



ISSUE No. 33

Solihull BORO BANTER



AUGUST, 1986

The new Lodge

**Yardley Wood Road,
Solihull Lodge.**



Ansell's

**ENJOY TRADITIONAL
BEER AT IT'S BEST.**

**Wide range of Bar Meals
Mon. — Sat. 12.00 — 2.00**



NEW BREW FOR SOLIHULL

The range of beers available to the Solihull drinker has increased recently with the introduction of Wem Special into some Davenports houses following their takeover by Grenall Whitley. We have tried it at The Drawbridge in Majors Green, Shirley and The Boat, Catherine de Barnes.

The handpumped beer seemed in good condition at both pubs and was not too expensive. Wem special is a tasty hoppy pint (o.g. 1042, price 78/80p pint) with more body than Davenports Traditional (o.g. 1039, price 70/72p) and frankly I preferred the

Wem. Flowers Original has now been withdrawn from many Davenports pubs which is to be expected following the takeover.

The future intentions of Greenhall in the area are unknown so we shall have to wait and see, although a little speculation will not go amiss. They are likely to make their presence felt more as time goes by. Already there have been sightings of cider and lager made by Greenhalls in Davenports pubs. If Wem Special takes off (it was reported to be selling well by the landlord at The Drawbridge), the powers that be might think they can do without Davenports Traditional Bitter. I wonder if its days are numbered?

CARNIVAL SUCCESS

I am pleased to report that from CAMRA's point of view, our stand at the Solihull Carnival was a marvellous occasion. Fortunately Saturday, 7th June was quite a warm, sunny day which helped swell the overall attendance and consequently much interest was shown in our stall.

We are not allowed to sell beer but did sell and give away a large amount of beer related material. Financially, this our third successive Carnival, was the best ever and all profits go into Campaign funds, which incidentally are growing steadily. Maybe we will be able to afford a beer festival in the future!

However, even more important possibly than the money, we feel we gained much good publicity on the day as well as helping raise money for charity. In addition to this we had a very enjoyable day out too! The local Round Table groups must be congratulated for the organisation of the event and thanked for putting up with us again. We hope to be there next year.



DISASTER IN NETHERTON!!

Just before the Banter went to press there was a fire at the old Swan (Ma Pardoes) in the Black Country and the roof of the brewery was badly burnt. Some beer was lost and production halted. At the time it was not known if or when brewing could recommence. Fortunately the marvellous adjacent pub was not damaged.



BERDIES

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Can offer you
**A WIDE SELECTION OF
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NOW WATNEYS GIVE WILSON
THE BIG CHOP!!



A few years ago it seemed unthinkable that large breweries owned by the national breweries would close with such regularity, but now we are almost "getting used to it". The latest casualty is Wilsons of Newton Heath, Manchester. Watneys, who own the brewery say it is to close later this year with the loss of 273 jobs. CAMRA is sceptical towards assurances that all their beers will continue to be available with production being switched to Websters in Halifax. Websters would be brewing at least six cask beers and surely plans for future rationalization of the beer range cannot be ruled out. Websters Yorkshire Bitter in particular seems to be given heavy promotion by the Watney group, possibly to the detriment of the other beers. CAMRA feel this is a sort of "Red Barrel of the 80's" a formerly regional brew that is now available throughout almost the whole Watney empire. As it becomes even stronger, regional brews look more vulnerable. It seems incredible that a brewery supplying about 500 pubs can be wiped out in an instant and equally so that another can absorb the production so easily. It just goes to prove that there is enormous over capacity in the industry today. This is because sales of beer have continuously dropped in the last decade or so, due to high prices and increasing competition from lager and wine. It is tragic that beer (our national drink and part of our heritage) is being ignored by many people who are turning to French and German wines and Australian and American lager etc. Where is their sense of patriotism and pride in our country. It is the height of hypocrisy to buy a BL car because you want to

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help our economy and then celebrate with a can of Fosters! Think about it. However, on a less hysterical note, CAMRA are campaigning to try and save Wilsons beers. A leaflet has been produced pointing out the likely detrimental effects of the closure and it also includes a postcard customers can sent to Wilsons to complain about their decision to shut the brewery. If something is not done to stop this, Wilsons will follow The Norwich Brewery onto the scrap heap, with the subsequent state of uncertainty regarding choice of beers and standards of quality..



