746 or **socialsecretary@dudley.camra.org.uk**
Monday, 20th 8.00pm
Branch Meeting Smethwick Conservative Club, Hight St, Smethwick

Stourbridge & Halesowen

JUNE

Wednesday, 6th 8.00pm
Branch Meeting Starving Rascal 1 Brettell Lane, Amblecote
Tuesday, 12th 8.00pm
Branch Pub of the Year 2018 Runner-up presentation. Robin Hood, Collis Street, Amblecote
Wednesday, 20th 8.00pm
Branch Cider Pub of the Year 2018 presentation Waggon & Horses, Worcester St. Stourbridge

JULY

Wednesday, 4th 8.00pm
Branch Meeting and Branch Club of the Year Presentation. Coombs Wood Sports & Social Club, Stewarts Rd, off Long Lane, Halesowen
Tuesday, 17th 8.00pm
Norton Marking Social Start New Inn, Cherry St. then Garibaldi, Longlands, Gigmill and Plough & Harrow.

AUGUST

Wednesday, 1st 8.00pm
Fixed Wheel Micro Bar, High St. Lye (TBC)
Thurs 9th 6.00pm – Sat 11th 11.00pm
Black Country Beer Festival, Lye Cricket Club £10 admission (£2 off for CAMRA Members) Volunteers wanted to staff CAMRA Information Stand. See BCBF website for more details.
Tuesday, 21st 8.00pm
Colley Gate Marking Social. Start Vine, Lyde Green then Round of Beef, Why Not and Little Chop House

SEPTEMBER

Wednesday, 12th 8.00pm
Branch AGM Duke William, Coventry St. Stourbridge

Pub News

Dudley & South Staffordshire

BEACON HOTEL, Sedgley DY3 1JE – is holding a Black Country Day event on Sunday 15th July. The pub will be open all day and hot food will be on offer. In addition to the regular Sarah Hughes beers, a selection of their occasional brews will be available, plus one or two guest beers.

CROSS, Kingswinford DY6 8AA – is currently closed. The word on the street is that JD Wetherspoon has purchased the pub although this is yet to be confirmed on the company's 'Opening Soon' webpage.

CROWN INN, Iverley DY8 2RX – has reopened following a makeover. Real Ales from Purity Brewing Co. and Enville are on sale.

LENCHES BRIDGE, Pensnett DY6 8XD – has a new landlady called Elaine Pittom. The pub sells one Real Ale (Enville Ale) and has a large function room which can be hired for private parties.

OLD DISPENSARY, Langley B68 8LS – has a new house beer called 'Old Dispensary Ale' (ODA). Brewed by Fownes Brewing Co., this 4% beer is described as a "Sessionable Pale Ale".

OLD SWAN, Netherton DY2 9PY – has suffered considerable structural damage leading to the removal of one of the front bay windows following a car crash.

SADLER'S TAP ROOM, Quinton B68 0DJ – opened at the end of May 2018. Located on Hagley Road West, this bar serves the full range of cask and keg beers from the popular Lye-based brewery.

SANDWELL, West Bromwich B70 8ND – has a new manager called Anna Holdaway. Previously 'The Goose', the Sandwell now has a strong focus on Real Ale with three changing beers available at all times. There is a CAMRA discount scheme in operation plus there are useful tasting notes attached to each handpull. The pub is very active on Facebook including regular updates of their beer selection.

TIVI ALE, Tividale B69 1TL – new branch micropub on Regent Road will open on Saturday 9th June

VINE, Blackheath B65 0DT – has welcomed new managers called Paul and Anna.

WINDSOR THEATRE BAR, Smethwick B66 4DL – sells two Real Ales including an "exclusive collaboration ale with Blind Monkey Brewery" described as a "traditional 5% Birmingham Brown Ale".

Stourbridge & Halesowen

THE FORESTERS, Wollaston DY8 3PL – summer cider festival returns! Put the 24th - 27th August in your diaries.

THE OLD BANK, Stourbridge DY8 1DA – the outside seating area has been approved and ready to enjoy the summer months with a pint of Real Ale in the sun. The kitchen and full menu will be ready soon as well.

RED HOUSE, Stourbridge DY8 1EL – 21st June is Battle of the Welsh Breweries featuring Tiny Rebel V's Hopcraft. 3 Cask and 3 keg beers from each brewery.

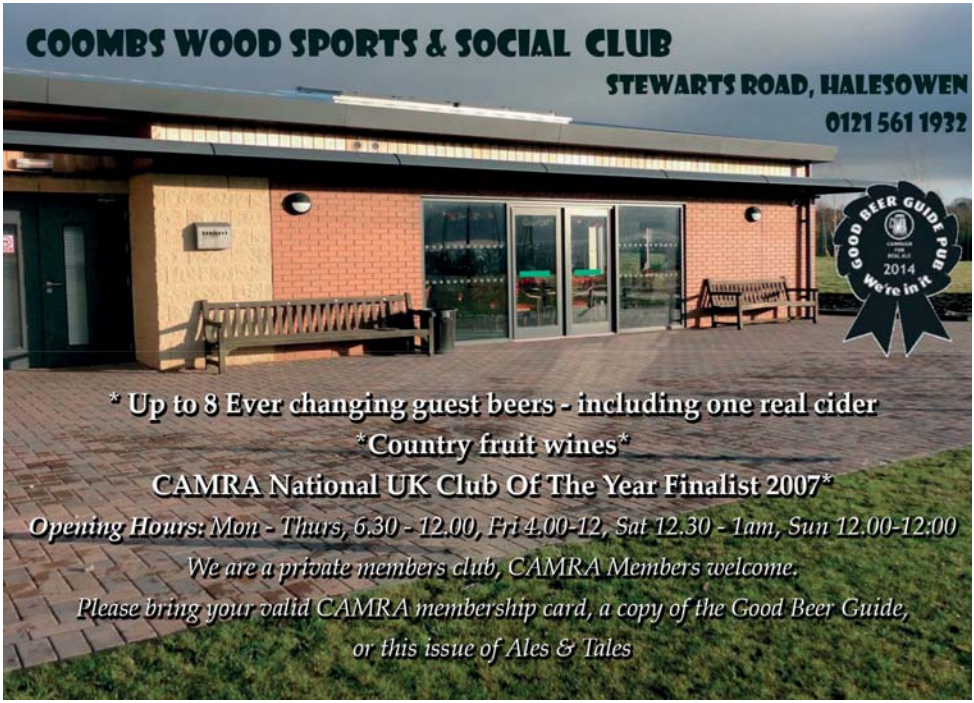
Don't forget
BLACK COUNTRY BOATING FESTIVAL
15th - 16th September 2018

The 33rd annual Black Country Boating Festival returns in September at the Bumble Hole Nature Reserve, Windmill End, Netherton. The event is run totally by volunteers and regularly attracts over 10,000 visitors, raising funds for local and national charities.

