



NEWS OF THE ALE WORLD FREE

This is the bi-monthly newsletter of the Lichfield, Sutton and Tamworth branch of CAMRA.

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or see

www.LSTCamra.org.uk

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L.A.S.T. Orders Edition 39 Dec / Jan 2012



The horse and mule live thirty years
And never know of wine and beers.
The goat and sheep at twenty die
Without a taste of scotch or rye.
The cow drinks water by the ton
And at eighteen is mostly done.
The dog at fifteen cashes in
Without the aid of rum or gin.
The modest, sober, bone-dry hen
Lays eggs for noggs and dies at ten.
But sinful, ginful, rum-soaked men
Survive three-score years and ten.
And some of us, though mighty few
Stay pickled 'til we're ninety-two.



Charles Duffy

The bi-monthly CAMRA newsletter for
Lichfield, Atherstone, Sutton & Tamworth,
including
Chasetown, Shenstone, Rugeley, Whittington, Curdworth,
Coleshill, Kingsbury and Polesworth

Durham Drinking

When asked to spend a couple of days working on-site in Washington I was over the moon and looking forward to some quality drinking. No, not the one on the other side of the Atlantic but the one just short of Newcastle on Tyne!

Experience prompted me to book into the Premier Inn located 10 miles away at Pity Me. This is a perfect base both for taking a 15 minute bus ride to Durham city centre or for a stroll to a couple of local *Good Beer Guide* listed pubs. At the hotel I indulged in a fairly decent curry, washed down with a mediocre pint of *Pedigree*. At least they were serving cask!

I then set off along Front Street and after about half a mile I crossed the threshold of the **Tap & Spile** at Framwellgate Moor. What a gem of a pub, very traditional with at least three separate rooms served from a central bar. After pondering the beer list (pictured right), I opted for a pint of *Ossett Pale Gold*, followed by a *Moorhouse Blonde Witch*. I was very tempted to stop for another but curiosity got the better of me and I headed back towards Pity Me and had a final pint of *Rudgate Battle Axe* in the **Lambton Hounds**, another *GBG* regular. Also on tap were *Hambleton Old Raby*, and *Consett White Hot*.



On the following evening, after a hard days graft, I went to Durham centre and started my *GBG 2011* pub crawl at the **Colpitts Hotel**. This is an imposing, wedge-shaped Samuel Smiths tied house offering *Old Brewery Bitter* at the highly competitive price of £1.45 a pint.



The urge to explore kicked in and my feet transported me to the **Bridge Hotel**, pictured left. The building was originally built as accommodation for navvies who constructed the large railway viaduct that towers above. Although my pint of *Deuchars IPA* was in good form, I was not over-enthusiastic with the overall choice (Fullers *London Pride* and Wells *Bombardier*).

The next pub on my list was a ten minute brisk walk, across the river (twice) and then up the hill to Hallgarth Street. As I homed in on the pub I could not fail to see a large sign on the Students Union Building advertising "CAMRA Beer Festival Here Thursday." Too bad I was on my way home the next day!

My destination, the **Victoria**, is aptly summed up on its website: "A family run Grade 2 listed Victorian Inn with a congenial atmosphere, cracking ale, and a hearty breakfast." Not surprisingly, it also features in the CAMRA National Inventory of Historic Pubs. I indulged in an excellent pint of *Big Lamp Bitter*. Also on hand pull were *Hadrian Border*

Durham cont.

Sailor Geordie, *Hambleton Stud*, and *Wylam Gold Tankard*. The Vic is pictured below.

Back in the centre of Durham, I quaffed a pint of Maxim *Swedish Blonde* in the **Market Tavern**. This has a narrow frontage, but makes up for it with a relatively long interior and a raised area at the rear forming an L-shape. The other ales on sale were Everards *Tiger*, Fullers *Summer Ale*, Northumberland *Lunatick*, *Hobgoblin* and Maxim *Decimus Meridius*.

I then went for my final drink in the nearby **Shakespeare**. I chose *Caledonian Flying Scotsman* in preference to *London Pride*, *Deuchars IPA* and *St Austell Tribute*. The bar was empty, but it wasn't quiet, as a regular folk music session was in full swing in the little snug to the rear. Every so often one or two of the folk music crowd would pop into the bar, say hello and top up with cider or ale!

After I finished my last pint it was then time to take the bus journey back to the hotel and ponder the fact that I had had only quality beer all night. I very much look forward to my next visit to Durham!

