



# ALES & TALES

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

Issue 35  
Winter 2017

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# Welcome Back

## Well there goes another year!

It will soon be downhill to Christmas. Needless to say, it is always a busy time for the pub trade. During the Christmas holiday, every day seems to be a pub day! Pubs are full to the rafters with Christmas drinkers which is a mixed-blessing for real ale fans, on the other hand it is great to see these businesses thriving! As members of the Campaign that is surely something that we must all aim for. However it can be a source of frustration for some of our members that this is the time of year that people who don't normally visit pubs decide to use them so maybe with a little added Christmas spirit we can persuade more people to join our cause.

This branch magazine will be available into January, when some pubs will be a lot quieter. In fact January can be a tough time for the pub trade as many people will be trying to keep to well-intentioned New Year's resolutions, or adopting one of the endless 'Dryanuary' campaigns. Imagine if those pubs we find so valuable at Christmas were not there next year?

We are lucky within our branches to have had a number of new venues open in recent years, check out our pubs news section, however there are many traditional pubs that are still closing. All pubs need your custom on a year-round basis, not just during the two weeks around Christmas and New Year. As readers of this magazine, it's probable that you're already on the same page on this issue, but it doesn't hurt to remind those around us.

A pub is for life, not just for Christmas! Or to put it another way: 'use it or lose it!'

We still have one pre-Christmas treat to look forward to and that is Dudley Winter Ales Fayre.

## A quick message from Jacqui Edwards Assistant Festival Organiser for Dudley Winter Ales Fayre 2017

To quote Shakespeare last year it was "to be or not to be" but this year it is a case of "once more into the breach" with a more invigorated and replenished committee. People attending the festival this year will find some changes have taken place but do not worry there will still be over 70 Real Ales, plus Ciders, Wines and of course Foreign Beers available.

Hot and cold food will be on hand including some traditional black country dishes such as faggots and peas. Although a quiet night on Thursday we will be providing a variety of entertainments on Friday and Saturday, plus an auction of brewery memorabilia.

The dates to put in your diary for November are Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> from 5.30pm to 11pm, Friday 24<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> both from 12.00noon to 11pm or on Saturday until the beer runs out! The venue is as usual at Dudley Town Hall, St James Road.

Volunteers are always welcome and any training needed will always be provided for the various jobs if required. With new people involved we are hopeful that the future of Dudley Winter Ales Fayre will be secured. However, we still need "new blood" and new ideas so don't be shy members.....Your branch needs you!



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# Meet The Brewer Fownes

**Name:** Tom Fownes a.k.a. Broddr Firebeard, Master Brewer to King Korvak and purveyor of the finest ales in all the Five Peaks.



## What was your background before brewing?

Before embracing the glamorous globe trotting life of Commercial Brewer in 2012 I'd had the ever so slightly less glamorous globe trotting life of a Heavy Metal Music Journalist and Concert Photographer.

## What was your first alcoholic beverage?

Most likely Banks's Bitter, sucked from my dummy with a side of cheese and onion crisps, courtesy of my Grandad.

## What are your hobbies and interests?

I'm a bit of a Renaissance Man so they're many and varied. But main ones tend to shine through in my work.

## What is your favourite:

### - Beer (your own)?

Hands down Firebeard's Favourite No.5. It's got such a great malt profile, full of depth and complex flavours that it just gets me going. I'm definitely not a hop head.

### - Beer (someone else's)?

It's difficult because there's just so much mediocre beer these days. I enjoy tasting new beers from local breweries. We're lucky around here, as amongst others Alex at Green Duck and Scott at Fixed Wheel both produce exciting, flavoursome beers.

### - Part of your job?

I love getting to go and meet the people who enjoy the beer I make. It's a product designed to be consumed, and drinkers become fans when they feel like they belong to something bigger. I get a buzz out of knowing folks go out of their way to seek our Dwarfen Ales and buy into our brand of Epic Ales & Tales.

### - Board game?

Blood Bowl, which is a fantasy football game from Games Workshop. It does a wonderful job of combining American Football and fantasy violence. It also bears a striking resemblance to the Dwarfen sport of Crash Ball.

### - Pub - could be anywhere in the country as long as you don't own it?

The Jolly Crispin. We've tried many but always end up here wishing we hadn't left. It's such a great pub, from the selection of beer (I hear the Fownes beers are quite good!) to the warm and inviting atmosphere. The Crispin has been our home for the last five years and it suits us.

### How did you get started in the business?

Funny story. And true. As with all good stories it didn't start with salad but down the pub. You can read all about it on our website!

([fownesbrewing.co.uk](http://fownesbrewing.co.uk))





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

How long is a Dwarf's beard? It varies. Greatly! Most of our range is planned during the short winter days and brewed over the coming year, with a few (some more than others) tweaks along the way. And then there are special brews like the one we did earlier this year, Broddr's Swan Song for The Swan in Halesowen.

### What are your aspirations for the business?


To be bought up by a large regional brewer and retire to the mountains. Just kidding (not kidding). We want to increase the volume of beer we produce and continue to sell directly to Free Houses across the Midlands wherever possible. And maybe acquire a Dwarfen Drinking Hall or two.

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

This is an easy question to answer. We need the Campaign for Real Ale to do what all of our Fans do. To go out there to pubs and bottle shops and evangelise about our fantastic range of Dwarfen Ales! As one of the smallest breweries in the West Midlands our excellent products don't always get the exposure they deserve.



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Further info via our Facebook page

# 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 PEAR TREE, Mincing Lane, Rowley Regis.

The picture shown was of the rebuild which took place in 1938. The pub was demolished in 1998 and housing was built on the site (in Pear Tree Drive).

The original pub dated back to at least 1861 when the licensee was William Merriss who was described in the census as a farmer of 20 acres and beerhouse keeper. The pub was run by the Merriss family for 50+ years.

Farming was still evident in 1926 when William Taylor (the licensee of the pub), Pear Tree Farm, was fined £10, together with £2 17s costs, for selling milk that contained 9.41 per cent of added water.

## Stourbridge Observer 10/8/1867

"A fatal accident occurred on the 2nd inst, to a youth named Thomas Robins, aged fifteen. It appears that deceased was a collier, and worked in

the Rowley Hill Colliery. On the above date he was at work down the pit, when a fall of coal took place, and so injured him that he died in ten minutes after the occurrence. The poor fellow was got up out of the pit and taken home.

An inquest was held on Monday last at the PEAR TREE INN, Mincing Lane, on the body, before W. H. Phillips, Esq, Coroner. Mr. Baker, the Mining Inspector, was present in consequence of having received an anonymous letter, as to the state the pit was in. He said that he had been down the pit in consequence of receiving that letter, and found that the contents of that letter were untrue. He considered the pit to be in proper working order. The jury returned a verdict of Accidental Death."

## County Express 24/8/1878

"An inquest was held on Wednesday, by Mr. E. Hooper, at the PEAR TREE INN, Mincing Lane, Rowley, touching the death of a pikeman, named Edward Robinson, aged 38. Deceased was employed at the Yew Tree Colliery, and on Monday night, a little before eight o'clock, he was engaged with another miner, named Perks in excavating a small 'inset', 75 yards below the surface of a water pit, a cage being hung from the top on a level with the place. In order that descent might be made into another shaft the cage was drawn up, and the deceased and his companion being busily engaged with their work apparently forgot this fact. They pushed a tub laden with earth to the cage as they thought, and the deceased, who was nearest, before he could recover himself, the tub over-balanced and fell, carrying him with it. Deceased fell a distance of more than two hundred yards into a deep 'sump' filled with water. It was some time after the accident before the body could be recovered.

After hearing the evidence, the jury were satisfied that no blame attached to anyone but the deceased himself, and a verdict of Accidental Death was returned."