With more than 100 boats, trade and craft stalls to browse, a floating market, a classic car display on Saturday, a dog show on Sunday, regular boat trips, a funfair and live music throughout the weekend, there is always something for all the family.

A Real Ale (and Cider) Bar managed by local CAMRA volunteers and supported by local brewers is situated in the main marquee. There will also be a separate gazebo just outside the marquee serving a supplementary selection of ciders and perries, set up to relieve congestion at the main Bar.

The festival is open to the public from 10am to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday; admission to the site is free and there is ample on-site parking.



Brewery News

Enville – Stourbridge DY7 5LG

Three Lions (a 4% Russia 2018 – World Cup Special Ale) will be available from Monday 4th June 2018. Described as a "beautiful, well-rounded, traditional, golden bitter made with the finest English malt and hops and of course our own natural well water".

Green Duck - Stourbridge DY9 7ND

Plenty of monthly specials coming up over the coming months, including Bliss (June), Beat the Devil (June), Madness (July), Hysteria (August), and Little Giant (July / August), alongside returning favourites Lost Patrol (June), and Flame of the West (July) and The Great Divide (August). Of course, core beers will always be available as usual! Also, a selection of beers have been canned, which are on sale to trade and via the Brewery directly. Green Duck will be present at Lock and Key Beer Convention between 20th and 22nd July. Look out for another Green Duck Beer Festival at Badelynge Bar, running between 28th and 30th June.

Sadlers - Lye, Stourbridge DY9 8ER

The new Sadler's bus is finished! Keep your eye out for it at various events across the summer. Also look out for new Sadler's bars at various sporting venues across the Midlands. The Quinton Tap Room, at the time of going to press, is well on the way to being finished and ready to open. Follow Sadler's on social media to keep up-to-date with all the latest information.

Kinver Brewery

Kinver Brewery continues to supply local beer festivals and a number of pubs with Tap Takeovers as well as our regulars and new customers. Also supplying various CAMRA Beer Festivals across the country with a selection of beers from the West Midlands region.
A few special beers planned over the coming months and a few old favourites revived!
Kinver Brewery are taking part in the Kinver Beer and Cider Festival on 8th and 9th June at KSCA in Kinver, Friday 5 - 11 and Saturday 12 - 11. There will be an extensive range of Kinver beers available and guest beers. Come on over to the festival and also enjoy the village and pubs that weekend!

Annual GBBF Trip

The Dudley & South Staffordshire Branch is pleased to inform all CAMRA members that the annual trip to the Great British Beer Festival is once again being run; this year on Thursday 9th August 2018 and bookings for seats are now being taken.

The cost is £30 (a modest increase on last year's £28) but this does include the cost of an all-day ticket to the event.

Steps this year have been taken by the festival organisers to provide even more entertainment, seating, side bars, games, stalls, foods etc. to make this year a bigger and better event at which to drink your favourite beers, ciders and perries. It also is a tremendous showcase at which you can try new beers from all over the world.

Panels and displays allow you to learn the art of beer tasting or even how to make beer should your interests lie in that direction.

There will be several pick up points, with comfort stops, a raffle, with return at 7.00pm approximately to the drop off points.

Should anyone wish to join the trip then please contact the Social Secretary, Jacqui Edwards, by calling 07939489746 or by emailing **jedwards31@btinternet.com**

Please book early to avoid disappointment.

Jacqui Edwards
Social Secretary,
Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA

oakham

oakhamales.com

Beer Days Out
Beer in Bridgnorth

Bridgnorth is an historic market town in Shropshire on the River Severn and is a popular place for visitors from the West Midlands and elsewhere. It is not only the northern terminus of the Severn Valley Railway, but also has the steepest inland Victorian funicular in England, linking Low Town and High Town, and was an important port when the River Severn was navigable this far north. An early name for the town may have been Bruges, hence the first link with beer (Belgium). Bridgnorth has a long history of pubs and inns; once nearly 130 pubs and inns were licensed in the town, and although this is now down to less than 30, several historic pubs survive. We recently decided to check what was on offer at the many pubs and hostelries in the town.

We arrived from Kidderminster on the Severn Valley Railway, and our first port of call was naturally the bar on the station, the **Railwayman's Arms** (formerly the Station Tavern, dating from 1862). Batham's Best Bitter is always kept well here, and we sampled a glass, along with Bewdley Brewery Station Porter, with others to choose from the 10 handpulls. We then crossed over the bridge (replaced in 1994) to New Road and walked up the hill, past the ruins of the 12th century castle, to the **Old Castle** to have an enjoyable meal, washed down with Hobson's Town Crier. A couple of doors further along West Castle Street is the **White Lion**, dating from the late 1640s, originally with stables and rooms. It is now the tap-house of the Hop & Stagger Brewery, previously behind the pub, but now brewing at larger premises in the countryside. We sampled their Bridgnorth Porter, Golden Wander and Triple Hop IPA (very hoppy!) from the choice of 7 hand-pulled beers. Then across the road to the **Shakespeare**, first licensed in 1792 as the Punch Bowl. This historic pub was recently taken over and renovated by Joule's (Market Drayton), and here we sampled Slumbering Monk and Pure Blonde ales.

