



Issue 43
Winter 2010

FREE
Please
take one



SHAKES BEER

Newsletter of Shakespeare branch of CAMRA - Real ale in Shakespeare country & The Vale

Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow...

See page 12
for the winter
delights available
from our local
breweries

When, in the words of the song, 'the weather outside is frightful'; when winters icy fingers squeeze the warmth from the world and the nights draw in, many beer lovers, including myself, look forward to a delightful fireside and a cornucopia of winter ales from our favourite brewers.

Forget about searching for a bit of winter sun, stay at home or better still, get down the pub and seek out a few winter ales.

This is the time of year when brewers let their imaginations run riot and get creative.

Traditionally winter warmers are rich and dark with a little more alcohol in the brew, perhaps a touch of spice and lots of body. In an age dominated by golden brews it is such a pleasure to see darker beers to the fore.

The CAMRA Supreme Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2010 is **Elland Brewery's 1872 Porter** (6.5%) whilst previous winners include **Nethergate**



Penny 'the landlords daughter' and Pip at The Royal Oak, Whatcote

Old Growler (5%) still the only beer to win gold twice, **Robinsons Old Tom** (8.5%) and **Wye Valley Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout** (4.6%) Beers such as these and the inevitable quirky Christmas specials, all enjoyed while relaxing by the fireside mean that whatever the weather, this is a very special time of year. Most pubs with a reasonable ale range

will offer one or more winter warmers, but Winter Ale Festivals are the places to experience the full variety of the specials on offer.

CAMRA holds the National Winter Ale Festival in Manchester in January (19-22) and locally there are winter ale festivals in Tewkesbury (February 3-5) & Redditch (February 4-5).



Wye Valley Brewery
Herefordshire
www.wyevalleybrewery.co.uk

An explanation to Shakespeare CAMRA members

Members will be aware that the branch has been through a period of uncertainty this year following the resignations of Chairman and Secretary.

At the Shakespeare CAMRA AGM last May there were no volunteers to take on the vacant positions. The AGM was postponed and reconvened in July at **The Holly Bush**, Alcester where local licensee Roger Smith (**The Bulls Head**, Bidford) offered to take on the role. Regrettably having only recently taken on his pub, having some personal issues and being relatively unfamiliar with CAMRA internal affairs Roger found the post too demanding and had to resign. In order that this untenable situation could be resolved, an Extraordinary General Meeting was called and held in October at **The George Hotel**, Shipston. Here the branch welcomed back former Chairman, Lloyd Evans. Lloyd resigned as Chairman three years ago but remained active in branch affairs and the Beer Festival organisation. Hopefully we will now enjoy a period of relative calm during which the branch can continue to develop.

A letter from the Chairman

Having just been elected at the recent EGM I just thought that this was an ideal opportunity to say hello and to introduce myself to everyone who reads this excellent branch news letter. However those of you with slightly longer memories will probably remember that this is my second time as Chairman having previously been in this position about three years ago, some people never learn! Talking of not learning, I was thinking back the other day as to when I first become a member of CAMRA and decided that it was back in 1979 just after I started to attend College in Cheltenham. They were looking for volunteers to organise the first ever Gloucester student beer festival and I decided after this experience that there were a lot more beers, even then, than I had previously tasted in South Wales but I still have very fond memories of Worthington Dark, Buckleys Best and Hancocks HB which were the drinks of my youth. After a gap in my membership through the end of the eighties and nineties when we had our children, we moved to Worcestershire from Herefordshire and I rejoined CAMRA back in 2003 and decided to attend a branch meeting as my wife decided that I

needed some "social" interests. From there I found out that the Shakespeare branch covered quite a large area and unusually in some respects it included parts of both Warwickshire and Worcestershire as it seems to sweep around the northern fringes of Gloucestershire. If you see me out

My beer drinking has apparently also had quite an influence on my own children as when I now go out with the family I have three other real ale drinkers with me, including my daughter...

drinking then normally this would be anywhere between Evesham/Broadway to Alcester as I live just north of Evesham and if you ask me what is the best pint that I have drunk recently then I would have to say that it was Caledonian Brewery Edinburgh strong ale at 6.5% at **The Old Swanne in Evesham** offered as part of their November beer festival. My beer drinking has apparently also had quite an influence on my own children as when I now go out with the family I



...drinking Mitchells Raven Stout in the waterfront area of Cape Town this summer

have three other real ale drinkers with me, including my daughter, and in this day and age it has become quite expensive to order four pints of beer but would you change it if you were in my position?