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# Cider of the Festival 2017 Presentation



It is always a great pleasure to meet up with cider producer David Millward. He is such a passionate producer and is always enthusing about new and interesting methods of cider production.

The reason for our recent meeting was to present him with yet another award for his wonderful 'Wrongbow' cider, which is still produced at his

home in Wollaston. The award this time was for Cider of The Festival for Stourbridge & Halesowen CAMRA's 2017 Beer Festival. This is the third year on the trot that David has won this accolade, and adds it to many other awards locally and nationally. Unfortunately, David has hinted to us that he won't be entering Wrongbow at Stourbridge Beer Festival 2018, which is a shame as it is usually one of the first to sell out. If you do bump into him, try and get him to change his mind!

If not, he is hoping to be selected for inclusion at Kidderminster Beer Festival instead. In fact, if you need a Wrongbow fix, that would be a good reason to make the short rail commute to Kidderminster to attend their beer festival.

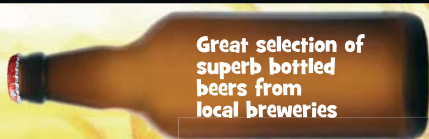
No doubt at this time of year David is working hard pressing apples and getting his next batch ready for 2018 so we look forward to tasting his next vintage.

Lizzie Cadwell



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# Craft Beer

## Love it or hate it: a personal view

In Part 1 of this article, we looked at various definitions of "craft beer" in a somewhat esoteric and inconclusive lecture. In Part 2, we look at the local "craft beer" scene.

So let's look at the local situation in the Black Country. Well, at the brewery taps of some of the newer breweries, traditional "real ale" is served from handpulls cheek-by-jowl with the taps for craft beer. Examples include Sadlers Brewhouse, Fixed Wheel Brewery and Green Duck's Badelynge Bar.

Several pubs in the local area are now offering "craft" beer, and smaller beer cafés and some micro-pubs also offer this type of beer. In addition to the brewery taps mentioned, local examples include Barbridge, Duke William and Last Orders at the Red House in Stourbridge, and several "hip" bars in and around Birmingham city centre. "Craft" beer is also readily available in some pub company chains, both on draught and in bottles/cans, most notably at Wetherspoons.

### So, what do the local brewers think?

Holdens focus on cask-conditioned beers, brewed in a traditional way with traditional ingredients, using the finest malts and a "myriad of new and daring hops". No mention of "craft beer" there. Similarly, Enville focuses on brewing award-winning cask ales, while Kinver concentrates on the traditional brewing process, using the finest ingredients, with the "tag line" "craft beer from crafty brewers!" Pig Iron strives "to bring you the best ales made to the highest standard made with local ingredients and brewing practices". Angel Ales is a small brewery, which never compromises on flavour, focusing on using the finest quality malt, the most aromatic hops, and natural flavourings. All these brewers concentrate on the traditional and high-quality of their beers.

Sadlers of Lye unashamedly market their beers as "craft beer" with their mission to "create a passion

for their unique craft beer, allowing customers to share the same intensity and enthusiasm as they have for Sadler's and Sadler's Ales". Brewing from their new 49 HL state-of-the-art brewery in Lye, they brew a wide range of cask-conditioned and keg beers, and serve both cheek-by-jowl in their Brewhouse. Green Duck offers their range of locally brewed beers in both traditional cask ale and "key-keg" form at their brewery tap in Stourbridge. They also have a range of seasonal limited edition beers, including Figgy Mild, Beat the Devil Porter, Shaky Stevens American Stout, Steeltown Black Country Beer and Heaven Sent Chocolate Milk Stout.



Black Country Ales have the tag-line "Micro Brewery, Major Taste", and brew an outstanding selection of the finest real ales using only the finest ingredients to the highest possible standards. Sarah Hughes Brewery, at the Beacon Hotel, "keeps the traditional art of brewing alive", whilst Fownes Brewery, at Gornal, focuses on the "traditional ingredients used in brewing their beers: whole leaf hops and speciality malts...brewing only 10 casks of beer at a time...producing a premium product".

Further afield at Brownhills, the Backyard Brewery brews "hand crafted ales"; they "love real ale and brew it with the care and attention it deserves...and believe in creative brewing, to find both traditional and excitingly new tasty beers". Beowulf, at Chasewater, describes its beer as being "craft-brewed", whilst at Stafford, Slaters "have been brewing high quality award-winning beers... and



lovingly hand craft and create their beers so you get them crisp, clean and fresh". Woods in Shropshire brew "hand-crafted" beers, whilst Titanic in Stoke-on-Trent has been at the "forefront of innovation in the UK brewing market".

Scott Povey of Fixed Wheel Brewery sees himself simply as a brewer and doesn't like distinguishing between traditional "real ale" and "craft beer", saying it is largely a marketing term. He reckons that about 70% of the beer he produces is "cask" ale, served by handpumps, and the remaining 30% is put into "key-kegs" and served from separate taps. He doesn't pasteurise or filter the beer that goes into the key-kegs; the brewing method and ingredients are exactly the same. Scott is also brewing a series of seasonal limited-edition beers, including De Muur Belgian Ale, Summer Smiles American Wheat, Theraputic Exemption Sour and Big Mig Farmhouse Saison.



Talking recently with Martin Parkes, landlord of Barbridge, he reckons about 60% of his trade is in "real ale" traditionally served by handpumps, with around 40% served from key-kegs. The price differential (£3.10 for a pint of real ale; £4.50 for key-keg beer) is mainly due to the increased cost of the latter and strength of the beer; he also says that key-keg beer is easier to store and lasts longer.

Now, it's time for a beer!

Steve James



## A.I. is too important to be left in the hands of machines.

The A.I. we're referring to isn't Artificial Intelligence, it's Ale Intelligence, of course. We're not technophobes, we just don't trust anything incapable of smelling, feeling or tasting to create something as delicately balanced as Landlord. That's why we have five hands-on, Heriot-Watt trained brewers involved in every step of the process, from barley delivery to filling the casks. This way, we can make sure that every sip of Taylor's is as delicious as humanly possible. Machines may one day take over the world, just be thankful you won't be around to drink their terrible beer.

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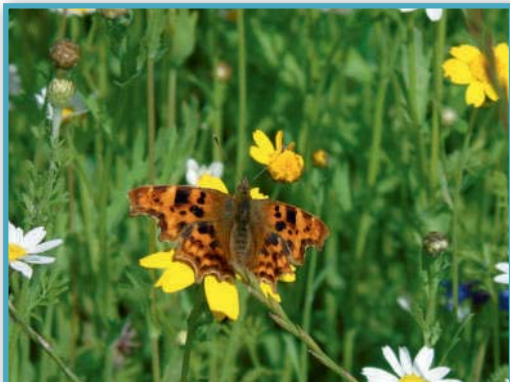


# Beer & Butterflies

## Combining Hobbies

Anyone who knows me will be well aware of my passion for butterflies. Thus Bridget Skirving suggested the idea of linking the 2 subjects, for an article for Ales and Tales. So, what are the links? Firstly, the Lepidoptera part of this article - there are relatively few butterfly species in UK (around 55), some of which are located in specific, very localized areas – the Swallowtail is restricted to the Fens, whilst the Chequered Skipper is now only found in Scotland, although it was once found in England. This is demonstrated by The Chequered Skipper, a long-standing GBG entry in Ashton, Northants. The pub was named after the butterfly, long since extinct in the area.

They also have varying flight seasons – some appearing only in the spring and others late in the summer into September. It is the aim of many butterfly enthusiasts to 'tick off' all the species – roughly similar to beer ticking – which can mean lengthy journeys. My husband, Adrian, does not wear the same butterfly anorak but loves steam trains. We both love beer, so we have planned many day trips to take in all 3 hobbies. Thus many of our days out have focused on butterfly sites near preservation railways and GBG pubs.