White Lion, West Castle Street, Bridgnorth

We continued into the market place, with its fine 17th century timbered town hall, where market stalls are present on Saturdays and at other times, including fairtrade and farmers' products. We turned left into Whitburn Street to visit the **Kings Head**, dating back to 1780 and now owned by a local butcher, amongst the beers on offer are Hobsons Twisted Spire and Wye Valley HPA. Behind the pub is the **Stable Bar**, now a separate business and the tap-house for the Bridgnorth Brewery, set up in 2011 by Craddock's (Stourbridge). We sampled River Steam, Monarch's Way and King's Escape, along with Three Tuns XXX Pale Ale.

Back into the market place, we briefly visited the local Wetherspoon pub, the **Jewel of the Severn**, opened in 2002, to sample a glass of Salopian Lemon Dream from their selection of 10 hand pumps. A couple of doors further along High Street, next to the 13th century town gate, is the historic **Golden Lion**, dating back to 1790 and once with its own brewery. In 2017, this pub was bought and renovated by Holden's, and we sampled Holden's Bitter, Golden Glow and Black Country Mild.

Golden Lion, High Street, Bridgnorth

Retracing our steps along High Street to the end of the market place, we called into the **Merckz** specialist Belgian bar, named after the famous Belgian cyclist. It has 9 taps serving a variety of Belgian and German beers, and over 60 bottled beers, the owners are very knowledgeable about Belgian beers and gins. We then turned left down the hill to Cartway. This steep narrow street was once home to over 20 pubs and inns, some with secret hatches and passageways, but now only two survive. The **Black Boy** was first licensed in 1790 and the present pub dates from 1889. We sampled Three Castles Black Boy Bitter, Greene King St Edmunds Golden Beer, Olde Trip and one of my own favourites, Saltaire Triple Chocaholic. The other surviving pub at the bottom of Cartway (Magpie/Beehive) now trades as the **Bassa Villa** and has a small range of local beers on draught and in bottle.

Black Boy, Cartway, Bridgnorth

Unfortunately, because we had to catch the train back to Kidderminster, we hadn't time to cross the river into Low Town. Here, recommended pubs include the **Black Horse** in Bridge Street, dating from 1810 (10 hand-pumps, including Wye Valley), and **The Vine** (1720) and **Fosters Arms** (1790) in Mill Street (both Bank's & Hobsons).

So Bridgnorth is an interesting place for historic pubs and a wide variety of excellent beers and is well worth a day out.

Further information on pubs in Bridgnorth is available in the Bridgnorth Pub Trail, available from **www.sturmorepublications.co.uk**

Steve James

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 FOXYARDS, Sedgley Road West, Woodsetton. The pub, owned by Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries since 1910, became one of their Tap House Chain, reopening in August 1994 as the RAG AND MOP, a nickname by which the pub had been known.
It closed and was demolished in 2007.
Housing has recently been built on the site.

Our earliest reference to the Foxyards Inn is from a trade directory of 1845 when James Page was the licensee. He was listed as also a wheelwright. In the 1851 census and a trade directory of 1854 he was described as also a timber merchant. He died in 1857 and his wife, Mary, briefly took over the license.

TO TIMBER DEALERS AND OTHERS.
SALE OF OAK, ASH, AND ELM TIMBER, CANAL BOATS, &c.,
By direction of the Executors of the late Mr. James Page,) upon the premises,
AT THE FOXYARDS, NEAR TIPTON.
BY Messrs. ASTON and SOLLOM.—To be SOLD by AUCTION, about the middle of the present month, the extensive Stock of round and converted TIMBER, SHEDS, TIMBER CARRIAGES, CARTS, WAGGON HORSE, the contents of the Blacksmith's Shop, four CANAL BOATS, and other Effects.
Further particulars in next week's paper.

In the 1920s Georgina the Gipsy, a colourful character who toured the local streets selling clothes pegs, lived in a wigwam at the rear of the pub.

Birmingham Daily Gazette 22/1/1930
"Valentine Smith, the famous Black country gipsy known as 'Val the Pegman' has died at the age of 103 in his wigwam near the Foxyards Inn, Woodsetton, between Tipton and Coseley.
His rough shanty was constructed of corrugated iron and canvas, and his claim to be the oldest gipsy in the country was never disputed. During his last illness, Mr. Smith was nursed by his daughter, a sprightly woman of about 75, who lives in a caravan not far away from the old man's wigwam.
For 80 years Valentine was known throughout the Black Country as a maker and hawker of clothes-pegs. Until a year or two ago he enjoyed good health, and even when he had passed the age of 102 was in the habit of taking a daily constitutional in the fields adjoining his shanty. He attributed his longevity to his healthy occupation and an open-air life. He never smoked, and had lived more than a century before he touched alcoholic beverages.
A native of the Black Country, 'Val the Pegman' began work before he was 10 years old, and obtained unofficial recognition as the champion clothes-peg maker. During all his days he lived the free and easy life of a gipsy. At the back door of his wigwam geese and fowls pecked at scraps of food, a cat lazed by the open brazier, and a friendly goat walked in and out displaying no sign of nervousness while the old man was about.
Mr. Smith was a commanding figure, with flowing locks and a clean shaven face, and he was known to and liked by thousands of Black Country house-holders. He will be buried at Sedgley Parish Church tomorrow."

Birmingham Daily Gazette 11/10/1933
"'You turned them out in mass formation this time' said the Chairman at Tipton Court when fining Mathew Loveridge, living in a caravan at the back of the Foxyards Inn, 25s for allowing five horses to stray on the highway."

Hitchmough's Black Country Pubs
longpull.co.uk

Waggon's Roll!

For a number of years there has been a growing desire to reform our branch Pub of The Year process.

As a bit of background, the process started as early as November last year, where nominations were initially sought from our wider branch membership of around 700 people.

The final 6 nominations were also drawn from Good Beer Guide scores, and further nominations at our December branch meeting. What we thought was a fair process initially threw up a few anomalies and the list of 6 was settled.

A degree of forward planning meant that this year we could follow a proper judging process which is a lot more in line with regional and national competitions. Throughout January, our volunteer judges visited the pubs involved, and marked them on factors such as beer quality, welcome, cleanliness, and promotion of CAMRA.

For the second year running it was our pleasure to present the Waggon & Horses Halesowen as our Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA Pub of The Year 2018! Mick and Dawn have consistently spoilt us with wonderful beers and ciders. The welcome from all the staff at the pub is always cheerful and friendly.