Dave Backhouse



Gill & Tony welcome you to THE DRILL INN

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WYE'S WORDS No. 47



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Tipple Tattle

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE

It's all change again at Nuneaton's **Felix Holt** JDW, where the CAMRA discount has been altered yet again. Guest ale pints used to be £1.30 to card-carrying CAMRA members, then went up to £1.35. Now the deal is 50p off a pint, still a good deal. So don't bother getting your vouchers out at this JDW! Note that half pints don't get this deal.

Quite a few punters were gently the worse for wear after the World Beers Festival at the **Horseshoes** in Nuneaton. With twenty continental beers going up to 9% in strength, even a third-pint of each was going to put you into orbit! A great pub – except when pointlessly filled with the loud, cretinous jabbering of Radio 1.

Nuneaton's **Crown** offered a chance to participate in 'November Madness' – all ale pints £1.95 throughout the month. Even sledgehammer brews like Oakham's *Black Baron*, an 8.8% Imperial stout, went for this bargain price. Look out for their Xmas beer festival – see fest listings.

The **Market Tavern** in Atherstone, a Warwickshire Beer Co pub, has seen more guest ales popping up, with the six hand pulls featuring at least two non-Warwickshire beers. Wold Top *Wold Gold* and *Voluptuous* featured recently, plus Wychwood *Hobgoblin*. The real fire in the main bar makes it a cosy haven in winter.

Choice and quality remains high at Atherstone's **New Dolphin**; there's always a number of interesting ales on. The beer choices there are never predictable, but often include favourites such as Blythe, Beowulf or Salopian. You may need earplugs on some Sunday nights – the howling wail of karaoke can sometimes pollute the airwaves.

Cottage beers seem to have got a lot more interesting of late, typified by the *Trident* tried at Atherstone's **Hat & Beaver** recently – a nice rich roasty brew. The Beaver has also had some nice Sadler's beers, such as the *Haunted House* around Halloween. January sales will again feature at the Beaver – all-week happy hour throughout January.

Thwaites is another brewery which seems to have lifted its game, for specials at least. The **Blue Boar** in Mancetter had *Crafty Devil* on, a dark spicy brew with cloves and cinnamon punching you in the nose. The Boar had its first ever beer festival at the end of November; it was after we went to press so we can't tell you how it went!

The **Gate Inn** at Nether Whitacre is now allowing you to sample three one-thirds of a pint for £2.90. There are six or seven beers on offer at any one time.

Not far away, the **Railway Inn** at Whitacre Heath had a change of landlord during the summer. This has meant a change to the ale on offer, with two guest ales (including one from Church End) being on offer alongside Greene King *IPA*. The latter is served from Greene King's new-fangled 'Revolution' font which allows the beer to be served either with or without a creamy head. Let's just say that we were unimpressed with the output of the equipment, pictured right!



The **Green Man** at the crossroads in Coleshill is taking full ad-

Tipple Tattle cont.

vantage of being able to order guest beers directly from brewers who are members of SIBA. Amongst others, ales from Beowulf (*Dark Raven*, *Swordsman*) and Burton Bridge (*Bitter*, *Porter*) have recently featured.

STAFFORDSHIRE

We are pleased to report that the **Swan With Two Necks** at Longdon re-opened on the 11th of November. It closed for more than a month due to a dispute, but is now fully back in business. It must be a relief for landlady Anne, who saw the prospect of missing out on the Christmas season. The pub has been a deserving entry in the *Good Beer Guide* for more than 30 years – pop in and see why!

The **Plum Pudding** in Armitage gained Cask Marque status earlier this year. They now have guest ales changing on a weekly basis, at a fixed price of £2.50 a pint.

The **Chetwynd Arms** in Upper Longdon have advised us of their extended opening hours. Mon is 5-midnight, Tue-Fri is 12-3 and 5-midnight, Sat & Sun noon-midnight.

Last issue we promised to tell you more about the re-opened **Red Lion** at Longdon Green (WS15 4QF). It's looking good on the ale front, with Timothy Taylor *Landlord* as a regular and guests from Wychwood and Brakspear. Food is served Mon to Sun from noon-9pm, with a brunch menu on weekends from 11-1pm. Sunday lunch comes in at £8.95 with a choice of beef, chicken or pork. Opening hours are noon (11am Sat & Sun) until 11pm.