There are, however, other links to examine between butterflies and beer. Very few caterpillars can be considered pests. Apart from the Small and Large

White (often called Cabbage Whites as they lay eggs on plants of the Brassica family), one other species springs to mind, especially in relation to beer. The Comma butterfly was almost wiped out, as one of its favoured caterpillar food plants was the hop, although it more commonly uses stinging nettle. Coincidentally the West Midlands branch of Butterfly Conservation chose the Comma as its symbol due to various links with the region – hop growing in Worcs, the fact that it was, at the time, the northern-most limit of the butterfly and a sub-species discovered in Herefordshire.

For me one of the more interesting areas of establishing links has been the efforts of several breweries to publicise various butterflies by offering beers named after different species. On a CAMRA trip to Nottingham a few years ago, I was delighted to find a beer, produced by Castle Rock brewery in support of the local wildlife trust and named after the Comma.

One of my favourites was a set of 6 from Wentworth Brewery, each named after a different butterfly. Sadly I never got to sample any of the beers, just have a set of the beautiful pump clips and I never investigated any links the brewery may have had with Butterfly Conservation. It seems it is too late to pursue any investigations as the 2016 GBG advised that Wentworth had closed earlier in the year.



One of our most famous conservation stories over the last few years, is that of the Large Blue. Despite last ditch conservation efforts to save it, the butterfly died out in the UK. There then followed



an extensive research project into the life style of the butterfly to pave the way for re-introducing the species to England. This revealed its hitherto unknown, extraordinary life cycle in which a certain species of ant plays a vital role. By mimicking their grubs, the Large Blue caterpillar hoodwinks red ants into taking them into their nests below ground. Their final growth stage consists of feeding on their hosts' grubs, before pupating. The adult butterfly eventually crawls above ground in June.

Carefully selected sites were chosen and adults re-introduced from existing populations in Europe – again specifically identified as being closest to the extinct British species. Starting in Somerset, using historic Large Blue sites, the project has been gradually extended. In 2016 Gloucs Wildlife Trust held the official opening of one such re-introduction site at Daneway Bank. To celebrate the butterfly, Wadworth brewed a special beer, which was on sale at the local pub – The Daneway Inn.

Of course, before becoming a butterfly, the creature undergoes its larval stage as a caterpillar. I have only found one, rather tenuous link to caterpillars – a bottled beer from Brewfist brought back from Rome. It owes its inspiration more to Alice in Wonderland than the caterpillar itself but they can be spectacular and maybe it's a subject that deserves more attention from any conservation-minded brewers out there (???)



The latest effort locally to publicize our West Midlands butterflies – in particular a recently published, detailed book "Butterflies of the West Midlands" and highlighting the beautiful Fritillaries found in the Wyre Forest – is a bottled beer brewed by Bewdley Brewery.



Butterfly Conservation is not just about butterflies. The aim of the organisation is to protect all forms of Lepidoptera, which includes moths. The UK boasts thousands of different species, most under threat.

I am sure there are lots more examples out there and other nature conservation issues are supported by breweries across the UK. Hobson's Old Prickly, Cotleigh and Exmoor Breweries spring to mind. So, if like me you love nature, why not seek out these beers championing the diverse creatures with whom we share our country – maybe you could report any others via our website?

Joy Stevens

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# Basque Country Beer

The Basque Country is the border region of Spain and France on the Bay of Biscay. Fiercely independent, the Basques will tell you they are not Spanish or French and would like to be an independent country. Older readers may remember ETA, thankfully those days have gone and they pursue independence without violence now.

It is famous for its food, all bars have incredible displays of pintxos, a kind of tapas, at prices around €2.50 on the bar, and a blackboard menu of hot pintxos cooked to order for about €4.50. There are more restaurants with Michelin Stars per square kilometre in San Sebastian than anywhere else. We thought we were on a food holiday rather than a beer holiday, we were pleasantly surprised.



Our apartment was in the border town of Hondarribia. We were in the old town which is a fortified walled town that held off 27,000 French Troops in 1632. An event they still celebrate today. After unpacking we went to Gastroteka Donontzat, a restaurant nearby that I'd booked previously. On the bar was a selection of local craft beers. We enjoyed Shackle Town, a 6.5% IPA from <http://www.malagissona.beer/eng/> and Miel Otxin 6.5% IPA by <http://www.biribil.com> together with a meal that lived up to our expectations.

The following day we found a bar near to our apartment called Etxebirra that sold local craft beer plus international beers. Six beers on tap and a selection of Belgian, British and American cans/bottles. We tried the local brews, Green Go a 6% American pale ale from <http://www.baiaagaragardotegia.com/home.html>, Kong a 7% IPA from <https://www.facebook.com/naparbier/> and a cider Sidra Natural Cosecha 6% by <http://www.sidratrabanco.com/en/>. All were first class. Big on cider in northern Spain, there are many cider houses, usually out of town where for €25 you get a meal and as much cider as you can drink. The cider is always poured from a great height to aerate it without spilling a drop.

In the next town (Irun) there was a microbrewery with a taproom only open on Saturday, as it was Saturday we caught the E25 bus there and after some sightseeing, eating and drinking (wine) we walked to the industrial estate on the edge of town to Bidassoa Basque Brewery (<http://bidassoa.es/en/>). With a taproom almost as good as Magic Rock's, we were made welcome by the bar staff and tried several halves of their ales: Boise 6.4% IPA, Mugalari 6.7% pale ale, Black Saison 6.7%, Kasper 4.7% Kellerbier and Cenitz 6.2% IPA. It wasn't until we had three of these we realised



we could have had a flight of thirds. We bought a bottle of their Imperial Stout 10.5% to have at the apartment a few days later. All were most enjoyable.



The following day a 35 minute ride on the E21 bus took us along the motorway to picturesque San Sebastian. After climbing up Mount Urgull, a paddle and numerous pintxos we went to Pub Drop where there were 19 beers on tap. We were surprised how many English beers he had on, two Dark Star, Burning Sky, Wild Beer and Northern Monk. Of course Scotland's Brewdog was there, they are everywhere now. However we stuck to drinking Basque beers: Brew & Roll's Drop & Roll 3.9% IPA, Basque Brewing Project's Imparable 6.8% IPA, La Quince's God Save the Oatmeal Pale Ale 4.7%. Also in San Sebastian is Mala Gissona Beer House, a microbrewery with a taproom (<http://www.malagissona.beer/eng/>) Unfortunately we didn't have time to visit but I mention it here as if their Shackle Town is anything to go by we should have made time.



The highlight of our quest for Basque beer was a return bus trip to nearby Irun and a short walk to Cerveceria Boulevard, a craft beer bar that proved to be our favourite of all the bars visited. Opened in 2005 by Mikel and Antonio, they started with a selection of German & American beers but now stock a wide range of craft beers from all over the world, including many local ones. Mikel was looking after the bar and Antonio was doing the cooking, though they occasionally swap jobs. Mikel had an excellent knowledge of worldwide beers including English, I'm glad to say. While we went through some of his range of 10 draught beers he told us about other local craft bars and beers we could visit. We enjoyed Naparbier's Agwe 5.7% American Pale Ale, Bidassoa Basque Brewery's/Boulevard collaboration's Brasil 7.2% stout, Bidassoa's Mugulari 5.6% Pale Ale and another wonderful

Shackle Town. A comfortable, friendly bar, which was the favourite of our trip, a must to visit if you are in the area. As we left Mikel insisted we try the Nexus 10% stout which he brewed in collaboration with Bidassoa, delicious.