VAUX CLOSE HALF THEIR BREWERIES

Vaux of Sunderland shocked many people recently by announcing that two of their breweries would be closed within a year. First to go will be Darleys of Thorne in South Yorkshire, followed by Lorimer and Clark of Edinburgh. Darley Thorne Best Bitter will

be brewed by Wards of Sheffield (also part of the group) and the 63 tied pubs will continue to be run as Darley Houses. This is some compensation but CAMRA are still upset to see the end of Darley's impressive brewery, which has been owned by Vaux for 8 years.

In some respects the Lorimers closure comes as no surprise. Most of their beer is sold in the Sunderland area so transporting the beer from Scotland was obviously a problem. The parent company in Sunderland will brew Lorimer's Scotch and 80 Shilling after the closure and one has to see the sense in that from Vaux's point of view. However, CAMRA do not want to see "yet another English brewed Scotch" go. We will be objecting to Vaux regarding both of these closures.

More takeover speculation seems to be centred on the North East and Vaux are seen as likely victims. The decisions to shut the two breweries may be a sign of them becoming edgy. Adding weight to this speculation are Vaux's interim, pre-tax profits of £6.22m, more than £1m up on the same period last year. Profits for the year are expected to top £17m.

SAVE THE MILD



Traditional mild, like the once popular public bar is now becoming an endangered species around parts of the country and Solihull is no exception as pub interiors, like a lot of people's tastes, alter to follow marketing trends. In some areas Mild is being, or has been withdrawn totally because unlike the heavily promoted lagers and bitters it is not an 'image' drink which the brewery publicity moguls wish to push, promote, or attempt to manipulate the public's taste towards. Talk to some brewery executive type whizz kids and they tell you that it's conception is that of a 'tired brew', 'old hat' and an unfashionable old styled working man's drink reflecting the cloth capped factory image of a by-gone era while the chosen few left on the shopfloors often want to drink now what the office staff drink.... the 'see through' bitters and the golden lager which is brewed in this country and is about as continental as fish and chips! Traditional Mild, when kept in good condition as value for money scores over the other brews because their prices represent the heavy expense of publicity and promotions which are passed on to the customer. Somebody has to pay for the millions of pounds spent on mass advertising in newspaper and magazines with the colour pic. ads, along with the humorous T.V. sketches in which ordinary people turn into super human beings capable of most amazing feats - all good expensive fun.

So mild, ignored and rarely promoted is even losing ground where it once ruled in areas of heavy industry which are mostly dismantled and flattened; like many inner city areas taking out huge areas of trade. Another fact that tarnished Mild's image in some areas has been the stigma created by unscrupulous landlords returning slops and unfinished drinks into the barrel producing sub-standard, tangy tasting drink that often drives people to switch to other drinks. However, all is not gloom as the Brain's dark mild in the Cardiff area is well advertised well received and legendary. Locally, we are lucky that the Burton brewed Ansell's Mild has attained a high quality and recently won CAMRA awards. M & B Mild has been improved, hopefully not at the expense of the famous Black Country Highgate dark whose future seems obscure while Bathams after coming close to extinction has seen a revival of sales. The future of another leading dark Mild on the east coast - Bateman's, is also in the balance along with the fate of the brewery which is up for sale. Meanwhile Marston's famous Merrie Monk because of its high gravity is pricing itself out of some pubs being replaced by the weaker Mercian Mild. The Midlands and the North West remain the strongholds for the brew but elsewhere lesser known light and dark milds are being phased out as barrellage sales fall to uneconomical levels. So next time you go into the bar of your local try a pint of mild for a change. Out of 70 pubs in this area 23 still sell it, and if you like it join the mild-drinking men and help save a tradition.

LAST CHANCE TO JOIN UP AT ONLY SEVEN POUNDS



Although the CAMRA subscription renewal fee was supposed to go up to £9 from July 1st, 1986, people joining can do so for the old price (£7) right up until the end of September. If any of you are undecided about joining, now is the time, while it is cheapest. Use the cut out membership form at the back of this Newsletter NOW!!!

