



ISSUE No. 36

Solihull "BORO BANTER"



SEPTEMBER 1987

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NEW GUIDE OUT

This year's Solihull Carnival saw the launch of the second edition of "Real Ale in an around Solihull." We are hoping it will appeal to drinkers in general in addition to the committed traditional beer enthusiast and with this in mind it will be absolutely FREE!! It is a selective guide to nearly 50 of the best real ale outlets within the area covered by the Solihull Branch of CAMRA, plus a few significant pubs just over the borders. There are articles about real ale and what can be done to preserve or improve it, together with useful information regarding facilities and the beers available at individual hosteleries. Look out for one in local pubs, libraries or at local CAMRA meetings or socials.



RAYMENTS FACING THE AXE



CAMRA is once again leading the fight to save another brewery from closure, not from a recent takeover this time, however, but one that happened 60 years ago! Major East Anglian brewery, Greene King, have said that their subsidiary Rayments of Furneux Pelham will close in October. Rayments is a delightful small brewery set deep in the Hertfordshire countryside who own 27 delightful and individual pubs selling their excellent light bitter called BBA.

The news of closure comes as a bitter blow to drinkers and pub-goers but also a shock because they were doing quite well especially with expanding free trade sales in London. Rumour has it that Greene King's motives could be to dispel any "country bumkin" image of themselves, to try and show the City and predators a more hard nosed, street-wise face.

Despite all this, CAMRA is fighting all the way with petitions, a public rally and by sending 25,000 postcards to Greene King boss, Simon Redman complaining about their decision. Locally, Bernies Off Licence, in Cranmore Boulevard has sold BBA recently and more is planned as it sold so well. Drinkers agreed it was too good a beer to lose. Write in support to Paul Morris, Manager of Rayments Brewery, Furneux Pelham, Buntingford, Herts.



NEW LIFE IN OLD BREWERY

A pub in the Black Country has started brewing again after a gap of 29 years. A small brewery at the rear of The Beacon Hotel in Sedgley has been renovated by landlord John Hughes who now brews an exceptional beer, "Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild". Sarah was the Grandmother of John who is the third generation of his family to own the pub, while the beer itself is a revival of a 100 year old recipe. It is very strong (og1058) and dark, with superb consistency and flavour. Try it sometime, only at the pub where it is sold alongside other unusual and interesting beers!



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GREENALL'S TURN TO WIELD AXE!



Following Greenall Whitley's decision to stop all canning and bottling operations at Davenports it comes as no surprise to hear that The Wem brewery in Shropshire is to close in February next year. All beer packaging will take place at a soft drinks factory in Bolton while West Best Bitter and Wem Special will be brewed at Davenports in Birmingham.

The Wem brewery has been in existence for 200 years and this news comes as a great blow to CAMRA, brewing workers and customers in general. CAMRA has immediately formed a WEM ACTION GROUP and with their help will oppose the closure to the bitter end. It will be an almost impossible battle to fight but win or lose we aim to identify Greenalls in the public eye as the beer drinker's enemy No. 1. Consequently it may be harder for them to effect more takeovers or closures in the future. Remember Simpkins, bought and closed almost overnight?

Tragically, everything CAMRA has previously said regarding takeovers has been proved to be right again. Since Davenports was acquired most of their bottled beers have been phased out. Wem Mild and Wem Pale Ale (both traditional ales) are to be phased out. Thirty nine jobs are to go at Wem, over half the workforce. 64 jobs will go at Davenports packaging department, nearly one quarter of the staff. Plus the loss of a 200 year old traditional brewery.

The Mergers and Monopolies Commission are at present, investigating the whole of the brewing industry. Perhaps it is time they took more notice of what CAMRA has to say. If the current rate of takeovers and closures continues at its present pace there will be no independent breweries left by 1997. The situation is becoming CRITICAL!

Oyez Oyez...



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Contact- B. Queenborough on
021-744 3113

LAPWORTH PUBS A BRIEF HISTORY

Of existing pubs in the area the licence of the Punchbowl formerly existed across the road in a beer house known as the Cherry Trees. The licence was transferred to the existing building in 1861.

The Boot on the Old Warwick Road is probably the oldest pub in Lapworth, beer was brewed there as long ago as 1722. Just up the road we have the Navigation, this hostelry is actually in the manor of Kingswood and is reputedly of medieval origin. It served road travellers long before the canal was built.