Even prior to this, Mick and Dawn are no strangers to pub success having previously run the Court House in Dudley.

For those who don't know the Waggon & Horses, it was recently bought by Black Country Ales and treated to a full, sympathetic refurbishment and extension. The format of the pub has changed very little with the long bar and narrow passageway to the rear. One modernisation of note is the beer list on a television screen behind the bar, as is now present in a couple of Black Country Ales premises.

The pub is a very short walk from either the No9 bus route, or Halesowen Town Centre itself, so there is no excuse for not paying a visit!

As a footnote, we have to acknowledge the assistance that Mick and Dawn have given in the planning of Stourbridge Beer Festival. The sales flyers, posters and the programme were all arranged with their help, and the results were well received by beer festival customers. We would like to extend a big thank you to Mick & Dawn!

Tim Cadwell

CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE
WHAT?PUB
The online pub guide for CAMRA members

Birmingham's New Bars

Following a surge of new bars opening, two more have opened within a small walk from two city centre railway stations.

Firstly, Bonehead, situated a minute's walk from Birmingham New Street station next to Cherry Reds on Lower Severn Street.

It's a compact space, seating no more than fifteen, there are eight taps and a well-stocked fridge with beers including Beavertown, Lervig and Cloudwater. The decor is dark, black in fact. The main wall is covered with artwork such as concert artwork which is worth browsing if sat on one of the stools. The upstairs contains a fried chicken restaurant (burgers, wings etc). Despite having not eaten there yet, it always seems busy. There are approximately thirty seats.

On tap when I last visited, Garage Montessori was of a vibrant orange appearance and tasted of tangerine. Excellent on a warm bank holiday Sunday. I then sampled a Cloudwater Small Loral Pale. Following the current trend, Cloudwater are producing a consistently good range of low ABV beers. The Small Loral Pale being 2.9% but is packed with loads of citrus flavours which belies its strength and could easily be mistaken for a 4.5% beer. In my opinion, this is the best low ABV Cloudwater however the Kernel Table Beer Range remains my favourite. The range is biased to light, hoppy IPAs and pale ales, however, these styles will suit the food on offer and the season that they have opened. It certainly is a strong alternative to other bars in the locality so close to the train station. A delayed train will now feel less of an issue.

Secondly, at the rear of Moor Street station under the railway arches in Shaws Passage, Kilder has opened next to Original Patty Men.

This bar consists of two areas; an outside beer patio which is a shared space with O.P.M. where customers of each venue have exclusive use of one table. The interior is slick with a contemporary feel with a combination of comfortable seating and stools.

The beer selection is very good. Currently offering fifteen taps and four wines and numerous spirits, the choice at the Bank Holiday included Garage, Howling Hop, Siren and the fantastic Founders KBS (Kentucky Breakfast Stout), 11.8% and so smooth. It's the barrel aged version whereas it's sister/brother beer, the Canadian Breakfast Stout (CBS) tastes of maple syrup.

The fridge is well stocked, again with Garage, Kernel, Siren and Beavertown all having a strong presence.

Food offerings, if you don't fancy the fantastic burgers and chicken wings at O.P.M, looks fairly simple and expensive however the ham and cheese toastie was excellent and definitely kept the munchies away for the rest of the afternoon and early evening. Kilder is a great asset to the beer scene and I'm sure will gain a strong following of regulars in the future.

Martin Clarke

The Six at Minus Six

On the final day of February 2018, six stouthearted CAMRA members battled the so-called 'Beast from the East' to frequent the alehouses of Holly Hall and Pensnett. The pavements were treacherous and the mercury slumped to -6°C.

Our starting point was the King William, a Marston's pub in close proximity to Russells Hall Hospital which is a rare breed for this pub operator inasmuch as it is wet-only. There are two regular beers – Banks's Amber Ale and Wainwright. On the night, the average beer score across the two beers was 2.5/5 which translates to "Average/Good". There is live entertainment every Saturday, numerous televisions showing sport, and cobs are available Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The pub is also blessed with a bus stop from which the 246 Bus Service transports you directly to Dudley Town Centre.

the Fox & Grapes, Pensnett

From here, we skied downhill to the Fox & Grapes which is part of the Bathams Brewery portfolio of public houses. Only a number of Batham's-owned outlets continue to sell Mild in light of the seemingly irreversible fall in demand, and on our visit to this particular Pensnett pub the Mild on offer was tired but politely replaced. We commend the Delph Road brewery for persisting with this traditional beer and would encourage the readership of Ales & Tales to seek out and sip down some of this low-alcohol brown beverage. The iconic Best Bitter was scored a 3/5 which translates to "Good".

A 15-minute westward walk along the A4101 took us to the Lenches Bridge. Here we were greeted by the new manageress, Elaine Pittam, who was enthusiastic to give us a peek of the tastefully-refurbished function room. The lone beer, Enville Ale, was bright on our visit, delivered on the same day. That said, it was scored fairly highly by those in attendance with an average score of 3.25/5 being recorded on WhatPub! (**www.whatpub.com**).

Ryan Hunt
Chair, Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA

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EVERARDS OF LEICESTERSHIRE

Sex, Drugs and IPA

Amsterdam, just a one hour fifteen-minute flight away from Birmingham airport — if you ignore the check-in, customs, the long taxiing to the runway or terminal at Schiphol and the walks to the furthest gate at the airport. Even so, it is the easiest European City to get to.

Amsterdam has always been one of our favourite destinations but be warned it is also one of the most expensive. We stayed in the East side of the city for the first time, which meant crossing the Red-Light district to get to some of our favourite bars, not that I ever looked at the rows of scantily clad ladies parading their wares in the windows. Amsterdam's other claim to fame is the freedom to smoke cannabis in the Brown Cafes, my advice is not to bother with this expensive habit! However, we were here for neither of those two pleasures but for the third — beer.

Walhalla Brewery Taproom

Amsterdam has long rivalled Belgium as a beer destination. The Netherlands has always had its own Trappist Brewery, La Trappe at Bierbrouwerij de Koningshoeven and many small breweries producing Belgian style beers but now it has also embraced the beer revolution of recent years that CAMRA diehards ignore.
Three bars of long standing that should not be missed are: -
In de Wildeman, this has a world-wide range of beers, including decent English real ale.
Proeflokaal Arendsnest, this has 40 Dutch beers on draught.
Cafe Gollem Raamsteeg, cosy bar with world beers and plenty of Belgian ones.