So having learned a little bit about me what about you becoming involved? If you are reading this and are not a member of CAMRA then please get in touch with us and join and if you are already a member what about getting a bit more active and coming along to one or two of the branch meetings or the social activities? The branch can only be as strong as the members and we would welcome any support that you can give.

**Best wishes,
Lloyd Evans**

Pub News...

Loxley, near Stratford-upon-Avon

All change and no change at **The Fox** as Gareth Slater, Manager for over four years took over the licence in September. Together with Sue Harris his partner of 14 years and chef Danny Kilguir, Gareth is embarking on a refurb and rebranding of the pub in the new year, taking it back to its traditional roots. Traditional pub teams, monthly folk nights, (first Sunday) and well kept ales and ciders remain the heart of the business whilst local game has been added to the established food offering. At the time of our visit, Wye Valley Bitter, Old Hooky, Black Sheep and Wadsworth 6X were the beers on offer and Moles Black Rat the permanent cider fixture. All in excellent condition as one would expect from a pub recently achieving Cask Marque status. Gareth has his sights set on a Good Beer Guide place but needs CAMRA members to get in there and try what's on offer. To encourage this he plans a 10 pence per pint discount on production of a membership card.



Welford-on-Avon

Landlady Jackie Hensher reports that she is happy to have left **The Fox** in such capable hands and has moved on herself to **The Shakespeare** at Welford. Despite a recent refurbishment which imparts a contemporary style, Jackie wants to retain a traditional atmosphere and encourage local teams and drinkers to enjoy the pub. She's certainly going the right way about it as excellent reports have been coming in about the welcome, the food offering and the beer. Credit to Jackie and bar manager Liam Tyler as **The Shakespeare** has just been awarded Cask Marque status for its range of Old Hooky, Purity Mad Goose and Wye Valley beers.



Evesham

After a prolonged closure but following a very substantial refurbishment **The Fairfield Inn**, Battleton Road opened again in early November. It's the latest addition to the growing stable of pubs in and around Evesham and Pershore managed by Guy Stephenson. Denise

Holroyd who also has **The George and Dragon** in Bewdley Street, Evesham, managed the re-opening and says, 'it's too early yet to guarantee real ale' the pub needs to see if there is a demand. There is an available handpull so it just needs lots of you to go and ask for it. Keeping it traditional they're keen to welcome pub teams and already are competing in the local Pool league. Food is limited to sandwiches and snacks for the time being. The pub is initially open all day from 10.00am so you've plenty of time to explore.

Stratford-upon-Avon

More good news for Stratford Beer Drinkers. Following a brief closure for a major refurbishment **The Lamplighter**, Rother Street reopened in October having been purchased by Highgate and Davenport. Manager John Cairns is keen to keep the pub traditional through the day but with plenty of entertainment including live music and monthly quizzes in the evenings. The lunchtime and evening food offering was accompanied when we called by three ales on offer. Davenports, The Story Teller, Davenports IPA and Highgate, Pheasant Plucker. Details of food and entertainment on the new website, www.thelamplighterstratford.co.uk



Fox licensee Gareth and Chef Danny flank Sue 'the one who does all the work'





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More Pub News...

Whatcote



'Rocket' pulls a pint for the photographer

Ronnie Hopkins at the **Royal Oak** has been awarded Cask Marque accreditation which just goes to show that even if a pub is temporarily "dropped" from the Good Beer Guide, the beers are often in tiptop condition.



Now in his 12th year at the Royal Oak he is helped by daughter Penny and the 'meeter and greeter', pub dog Pip, (pictured on the front cover). Delicious home cooked food is available lunchtime and evening (not Sunday evening or Monday lunch). In a previous existence Ronnie drove a JCB and he appeared at clients' premises with such punctual regularity that he has been known as Rocket Ron ever since.

Evesham

Formerly The Blue Maze, **Bar 21** opened in September just too late for the Autumn edition. No real ale yet and no sign of the brewery being reintroduced but we live in hope.

