



Solihull

BORO
BANTER

ISSUE 13

OCTOBER 1983

THE NEW LODGE

of
YARDLEY WOOD ROAD
SOLIHULL LODGE

fine



ales

TRADITIONAL

mine hosts -
PETE AND JANE HOLGATESAMUEL ALSOPP'S
GOLD CROSS
lager
SOLD
HEREGREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL
BINGLEY HALL, BIRMINGHAM

It's a shame only a few members of The Solihull branch helped out at The G.B.B.F. because however much we talk about beer, action will always speak louder than words. I must admit that I enjoyed every minute of the Festival, despite the hard work.

My first session was behind The Allied bar, where after being issued free Ansells sweat shirts we served members of the press and brewery reps. to the products of The Allied Empire. On the same stand were some of the Welsh beers but unfortunately they had not settled. Ansells new lager, Gold Cross seemed to go down quite well but whether that was due to its novelty value I'm not too sure.

My first lunchtime session was behind The M & B, Ringwood, Blue Anchor and Bourne Valley stand, where I really enjoyed myself, as so did the customers. Three middle aged chaps drank Ringwood Old Thumper (O.G. 1060) from eleven in the morning until three in the afternoon. They could still stand but their eyes were glazed, still they enjoyed themselves. The Blue Anchor was off and was to prove troublesome during the whole Festival. One poor chap had come from Manchester to renew his association with Blue Anchor. When I told him it was off there were tears in his eyes. M & B's beers were in superb condition, in fact Highgate Mild became my standard drink. M & B's new Highgate Best Mild was also on offer but it certainly did not appear to be a mild to me, more a light bitter. I was fortunate to spend another session on this stand.

Next evening I was on the glasses counter. This involved giving the drinking public their glasses. It was here that I heard some choice remarks. "Where's the real ale?" "Where's the Carling Black Label?" I never knew such loons existed. It was a hard job though. People were coming from everywhere. I think that by the time the night was over glasses were coming out of my ears! and money seemed to be flying everywhere.

You can't always do the nice jobs behind the bar and so my next session was staff food. I will say no more than that I had to do washing up for five hours solidly! Ah well! someone has got to do it.

My last session was on the Saturday night, the final session of the beer festival. This time I was a standby. I ended up on Pub Games. This was a very popular section with the public having a skittle alley, darts, shove halfpenny and many more games associated with pubs. After the customers had had a few pints there was no shortage of lads prepared to give the onlookers a good laugh!

Entertainment was provided every night and although it was a little difficult hearing orders the public certainly enjoyed it. The one thing that kept me going again and again to the Beer Festival was not the half price beer but the atmosphere. The public occasionally a little off dally were never aggressive and most of the staff were a great bunch. It all seemed to gell into a friendly jovial atmosphere.

It's sad now that it's all over but I am already looking forward to next year. Maybe you'll come and help, you will enjoy it.

CAMPAIGN CORNER

The Golden Acres, Damsonwood has never featured strongly in our area as a pub in which to spend a pleasant evening. This could change. Twelve months ago, Eric took over The Acres as a tenant, previous publicans were managers. This means

Continued next page....

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THE NAG'S HEAD

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'Camelot Restaurant'

George & Connie Powell

..... CONT. FROM FRONT PAGE

that Eric has a certain amount of freedom over the running of the pub.

Before coming to The Acres, Eric held a license in Cradley Heath, an area alive with real ale and Eric is keen on serving traditional ale but he suggested that if he did install it, it would only be the bitter and that it would be served with top pressure. Of course, C.A.M.R.A. would prefer to see the beer served naturally, but maybe we should take one step at a time. At least The Acres is going in the right direction.

There is however, one small problem. Since Eric took over twelve months ago he has been asked every two months if he would like traditional beer installed, to which he has answered "Yes". Ansells, though, have not as yet put the beer in. So maybe we should put our pens to paper and ask Ansells to stop dragging their feet and install the beer.

Once it is in maybe Eric will be convinced that top pressure is unnecessary. Due to his cellerage arrangement he would need to serve it electrically so we shouldn't be seeing handpumps installed but at least the pub is going in 'our direction'. If we campaign hard enough by writing to Ansells and keep up a good rapport with Eric it might not be too long before The Golden Acres could appear in the Good Beer Guide!

FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE?

There seems to be a very worrying outbreak of beer price increases at the moment, both here in the Midlands and Nationwide too. In July Ansells increased the price of bitter by 2p a pint and in early September both Davenports and M + B did the same. Although these are the first self imposed price rises for quite a while, it

seems particularly hard on the drinker if you take into consideration the fact that the hot Summer has been a shot in the arm for the brewers.

Profits are also up for the brewers which makes the price rises even more hard to understand. Bass (who own M + B of course) have recorded profits of over £60 m for the first half of the year, and increase of 45%.