The **Olde Peculiar** in Handsacre had Leatherbritches *Doctor Johnsons* (4%) on offer on a recent visit; it was in top form.

We are shattered to learn that the **Glass Works** in Rugeley has seemingly stopped doing real ale. Disappointing for an establishment on Brewery Street!

The **Queens Head** in Lichfield is regaining drinking street cred, with a choice of Timothy Taylor *Landlord*, Brakspear's *Oxford Gold*, *Pedigree*, and three guests from the Marstons portfolio. Tasting notes are displayed on the blackboard above the bar and the pub has benefited from a tasteful redecoration. The tenancy is operating as the Lichfield Small Beer Company and they also run the **Railway Inn** at Shenstone. A warm welcome is extended to customers old and new to enjoy a drink in the Queens.

Just up the road, Tracey and James at the **Horse & Jockey** hosted the 'Thank You' event for volunteers who organised and worked this year's Tamworth Beer Festival. The 25 who attended the freebie enjoyed a buffet lunch washed down by a choice of ales. During the following week, pins from selected micros took their turn on the bar to celebrate 'Cask Ale' week. This was in addition to the usual range from the eight hand pumps.

WEST MIDLANDS

Sutton Coldfield has a new JD Wetherspoons – the **Mare Pool** in Mere Green opened at the end of November. The pub is at 294 Lichfield Road (B74 2UG). It was yet to open at the time of going to press, so we've yet to go in, but we are led to believe that there will be ale-related events such as meet-the-brewer evenings, and there may even be a discount for CAMRA members. We'll keep you posted when we find out more.

Tim and Sue
welcome you to

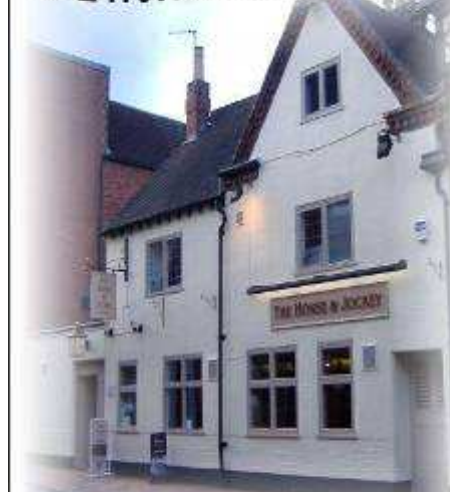
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Welcome from Jean & Mark

www.thegateinn.com

Drunkard's Cloak

It's an era where chavvy male fashion dictates that you need to lower the beltline so that your grubby underpants are visible – in the best case. In the worst stomach-turning cases, that hairy bum crack is exposed as though it's a classical Greek carving. It is of course just an arsehole, like the impressionable yooof displaying it. The lowered crotch also looks rather akin to a baby's nappy hanging down. Is it really that cool to look like you've just soiled yourself? In the spirit of preying on stupidity, let's suggest the next hot fashion, a real retro-revival.

Apparently, a punishment for debauchery in the 17th century was the 'Drunkard's Cloak', as pictured right. The miscreant was placed in this mobile stocks, and made to "march to the view of all beholders." The clear aim of the punishment was to humiliate the drunk by making them look completely and utterly ridiculous.

The yooof pictured right are clearly gagging for a piece of the action, so expect this to hit the streets once showing your arse in an ill-fitting nappy goes out of fashion. When it happens, don't forget we predicted it here first!



Full Pint – Or Not?

Still struggling to get a full pint? Are you presented with a pint bearing an inch-thick creamy collar? Or worst still, the over-sparklered mass of turbulent bubbles which settles out to even less? You don't know you're short-changed unless you wait for the Caffreys-esque concoction to settle.

CAMRA did push for the last Government to fulfil their promise of full-pint legislation, though it came to nothing. But you, the customer, are in the driving seat so call the shots:

- ◆ inch thick collar? Ask for a top-up!
- ◆ pint of Caffreys-esque ale? Wait for it to settle, it will be worth the satisfaction of demonstrating how much you are being short-changed. Then of course, ask for a top-up!
- ◆ bar staff trying but taking ages to fill your pint? Wasting loads at the same time? Pouring beer is rocket science to some, so suggest the obvious remedy of removing the sparkler. Miracle of miracles, it's no longer so lively!

Too many punters put up with disgracefully short measure, and have only themselves to blame if they meekly accept it. Unless a beer is abnormally lively, a head of around 5% is quite achievable if the bar staff know their job.