**Tony Skirving**

Here are some of the other local breweries recommended by Mikel in case you go to the Basque Country:-

<http://www.laugarbrewery.com/en/visit/>  
<http://www.falkenbrewing.com>  
<http://www.drunkenbrosbrewery.com>  
<https://www.facebook.com/grossbeer/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/zarautzbeer/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/BiribilBrewing>

**Brewery, Bar & Visitor Centre**



[www.theludlowbrewingcompany.co.uk](http://www.theludlowbrewingcompany.co.uk)

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**Saturday**  
10am - 4pm

**Sunday**  
11am - 4pm

**Brewery Tours:**

**Weekdays** 3pm  
**Saturdays** 2pm



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**Ma Pardoe's Black Widow Brew 6.7% ABV**

**NPA 4.8% ABV**

## **Opening Times:**

Mon-Sat 11am-11pm, Sun 12noon-11pm

## **Food Available:**

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(Menus vary throughout the day)

## **Upstairs Function Room Available**

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# Business Rates

Did you know that pubs pay 2.8% of the UK's Business Rates Bill in England yet only generate 0.5% of business turnover?

The current business rates model is crippling thousands of pubs every year - which is why CAMRA is calling for an annual £5,000 business rate relief for all pubs in England - a move which would drive custom back to local pubs.

Pubs currently face a punitive tax burden, which sees the average pub pay £140,000 a year in direct taxes, or 34p in every £1 taken in the till. Ultimately, it's consumers like you who pay the price of this tax burden as publicans are forced to put up the prices. British pub-going tradition is at risk of dying out as beer prices soar.

The tradition of going to the pub is becoming an unaffordable luxury for the majority of Brits as new research shows that just 15% of UK beer drinkers now think that the price of a pint in the UK is either very or fairly affordable.

CAMRA will be presenting its Budget submission including research, conducted by YouGov to the Chancellor, Philip Hammond, ahead of November's Budget. The campaign organisation is calling for a permanent £5,000 business rate relief for all pubs in England as well as a freeze, or reduction in, beer duty for the rest of this Parliament. With four in 10 pubs experiencing a rise to their business rates, CAMRA warns that without urgent action, thousands of community pubs could be wiped off the map.

CAMRA research has found that in some cases English pubs will need to sell more than 20,000 extra pints of beer every year to cover the rises in their business rates, which will lead many landlords to either put up their prices to make up the cost or close their doors forever. Yet as prices at the bar continue to rise, many pub-loving Brits are finding they can only afford to drink at home.

Colin Valentine CAMRA's National Chairman said: "The British pub is unique, and has been rooted in Britain's history for hundreds of years. All the evidence shows that drinking alcohol in moderation in the company of others is good for people's wellbeing, yet the opportunity to get together and enjoy a beer is being taken away from swathes of people on lower and middle incomes, who are increasingly viewing a pub pint as an unaffordable luxury.

"Many landlords are in a tricky situation in that they are forced to either raise their prices or close their doors forever. It is the people on lower incomes will be hit the hardest, and will then choose to drink at home. In addition, thousands of local pubs are at risk of closure, bringing devastating consequences for their local communities.

"The Chancellor must take urgent action in this Budget if we are to keep pub-going a social activity open to all and prevent local pubs from being wiped off the map."

CAMRA is also calling for a freeze or reduction in beer duty for the rest of this Parliament. Other key evidence contained in CAMRA's evidence to the Chancellor includes:

- On average, each pub pays nearly £140,000 in taxes each year
- Around 37% per cent of the total cost of a pint is now made up of taxes
- The UK pays nearly 40% of all beer duty in the EU but only consumes around 12% of the beer

Source: <http://www.camra.org.uk/businessrates>

Source: CAMRA Press Release  
Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2017

# Stourbridge & Halesowen Real Ale & Pub Census

The idea for an Ale & Pub Census came from an August 2016 article in "What's Brewing", the monthly newspaper sent to all CAMRA members. The Leicester branch had reported the results of their recent annual census. It covered their City Centre pubs and revealed the range of beers on offer and the breweries represented.

Members of Stourbridge & Halesowen agreed to repeat the idea in our area and a date was set for Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

Before the day, we agreed that we would try and visit as many of our 94 real ale pubs as we could. It was tackled from two directions:

We drew up a series of five "Ale Trails" in various areas. All of the trails had six pubs, the last of which was one in Stourbridge town centre. Groups of two or three volunteers chose which trail they preferred and they were all timed to finish in the final venue, the Red House Boutique, near the bus station in the early evening.



We then asked for our other volunteers to visit some of the remaining pubs whenever they could, during the day.

The Organiser for the day was Andy Koszary. "It worked really well. We had 21 members to help and between us we managed to visit 76 of our 94 real ale pubs."

## The main results were:

76 pubs visited.

150 different ales on sale from 83 different breweries.

31 different real ciders available from 17 producers.

## The most popular ales were:

Enville Ale, Holden's Golden Glow, Wye Valley HPA, Banks's Amber, Wye Valley Butty Bach, Sharp's Doombar and Thwaites Wainwright Golden Ale.

The average price for a pint was £3.08 and the average ABV was 4.3.

Members also took the opportunity to score various beers on the CAMRA WhatPub website. 40 beers were assessed and the average score on the day was 3.51 which put them in the range of "Good / Very good".

Everyone enjoyed the day. The results will be a useful "Benchmark" for the range of beers available on the day and we plan to repeat the exercise in 2018. We will then be able to measure the results of our campaigning efforts, on the range and quality of the beers available in our Stourbridge & Halesowen real ale pubs.





# A Grand Day Out No.16

## Saturday 23rd Sept 2017

### Sedgley Beer Festival

The venue for the Sedgley Beerfest, for those of you who have yet to visit, is the Scout Hut, tucked away behind ASDA, close to the centre of the town. What a great little festival it is!

According to the comprehensive programme notes the festival has been going now for five years and is expanding each time. Originally held in just the Scout Hut it has now spread to an enormous marquee comfortably furnished for the more sedentary drinker with a purpose built stage at one end and a temporary 'outside toilet block' at the other, all mod-cons!

We entered via the 'admissions tent' (gazebo) and were greeted like long-lost relatives, so friendly. No admission charge, just £2 for the glass (refundable) and the, now traditional, token card at £8, nice and simple.

Two members from the 'army' of volunteer helpers homed in on my Stourbridge Beerfest T-Shirt and proudly introduced themselves as Dave and David, it saves confusion if everyone has the same name, and gave us a guided tour of the festival; they explained they were the founding members of the festival and also heavily involved with the Scout Movement. They were so keen to get our feedback on their efforts that I felt obliged to promise them an article in the next Ales & Tales and believe me they deserve it.

It really is a very 'professionally' run event, all the staff in their festival T-Shirts, delicious food available from the Scouts' own kitchen, plenty of easily accessible toilet facilities and an excellent choice of musical accompaniment. I know a lot of people don't like loud music at festivals but our afternoon was enhanced by the wonderful 'Sedgley Ukulele Strummers', it seems like there were about 80 of them on stage, we all had a 'melodious' memory jaunting sing-a-long. (It sounded melodious from where we were, it's amazing what effect alcohol has on your musical appreciation.)