Beer sales are still low and many of you will know that earlier this year, the Brewers Society spent £1 m advertising pubs under the slogan "you should have been in the pub last night". CAMRA believes lower prices would do more to encourage people to leave their living rooms and get back into the pubs again. For example, a hotel in South Wales has cut beer prices to 40p per pint and has seen SEVEN times as many customers as a result.

Its possible the recent increases are geared towards bigger profits for the breweries at the expense of lower volume of sales. Bearing this in mind, beer consumption would decline still further and subsidiary breweries would be closed down or workers made redundant, thus cutting costs even more for the big breweries.

We are not against profitable breweries. If a company were to struggle financially and close down or brew less beers this would mean even less choice for the drinker, which is the last thing CAMRA want. I just wish that more of the profit could go back into the beers and make certain thin or bland beers (e.g. Spew XI) a little more flavoursome.

Another interesting point regarding the price rises the Midlands is that Ansells, M + B and Davenports are all increasing lager prices by 3p per pint, half as much again as the beer increase. This is laughable when you consider that it is easier to brew, distribute, store and serve than real beer.

The main brands of lager "manufactured" by the 3 above breweries are also weaker than most of their bitters, which means less duty is paid by the breweries. The 3p rise is yet another case of lager drinkers being ripped off. It is often lager sales that make up a substantial part of the brewers profits and yet the only thanks they get is to be conned even more. Without massive advertising lager sales would probably slump. Often drinkers are convinced that, because of the adverts, the lager they prefer comes from abroad such as Holland or Germany. More often than not the factories are in places like Warrington or Northampton. Watneys even think lager drinkers are bigger MEN than beer drinkers, which is a hilarious joke, with lager being more of a ladies drink.

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NAVIGATION – TOM-O-THE-WOOD SOCIAL

It was a superb evening, sun shining on the parched earth, a gentle breeze blowing through the handpumps of the Navigation, Lapworth. I arrive early, as being walk leader, I thought it wise . . . but where was everyone? Had I got the wrong day?, the wrong time?, the wrong pub? Beads of sweat broke out.

I expected to see eager Solihull Branch members trampling everyone else down, jogging on the spot, trainers stamping the ground in anticipation of the evenings stroll, but no, no one.

7.30 p.m. and ah ah!, whats this, Clive arrives in the Old Master, and whose that in the garden of the pub? Alan Franklin and Family. So thats one . . . two . . . three . . . eight! Where's Malcolm? Where's Brian and David, where's everyone? Ah well! bugger 'em we're off, after a pint that is. Beware, the Springfield is KEG on handpump!

We joined the canal on the opposite side of the road to the Navigation, with the towpath on the righthand bank of the canal. After passing a family of ducks we crossed a bridge at the canal junction, turned right heading towards the Stratford Canal, passing under the Birmingham – Warwick railway line. Here lay quite a few old boats painted with traditional narrow boat paintings. At the junction turn left on to the Stratford Canal, noting the unusual barrel shaped roofs of the canal side cottages. At the next lock cottage we turned left along the lane and looking in the garden of the lock cottage we saw a goat and a donkey which had, what looked like, a grass skirt on its head. We looked around, hopefully, for the young lady who may have owned this but no such luck.

However, press on up to the road, turn left, in a hundred yards, The Tom-of-the Wood and that den of iniquity, my friend, is where everyone was . . . excuses . . . excuses. As per norm, the beer was lousy and so were the prices. We mused over the possibility that canal water might be tastier and certainly less expensive.

Being eager to sample more of the Navigation's wears we set hot-foot back to Lapworth. Leaving The Tom-of-the Wood, turn left, cross the canal bridge, on to the towpath under the bridge so that in effect you have turned right out of The Tom. This is a shorter route than the one taken in the first part of the walk and we all arrived back at the Navigation at about ten'ish, that is all those who walked. The idle few who drove, got there first but didn't get a round in, hint, hint.

And so the night ended. The weather was fine, the ale was fine, its just a shame more members didn't join in the spirit of the occasion. Why don't you come on our next social?

Steve Dyson

The Bulls Head

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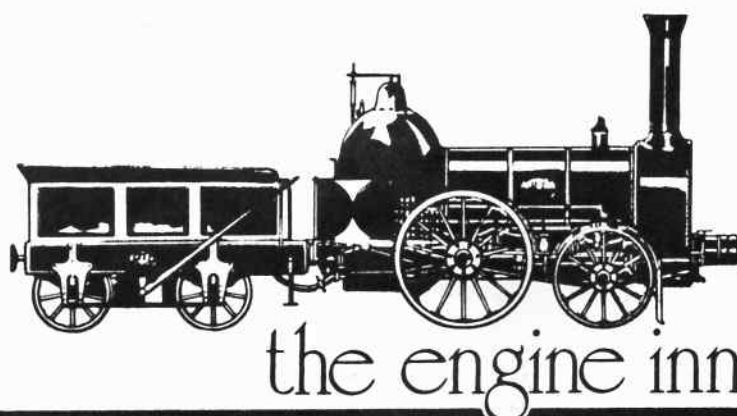
WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Once upon a time there used to be a run-down Ansells pub on the Square in the centre of Warwick with bus stops outside and undesirable looking Hells Angels (well apprentices) types lurking amongst the bench seats under the front archways, Inside, a dilapidated handpump dispensed Traditional Mild which tended to be rather unexceptional, so this was the run-down Green Dragon up until 1980 onwards until the Ansells overlords called for a change, a clear out and a new image (There's nothing quite like them!). The interior was gutted; refitted with all the modern plastic gear, plush seats, even dim lighting once (so you could not see if your beer was cloudy); plus the sounds and all the trappings to make a trendy young pub. But . . . what about a name to go with all this? Green Dragons were out (extinct like the Dinosaur!) so it became . . . The Open Arms – how does that grab you! Not long afterwards it decided in Warwick tradition to go historical and became . . . The Kings