There are of course many more city centre bars worth visiting but we wandered a little further afield in search of local saisons, stouts and IPAs. Cross the Ij on one of the many free ferries to Oedipus Brewery with its large taproom with ten of their own beers on draught or the nearby cosier Walhalla Brewery taproom who brew a variety of IPAs, barley wine and stout.

To the south of the city you'll find Craft & Draft with 41 beers on draught including the incredible Uilje beers from Haarlem. Also, in the south of the city is Foeders, a fabulous 42 world beers on tap. In the east don't miss Ij Brewery, easily identified by the windmill next to it, their bottle beers are available all over the city but at the brewery tap the draught is the cheapest beer you'll find.

Tony Skirving

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Holden's Abraham Darby

Holden's Brewery has brewed a beer called "Abraham Darby 1st Molten Glow Special" in honour of the Industrial Pioneer ahead of a proposed Memorial to him which is to be in Woodsetton, the birthplace of Abraham in 1678. In 1709 at Coalbrookdale he successfully smelted iron with coke, and to celebrate he bought a consignment of beer for his workmen.

The beer was launched at Holden's Bottle Shop on 13th December 2017. The Memorial design has been designed by Dudley Borough Artist, Steve Field. We think the beer tastes great!

Holden's are donating 10% of the bottle sales to the Abraham Darby 1st Memorial and it is on sale at Holden's Bottle Shop and should be on draught in the Summer.

Mandy Caddick

Cider Celebration
Old Dispensary, Langley

Sunday 18th March was our second attempt at visiting this little gem of a micro pub. The bad weather at the beginning of the year had played havoc with the original arrangements and upon waking up to see yet another blanket of snow covering the garden I feared that this second presentation date would have to be postponed, but no! Like intrepid explorers along with our two trusty canine companions we wrapped up warm to brave the snow. We received one of the warmest welcomes ever from the landlord and 'lady, Simon and Emma Dunne, combined with a choice of ciders and some lovely food which all helped to melt the snow from our boots. We really must thank them both for the lovely samosas and pork baps that kept us going throughout the day.

Simon and Emma Dunne (landlord and 'lady) and Ryan Hunt (Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA Chairman). Credit: Maxine Geens

The wonderfully named Old Dispensary (what else could you call a micro pub in an old chemists!) is a deserving winner of this year's Dudley & South Staffordshire Cider Pub of the Year, it must also be mentioned that this pub (having only been open just over a year) was also a Pub of the Year finalist. The hard work and effort of the owners has clearly paid off and it is proving to be an asset to the local community. If you haven't been there before the owners have created a long rustic wooden bar stocked with Real Ales on hand pull, a variety of spirits and most importantly a good selection of ciders. On this visit we were treated to the delicious Moseley Dry Cider and for the sweet-tooths a range of boxes to choose from. It's a good job there's plenty of seating as well because I can easily see us being able to spend a good few hours here just watching the world go by.

Tony Lovering, Halfpenny Green Cider Company

There were many fellow CAMRA members in attendance, it was good to spot our Regional Director Gary Timmins helping us celebrate, but this happy occasion was tinged with sadness as we were also gathered to remember the late Sally Lavender who held the position of Regional Cider Rep. I'm sure Sally would have approved of us sampling the ciders (and beers) available to us and I must mention the beautifully worded tribute that her partner Mark Parkes gave, it brought a tear to many of us.

It was also nice to catch up with a few local cider producers - the team from Hurst View cider in Wheaton Aston and Tony Lovering from Halfpenny Green Cider. The latter gave us an insightful presentation on his method of producing a naturally fizzy premium craft cider, which we later sipped. Highly recommended!

Lizzie Cadwell

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Visit to DEYA Brewer Can Launch and Cheltenham Spa

Birthday celebrations commenced with a visit to DEYA Taproom to sample their can launch. Saturated in Simcoe - 8% single hop Simcoe DIPA. Invoice me for the microphone - 6.5% Citra & Mosaic IPA and Steady Rolling Man 5.2 Pale Ale and what a great experience is was.

The Tap Room is located onsite at the Brewery where you will find DEYA Beers on tap -Address Units 33/34 Lansdown Industrial Estate Cheltenham. The train station is a 5 min walk away and there are plenty of buses to take you into Cheltenham Town. The Tap Room opens every Friday from 4pm-9pm and Saturday 2pm-8pm and has wheelchair access and is also child and dog friendly.

The large open area outside the Taproom is spacious and Food Trucks rock up on a Friday evening, all Events and details are accessible via DEYA Brewery social media channels. The sun shone for us and we started the day with a very drinkable Steady Rolling Man 5.2 which was fruity and hoppy. One of our group is a wine and cider drinker and found an agreeable white wine to enjoy while we enjoyed the tasty beers.

DEYA have a rotating beer list. We were made to feel welcome and were told that any questions that we had about the Brewery or the beers could be answered by the bar staff who were extremely knowledgeable.

We sampled many a good beer including most of the can launch beers a couple of dark beers which were extremely smooth and moreish.

We decided after our tasting to hop on the bus into town and headed for a dirty burger before arriving at Wild Beer at Jessops house. This is a beautiful Georgian period property serving an array of beers, the Imperial Stout at 11% for a third was very agreeable, smooth and rich with strong chocolate flavour.

Our non beer drinker decided on a soft drink here and we then took some time to plan our next port of call which would be Favourite Beers.

Favourite Beers is predominantly a bottle shop but have a beer club every Friday and serve about ten taps. They have a range of Beers from sours, stouts, Lambic, Abbaye beers, just about every type you can think of. You can also select a bottle from the shelves to purchase and drink in the small seating area within the shop with is extremely friendly with many likewise drinkers.

Snacks beckoned again so it was a quick stop for some food before walking to our next point of call which was Sandford Park Alehouse which serve Cask including Oakham Citra, Wye Valley and Salopian. Craft and Keg as well as Ciders and Perries are also on the menu.