Lower Brailes

Sad to say farewell to Dave and Sue from **The George Hotel**, Brailes but

welcome to new licensees Bill and Charmaine Leadbeater who took on the pub in early November. They brought with them their 'extended family' bar staff Amy and Megan who were with them during their seven years at **The Masons**, Swerford, (nr. Chipping Norton), a free house which they built into an extremely successful pub restaurant. Bill is hoping to repeat his success in Brailes and is embarking on a major refurbishment of the pub and separate restaurant area. At the time of our visit the kitchen was being refitted and a full food service hoped for at the start of December.

Not losing sight of his basic pub trade though Bill already has four excellent Hook Norton beers available; he wants players for pub teams, and occasional music nights are planned. Aunt Sally and Dominoes are already in place.



Evesham

Welcome, we hope, to a more permanent face at **The Trumpet**. Temporary manager Mathew Adams, English born but raised in South Africa, was, at the time of reporting, in negotiations with Hook Norton to take the pub on full time. No stranger to the trade, Mathew has worked pubs

and bars both here and in South Africa, and developed his love of Hook Norton beers at **The Bell**, Great Bourton, a Hooky pub still run by his mum and dad. Mat took over **The Trumpet** at the beginning of October and has found it hard going since a number of regulars left whilst the pub was shut or under temporary management. He's confident though that he can attract them back, he already has three darts teams and support from Evesham RFC where he plays and coaches. He would welcome any homeless or aspiring cribbage and domino teams and promises that they would be well looked after.

Currently open evenings only he intends to extend the hours as business picks up and in due course, to offer traditional pub food. We wish him and Hook Norton the very best of luck with the only Hooky pub in Evesham.

Mathew Adams at The Trumpet



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**"Shakespeare CAMRA Warwickshire
Pub of the Year 2010"**



More Pub News...

Kinton



Following a closure of about two years **The Swan Hotel** has finally opened its doors and started trading again. Bought by local restaurateur Shah Huissein, this historic pub has been extensively refurbished and given a modern look inside. After testing the trade for a couple of days, the pub was officially opened on 20th November with a visit from local MP Jeremy Wright. They hope to have traditional pub food up and running in December

but in the meantime a large bar with plenty of space for drinkers now houses Hobgoblin and a bespoke Brakspear beer called, 'Swan for the Road'. Our man on the scene reports the beer is in good order so plenty of support here please.

Shipston

What a prize we've landed at **The Falcon** with new licensee Ian Keeling who took over at the end of October. Ian has his own pub company, 'Pub Inspirations' and already has pubs in Coventry Warwick and Leamington. A fan of real ale his last pub, the highly regarded **Port n' Ale** in Tipton had up to ten handpulls. By the time you read this The Falcon should have at least two ales on and Ian is determined to build demand and have a minimum of three in due course. These will include his own 4.0%ABV 'Where's Wally', brewed to his own

recipe by Wye Valley and not available outside his own pubs.

A keen CAMRA supporter Ian is offering 10P a pint discount on production of a current membership card.

Oxhill

Those girls at **The Peacock** are winning awards again. They've reached the final four of the prestigious Publican Awards for the best food offering – in the Country that is. As if four excellent real ales isn't already reason enough to visit. Winners will be announced at a posh frock dinner in April. Congratulations Yvonne and Pam, whatever the outcome.



Apples, Ales and Fun

The timeless tranquility of The Fleece, Bretforton was once again shattered when Shakespeare CAMRA joined the crowds who braved inclement weather and turned out to The Apple and Ale Weekend Festival hosted by licensee Nigel Smith in early October.

The pub's own Fleece Folly cider was my star of the show not least because we'd seen its origins at this same event last year. As then we were entertained by the pub's home made twin-screw cider press being fed cheeses of apples pulped by a restored, steam driven scratter. Over 40 real ales and ciders were accompanied by entertainment by local Morris dancers and a selection of goodies including local produce and a children's petting zoo in a marquee on the lawn. Knowing my own frailty I decided it would be best not to drive home following the celebration and parked the trusty camper in the orchard at the pub. I'd just like to thank Nigel, for his hospitality and wonderful beers and ciders and the fine body of men who pushed us out when we were stuck in the mud!



the scratter..



