

Solihull Solihull



ISSUE No. 31

MARCH 1986

Lodge

Yardley Wood Road, Solihull Lodge.



Ansells

ENJOY TRADITIONAL BEER AT IT'S BEST.

BURTON ALE

Wide range of Bar Meals

Mon. — Sat. 12.00 — 2.00

WARWICKSHIRE GONE

Our local small, independent brewery closed just before Christmas after only about one year of trading. The Warwickshire Brewery which was actually in Tamworth, Staffordshire has stopped trading after a number of problems. Initially the two former Ind Coope workers couldn't find suitable premises. When they finally started brewing, outlets were almost impossible to find due to a lack of free houses in the area. The final straw came when the actual brewer decided to leave. the 3 traditional beers Mild. Bitter and Kingmaker are no longer available. It is always rather sad to see such a concern cease trading, but unfortunately they are not alone. This is mainly because the Big Six have so many pubs tied up.

TAKEOVERS

It's takeover time in the brewing industry again. We thought that the end had come to this state of affairs after the takeovers of the late 60's and early 70's but no, they are with us again.

Lets start with the good news.

Matthew Brown is saved from the clutches of Scottish and Newcastle after a fine fight put up by the brewery itself, the customers and CAMPA.

But now, bad news. Elders are still pursuing their bid for Allied, (Ansells to us). If they win this Australian company will probably subject us to Australian lager. Allied are not CAMRA'S favourite brewers but they have improved recently.

Bad news. Greenhall Whitley have removed Simpkiss from the face of the earth.

Bad news. Batemans are up for sale and rumour has it that Home are favourites.

Debatable bad news. Hanson Trust are pursuing financial dealings which would give them the ownership of Courage.

Very bad news. Davenports have merged with Greenhall Whitley, a brewery that has systematically been buying up other breweries, i.e. Simpkiss in 1985. Time will tell if it is to be a merger or a takeover with the subsequent loss of Davenports beers.

So 1 good news : 5 bad news. What does all this mean to you and I the average beer drinker? Well, less choice due to product domination which in turn usually leads to higher prices as there is no competition. The brewers will dictate to us what we will have. This is horrific when you consider that the beers we are talking about are Ansell's Bitter and Mild, Burton Ale, Davenports Bitter, Mild and their recently introduced Top Brew De Luxe. I'd hate to lose these beers wouldn't you?

TWO LOST LOCALS

The Engine in Hampton-in-Arden has almost become a "lost local". This M&B pub which was previously rather ordinary but with a keen landlord interested in real ale has become a plush pizza bar. Predictably it is now all keg.

A similar fate is about to befall The Old Royal Oak in Hockley Heath. After months of closure it now looks as though it will become some sort of "Greek" resturant.



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BIG SIX TAKEOVER TURMOIL

The Australian company Elders IXL are pressing ahead with their £1.8 billion takeover bid for Allied Lyons but the result will not be known for some time yet. This is because it has been referred to The Monopolies Commission and investigations are likely to take several months. They might be concerned with the unusual financing, with Elders being about a quarter of the size of Allied although CAMRA can't rely on them too much after the recent fiasco regarding Scottish and Newcastle and Matthew Brown.

CAMRA remain firmly against the bid and fear their could be severe repercussions should the Aussies win. Allied Breweries probably produce better beers than any of the other big six and their ideas regarding decentralisation and pub refurbishment are also often on a par with CAMRA's. We don't want to lose all this. Allied themselves are determined to see off the challenge. They just realised record half year profits (£123m) and are using these healthy figures to try and persuade shareholders not to sell.



A few months ago we thought the big six breweries were almost indestructable. First there was the Elders saga and now Hanson Trust have made a £1.8 billion bid for The Imperial Group who own Courage. Imperial are also adamant that they are not for sale. They say the offer is inadaquate and are urging shareholders not to sell. Like Allied Breweries they are also showing good profits. £235 million last year, a rise of over £15m from 1984.

THE NAVIGATION INN

LAPWORTH

Andrew & Gerd Kimber



fine traditional ales.

Selection of light bar snacks available Attractive Canalside Garden

GOOD BEER GUIDE LISTED





SCOTTISH AND NEWCASTLE

FAIL AGAIN!