Retreat, well perhaps so many keg dispensers made him retreat because it's now turned into a steak bar and re-named . . . The Kingmaker! (The only traditional beer was Gibbs Wiltshire Bitter which was far from its best.)

THE BLUEBELL – HENLEY

This Whitbread pub on the A34 now sells real ale. Several branch members called in during a recent social in Henley and were delighted to see and taste the superbly kept Flower O.B. and Whitbread Traditional Bitter, which are now on sale on handpump. The Manager explained that he had wanted real beer for a long time but the cellar was too small and the last thing he wanted was poorly kept beer. However, a new cellar has just been built which is ideal for kegs and the original cellar is now perfect for the cask beer, with much more room being available. This pub is now definitely worth a visit!



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was not having any of it. His voice rose strongly over all those dashing for the exit to avoid the din. His dexterity on the cazoo is amazing to see. . . and hear. We had to stand twenty feet away for fear of being hit by flying spittle! To top it all he was still cajoling another song out of the band whilst they were putting their coats on! And then friends. . . no! no! I see you have had enough. Let me at this point draw a veil over the scene. Suffice to say if you are coming on a future social with us, phone me first. The least I can do is let you know whether Andy is coming or not!

BRANCH DIARY

Wednesday, 19th October.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at The Golden Lion, Solihull. Please attend if at all possible as it is our most important meeting of the year.

BRANCH DIARY AMENDMENT

The 7th November Committee Meeting has been changed from the Woodside in Shard End to The Engine in Hampton. Meeting commences at 8.30 p.m.

The branch would like to thank Dave and Margaret Weston of The Bulls Head, Earlswood for their hospitality during our September committee meeting. We will also be very sorry to see them leave the pub this month and to say goodbye the branch have arranged a special social at the pub on the 12th October, at around 8.30.

SOCIAL WITH SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER BRANCHES

Shakespeare Branch were kind enough to organise a skittles match between various local branches and themselves at a Free House called the Gay Dog, Lower Quinton. It served a reasonable pint of Hook Norton Bitter, at least in the early part of the evening.

Lower Quinton is situated some six miles to the south of Stratford-upon-Avon and it was a pleasant Tuesday evening as David, Brian, Malcolm, Maxine, Clive, Steve and Andy whisked their way down through the leafy lanes of the Warwickshire Feldon.

We arrived at The Dog at about eightish then wandered up to a Whitbread pub to try the brew there. We managed to get a drink after waiting for a coach party to be served, followed by Andy mixing all the orders up but let's not dwell on that.

Andy mixing the order up should have been an adequate warning of what was to come, but he took the first opportunity possible to remind us of his accident proneness. While passing by the bar he insisted on kicking the skittle alleys protective side and with arms akimbo went flying across the bar. This was quickly followed by giving the Chairman of Shakespeare Branch a smart wallop, who at that time was carefully manoeuvring the two prizes of bottled beer to a position where the populace could admire them. It was with maraculous dexterity that he saved them from certain destruction. Well, readers that sounds bad enough but if you can but wait awhile the worst, as they say, is yet to come.

Our first game of skittles was Shakespeare versus The Rest, in which the teams were evenly matched. Each player threw three balls and the amount of skittles knocked down was added to his teams score. The tally stood at Shakespeare 68, others 67. Malcolm was to throw the last ball. Beads of sweat ran down his brow as he threw the ball down the alley. It tottered along the flooring, veering slightly left, then right knocking over the skittles. Our team had won! Shakespeare Branch 68, Others 72.

A slight respite came then in the form of three musicians who entertained us whilst we munched through chicken and chips and supped the ale. Then back to skittles.

Round two.

This round was a knockout round. Everyone for themselves. Two prizes were earmarked for the two winners, first prize, a bottle of Devenish Smugglers Ale, second prize, a bottle of Simpikiss Extra Special Bitter.

Solihull can claim a modicum of victory in that Steve came away with the Simpikiss. And so dear reader we settled down to sup our ale and chat convivially whilst the band entertained us to some songs.

They should never have encouraged audience participation. The night was drawing to a close, the singers were weary but no, Andy

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