So, never be afraid to take control and ask for a top-up. But also remember that you will get the best results if you go about it in a friendly and polite manner!

Half Cut



After letting the train take the strain and arriving at the small Cheshire town of Alsager, I headed for the **Lodge** pub (pictured left) which has a small on-site brewery, GoodAlls. Unfortunately none of their beers were available on this occasion, as their beers sell out quickly when on the bar. However an excellent choice of five ales was available including the superb *Folded Cross* from Beowulf with its

butterscotch and grain flavours and firm bitter finish. Bath Ales *SPA* was light, citrusy and hoppy whereas Dark Star *Hophead* was flowery and fragrant with an intense bitterness. It was time for some monkey business in the form of *99 Red Baboons* from Blue Monkey. This was roasty and grainy with a nice hop finish. Ironbridge's version of the American hopped *Citra* was a superb example with its blackcurrant hoppiness and moreishness.

I reluctantly left this basic alehouse and headed to the canal. I walked several miles along the copper-coloured Trent and Mersey canal and its leafy banks to get to Kidsgrove. The canal was obviously a busy route in its day with its two-way twin locks and an unusual feature that I had not seen elsewhere. These are bridges of a single span but with twin arches built into them for each-way traffic (pictured right).



The drab exterior of the **Blue Bell** which is adjacent to the canal belies the pleasant interior (pictured below). You can easily walk past the pub as I did, as it is in an elevated position behind a hedge. It was worth backtracking to find it though for its good choice of six ales, all selling for around £2.50 a pint. It was busy with kindred spirits, and the pace of drinking was such that two beers ran out and were replaced during my time there. *Conundrum* from Salopian was an excellent thirst quencher with its blackcurrant flavour

and hoppiness. The *Cascade* from Townhouse was very similar and hit the mark. The *Steel Cow* from Bradfield had a syrupy sweetness to balance the hop flavours as did the *Harpers* from Oakley brewery. My final tippie was *Summer Pale* from Acorn which was another light, citrusy and hoppy beer. Much as I like this pale style of beer it would be nice to see more stouts and porters available for those of us with a darker side.

Eric Randall



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To Cap It All Off

The crown cap – or crown cork to quote its historical name – is a familiar friend to drinkers in every beer-drinking country in the world. But I bet there are a tiny minority who can confidently answer this question: how many points or teeth does a crown cap have? If you don't look at the mantelpiece when you're poking the fire, then you won't be counting up the points when you could be getting stuck into the beer! The answer, in case you want to mull it over, is at the end.

The original name of crown cork came from inventor William Painter, an Irishman who emigrated to the US, and took out the US patent in 1892. You won't be surprised to hear that he quickly followed up with a patent for the bottle opener! Amongst his 80-plus other patents was an ejector seat for passenger trains!

Painter's original patent had twenty four points. Quite why is not specified, but it is generally accepted that the number of points is a compromise – large numbers allow greater circularity and hence a tight seal, but too many will reduce the area of metal in contact with the glass neck.

The Germans, already having defined uniformity of beer content with the *Reinheitsgebot*, decided in the 1960s that they'd enforce a DIN standard for crown caps, coming up with the current worldwide standard of twenty one. This allegedly is the smallest number required to prevent leaks. Now you know!



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SUNDAY NOON–6PM

ROAST AND A DRINK* £5.99



Glasse Bottled Beer Review

The Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum is one of the must-visit places if you find yourself in Glasgow. Pictured right, the massive, ornate red sandstone building is home to a bewildering variety of material, and the internal grandeur of the place is worth considering in its own right. Allow at least four hours for a visit. That's one hour for a quick scoot around the museum, followed by three hours in the BrewDog bar across the road! You can admire the splendid frontage of the Kelvingrove from there, and sample some classic doggy brews. And if time is tight, why not scrub the museum? Museums keep. Beer doesn't.



BrewDog Glasgow is the third of the new BrewDog bars, following hot on the heels of Aberdeen and Edinburgh, with Camden, Manchester and Newcastle to come. BrewDog have an 'Equity for Punks' venture, a share-purchase scheme to allow them to expand the business. The prospectus for this suggests that there will be ten BrewDog bars by the end of 2012, with Birmingham earmarked as one of these.

The Glasgow outfit, pictured below, serves twelve draught beers – eight BrewDog and four imports. The imports are always exotic, with Stone of California and Mikkeller of Denmark making frequent appearances.