At last some really good news on the takeover front. S&N have failed at the 11th hour in their £124 million takeover bid for Matthew Brown of Blackburn (who also own Theakstons remember). Browns shareholders had to accept the offer by 3.30p.m. on 11th December and at that time the Tartan fiends owned 47%. The deadline was extended until 5.00p.m. and by then owned 50.3% and claimed victory. However, the next day saw Browns financial advisors complain about this extra 90 minutes and the offer lapsed with S&N's holding dropping back to 29.9%.

The workers and board of Matthew Brown were delighted. They had opposed the deal from the start and praised CAMRA highly for our part in the battle. It is being hailed as our finest single victory in years. CAMRA also paid tribute to the determined Brown board and loyal shareholders.

All this is bitter news for Scottish and Newcastle and they reacted angrily towards CAMRA by raying we should "keep our mouths

Bitter

shut" and stop interfering. They think we are a real pain but at least the feeling is mutual! Camerons just managed to avoid . S&N's clutches in 1984 and CAMRA played an important role in that victory too.

It will be interesting to see where they go from here. It was rumoured they might go for Boddingtons but this could be just speculation. The Scottish Press estimated this recent abortive bid for Browns could have cost them £13m. Add to that the bad publicity they have received and inevitable low morale and the possibility of them being taken over themselves cannot be ruled out. Distillers considered it as a way of escaping from the Argyll Group or an overseas company such as Alan Bond's Castlemaine Tooheys might come forward with a bid.





DAVENPORTS MERGE WITH

GREENALL

In a £38.3m deal Davenports have merged with Greenall Whitley. This has thwarted Banks's attempts to buy out the brewery. Success would have meant Banks's beers being more readily available throughout the Birmingham area.

One can never be sure with Greenall Whitley as to whether the long term future of Davenports is secure. Last year they took over Simpkiss and closed it down overnight. With Shipstones they have allowed it to continue brewing as if it were an independent company.

The future of Davenports is something to be watched carefully over the next few years. Greenall want to get into The West Midlands. Lets hope the merger is not a takeover thinnly disguised.

It is to be wondered where Banks's will go from here.

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GOOD BEER GUIDE LISTED

GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL

1986

The Great British Beer Festival will be held at the same venue as last year, The Brighton Metropole Hotel.

Opening times for the public are from the evening session on Tuesday 5th August to Saturday 9th August inclusive.

The Banter will issue more information on this, not to be missed, event as and when it is recieved.



BASS, M&B - WHATS THE FUTURE?

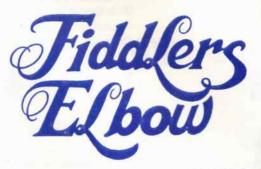
A survey of the Solihull area shows that M&B own some 35% of the pubs. Allied (Ansells to most of us) have some 30%. So it can be seen that any actions these breweries take will significantly affect the Solihull drinker. Thankfully, Ansells seem to be reacting to "consumer demand" more cautiously at present. But what of M&B?

The Engine, Hampton-in-Arden could never be said to have been a characterful pub but under Martin Mckewan's management there were traditional ales available in good condition. This has now gone. Replaced by a pizza pub with all keg. It is doubtful whether M&B discussed with the locals their ideas before substantially altering the pub and considering they own both pubs in the village you would have thought the local licensing magistrates would have demanded some consultation, but no, M&B did what they wanted. To be sure The Engine must be only one of many that M&B have radically changed at their own whim.

If this is the policy concerning pubs, i.e. emphasizing the food angle what about the beers. We all know keg is produced because it lasts a long time (2 to 3 months) and you need no brains to connect a gas pipe. Even a pizza pub gaffercan do that. However, traditional beer needs care and attention, something it would appear M&B are not too bothered about. The winter of 1985 saw the announcement that Highgate Old would no longer be brewed, which further compounded the belief in CAMRA circles that The Highgate Brewery in Walsallhas only some 18 months to go before closure. Likewise Springfield is a bitter enjoyed by many, usually in keg form, but is also available in cask. This is brewed in Wolver-

hampton. Ominous rumblings sugg-

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Paul Mc Mullen - Lead Vocals, Acoustic Guitar - Lead Vocals, Bass Guitar Paul Haves Simon Fitzgerald - Drums, Backing Vocals

> For further details & bookings contact:-

John Lowry on Earlswood 2305

est that this breweries future is anything other than certain.