The venue was very comfortable and we decided to spend our last few hours here before we headed back to our Hotel. We sampled Wholesome Stout by Wye Valley which was a mild light roasted stout with dark malts and the Siren Craft Brew – Coldblooded which was a gorgeous chocolate based Porter.

After a very enjoyable few hours chatting with our friends we decided to head back to our Hotel. We awoke fully refreshed and headed back to Cheltenham for a full English and a stop off at DEYA to collect our cans.

Cheltenham is a wonderful Spa regency town with some great beer outlets with great public transport and a wealth of Breweries and Pubs and is well worth a visit.

Until next time Cheltenham.

Tanya Rhead

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Festival Focus

Wolverhampton Beer Festival will continue at the Newhampton Arts Centre after its recent success at this venue. The venue is easily accessible by frequent bus services from Wolverhampton Bus station (number 6) or a 20-minute walk from the Railway Station, Bus station and Metro Terminus. The venue at Dunkley Street is ideal for a beer festival and will have 75 beers plus Cider, Perry and Foreign bottled beers. The festival opens on the evening of Thursday 7th June at 5pm until 11pm and continues Friday 8th and Saturday 9th from noon until 11pm both days. Admission is £3.50 on Thursday, £2.50 between Noon and 5pm on Friday but after 5pm admission is £4.50. Saturday is FREE all day. CAMRA members get £1 worth of beer tokens Thursday and Friday. Entertainment Friday evening only and will be announced shortly.
www.wolverhampton.camra,org.uk

Bromsgrove beer festival is the first of a sequence of outdoor, marquee-based festivals. Held at Bromsgrove Rugby Club, which is about a 10-minute walk from Bromsgrove Railway station, it is an ideal site with lots of grassed areas to enjoy the Summer Sun. The festival opens on the evening of the 28th and continues on the 29th and 30th June.
www.bromsgrovebeerfestival.org.uk

Hereford Beer Festival will be back for its 14th year on the banks of the River Wye at the city's rowing club. Taking place from the 6th to the 8th July, the festival opens on FRIDAY afternoon at 2pm until 11pm, continues on Saturday from noon until 11pm and ends with a family fun day on Sunday from Noon until 5pm. The setting is superb alongside the River Wye adjacent to the rowing club on Greyfriars Avenue, Hereford. HR4 0BE.
www.beeronthewye.org.uk

Stratford Beer Festival is a 2-day event on Friday 6th July and Saturday 7th July. Opening times on Friday are from Noon until 11pm and on Saturday from 11am until 11pm. The location of the festival is Stratford-upon-Avon Racecourse, Luddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 9SE. The site is about a 25-minute walk from the railway station but there is a shuttle bus that meets the trains. Taxis are also easily available.
www.stratfordbeerfestival.org.uk

Shrewsbury Beer Festival will again take place at the Wakeman Hall, Abbey Foregate, SY2 6AA from 19th to 21st July and features over 100 beers, ciders and perries, country wines and craft gins. Admission is free at all times for CAMRA members and £2.50 for non-members. The festival opens on the Thursday from 11am until 11pm, Friday from 11am until 11pm and on Saturday from 11am until 9pm (or earlier if the beer runs out).
www.saws.camra.org.uk

Heart of Stafford Beer Festival takes place from the 26th to 28th July at the Blessed William Howard Catholic School Rowley Ave, Stafford ST17 9AB
www.staffordbeerfestival.co.uk

Worcester Beer Festival will be at its usual venue of Worcester racecourse and takes place from Thursday 9th August until Saturday 11th August. This festival offers ADVANCE tickets and you are STRONGLY ADVISED to purchase an advance ticket. Advance ticket package for Thursday, 5pm until 11pm is £13 (£6 entry +£7 beer tokens). Advance ticket package for Friday, Noon until 11pm is £17 (£10 entry + £7 beer tokens) and for Saturday, Noon until 10pm is £13 (£6 entry and £7 beer tokens).
www.worcesterbeerfest.org.uk

The Great British Beer Festival held at Olympia in London takes place from the 7th to the 11th August. Advance tickets are available online.
www.gbbf.org.uk

Tamworth Beer Festival takes place from the 6th to the 8th September. The venue is the Masonic rooms on Lichfield Street on the western edge of town. The festival is open from 11am until 11pm each day.
www.lstcamra.org.uk

Halesowen Cricket Club are holding their 2nd beer festival on the 13th - 15th July. They will be serving 24 real ales & 10 ciders and a band each night.
www.halesowencricketclub.co.uk

Steve Thompson

Momentous Moments... No. 62

'How I opened a Bottle'

If you're as old as me you will remember the advent of CAMRA way back in the '70's, the days of Watneys, Double Diamond, Whitbread Tankard and other 'delightful' beverages grouped together under the banner of 'Nitrokeg'..... uuuugh!

As well as the following resurgence of 'draught' beers the brewers got savvy when it came to expanding their product range, old brews were resurrected, new ones 'invented' and historic moments were commemorated by the production of a bottle with a fancy label.

The Queen's Silver Jubilee, 1977, was duly honoured, as was The Royal Wedding a few years later in 1981. Dear old 'Dasher' Downing even announced the birth of his granddaughter with a 'special'..... 'Baby's Bottle'! Stourbridge CAMRA had a beer brewed by Premier Ales in 1989 to commemorate 15 years; how many of you knew that?

Unfortunately CAMRA was not able to prevent many of the 'biggies' buying out the smaller brewers by tempting them with offers they couldn't refuse. One of those 'buy-outs' involved local 'family' brewery, Simpkiss, whose workers found out from an article published in the local press that the family had sold-out to the Warrington based brewer, Greenall Whitley and they were all jobless!

The staff were to have the last say on this matter and brewed 'Simpkiss Wake Bier' in July 1985.

It was at the Talbot, Silver End, that we met Harry Rodgers and his family. Harry was the landlord and kept, without a shadow of a doubt, the best pint of beer in the area! He was a very generous fellow and through him I acquired quite a collection of Simpkiss memorabilia and he would always put aside a few bottles for us as soon as they became available.