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Shakespeare's CAMRA Worcestershire pub of the year 2008-09

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<http://www.stanwaybrewery.co.uk>

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9

Here come the girls....

Real ale has suffered from its beard and sandals image for far too long, but that may be about to change as reports emerge that there has been a significant growth in the number of female real ale drinkers.

CAMRA states that in the past year alone 37% of female alcohol drinkers have tried real ale - which means it has more than doubled in less than 2 years. Increasing numbers of young women in particular are turning away from cold fizzy lager in preference to real ale, perceived as a more natural and tasty drink. Perhaps more shocking to the traditionalist, in the summer the press picked up on a story that women make better beer tasters than men. It would appear that worldwide many brewers agree, because they are now recruiting more and more female tasters. Beer giant SABMiller, responsible for brands including Grolsch, say 30% of their 1,000 advanced-level tasters are now female. That's four times more than just ten years ago. One theory reads that evolution has

played a role - for centuries men hunted while females prepared food and, to protect their families, had to check if it was tainted, off, or even poisonous and as a result have developed more sensitive palates.

As if to prove the point a fair few women joined the celebrations at Stratford's Wetherspoons, The Golden Bee, at the launch of their Autumn Beer Festival in late October. Shakespeare CAMRA and guests were invited to a VIP night out with matched food and beer offerings, free tastings and an opportunity to meet and chat to Warwickshire Beer Co. and Purity Brewery. Warwickshire Brewer Mark Dalison and Sales Manager Paul Jenkins also took the opportunity to launch Golden Bee Bitter, a bespoke golden IPA beer created for the pub. Whilst the women were busy tasting

the beers and matching them with food (who would have thought that Purity Mad Goose makes a perfect marriage with spiced fruit bread?) the men were reasserting their masculinity by discussing moustaches. (Only fair if we are to take away their beards and sandals after all.)

The Warwickshire Beer Co are supporting the charity Movember, a moustache growing charity event held during November each year that raises funds and awareness of men's health. They have come up with a special Moustache Beer (4.1%) to raise the profile of Movember in pubs across the country. Five pence from every pint sold will be donated to the foundation with most of the funds raised in the UK going to The Prostate Cancer Charity (TPCC). For more information on Movember see their website www.Movember.com

Interested in beer tasting?
CAMRA has operated organised beer tasting panels since 1989 compiling tasting notes for the brewery section of the Good Beer Guide and selecting nominations for the Champion Beer and Champion Winter Beer of Britain awards. Have a look at the CAMRA website (www.camra.org.uk) to see how the panels work and how the beers are judged.

Some of the Shakespeare girls with our hostess Tammy Montgomery (far right) and on her left, Kirsten Smith, Marketing manager at Purity.





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Brewery News

Some changes at Whichford as Tim's partner left the business a few months ago. Cheffing and bringing the pub up to standard has slowed the brewing down a bit although enough for **The Norman Knight** and the occasional festival, about twenty firkins a week, is still brewed. Currently on is Patriot, 'Nelson' 4.0 % abv, which was launched on November 5th. Challenger, Willamette and Styrian Goldings hops result in a deliciously light and refreshing beer. December will see the arrival of 'Bulldog', a darker, maltier beer at 4.5% and more suited for the Christmas season.



Following record growth of over 50% through 2010 and a turnover in excess of £2,000,000, Purity have announced plans to keep on investing and expand the business still further. In light of the fact that they are virtually permanently brewing to capacity, (producing 180 barrels per week, that's over 2.7 million pints), they have announced plans to build a new 5000 sq ft brewhouse capable of more than tripling their production. The plans which were approved in late October mean that, if all goes well brewing should start next summer. The new brewery will be based in empty barns at the current farm site.



Roll on the winter when we see Hooky's classics in the pubs. December sees the arrival of Christmas in a bottle with strong, dark, nutty, sweet, 'Twelve Days' 5.5% ABV. January & February see 'Double Stout' 4.8% ABV with it's glorious balance of coffee and chocolate.

These are among four Hooky beers to win golds in the recent International Beer Awards.