Pubs no longer on site include the Bird in Hand, a former grocer's shop near to the Boot. It was opened as a beer house and stores in 1871 primarily to serve canal folk. The Bell on the corner of Wharf Lane originated in the late 1700's and was the only pub in the area to boast a smithy, a very important service at the time! It was closed in 1890 by locals because it was little used. The Wheatsheaf on Lapworth Hill is now a farm. Stagecoaches stopped there to water and rest the horses.

Hockley House was a large Georgian coaching inn on the Stratford Road near to Hockley Heath, horses on the coach run out of Henley in Arden were changed there.

It is said that the young Princess Victoria spent the night there in 1837.

If you have any information on Solihull or Henley in Arden pub history please contact John Salmon on 706 7514 or write to:
42 Barn Lane, Olton. B92 7ND

(Thanks to "Portrait of Lapworth" by Joy Woodall).

“Why not advertise in
the Boro Banter?”



FACT - traditional pubs, real ale and small, independent breweries are fighting for their lives and very existences as the brewing industry has suddenly got caught up in 'Take-over mania' similar to the mid '60's and early 70's as the "Big 7" and the larger independent breweries look to strengthen their grip on the market and your drinking fortunes. By expanding their estates and buying their way into the Free House trade in addition to sucking in chains of off-licenses they are now creating national and even local monopolies. Now what direction have things been moving since CAMRA waded into battle amassing over 20,000 members helping in the fight to keep small breweries independent as brewery 'take-overs' have the following effects:-

PUB DOMINATION:-

Years ago Whitbreads took over Flowers and West Country ales (Cheltenham) unveiling a monopoly of most of the pubs stretching from Stratford and all across Gloucestershire to Bristol and beyond. Also in the early '60's M & B brought out Banbury's Hunt Edmund brewery and after closing it hoisted their products in new outlets all across Warwickshire and Oxfordshire.

FREE HOUSES

These rare outlets where there was once a CHOICE of real ales are now being drawn into the tentacles of the big brewery octopus. Assisted by tied-loans for pub alterations, car parks, restaurants, etc., these pubs and clubs end up often selling ONLY their beers - there is no competition. This has proved a formidable barrier for the recent upsurge of 'mini breweries' - 200 have started up since 1974 but already 60 have closed as they were unable to sell their beers as many free houses, in some areas, are tied to Big 7 beers.

NATIONAL BRAND BEERS:-

Another side effect is a similar return to those Watney's Red Barrel revolutionary days - remember that? Well now the Watney barons have decided that their bland Websters Yorkshire bitter is the beer to be offered in all their pubs instead of local brews, already Manchester's Wilsons brewery has closed because of this indirectly, while in the south, Ushers (Trowbridge) beers and brewery are now in danger.

Meanwhile, Courage have re-launched John Smiths Tadcaster bitter in all directions and so it goes on; the big image, the big advertising push and to hell with the local brews.

PRICES

These too are so often controlled by "Big 7" monopolies which is why Manchester has the cheapest beers in the country because it has the most competition - a fierce 'cut throat' market where several small, local breweries compete with the big boys often giving better value for money. Recently, Home Ales (Nottingham) announced huge price rises dictated by the Scottish & Newcastle giants who took them over. Every 'take over' has its price! and as usual, we - the consumer pay for it; more cost - less choice.

RECENT BREWERY 'TAKE-OVER' FACTS:-

MARCH 1984: Mathew Brown takes over Theakston's-Carlisle brewery closing soon: 30 jobs lost.

JULY, 1984: Marstons take over Border brewery (Wrexham) - brewery closed 7 months later: 120 jobs lost.

NOVEMBER, 1984: Thwaites (Blackburn) took over Yeats & Jackson (Lancaster): brewery closed after 2 months: 50 jobs lost.

APRIL, 1985: Grand Metropolitan (Watneys) closed their Norwich brewery: 155 jobs lost.

MAY, 1985: Mansfield Brewery took over North country Brewery (Hull): brewery closed 4 months later: 115 jobs lost

JULY, 1985: Greenall Whitley took over Simpkins (Brierley Hill) closed brewery immediately; 20 jobs lost.

MAY, 1986: Vaux (Sunderland) close Darleys (Thorne) and Lorimer & Clarke (Edinburgh): 57 jobs lost.

JANUARY, 1987: Allied Breweries took over Dryborough (Edinburgh): brewery closed within weeks: 49 jobs lost.

These are only the tip of the iceberg; as during this period eleven breweries closed, another five lost their independence, 89 individual brands and brews have vanished and at least 864 jobs lost altogether.