The beer was soon flowing and rapidly running out, which is a good sign, by the time we left at about (a

bit vague) 6 o'clock there were nine or ten empty barrels, still another twenty-six to go though. The beer choice we thought was pretty impressive and cleverly thought out. Strengths ranged from 3.6 to 6.9, so nothing dangerous, the choice of beer styles was also all embracing, from light refreshing bitters and golden ales to powerful malty stouts. Thankfully there weren't too many over-hopped, 'fruity' beers (personal dislike), all in all an excellent choice. Some interesting new breweries, Black Edge, Neepsend, Vocation, Shiny and The Borough were represented along with a lot of 'old faves', it was also noticeable that there were very few 'locals' (Sadlers, Enville and the marvellous Kinver were present), in our eyes that's not a bad thing, I go to festivals to taste new 'stuff'. I don't profess to be an expert on cider but they appeared to have a good range\*, with eight traditionals and a perry. Thankfully only two of those awful fruit ciders were available (contentious comment I know, but I like to keep the enamel on my teeth, the few I've got left). We had a great experience and can only commend the 'Dave Brothers' and all their 80-strong crew for the work they put in. It is important to point out that all the proceeds from the festival goes to the on-going work on the Scout Hut, Children In Need and other local charities.

Earlier I said we left the festival at 'about' 6 o'clock, we were in Sedgley, what do you do when you're in Sedgley? Exactly, visit the Beacon! So Geoff set-off at some pace closely followed by Tim, Jez, Carol, Joy, another Dave and me. We were lucky to find seats adjacent to the bar, the lads settled in with the local brew and a pleasant little number from Hop & Stagger of Bridgnorth whilst the girls interrogated a young man about his collection of tattoos, how embarrassing!

Taxi home..... End of a Grand Day Out.

Adrian Stevens

*\*Lizzie gets grumpy if I don't mention the cider.*

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12:00 - 11:30

Sun:

12:00 - 22:30



**Wyre Forest  
Pub Of The  
Year 2017**



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR REAL ALE**

**West Mids  
Pub Of The  
Year 2017**



# Regional Good Beer Guide Launch & Regional Pub of the Year Presentation

The launch of the new edition of CAMRA's flagship publication, the Good Beer Guide, took place in Kidderminster at the Weavers Real Ale House. The guide lists 4500 pubs across the country, selected by CAMRA members. Weavers was acquired last year by Dean Cartwright who owns and operates Pig Iron brewery and who also has taken on a long-term lease of the Britannia Inn in Rowley Village.

As part of the same ceremony Dean was also presented with the Regional Pub of the Year award, an achievement that is unsurpassed for someone

who has been operating the pub for such a brief time. The pub now faces stern challenges in the next round of the competition where it will compete against four other pubs from up and down the country.

**Steve Thompson**

## IN THE PHOTO

Brett Lanoish (right)  
Amanda Hignet (centre)  
Karen Williams (left)  
Dean Cartwright (seated)



**Church End Brewery**  
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CV10 0RD

## Brewery Tap Opening Times:

Thursday 6pm - 11pm  
Friday 12pm - 11pm  
Saturday 12pm - 11pm  
Sunday 12pm - 10.30pm

**For Brewery Tours or for further  
information ring:-**

**01827 713080**



# Members' Weekend AGM & Conference 2018

This event will be held at Warwick University next April. For those who are not familiar with the area, Warwick University is not in Warwick at all, but on the south side of Coventry (not to be confused with Coventry University). It is easily reached by a frequent bus service from Pool Meadow bus station, or the railway station. The conference itself will be in Butterworth Hall, a world-class concert hall. The Members' Bar will be in the nearby Students' Union building.

An event like this requires quite a few volunteer staff. We need people to work in the bar area, "Meeters & Greeters" and tellers. If you are interested, would you please register online at <http://camraagm.org.uk/volunteer> or complete the form right:

Thank you,

**Jim Witt**  
*Chairman, Local  
Organising Committee*

Photo credit: Mischa Photo Ltd - Visit Britain



## University of Warwick

20th-22nd April 2018

Hosted by Coventry & District branch

**Please register online at [agm.camra.org.uk](http://agm.camra.org.uk) or complete the form below and return to: CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans AL1 4LW.**

Membership # \_\_\_\_\_ Joint Membership # (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_  
First Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Surname \_\_\_\_\_ Surname \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to volunteer, please indicate when you can help and the staffing officer will contact you in due course. Your information will be treated in accordance with CAMRA's Privacy policy.  
[www.camra.org.uk/privacy-policy](http://www.camra.org.uk/privacy-policy)

**Tue AM/PM Wed AM/PM Thur AM/PM Fri AM/PM Sat AM/PM Sun AM/PM**

Please circle if you have any specialist skills: first aider / cellarman / local knowledge / logistics / customer service / other.

(Closing date for postal & online registration is Tuesday 3rd April 2018)

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# Branch Diaries

## Dudley & South Staffordshire

### OCTOBER

**Monday 23rd - Branch Meeting 8.00pm**  
Old Bulls Head, Lower Gornal

**Wednesday 25th - Scoring Social**  
Langley/Oldbury

**Monday 30th - Dudley Winter Ales Fayre Meeting 8.00pm**  
Park Inn, Woodsetton

### NOVEMBER

**Wednesday 1st - Branch Social 7.30pm**  
Vine (Bull & Bladder), Brierley Hill

**Wednesday 8th - Scoring Social**  
Dudley

**Monday 13th - Dudley Winter Ales Fayre Meeting 8.00pm**  
Park Inn, Woodsetton

**Thursday 23rd to Saturday 25th - Dudley Winter Ales Fayre**  
Dudley Town Hall

**Wednesday 29th - Scoring Social**  
Coseley/Woodsetton

### DECEMBER

**Friday 1st - Branch Social**  
Jolly Crispin Cider Festival, Upper Gornal

**Monday 4th - Branch Meeting 8.00pm**  
Brickmakers, Quarry Bank

**Sunday 24th - Scoring Social**  
Sedgely/Upper Gornal

### JANUARY

**Monday 22nd - Branch Meeting 8.00pm**  
Court House, Dudley

## Stourbridge & Halesowen

### NOVEMBER

**Wednesday 1st - Branch Meeting 8.00pm**  
Queens Head, Enville Street, Stourbridge

**Thursday 16th - Lye Marking Social**  
Meet Fox, Green Lane 8.00pm then Shovel, Railway, Windsor Castle and Sadler's Brewhouse

### DECEMBER

**2nd December Meet the brewer**  
With Morton's at Hail to the Ale WV6 9EF plan to meet at 12noon travelling by bus with a hopeful stop off on the way home in Wolverhampton City Centre

**Wednesday 6th - Branch Meeting 8.00pm**  
Robin Hood, Collis Street, Amblecote, Stourbridge

**Wednesday 13th - Wollaston Marking Social**  
Meet Foresters, Bridgnorth Road 8.00pm then Plough, Gate Hangs Well, Unicorn, Princess and Graham's Place.

### JANUARY

**Wednesday 10th (Note: 2nd Wednesday of the month) - Branch Meeting 8.00pm**  
Shell-Ter Bar, Nimmings Lane, Shell Corner, Halesowen

**Saturday 13th - Buzz Trip (using W. Midlands buses)**  
Meet Duke William 12 Noon Itinerary TBC

**Thursday 25th - Amblecote Marking Social**  
Meet New Talbot 8.00pm then New Wellington, Starving Rascal, Swan and Robin Hood

### FEBRUARY

**Wednesday 7th - Branch Meeting 8.00pm**  
Duke William, Coventry Street, Stourbridge (TBC)

**Thursday 22nd - Short Cross Marking Social**  
Meet Whitley 8.00pm then Hawne Tavern, Edward VII and Waggon & Horses

### MARCH

**Thursday 1st (Note: Thursday Meeting) - Branch Meeting 8.00pm**  
Fixed Wheel Brewery, Long Lane, Halesowen





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PHONE: 01216025665



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# Pub News

## DUDLEY & SOUTH STAFFS

Holden's have been busy with their pub estate in the last few months. As many of the West Brom supporters will know the **Wheatsheaf** on the High Street has undergone a major refurbishment. The two-room layout has disappeared in favour of a smart single room. The bar has moved and is now situated along the right-hand wall as you enter the pub from the street. New tables and an eclectic mix of chairs, redecoration and the transformation of the Gents toilets completes the effect.