If you fancy running your own pub Hook Norton Brewery is looking for tenants who are serious about running their own business and committed to the hard, but rewarding, work it will take to succeed. For initial enquiries call **01608 737210** or email: **recruitment@hook-norton-brewery.co.uk**



A boost to the brewery's proud local ties, in October Wye Valley scooped Best Drink Producer at the Flavours of Herefordshire Awards 2011 a scheme which recognises the best use and promotion of local produce.

An offering of 'Christmas Whiskers' a 4.5% ABV a copper coloured best bitter, (named to honour drayman Andy Jones' beard growing charity efforts, last year) presents us with a full bodied beer with a spicy blackcurrant finish, perfect to be enjoyed with Christmas pies and puddings. January and February see two beers I've not yet had the pleasure of: 'Country Pale Ale' at a very quaffable 3.2% abv. and 'Ark Ale', 4.5% abv.

The folks at Cannon Royall have been on an early Christmas shopping spree and now have a



selection of over 20 different hops in store. From various blends they intend to create a new beer every month for the next year starting this month with a Christmas special, 'Santa Paws', 5%abv. This dark, well balanced brew uses eight different hops giving it overtones of citrus, blackcurrant and tangerine with a flowery, herbal nose. Confused? Just wait and see. The last 'special', the amber coloured 'Teddy Bear' 4.3% abv has proved so popular that it joins the brewery's stable of regular beers.

A classic winter brew which derives its name from the brewery links with the Stanway



House, the country manor's owner, Lord Neidpath, and the traditional Twelve Days christmas song, is a great way to keep out the winter chills. We're talking of course about 'Lords-a-Leaping', 4.5% ABV, a dark and full bodied beer available through Christmas at **The Crown and Trumpet**, Broadway.

...and finally

We are all sad to see the demise of **Buckle Street Brewery** - a final chance though for fans to grab a taste of **Pandora's Box** as the last few firkins will be on sale at **The Fleece** between now and Christmas



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Behind bars in South Warwickshire

The Horseshoe Inn in Shipston made it into the Good Beer Guide in 2011 and was recently voted Branch Pub of the Season. We asked landlord **Baggy Saunders the secret of his success. Loquacious at the best of times, Baggy didn't hold back and his reflections on beer, life and everything are offered below.**

The Autumn colours this year must be the most spectacular that we have seen for thirty years or more - certainly as good as any "New England in the fall" can offer. The seasons have a very powerful effect on us mortals and indeed that even includes our choice of what to sup. I noticed that as soon as the trees turned their spectacular golden browns our customers' beer choices changed almost instantaneously. The "Golden" ales that we had on offer over the summer period suddenly stopped selling so out went the Purity Mad Goose & Skipton Golden Pippin to be replaced by the wonderfully hoppy and fulsome Brakspears bitter as the session ale and the "full blown" Shepherd Neame Spitfire as the heavyweight. The point I am making is that people really do drink with their eyes - it wasn't the flavour of the lighter coloured ales that had them sent to the rest home for the winter - it was their appearance! In the same vein I consider it is of paramount importance to ensure that whatever cask you are dispensing appears crystal bright as well as being

in condition so I make sure that our staff are constantly looking for the tell-tale signs of the end of a cask - it may drink reasonably well but the eye perceives it to be poor. Needless to say - I am a great believer in sampling all cask ales on offer at least twice per day, it is the only surefire way that you can rest easy in the knowledge that your offerings are up to scratch - it's also rather pleasurable! Don't forget that cask ale is one of the very few products that one consumes that is genuinely living - would you eat an old dead oyster?? It is unquestionable that the pub trade is having a very tough time at the moment and for this reason one needs to be on top of the game at all times. I am a great believer in giving the customers what they want - not what the landlord wants - for example if a good proportion of your regular clientele want a particular cask putting on - let them have it even if it's not to

with Baggy Saunders, The Horseshoe Inn

your taste - the Customer is King not the landlord! Whilst the pub side of the trade is at best tricky the cask ales on offer from both the large and small breweries are probably better and more extensive than they have been for seventy years or more - so landlords & landladies use this plethora of wonderful breweries and if you are tied use the SIBA scheme. Always remember that people visit a pub to have a pleasurable experience so one must ensure they get it; friendly banter, good ales & wines but more importantly you must build the right atmosphere - we don't have a word for it - the Irish do - its called the "craic". In times of a depression and despair take a couple of tips from Sir Winston Churchill - "If you are going through hell, keep going" and my favourite "KBO" (keep bu***ring on). He was rarely wrong and he enjoyed his drink!