The only thing that jars about BrewDog Glasgow is that – room shape aside – the décor is a carbon copy of the previous two locations. What looked novel in the first one – steel checker plate, bare brickwork and exposed air conditioning – is starting to feel very Identikit.

The furniture is the same too – comfy leather sofas or arse-numbing chemistry-lab stools for seats. It's as though the whole thing comes in a box from Ikea, minus the instructions. If Scotty beamed you down into any of the three existing bars, you'd need to look outside to check where you were. Mind you, it is worth looking through the front door, pictured right.

One reason for visiting Glasgow – aside from visiting its many splendid pubs – was to sample alcohol-free beer. Sounds daft, but the beer in question was BrewDog's *Nanny State*. At only 0.5% alcohol, it's close enough to zero to be 'alcohol-free.' I'd seen this beer before in the other BrewDog bars, but had been put off by the price. £3 for a 12oz bottle??? Time to scrape



Glasse Bottled Beer Review cont.

together a few pennies ...

Served up in fancy stemmed glass, pictured right, the first surprising thing about it is the deep brown colour. This apparently comes from eight different malts – presumably used in very skimpy amounts to keep the ABV down! Next thing is the lovely hoppiness on nose, palate and finish – especially the finish, lingering and dry. Unlike the malts, they've clearly chucked loads of hops in – Amarillo and Centennial in this case.

Overall an accomplished brew. The lack of alcohol is detectable and maybe makes it slightly unsatisfying; but the full hoppiness stops it tasting thin. Of necessity, there's no sweetness to it, so you'd need to like 'em dry. I could happily drink this all night if I was driving – though somebody else would have to pay for them!



"Always carry a flagon of whiskey in case of snakebite, and, furthermore, always carry a small snake" W C Fields

Sir Robert Peel

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Staffs Sojourn

After catching a train to Stafford with my cycle in tow on a sunny Saturday in July and being worth my salt I decided to head for the small village of the same name. The **Holly Bush Inn** at Salt (pictured) is an old thatched roof pub with a wonderfully colourful and extensive external floral display, housed in a variety of tubs, hanging baskets and old chimney pots. The pub is claimed to date from 1190 and be the second English inn to be granted a licence. It certainly looks the part outside and internally with its old fashioned rooms and nooks and crannies. Adnams *Bitter* was my pleasure whilst sitting outside among the heady floral fragrances.



I had intended to cycle on to Stone on the tarmac but on closer inspection of the OS map discovered that it was possible to get there directly via the canal from Salt. Walking or cycling along the towpaths of these tranquil waterways, it is hard to imagine them as being the freight arteries of a bygone era, and that they were constructed solely by navvies with picks and shovels. I bet they got cut in the nearest hostelry after their strenuous days spent on digging it! After the pleasant interlude cycling along the towpath I arrived at the quaint canal town of Stone which has a pleasant mix of old fashioned buildings, shops and of course pubs – I knew I came here for a reason!

At the top end of town is the **Poste of Stone** where the excellent *Thornbridge Jaipur* was one of the beers on offer and a fitting reward for my efforts to get here. A short walk away is the Titanic pub, the **Royal Exchange**. It has a good choice of their own beers and guests. A Roosters beer *Stars and Stripes* had pleasing pineapple and kiwi fruit flavours and a soft hoppiness. Having plumped for a Titanic *Plum Porter*, this beer was a surprise as it did not taste of plums at all but had a distinct blackcurrant aroma and flavour. The **Swan Inn** by the canal was the next venue for a beer, this was the citrusy and hoppy *Foundation Stone* from the town's Limestone brewery.



My quest for some more rail ale took me to the **Railway Inn** at Norton Bridge where *Joules Blonde* was light, lemony and refreshing, akin to a continental lager and brewed with Czech Saaz hops. I then cycled back to Stafford to the honey coloured old stone building of the **Pie & Ale House** (pictured). In its contrastingly modern interior the Slaters *Premium* sampled had tof-

Staffs Sojourn cont.

fee flavours and a bitter finish.

It was time to head for the **Picture House**, as most of us who are old enough to have frequented them often did on a Saturday night. The feature presentations in this tasteful Wetherspoons conversion (interior pictured) were the beers on offer. I decided to bare all and finish off with a *Ginger Bear* from the Beartown brewery, definitely a beer for you ginger nuts out there.