*Baggies Boys Room*

Holden's have also completed the purchase of the Golden Lion in Bridgnorth. It opened at the end of September after a lengthy period with the decorators.

The **New Inn, Coseley WV14 9LT** has also got a new manager, Nik Hawkes, who has moved from the Fellows, Dudley.

The **Britannia in Rowley Village B65 9AT** has been acquired by Dean Cartwright of the Pig Iron brewery on a long-term lease. Featuring 9 Real Ales, one from the Britt brewery, 1 from Pig Iron brewery and seven other guests featuring Fownes and Fixed Wheel. The pub has been open a few weeks now and is building a good clientele. There is a 5% discount to CAMRA members.

The **Church Tavern, Quarry Bank DY5 2AA** is now serving 6 changing Real Ales following installation of an additional 2 handpulls in the rear lounge.

The **Old Bush, Wombourne WV5 9DT** is now managed by Michelle and Paul Hannon (previously of the Lych Gate in Wolverhampton).

**Bathams** have finally opened their new pub in Hagley, the King Arthur. On the fringes of our area but relatively easy to get to by train it should develop into an excellent addition to their pub estate.

**Stonegate Pub Group** have refurbished the pub in West Bromwich which has been called the Goose for some years and returned its name to the **Sandwell**. It serves three Real Ales.

**Jolly Crispin, Upper Gornal**, is holding a Cider Festival in December from 7pm on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> and Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Wall Heath Tavern 12-14 High St, Wall Heath, Kingswinford DY6 0HB** has sadly closed.

## STOURBRIDGE & HALESOWEN

We have a new pub **The Cock & Bull High Street, DY8 1EE** formerly The Glasshouse has been refurbished and now open. On a passing glance at the bar they looked to be serving Purity & Wye Valley (and the food looks nice too!)

Also, we have a new micro pub **Shell-Ter**. A single room micropub at Shell Corner. Currently serving three real ales when we visited it was Golden Glow, Envile Ale and Exmoor Gold, they do also stock bottles from Fixed Wheel.

### The Crafty Pint, Halesowen B63 4JU

The Crafty Pint are still hard at work converting next door and will be holding events over the winter season once it's open. Keep an eye on their Facebook page and at the pub for confirmed dates. A Christmas fair with good beer sounds like a plan to us!

The **Foresters, Wollaston DY8 3PL** have a kids Halloween party from 2 till 6 on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October, so why not enjoy a lovely pint of Ludlow Gold while letting the kids have a bit of fun. Also, there's going to be a bbq on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> November when the bonfire finishes at Stourbridge rugby club. Their Christmas Fayre starts serving from Fri 1<sup>st</sup> December through till 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Sadlers Brewhouse Conyers Trading Estate, Station Dr, Stourbridge DY9 8ER** have a packed schedule of events for over the Winter/Christmas period. 4<sup>th</sup> November 8pm The Secret Cabaret are performing, 18<sup>th</sup> November 8pm Live music from The Geckos 15<sup>th</sup> December 8pm Live music from The Barrelhouse Blues Band, 23<sup>rd</sup> December 8pm live music from Eastwood Band.

The **Old Bank 1 Coventry St, Stourbridge DY8 1EP** have refurbished all the seating to soft padded chairs and pews as well as a new pool table and a dart board.

The **Waggon & Horses, Halesowen B63 3TU** are going to be holding a gin festival in November- date is to be confirmed so please keep an eye on their facebook page for more info.





# Brewery News

## DUDLEY & SOUTH STAFFS

### HOLDEN'S

Holden's have produced Woodsetton Pale Ale for their in-house bottling line. The contract to supply the beer to Aldi supermarkets amounted to a whopping 77000 bottles.

Holden's have also launched the latest of their seasonal beers. Castle Class comes in at 4.6%.

### PIG IRON

Pig Iron have relocated from their original home in Brierley Hill to the Britannia in Rowley Village. Production of the Pig Iron beers is continuing but Dean has also launched a new series of beers under the BRITT brewery brand name. Brew Britannia, a sweet hoppy Golden Ale at 4.2% and Britt Pop, a heavily hopped straw-coloured ale with citrusy notes at 4.5%.

### ENVILLE

Stourton American Pale Ale is now available in bottles. The Autumn/Winter brewing schedule will ensure Gothic and Ginger Gothic are both available in casks and mini-kegs (5L tins) from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> October and Blizzard will be brewed either 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> November so casks and mini-kegs will be available from 27<sup>th</sup> November.

The Punch A estate now operated by Heineken has forced Enville to deliver into their Wakefield depot in Yorkshire from where it will be delivered back to the Black Country! Also, they are eliminating 'minor brands' so Ginger will disappear completely from the former Punch A estate. (They told the CMA this would happen but they assured the market there would be no reduction in choice!) Enville have spoken with Hobson's and they have the same issues but like Enville with Enville Ale they will continue to ship Town Crier to Wakefield, for now at least!

### OLDE SWAN

Olde Swan brewery have decided to brew what could prove to be an interesting variation on their Winter beer – Black Widow. They intend brewing the recipe without the addition of the Dark

Chocolate malts that have given it its characteristic colour. The beer will be the same ABV of 6.7% and will be called White Widow.

### SARAH HUGHES

Sarah Hughes have produced two special brews. Hedgerow, a copper-coloured strong beer, at 7.4% is on sale at the Beacon Hotel. This will be followed by a new brew, Challenger, at 4.6%, a pale beer which, for them, will be hoppy.

The annual brewings of Snowflake, their 8% barley wine, has commenced and this will be available at the Beacon Hotel from late November.

## STOURBRIDGE & HALESOWEN

### FIXED WHEEL

Fixed Wheel, Long Lane Trading Estate, Long Lane, Blackheath B62 9LD are holding a Halloween party on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October with live music from the Shambolics, and the Christmas beer festival will run from November 30<sup>th</sup> until Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December.

### GREEN DUCK

**Green Duck Brewery, Gainsborough Trading Estate, Rufford Rd, Stourbridge DY9 7ND**

As we go to press, Green Duck will be celebrating their 4th anniversary this November. Congratulations! Green Duck love a Boxing Day party and this year is no exception! Their Christmas Beer Festival runs from 21<sup>st</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> December. Look out for monthly specials 'The Storm' which is a Winterberry Stout, and Last Ship Sails which is a Cascade Pale. Heaven Sent, their Chocolate Milk Stout will also be available consistently over the autumn and winter months, as will a big batch of Ricochet, their amazingly fruity 7.2% New England IPA brewed with Mosaic & Simcoe. That is, as long as supply can keep up with demand of course! The beer range for 2018-2019 is currently being finalised based on new hops becoming available. Some old favourites will reappear in addition to some new recipes and the arrival of a new 7th fermenter will help support brewery growth into next year and beyond.

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# Kinver Brewery & the Seven Pubs

The Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA branch stretches 14 miles from east to west and 7 miles from north to south. Within that territory, we have towns such as Brierley Hill and Tipton which are well served by regular and reliable bus and train services. As a result, pubs and clubs in these urban areas are accessible day and night and many have little or no car parking provision.

However, the branch contains several South Staffordshire villages and hamlets such as Enville and Stourton which are more difficult to support on a regular basis due to their relative isolation. This inevitably means that the only practical way to survey and score many South Staffordshire venues is by mini bus, ergo more than a dozen branch members were chauffeured between rural ale pubs by veteran pubgoer Pete Hill on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2017.