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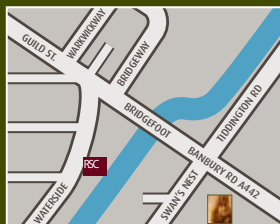




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WARWICKSHIRE PUB OF THE YEAR 2008



Shakespeare visits Derbyshire...a

September saw the branch celebrate the winning beer from Stratford's Beer and Cider Festival in June. Clad in our red festival shirts, (sponsored by Cannon Royall Brewery) and courtesy once more of a minibus from Responsive Accessible Transport, a tidy and sober 16 of us made an early start to present **Thornbridge brewers** with a thank you and certificate for giving us **Kipling**°.



Brewery manager Kelly Ryan and his partner who runs **The Coach and Horses** at Dronfield, Derbyshire, (effectively the Thornbridge Brewery Tap), welcomed us at said pub with an array of four Thornbridge beers plus guest ales and a couple of pints each on the house. It certainly got the day's celebrations off to a fine start and the assembly were already in high spirits by the time Festival Organiser Julian Stobinski made the certificate presentation. I would strongly recommend this friendly roadside pub, with four or five Thornbridge beers constantly on

offer, to anyone visiting the area. It would have been a waste to go all that way and not to try a few other hostelries and our next port of call was the **Old Poets Corner**, at Ashover (just outside Chesterfield). Home of Ashover Brewery, Chesterfield and District CAMRA PotY on a couple of occasions and CAMRA's National Cider Pub of the Year the Poets lived up to all our expectations. An impromptu brewery visit, courtesy of Kim Beresford and a belly stretching buffet lunch were only topped by the quality and range of beers available, (nine in total including



four from Ashover). What can I say; another one just not to be missed. We dragged ourselves away and headed off to Ashbourne, to **The Green Man and Black's Head Royal Hotel**, (I must research the origins of that name), and home of **Leather-britches Brewery**. In fairness to the pub it caters for a wide range of customers and we called on a busy Saturday afternoon. Whilst the beer was in good order our choice of sitting amongst an array of big screen TVs showing football or in a busy dining area was less than we'd hoped for. The staff were too busy to talk and the brewery shop was shut. A cracking pub at quieter times it wasn't to everyone's taste and we cut our visit a little short. Our next stop was **The Burton Bridge Hotel**, home of Burton Bridge Brewery. Warm and welcoming this is a classic



Closing date for copy for the next issue will be February 13th 2011

Old Poets Corner

an exceedingly good day out!

traditional pub with two bars and a separate skittle alley and meeting room. The seven beers on offer would normally have kept us there for a while but for one of our members shouting that the **Coopers Tavern** was just round the corner and not to be missed. How right that man was. Never having been there before I was delighted by this quirky back street pub serving beers straight from the cask in a small and cosy bar and long corridor. I'm ashamed but happy to say that by this time the group were in celebratory mood and led once



more by Alan Whittbread we commenced to involve virtually the entire pub, (including bar staff) in an evening of entertainment and song. For me, the pub of the day and one I'll certainly be returning to.

Our last stop before home was **The Griffin**, Shustoke. You'd have thought the bus had had enough and didn't need another cracking pub but

the beer range included amongst many others, Theakston's Old Peculiar and Sarah Hughes' Ruby Mild: just what we need to round off a good day out.



No meals at the pub but an excellent selection of cheeses and pork pies helped a little to soak up the days excesses. It was a very weary and I'm afraid, much less tidy and sober group that Stuart, our driver with saint-like patience dropped off in the early hours of Sunday morning. Thank you Stuart, thanks to all our hosts and thanks to those who came along and made it a day to remember.

***Incidentally...**

...festival voters can pride themselves on having excellent taste as Kipling is celebrating an unprecedented set of awards by winning the recent SIBA (Society of Independent Brewers Association) Midlands Beer Competition. Crowned champion bottled beer and winner of the Strong Bitters category, Kipling went on to take the Midland's overall Supreme Champion Beer award. The beer now goes forward to the SIBA National Competition early in 2011.