M. & B. TRY AGAIN WITH WILSONS



Mitchells & Butlers are planning to extend and refurbish The Wilsons Arms in Knowle, a 17th Century grade 2 listed building. The pub itself will not be altered drastically but outbuildings by the car park are to be incorporated into the general pub scene and will be linked to it by a new building. However, obtaining planning permission may be difficult because plans for a more extensive operation were rejected last year by the Borough Council, claiming it would cause traffic dangers on the busy road junction. West Midlands County Council also objected because the car park was not big enough. M & B plan to extend this now if the new scheme gets the go ahead. At the present time The Wilsons Arms is a pleasant but rather smart lounge only pub selling Mild, Brew XI and Bass with a fine array of hand-pumps for an M & B pub. Whatever happens to the rest of the pub it is to be hoped these remain.

Oyez Oyez... "Why not advertise in
the Boro Banter?"

Circulation 500 copies
Distributed free throughout the
local pubs in the Solihull area.

Charges - 4½ x 4½ £12-00 per issue
4½ x 2½ £6-00 per issue
Contact - B. Queenborough on
021-744 3113



HEART OF ENGLAND BEER FESTIVAL BECKONS



If you couldn't make the long journey to Brighton for the Great British Beer Festival, why not try the Heart of England Beer Festival. Although smaller, this event is almost as good and the venue, DIGBETH CIVIC HALL, is much more accessible! If it is anything like as good as the two previous festivals run by the West Midland CAMRA branches, it should not be missed.

The doors open to the public on the evening of Thursday, 11th September. Then there are two sessions on Friday and Saturday, but Saturday night it closes. Try to be there early in case the hall is too packed or the beer has run out! Many beers unusual to the area will be on sale and with food and live music, a lively and unique atmosphere is guaranteed.

Any CAMRA members who could go and help at the festival would be made welcome. The success of the whole event depends on willing volunteers. Obviously the beer has to be served during opening hours but helpers are also required for setting up (Tuesday 9th and Wednesday 10th) and for dismantling on the Sunday and Monday. If anyone is thinking about working could they please contact the Staffing Officer, Mick Fullers, 158 Chester Street, Whitmore Reans, Wolverhampton.WV6 0PZ and say when they could help. SO, whether you are working or drinking you will certainly be having a great time and helping a worthwhile cause too! I will make sure I do a bit of both.

I wish to become a member of the Campaign for Real Ale Limited. I agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign

I enclose £7 (£10 overseas) for full membership for a year.

Any additional amount will be welcomed as a donation

FULL NAME (Block capitals)

FULL POSTAL ADDRESS (Block capitals)

SIGNATURE

DATE

Cheques should be made payable to Campaign for Real Ale Limited, 34 Alma Road, St. Albans, Herts.

GEORGE & DRAGON SLAIN?



For many months now, we have been watching the George & Dragon on the Stratford Road, Shirley, wondering if it will ever re-open. It was leased by Ansells to Tramhill Ltd., who were supposed to be renovating the whole set-up. However, Tramhill have pulled out now and the pub is back with Ansells. They say the cost would have been too high and certainly there have been several problems, such as vandals breaking in and causing damage to new fittings. There is even the possibility that the pub will be demolished. So, uncertainty still prevails:

The views expressed in the Boro Banter are intended to inform the general public, in and around Solihull of changes, or happenings, with the ever changing Real Ale and Pub Scene. They may not necessarily reflect the views of CAMRA nationally.

BRANCH DIARY



TUESDAY, 12th AUGUST

OPEN MEETING AT THE CRAB MILL, Preston Bagot, near Henley in Arden. Country pub, tied by Whitbread but selling other breweries beers. Namely Hook Norton, Pedigree and 6X. The best range of beers in our area (in a pub) but rather expensive. However, still worth a try!

TUESDAY, 9th SEPTEMBER

OPEN MEETING at THE RED LION, KNOWLE. One of the better pubs around Solihull, with a pleasant selection of different rooms which includes a superb bar with a preservation order on it. Also Tetley Bitter and Ind Coope Burton Ale kept to a standard that merits inclusion in the 1986 Good Beer Guide.

CONTACTS

If you want any information regarding CAMRA nationally or locally contact Steve Dyson at 79 Walsgrave Drive, Damson Wood, Solihull (021 705 1168) or David Queenborough at 11 Upton Close, Shirley, Solihull. (021 744 3113)

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