Back to the present, well Christmas 2017..... whilst clearing-out a cupboard I realised I had two bottles of 'Simpkiss Wake Bier', now well over thirty years old. I held one up to the window so the light could penetrate the 'liquid' inside the bottle..... It was a clear, beautiful ruby red..... hmmm, I wondered, is it possible? Took it into the house and left it with my selection of beers purchased for Christmas partying, to be consumed in a couple of weeks time.

Friends, Dave and Maggie always keep us company on Christmas Eve, it was our turn to host the celebrations, they duly arrived and imbibing began. Maggie was driving so she stuck to the wine; Dave, Joy and I raided the Belgians! Food was consumed and refills called for. It was at this point that I remembered the 'Wake Ale'..... hmmm, I wondered again, is it possible? Anything's possible so the bottle was placed on the kitchen worktop, I bent down so I could see up through the bottle towards the light..... it was still a clear, beautiful ruby red..... hmmm!

"Dave, do you fancy a treat?" I called into the lounge. "Depends" came the reply "does it involve embarrassing myself?" "No, not this time, it involves beer." "Go on then."

I duly placed two glasses close together on the worktop and gently raised an opener to the bottle..... Ssshhhhh..... the expulsion of thirty year-old gas met my ears. Will it explode all over the kitchen? It didn't, a couple of bubbles percolated over the rim of the bottle. I was relieved. I raised the bottle to eye level with the light directly behind the bottle..... even now, it was a clear, beautiful ruby red..... I started to pour..... the beer trickled into the first glass, it behaved, no sudden rush of bubbling froth, I half filled the glass, picked up the second one and repeated the procedure. Phew that went well, now for the important bit..... I raised the glass to my nose and sniffed..... well matured Christmas pudding met my nostrils..... at least it wasn't rank!

Now for the taste..... hmmmm..... a bit ordinary..... Joy tried it and said it was..... 'OK'.

Dave didn't appreciate his 'treat'..... Maggie stuck to the wine!

Adrian Stevens

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Beer Destinations
Me and my beer in Myanmar

The sovereign state of Myanmar lies in South-East Asia, between India/Bangladesh and Thailand. Formerly the British colony of Burma, it has a population of around 54 million, most of whom are Buddhists. Over 7.5 million live in the three largest cities – Yangon (Rangoon), Mandalay and Naypyidaw (the new capital). We recently toured the country, visiting Yangon, Bagan, Mandalay, Bago and Mawlamyine, not only to search out the various beers, but also to travel on the rather antiquated railway system.

Myanmar's history of brewing beer dates from 1886, when the British converted a cannon factory in Mandalay to a brewery. At present there are two main brewing companies in the country, Myanmar and Mandalay. These have had a chequered history of being state-owned and independent, and stakes in these breweries are now held by both Heineken and Carlsberg. In 1996, Myanmar Brewing Co opened a new 140,000-hectolitre brewery outside Yangon, brewing both Myanmar and Tiger beer. Dagon Beverages also produce Dagon beers. In 2013, Carlsberg secured brewing licences and established the Myanmar-Carlsberg brewery, brewing Carlsberg, Tuborg and local Yoma beers. In 2015, Heineken built a new 330,000-hectolitre brewery for the Alliance/Archipelago Brewing Company outside Yangon, producing Tiger, Heineken, ABC and local Regal Seven beers. Not surprisingly, per-capita beer consumption in Myanmar has doubled in the past three years.

So with this number of breweries, we expected a similarly large range of beers. We were therefore rather disappointed to find a limited range of beer styles available. Most of the breweries produce a normal lager-type beer, with premium/super and strong/special varieties also available. For us, two of the outstanding beers were the award-winning ABC stout and Black Shield stout, both tasty full-flavoured beers. We also found a most unusual beer in Mandalay – Spirulina Anti-Ageing beer; spirulina is a rare micro algae nutritionally rich in anti-oxidants, amino acids, minerals and vitamins which apparently has anti-ageing properties – I certainly felt younger after sampling a glass! Beer strength varies from 4-5% up to over 8% ABV. The ingredients are usually water, malted barley, hops and yeast, but some breweries add rice, a staple part of the Burmese diet; however, some beers proudly pronounce themselves "100% malt".

Selection of Myanmar bottled beers

Bottled, and occasionally draught, beer is available in most hotels and restaurants, particularly in the main cities. But we didn't find many familiar beer bars or cafés, apart from the odd Irish-type bar. In Yangon, both the Rangoon Tea House (77-79, Pansodan Street) and Father's Office (291, Bo Aung Kyaw Street) have a good range of bottled beers, but the tea-leaf salad and coconut noodles deserve a miss. 50th Street (9/13, 50th Street) offers Myanmar & Yoma bottled beers, along with bottled and canned beers from the Burbrit micro-brewery (more about which later). However, we hadn't time to find beers from the York Street Brewing

Company, which apparently brews Porter, IPA and Hefeweizen beers. In Mandalay, Central Park (66th Street), with its semi open-air bar and barbecue, and Mann (83rd Street), popular with locals, also deserve a mention. Outside the main towns, "beer stations" seem to be the norm, which are little more than shops selling large quantities of bottled beers.

Perhaps the most surprising find in Yangon was the Burbrit micro-brewery. This is the first craft beer brewery in Myanmar, set beside the Pazundaung Creek in an industrial area north of the city centre (D16, North Dagon Industrial Zone, 34 Ward, not far from the Bo Bo Min bakery on U Wisara Road). Established in January 2017 by Htin Lin and Maung Zaw (trained in Singapore), this 500-litre plant mainly brews German-style beers (weizen, light pilsner and golden ales), using German-imported malts and hops and French yeast, but also offers an English Bitter, Irish Red Ale, Mandalay Brunette and London Porter. Its tasting room and beer garden is open every day, and offers sample trays of all their beers served directly from the keg, as well as take-away bottles and Growlers. A limited range of Burmese-Chinese fusion food is also available. When we were there, a Brewery Experience tour was in full swing, with a group of local Burmese trying their hands at brewing beers. Another tasting room is due to open soon nearer to the city centre, not far from the Thai Embassy (7-1, Ma Naw Haoi Street).

So, there is an expanding beer scene in Myanmar, with a variety of beers to choose from, and with the added bonus of at least one new micro-brewery with craft beers.