Eric Randall



Last Orders *Boozasaurus*

pot-valiant

adjective

made courageous by liquor; brave only as a result of being drunk

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Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of accounts.

Fränkische Schweiz

It's called 'Franconian Switzerland' for a reason – tranquil pastureland, long wooded valleys, rustic alpine houses. This picturesque chunk of Germany, east of Bamberg, is also hilly enough to make a pushbike tour a bit mental. Except that it has a stack of cracking village brewpubs, and little in the way of public transport! Twenty euros will get you the hire of a good bike for a couple of days; add in a bit of pedal power and you will then generate a thirst for the next beer and for the beautiful countryside! These were some of the places visited during an August visit in glorious weather.

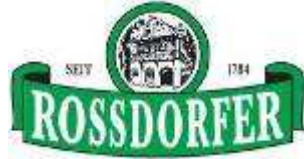


The village of Rossdorf is a good first destination. The **Sauer** brewpub features its own Rossdorfer beers, and is surrounded by a compact little beer garden, an ideal place to enjoy the *Helles*, *Dunkles* or *Weizen*. Summertime outdoor drinking in this region is often "self service" – meaning, go to the bar to get your beer, just as you would in Britain! The village also features the *Rossdorfer Felsenkeller*, or 'cave cellar' – not a dingy cellar boozier as you might expect, but a shady beer garden next to the brewery's former cold storage area cut into the hillside. This is the usual meaning of *Keller* in Germany – not the cellar itself but the drinking garden next to it.

A sweeping arable plain then leads to Geisfeld. Two brewpubs here, though the **Krug** was closed for their annual holiday. This is common in Germany, with most such family businesses shutting up shop for a week or two, often in August. But Geisfeld's other brewpub, the **Griess**, had the beer garden in full swing. The only beer was a *Kellerbier* straight from the wood, but ideal for the sultry weather.

Melkendorf is the next wonderfully sleepy village, with the **Winkler** brewery, and the tap hidden away behind it. The sole *Lagerbier* is sold only in the tap. The friendly owner/brewer was admirably vague when asked about the ABV – "not really sure, probably about 5%." Melkendorf sits on the edge of a popular mountain bike route, but tarmac works just as well for me!

More tediously beautiful scenery follows, with roadside shrines and splendid village churches reminding you that this is a stronghold of the Catholic faith. You get quite used to the standard hello of "Grüß Gott", or "Greet God", common throughout Bavaria – though cynical Protestant Northern Germans are said to retort "When I see him." A copy of the good book does come in useful – *Good Beer Guide Germany* of course!

The *Guide* prompted the next village call of Teifenellern, to the **Brauerei Hönig**, right. The highlight here was the first smoked beer of the day, *Posthörnlä Rauchbier*. Most people's experience of Rauchbier is Schlenkerla *Märzen*, the high-tar, baseball-bat of the smoked beer world and a love-or-loath drink. But many others are more subtle, and

Fränkische Schweiz cont.

so it was with this rural brew – subtle and quenching, aperitif rather than heavy dessert.



The refreshment provided a starter-for-ten for the long, winding hairpin climb out of Teifenellern. No brewery in the next village – maybe why they named it Poxdorf – and the brewpub in the village of Huppendorf showed the dreaded ‘Urlaub’ – holiday – board outside.

Pedalling on without a beer in the hot sunshine, you can at least be inspired by the lovely surroundings, typified by the view to the left. But after a long dehydrating stretch, the next beer in the **Brauerei Ott** at Ober-

leinleiter is going to be nectar! But no – there’s the sodding Urlaub sign, and they’re gone for three weeks too! So why has a gent just staggered out with a crate of beer? Venturing inside, the locals’ table is occupied, with beer in full flow. They seem to have decided that if they’re still going to sell beer from the brewery, they may as well keep the *Stammtisch* going too! Luckily they are happy enough for a sweaty cyclist to join their lock-in. The standard *Edel-Pils* barely touches the sides, allowing me to concentrate on the dark *Obaladara*, a nice dessert beer whose name refers to a local festival.