CAMRA recently successfully backed Batemans brewery against near closure and Mathew Brown (Blackburn) from a Scottish & Newcastle 'take over'. Meanwhile other fierce battles rage on - trying to save Mild from brewers neglect, bitters from all becoming bland, other brews from extinction and the flood of overpriced lagers endangering the whole lot. Then comes the endless fights to prevent breweries being closed and pubs being brewery vandalised into fun pubs, theme pubs, wine bars, pizza palaces.

If you like your real ale, an unspoilt pub and a choice of beers when you visit your local, then why not join us and help with the fight.

Incidentally, there is not one untied, free house in the Solihull area that sells real ale - I wonder why?

THE NAVIGATION INN LAPWORTH

Andrew & Gerd Kimber



fine traditional ales.

Selection of light bar snacks available

Attractive Canalside Garden

1987 PUB OF THE YEAR

GOOD BEER GUIDE LISTED



The Navigation in Lapworth, an M & B tenanted pub, is Solihull CAMRA's first pub of the year.

Branch members gathered on a recent Saturday lunchtime to present Andrew Kimber, the licensee, with a plaque proudly boasting the pub's achievement. Also in attendance were representatives of M & B headed by Irene Insley PRO for M & B Cape Hill. Much cordial bon homie took place between the branch and M & B over plates of food and pints of beer kindly provided by the brewery.

But why the Navigation?

The Branch felt in voting for the Navigation that it filled many criteria for an ideal pub. Andrew the licensee is a real ale man who serves consistent beer. The mild on the day of the presentation was excellent. Together with Brew XI and Draught Bass he has available the whole of M & B's range except the new Springfield brew. He is also a friendly man who makes an effort to make his pub special, it is well remembered by some branch members that he was seen last halloween, somewhat resembling Dracula! The pub itself has pleasant gardens alongside the canal and serves food at most times, making it an ideal family pub. Inside is a traditional bar and small comfortable lounge which together with the friendliness of the staff make this pub one that many others throughout Solihull would do well to emulate.

BOOZIN' ROUND THE BORO'

The Borough Banter hasn't appeared for some 6 months now as the Branch has been working flat out on a new guide. This is now available FREE from Steve Dyson, 79 Walsgrave Drive, Solihull, B92 9PP but include a sae approx 9" x 6".

A new beer brewed by M & B called Springfield Original (OG 1050) is being test marketed to the north of our area....keep a look out for it, it might be tasty!

Rumour has it that a new Worcestershire Beer Guide should be available soon.

Pubs due for or having undergone refurbishment Crab Mill, Preston Bagot, a "free" Whitbread house, always worth a look in although expensive; The Reservoir, Earlswood; The Crown, Monkspath; Black Swan, Henley - gaining Wem Special; The Boat, Catherine De Barnes, with a conservatory and reinstating the bar; Boot, Honily; Stables, Solihull; and the Wilsons Arms, Solihull. Big surprise is rumours that the Baltimore Diner may be reverted back to a pub!

How about beer? The new guide is pretty well up to date but here goes:

The Old Colonial, Elmdon now serves Draught Bass, along with Mild and Brew XI. The Golden Cross, Henley has added Tetley Bitter. In the same village The Red Lion has installed Flowers O.B.

Good News!!! The Great British Beer Festival, 1989 will be held in Birmingham - not to be missed.



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 Hifton Close, Shirley, Solihull. (021 744 3113)

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.

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 £9 (£10 overseas) for full membership for a year

Any additional amount will be welcomed as a donation

FULL NAME (Block capitals)

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SIGNATURE

DATE

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

BRANCH DIARY



TUESDAY, 13th OCTOBER Branch Meeting at The Forest Hotel in Dorridge, just opposite the Railway station. Meetings start at 20.30 hours.

NOVEMBER, 1987 (exact date from contact). The Fifth ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Solihull CAMRA will be held at THE GOLDEN LION Warwick Road, Solihull. The best pub in Solihull for the traditional beer drinker, sells John Smiths, Courage Best and Directors, all on handpump.

We would appreciate as much support as possible for this meeting, obviously it is our most important of the year. If anyone who has never met us before would like to come along we would make them especially welcome. The business is usually over as quickly as possible which leaves time for a social with food and a raffle.

Any Solihull CAMRA members wishing to vote for committee members will have to bring along their membership cards. If anyone wishes to stand for election onto the Committee or would like to nominate someone, could they please tell Steve Dyson (see contacts address and phone number).



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