Steve James

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Desert Island Beers

A choice of 6 beers, a book and a luxury item – What would be your choice if you were marooned on a Desert Island? Here goes with my personal selection for your consideration. Some of the beers you will be able to find fairly easily, others might prove a little more difficult.

My first choice would be what is currently my favourite cask beer, Saltaire Triple Chocoholic Stout. It's a 4.8% ABV beer full of Chocolate malts, cocoa, chocolate essence which combine to provide a strong chocolate bouquet and a rich chocolate flavour. The hopping provides a balancing bitterness. It was the Gold winner in Speciality Beer category at the Great British Beer Festival 2017.

Andechs Spezial is the second beer I would take on my desert island. Brewed at the Andechs monastery it is truly a classic German bottled beer. Described by the brewery as a beer with a clear gleaming look and firm, fine head which goes hand in hand with its fresh and pure aroma. Malty nuances are the first impressions. Spezial Hell is pleasantly tangy with a full, round malt body that cannot fail to fascinate. The soft flavour carries a distinctive balance of sweet accents and bitter hoppiness. a classic festival beer. 5.9% ABV, just the right strength for a German beer.

Oakham Citra has got to be included as one of my beers. The sharp Citra hops gives this beer the flavours of Grapefruit, Lychee and Gooseberry and the aroma matches. A beer at only 4.2% ABV it is packed full of flavour; the hops being complemented by the rich malted barley and malted wheat. Available mainly as a cask beer but also the bottled version is just as good.

Closer to home and I would plump for Sadler's Mud City Stout, brewed with raw Cocoa, Vanilla pods, flaked Oats, Wheat and a blend of beautiful dark malts. It is a 6% beer although a lower ABV version is being brewed with Original added to its name and distributed usually as a keg beer. My personal preference is to blend the two versions making a classic drink.

A beer that is still available these days but it is a pale shadow of what it used to be is RCH Pitchfork. If the beer from 20 years ago was still on offer it would certainly be on my list. At the forefront of the Pale, Hoppy revolution it was superb. A golden bitter with a pleasant floral citric hop aroma, it has a predominantly hoppy taste which is slightly sweet and fruity. Fuggles and Goldings hops combine to produce this 4.3% ABV beer now brewed by Epic Beers Limited who trade as Pitchfork Ales, this new company was formed out of the demise of RCH after HMRC involvement. I look forward to trying the new version but I fondly remember the original.

And now to my final selection, so many beers and so little time. Thornbridge brewery is in my humble opinion a brewer of some fantastic beers. You may be surprised that my choice would be Thornbridge Wild Swan rather than its stronger and more well-known Jaipur. Wild Swan is only 3.5% ABV but is packed full of flavour. Wild Swan is white gold in colour with aromas of light bitter lemon, a hint of herbs and a subtle spiciness. A great refreshing beer. An excellent beer to complete my desert island beers.

My choice of book would be a classic from my early days of home brewing. Published originally in 1978, "Brewing beers like those you buy" written by Dave Line was a fountain of knowledge. The book changed the face of home brewing and encouraged home brewers to use quality ingredients and in particular Brewers yeast rather than Baker's yeast.

My choice of luxury item would be a CITRA Hop plant.

Steve Thompson

Hitchmough's Archives

Compensation

During the industrial revolution the Black Country was awash with pubs. Beer was the drink of choice to slake the thirst of the working men, the water quality at that time being unreliable. The Beerhouse Act of 1830 had simplified the process of obtaining a license for sale of beer only, in an attempt to discourage the consumption of spirits (especially gin), and contributed to the growth of the number of pubs.

Early in the 20th century there was national concern about the number of licensed premises and there was also a growing temperance movement. Acts of Parliament were introduced which gave licensing justices the ability to refuse to renew licenses and a compensation fund was set up (collected from a levy on licenses) to make payments where pubs were de-licensed. Here are three cases from 1922.

Staffordshire Advertiser 22/7/1922

"There were 17 cases in the list for consideration at the Principal Meeting of the Staffordshire County Licensing Committee, held at the Shirehall, Stafford, on Thursday, under the chairmanship of Col. R. C. Clive. The proceedings lasted six hours, and as a result 13 licences were refused and four were renewed....."

BIRD IN HAND, Wallbrook, Coseley

"During the consideration of the case of the BIRD IN HAND, Wallbrook, Coseley, it was stated that the house was in an isolated position on a pit-bank; that the surrounding collieries were now dis-used; and that very little trade was done. As to the structure, the house was propped up with buttresses and tied up with rods, whilst there was even a clear stream of water running through the cellar.

Mr. J. Wylie (for the licencee): That should keep the beer cool in the summer.

Mrs. Bailey, wife of the licencee, said the water came from a spring and in no way interfered with the use of the cellar.

Licence refused."

[Compensation of £712 was paid.]

THULL GHAUT, Wordsley

"In support of the closure of the THULL GHAUT, Wordsley, Mr. Wickham King (clerk to the Brierley Hill justices) urged that the house had had a chequered career, and that it was the cheapest of those in the vicinity to compensate. There were three other houses within a radius of 180 yards with more accommodation and more easily capable of supervision.

For the owner and licencee, Mr. A. W. Dando, auctioneer, gave evidence to the effect that the THULL GHAUT was an extremely good structure and much more modern than the RED LION, an adjoining house. In cross-examination, however, he admitted that in April, 1919, he advertised the RED LION as an attractive house and one of the best selling houses in the district.

Licence refused."

[Compensation of £1,730 was paid.]

PLOUGH INN, Tipton

"In the case of the PLOUGH INN, Tipton, Mr. A. J. Long represented the local justices, and stated that the house was situated in a poor district, and there were eleven fully-licensed houses within 500 yards.

Inspector Mycock said the licencee told him in February that he was doing four barrels a week.

Mr. J. Wylie (cross-examining): That is the time of year when people drink less beer than at any other time?

Witness: Yes. He added that the licencee's family had had the house for 56 years without complaint.

For the owner, Mr. J. Wylie said this house had the great merit of doing a good trade, namely 6¾ barrels per week. What was more it was the only home-brewed house within a mile, and the great mass of the sensible beer-drinking population preferred home-brewed ale to the brewery product.

The licence was renewed."

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