[Door sign expanded]

Heiligenstadt next, and here the Urlaub sign at the **Aichinger** brewpub really does mean what it says! So it’s time to consult the map and the siren voice of the *Guide*, which is tempting me ever further from home. But with the day running out, sense prevails and Gunzendorf is the next destination, along a route with yet more inspiring scenery. Here there is another **Sauer** brewpub, pictured below. And long overdue, it’s time for the second smoked beer of the day, *Schlückla Rauchbier*. This too is subtle but thoroughly enjoyable. Also way overdue is eating, and shock horror, the recommended dish of the day is (a) not pork and



(b) vegetarian!! It’s *Pfifferlinge* time, akin to asparagus season in England except it’s a type of mushroom. Served up in a cream sauce with garlic and bread dumplings, it’s the perfect end to the perfect day – apart, that is, from the 20km ride back to Bamberg!

[Cycle hire and maps from various places in Bamberg; the main Tourist Info office can advise]

Newsletter Information

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Newsletter distribution:

Our newsletter is produced every two months. Current distribution is 2,500 copies.

Want to contribute?

Contributions are welcomed, pub news particularly. Please submit text and pictures to the editor. We thank all contributors and sponsors for their support.

Disclaimer: This newsletter, Lichfield, Sutton & Tamworth CAMRA and CAMRA Ltd accept no responsibility for errors or omissions that may occur within this publication. The views expressed are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the editor, Lichfield, Sutton & Tamworth Branch or CAMRA Ltd.

Next issue:

Issue 40 is due to be published on 1st February 2012. The copy deadline for inclusion is 15th January 2012.

Advertising rates:

£40 per issue for a half page (approx. 12.8 x 9.5 cm) advert, £70 per full page. If you would like to advertise, you can provide your own copy, or we can provide a free design service! Contact the editor.

Printing:

Tamworth Info-Biz

Tel: 07956 494884 or 01827 64600

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Beer Snippets

The new lower duty rate on 2.8% beers is encouraging some of the big fish to see if they can make them swim. JW Lees is launching *Golden Lite* and *Greengate Lite*, both at 2.8%, though the first is a lager and the second a creamflow. Greene King are making a better fist of it with their *Tolly English Ale*, a cask revival of a Tolly Cobbold beer. Don't expect micros to be jumping on the bandwagon though – they already pay 50% of normal duty, and get no further cut for sub 2.8% ales.

While the UK Treasury deserves a bit – if not much – praise for the 2.8% duty cut, their own figures suggest that overall duty rates may be doing more harm than good. HM Revenue and Customs estimate that illicit beer now accounts for 14% of total UK sales, up from 10% in the previous year. It's clear that the duty escalator and the VAT hike is fuelling the rise in illegal imports of beer that generate no tax revenue for the state.

Stella Tortoise drinkers can rest assured that their favourite fizz will remain "reassuringly expensive." InBev UK have announced that the pre-duty prices of their kiddie pops will rise by 8% in January, affecting both Tortoise and the US Budweiser rice beer.

We live in an age of rampant corporate greed, where executive scumbags take risks with other people's money and not their own, underperform to boot, and then accept obscene salary increases. So it's refreshing to hear that JD Wetherspoon founder and chairman Tim Martin took a £19,000 pay cut this year, in the face of a 6% drop in JDW profits. But you don't need to get the violin out for Mr Martin – with a new annual salary of £375,000 he will still be able to afford the Curry Club and a pint of Ruddles.

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Local Festival Diary

Festivals with a **bold heading** are CAMRA festivals, where entrance is either free or discounted to CAMRA members. Why not join? See page 18.

9-11th December, Crown Xmas 2011 Beer Festival
The Crown Inn, 10 Bond Street, Nuneaton, CV11 4BX.

9-11th December, Bulls Head Christmas Beer Festival
The Bulls Head, 4 Long Street, Stoney Stanton, LE9 4DQ.
Over 20 beers and ciders.

26-30th Dec, Old Oak Inn Beer Festival
Old Oak Inn, Main Street, Horsley Woodhouse, DE7 6AW

3-4th Feb, Redditch Winter Ale Festival
The Rocklands Social Club, 59 Birchfield Road, Redditch, B97 4LB
33 ales plus cider and perry. Fri 5-11, Sat 11-11. See www.redditchwaf.org.uk

3-4th Feb, Lichfield Winter Beer and Wine Festival
Lichfield Guildhall, Bore Street, WS13 6LU. www.lichfieldarts.org.uk, 01543 262223
35 ales plus ciders, Belgian draught beers, wines. Fri & Sat noon-11.



Manchester's National Winter Ales Festival will feature 300 real ales!
It runs from 18-21st January. More details at
www.alefestival.org.uk/winterales

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