So what could we be left with? M&B Brew X1 and M&B Mild all brewed at Cape Hill, at best a bland bitter and what can be a good mild but all too often ordinary. Bass, M&B are run by accountants and marketing men and sales people who, I feel, don't believe in their product otherwise they'd realise how mediocre their beers

generally are. They rely on one thing, that is the monopoly of pubs they own. This is an atrocious state of affairs for the consumer because it is they who come off worst. If the tied house system were abandonded, Bass, M&B would drastically have to alter their direction, which, I suspect would be a great deal closer to what the general drinker wants rather than the accountants and marketing men want.



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CONTACTS

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

More up to date publicity material is planned in an attempt to capture the general publics attention and to encourage them to drink Milds or even low gravity bitters. These have been ignored by the MMB in the past but this has changed to widen its area of activity and increase its publicity. In large parts of the country, mild is virtually unavailable and its place is taken by such things as 60 shilling in Scotland or "Boys" (ordinary) bitters in the south. Some of these beers have O.G. of about 1030 but it does not mean they are not worth drinking. I know beers that are skillfully brewed with an original gravity of 1033 that have more taste than ones of 1050. They are also cheaper and don't get you so drunk, an important consideration if you are driving.

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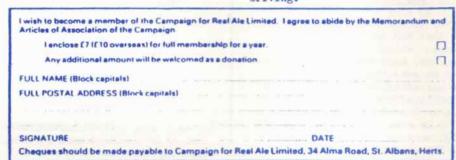
BRANCH DIARY

MONDAY 10TH MARCH - OPEN MEETING at The Case is Altered, Five Ways (just off A41 between Knowle and Warwick). Near perfect old fashiored country pub selling beers from Ansells and Whitbread. Any nominations for the 1987 GOOD BEER GUIDE should be submitted at (or before) this meeting.

THURSDAY 27TH MARCH - SOCIAL. Pub crawl of the Digbeth area of Birmingham. We will start at The Lamp Tavern in Barford Street at around 8.00. This new free house sells Fullers ESB, Pedigree and Sam Smiths, a great range of beers for the area. Other ports of call will be The Woodman, Albert Street (Ansells Victorian gem) and The Old Wharf, Oxford Street. Another new development this, it sells three draught beers from Banks's.

MONDAY 7TH APRIL - BRANCH MEETING at The Golden Lion in Solihull (Courage). We will be voting here for the pubs to go into 1987 GOOD BEER GUIDE. All Solihull CAMRA members are welcome to vote here but please bring CAMRA membership cards.







CAMRA NOT SO MILD MANNERED

Sales of mild in Britain have been dwindling for many years now and things are getting worse, especially with all the "hysteria" type promotion of lager and other light coloured beers. The image of dark beers is portrayed as something very undesirable and old fashioned. No self respecting poser would be seen within a hundrad miles of a pint of mild. To combat this unfortunate state of affairs, CAMRAS MILD MARKETING BOARD has been modified slightly. Regular meetings will now take place all over the country and all interested people are welcome.

In the Midlands we are particularly lucky with superb milds like Highgate, Ansells and Banks's. There is also some improved M&B Mild about. Not to mention others from Wem, Holdens, Bathams, Marstons, Hook Norton, Holts, Hansons and Davenports. With that sort of choice you've got no excuse not to at least try it!

CAMRA ACCOMMODATION GUIDE

CAMRA is about to publish a new guide book which will list good pubs from all over the country where real ale and cheap but adequate Bed and Breakfast type accommodation is available. is a new venture for CAMRA but we hope it will be a big publicity earner as well as bringing in much needed extra funds. I have spent many holidays walking and touring through Britain and one of the best places to spend a night must be a pub with well kept beer where all you have to do after the evening session is stagger up stairs to bed! I think this guide will be a good investment.

The Bulls Head Ray & Jane Franklin

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