With the final pick-up point being Sedgley, we made the short downhill journey to the **Summer House**, Gospel End, to kickstart the afternoon's drinking. Ordering the first beverage of the day was a straightforward exercise with almost all members of the party purchasing the unaccompanied Thwaites Wainwright which some argued was overpriced at £3.40/£1.70. That said, there was prompt service with a smile and the beer was in average/good condition.

From here, we made our way to the **Bell Inn** situated in Trysull where we were thankful to be visiting the pub during the calm before the storm. The following day, there would be a number of local road closures to accommodate the Velo Birmingham cycle race hence the management was intending to close the kitchen on what is usually one of the busiest days of the week. In addition to the core Holden's range, we sampled Stairway (that's the premium strong pale ale from Ludlow brewery rather than the Burton Bridge namesake), Batham's Best Bitter, and the Holden's seasonal beer Castle Class.

As noon became afternoon, we made our way to the **Red Lion** in Bobbington where we had a much needed intake of carbohydrates. The cobs contained home-cooked and hand-carved turkey, ham, and pink beef whilst the chips had a twist in the form of a balsamic vinegar glaze. We were pleased to see that this pub-cum-hotel continues to stock 3 rotating local real ales. On this occasion, we were offered Three Tuns XXX, Wye Valley Butty Bach, and Enville Ale.



With well-lined stomachs, it was time to manoeuvre and meander the tight bends of Six Ashes Road once more as we rolled up at the **Six Ashes Inn**. The real fire, low wood-beamed ceiling, and happy hound made for a textbook traditional pub experience. Of the permanent ales, there was a consensus that the Wye Valley HPA was in finer form than the Ringwood Boondoggle on this visit.

Our fifth port of call was the **Cat Inn**, Enville, which was crowned Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA 2017 'South Staffordshire Pub of The Year' back in June for the umpteenth time. A characteristically warm welcome awaited us and Dan very kindly provided a plate of sausage rolls to soak up the beer. I was delighted to find Salopian's Treasure Trove which I'd previously enjoyed at the Royal George in Willenhall. This is yet another excellent golden ale from this sought-after brewery with sharp tropical flavours and a satisfying hoppy aroma.





From one furry mammal to another, we departed the Cat and made ourselves comfortable at the Fox in Stourton. It was great to see the pub car park so full and the conservatory occupied by a private party. The pub serves two regular beers – Batham's Best Bitter and the ubiquitous Wye Valley HPA. On this particularly mild September Saturday, many members of the branch used this opportunity to enjoy the fresh air and the therapeutic ambience of the countryside.

It was now after five o'clock and we were all eagerly anticipating our visit to **Kinver Brewery** where the Festival Organiser of Dudley Winter Ales Fayre 2016, Jacqui Edwards, was set to present brewers Carol and Dave Kelly with the 'Beer of the Festival' award for the seriously strong but seriously supple 'Over the Edge'. Not long back from a tiring transatlantic trip, our good friends and devoted CAMRA activists were excellent hosts and treated us to a splash of the premium bitter 'Half Centurion'. Thank you Carol and Dave.



Our final pit stop was the **Navigation** at Greensforge. This idyllic pub and restaurant overlooks the Staffs & Worcs Canal and attracts a mixture of ramblers, cyclists, boaters and gongoozlers. Here we had one hour to chill out before our return journey to Sedgley and Dudley. A safe selection of local ales awaited us and again we were able to sit roadside without so much as a fleece. After all, alcohol is a vasodilator – as your level of sobriety diminishes you do not 'feel the cold'.

As darkness descended, we boarded the mini bus one final time and headed home. With panto season fast approaching, we award 'Kinver Brewery and the Seven Pubs' a full five stars for being a remarkable rur-ale retreat. Be sure to show your support for these great pubs throughout autumn and winter. Remember – a country pub is for life, not just for summer!

**Ryan Hunt**

*Chairman and Pubs Officer  
Dudley and South Staffs CAMRA*



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# My Dozen Drinks in South Staffs

Wombourne (sometimes spelt Wombourn without the 'e') is one of a small number of patches within the Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA branch to hold a WV postcode. It also boasts a disproportionately high number of food pubs which has frustrated local residents to such an extent that in September 2017 a petition was initiated to prevent the sale of meals at the **Old Bush**. As we arrived at this Marston's outlet, we discovered that there are new managers by the name of 'Shell' and Paul. As our list of pubs to visit was almost as long as the aforementioned petition, we sensibly settled for a half pint of Thwaites Wainwright and moved on.

We shuffled a matter of 100 feet to establish what was on offer at the **Vine** where it was more news of change at the top. The previous manager, Ron Brazier, retired over the summer and we were greeted by a temporary manager called Amy Brumby. If you have ever visited the Vine, you can relate to the assertion that the pub is unashamedly food-oriented with little space set aside for drinkers. We gathered directly opposite the bar with the majority of the group opting for Fuller's London Pride – a mainstream national product but not necessarily found in abundance in this part of world.

So far, in 'Wombourn', we had visited a community local and an upmarket gastropub so why not add a **Pool Bar** to the mix too! With more screens than Birmingham Airport and multiple pool tables, this really is heaven for anybody wanting to view sporting fixtures or to pot some balls. Again, as per previous visits, the Enville Ale was more than acceptable.

Next we visited the **New Inn** situated on a busy intersection in the north of the village. Although contractually limited to the Marston's range, there are 6 real ales. The New Inn is another example of a pub which enjoys an extremely high turnover of

pub grub. In addition, there are now various 'game zones' for genuine (and perhaps even pretend) children. Here, the Banks's Sunbeam was without doubt one of the best-kept beers of the day.

As you would hope in the middle of August, we were blessed with good weather which enabled us to do a bit of walking by both road and canal path during the day. Not only does this keep the cost of the outing down but it also builds in some much-needed breaks from the beer! After a steady half mile walk, we arrived at the **Mount Pleasant** where there's two equal-sized, rectangular rooms served by one central bar. Two of the beers sampled by the branch were Wye Valley Butty Bach and St Austell Tribute. In keeping with the management changes theme, this pub is now managed by Nikki Williams. The biggest competitor for the Mount Pleasant is the **Round Oak** – the two of which are separated by a small bridge with traffic signals. In many respects, the pub is a bit of an obstacle course which is largely down to the internal structure with various stairways. That aside, the eagerness of the staff to have feedback on the beer being served was both refreshing and memorable. Our satisfaction with the Banks's Sunbeam consumed earlier in the day led most of us to a repeat purchase.

Our final destination in Wombourne was the **Waggon & Horses**. Known more affectionately as the 'Brick Bridge' by locals, the pub has a new unique selling point having rebranded itself as a chicken rotisserie restaurant with large areas of the pub cordoned off for diners only. It is only when you visit multiple Marston's pubs consecutively that you really see the corporate strategy of pub portfolio homogenisation in full swing. It was apparent that the Marston's 61 Deep (previously Pedigree New World Pale) was getting near the end of the barrel which led to an interesting debate around how you would then score such a beer. I'll leave you to form your own opinion on this one.





Despite our preparedness to walk whenever and wherever possible throughout the crawl, common sense prevailed and we caught a bus to Swindon. It is hard not to have a soft spot for the unspoilt **Green Man** which has a certain 'living room' quality to it. Two Ringwood beers – Boondoggle and Fortyniner – are always available plus one real cider.

Whilst in Swindon, we were curious to explore **Swindon Cricket Club** for the first time. We found a one-storey, bungalow-like clubhouse overlooking Hinksford Lane Playing Fields. The single-room lounge has two distinct, carpeted drinking bays carved out by fixed seating. The entrance for the bar is at the rear of the venue and is accessed by walking along the perimeter of the dipped cricket pitch. The cricket team's 2017 main sponsor is Green Duck Beer Co. (Stourbridge) and, as a result, the bar serves exclusively Green Duck cask ale which is ordered in 36 pint pins. Currently, Green Duck Blonde priced at £3.00 per pint is the sole beer but this might rotate. Opening times are unfixed and seasonal (Thu-Sat) and the bar might be hired out for private functions so always have a contingency plan if you intend to visit.



Our tenth pub of the day was the **Hinksford Arms**; sitting on the outskirts of Wall Heath. We were pleased to share the great news that the pub had been selected as a new entry for the 2018 Good Beer Guide (although this was to remain embargoed for a further 3-4 weeks). The pub is a constant stockist of Holden's, Enville, and Wye Valley beers

and offers a generous CAMRA discount which is warmly welcomed.

Our outing ended with some nightcaps in Wall Heath where the **Horse & Jockey** was packed to the rafters with Wolves fans that were not going to allow their rare home defeat to title chasers Cardiff City ruin weekend antics. Similarly, the **Wall Heath Tavern** had a lively atmosphere where I finished on a high with my dozenth drink – Titanic Plum Porter. Unfortunately, it transpires that guzzling a 'Titanic' beer was a tad metaphoric as the Wall Heath Tavern has since ceased trading.

**Ryan Hunt**

*Chairman and Pubs Officer  
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# Costa del Beer

## Beer in Malaga

In the past, many beer enthusiasts have thought of Spain as something of a beer desert – the best you could get was a good glass of San Miguel. But when you're lying on a hot, sunny beach on the Costa del Sol, a glass of ice-cold lager certainly hits the spot. However, like other southern European countries, Spain has recently seen a virtual explosion of micro-breweries and craft beer, with a wide range of light and dark beers now available in many towns and cities.

As most of us live in the West Midlands, we reached the Costa del Sol for our New Year trip via a flight from Birmingham to Malaga. This gave us some time to sample the local beers and bars on offer in this coastal town. First of all, we travelled on the Red open-top bus tour to appreciate the history of the town, see the key sights and orientate ourselves. We then started off our beer exploration by following the long road around the northern edge of the old town (Calle de la Carretería) between the River Guadalmedina and the castle. First, we visited **La Madriguera** craft beer bar (roughly translated as "rabbit warren" in Spanish) to sample their five locally-brewed draught beers, including La Madriguera Cream Ale and Cerveza Malaqa. One of the lady partners of the brewery is so committed to brewing beer that she has tattoos on her fingers; on one hand the word "BEER" and on the other symbols for water, hops, malt and yeast!

A short distance away is **Central Beers**, a modern beer café, with a wide selection (15) of local and imported draught beers and a 100 or so bottled beers. The staff are very helpful and knowledgeable about the range of beers on offer, and there is a good basic food menu, with hamburgers etc. We enjoyed glasses of Barnett & Son Oatmeal Stout and Destrapero Negra. In the Plaza de la Merced is the **Cerveceria Arte & Sante**, a rather contemporary and "minimalist" beer café, which offers locally brewed La Malaqa draught beers and imports from other European breweries such as Mikeller and

Scottish Brewdog. A very cosmopolitan bar, with folks from as far as field as the 2017 City of Culture (Hull), Colombia and Australia. We enjoyed the company, and the beers, including Cerveza Malaqa Kernel Panic, Brown Ale, Bootlegger and the limited edition Mk Ultra 128482.



*Het Beste Biertje, Malaga*

The following day we had a day-out along the Costa del Sol to Fuengirola. Even here there is a craft beer bar at the far end of the town. **Woods Bar**, on Calle Churruca, offers a range of bottled beers from Cerveza Malaqa, and we spent a pleasant hour or two sitting outside in the sunshine sampling some of them. On our return to Malaga, we found the **Cerveceria Het Beste Biertje** in Calle Trinidad Grnd. As the name might suggest, this beer café focuses on imported Belgian beers, and I can certainly recommend the bitterballen (crispy beef and potato croquettes). We washed these down with glasses of Malasombre Porter and Tongerlo Christmas Winter Ale. Our final bar was a fairly new brew-pub, **El Rincon del Cervezero** in the heart of Malaga's Soho district. We spent some time talking to the brewer, David, who is passionate about craft beer, and offers brewing courses for both beginners and advanced home-brewers. We were spoilt for choice, but managed to sample glasses of La Reine del Soho (APA) ad Buen Karma (IPA).



*A fine selection of Spanish beers*

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Steve James

*(with thanks to Dick James for the photos)*

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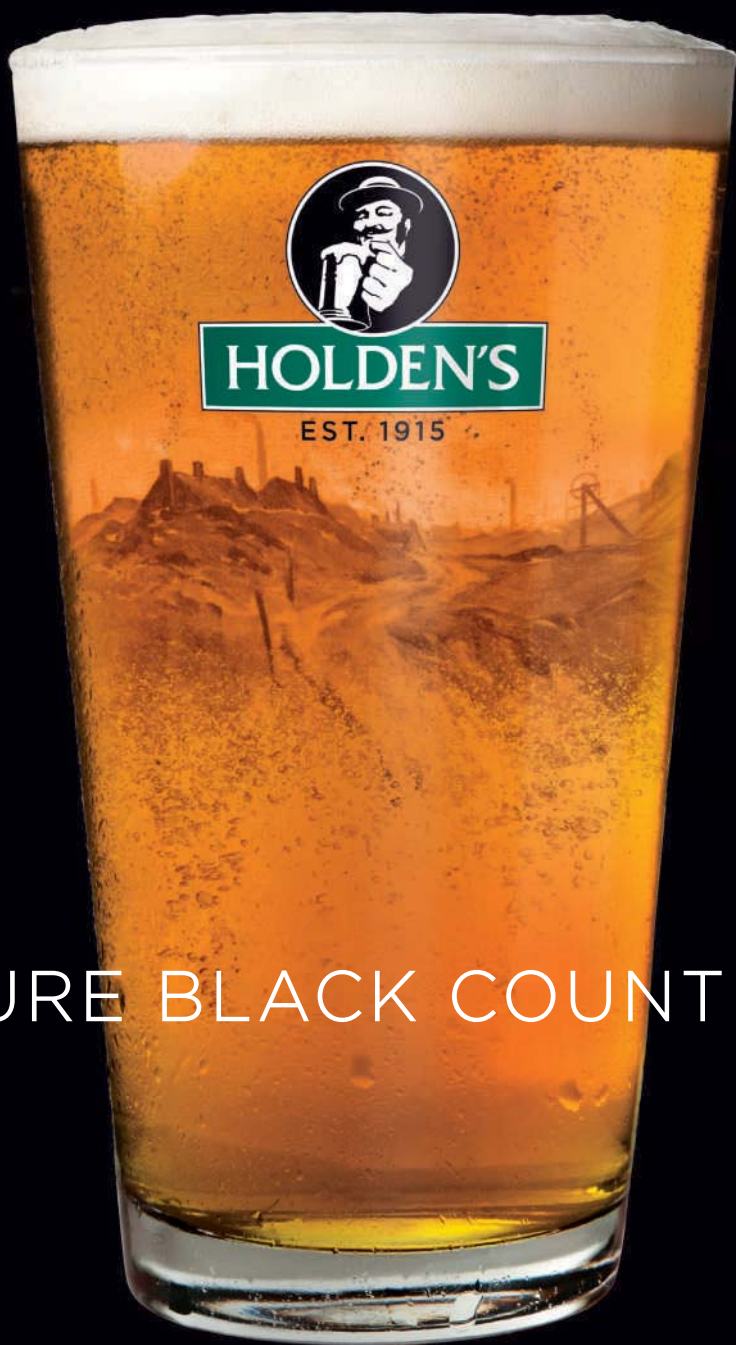
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Edwin Butler Bayliss, Black Country Landscape, early 1900s, oil on canvas.  
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