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On the road again...to Wye Valley Brewery

In November Shakespeare CAMRA and friends were delighted to accept an invitation from **Wye Valley Brewery** to visit their Stoke Lacey brewery in Herefordshire and a keen party of 15 made the journey.



A welcome from charming Sales Manager, Julie Allen set the day off to a great start before Managing Director, and sometimes brewer, Vernon Amor showed us round the brewery. Vernon spoke at length and with deserved pride about the expansion of the brewery from humble beginnings as a micro brewery in 1985 at **The Barrels** pub in Hereford, (for purists, we know they brewed briefly at Canon Pyon), and their subsequent move to the grander surroundings of Stoke Lacey in 2002. The brewery vision of Peter Amor, Vernon's father, has grown and developed from a 'micro' into what is now a well respected and successful regional brewery. They can produce over 400 barrels of beer per week, which is well in excess of 100,000 pints and have four pubs of their own. The brewery celebrated its 25th anniversary in March and they can be very proud of what they've achieved. The branch would like to thank Wye Valley both for their invaluable support, especially of our beer festivals, but mostly for producing such excellent beer. From Stoke Lacey our party moved on to **The Talbot**, at Knightwick, home of the **Teme Valley Brewery**. Once again we were

treated to a great welcome with good food and fine beers. We took our choices of their regular beers 'This' (3.7%), 'That' (4.1%) and 'T'other' (3.5%) and the seasonal 'Hop Nouvelle' (4.1%), (needless to say we tried them all), as our host, Chris Gooch, brewer there since 1977 talked us through his own brewing processes and philosophy.

It's nice to know that brewers support and help each other as both Chris and Vernon talked of borrowing yeasts and equipments from others. Interesting to note that the brewing equipment Chris is using actually came from Wye Valley when they outgrew **The Barrels**.

Next stop was Malvern Link and the wonderful **Nags Head**. This is a charming and comfortable local with roaring log fires and lots of interesting nooks and crannies, originally converted from three 18th century cottages. As

well as the ciders and Belgian beers on offer we were greeted by an array of over a dozen ales giving us a choice of all colours, styles and strengths and all in perfect condition.

My perfect winter warmer was here, a pint of locally brewed St Georges, Dragons Blood, (4.8%).

It was with some regret that we tore ourselves away

but were heartened that the next pub on our itinerary was **The Dragon** in Worcester.

A longstanding Good Beer Guide entry, The Dragon is always worth a trip for its great range of beers and it also offers real cider on tap and we were not to be disappointed. We just had time for a brief foray into the nearby **Postal Order**, one of the better Wetherspoons



Branch members listen to Chris' wise words

outlets, before heading back to the minibus and home. Many thanks go to all our hosts and to Responsive Accessible Transport for once again putting up with us. We had a great day out.

Sadly missing from our visit to Wye Valley was our main brewery contact, Lizzie Davidson. Not so sad is that she was at home enjoying her new son Thomas. Heartfelt congratulations Lizzie from all your friends at Shakespeare CAMRA



See our website www.shakespearecamra.org.uk

Chris Gooch



Wassail, wassail, we'll tell you wassail, it comes in bottles, it's brown and it's pale



Alan Whitbread

Alcaster Taster for the
Court Leet, Folk Singer and
Concertina Player -
www.alanwhitbread.co.uk

The Spring 2010 edition of Shakesbeer, (issue 40), gave an account of a **wassail**, which took place on the eve of the Old Twelfth Night (ie on 17 January) at **The Fleece, Bretforton**.

Not only was a good time had by all, with much cider, plum jerkum and ale being drunk, but a traditional wassailing ceremony was carried out to ensure that the cider apple trees would have a good harvest for the coming year. Nigel Smith, the landlord of The Fleece tells me that the ceremony certainly worked, as this autumn's harvest was excellent! During the evening there were also much dancing from three morris sides and several songs were sung. So what about wassailing songs? The first thing to say is that there are dozens of wassailing songs, including traditional songs from as far back as the 17c or before, more modern songs and several parodies. As some of the songs can be very long indeed, I give three shorter examples below, the first being collected by Cecil Sharp c1905, the second being traditional and the final one being a parody from Sid & Henry Kipper 1985.

Somerset Wassail

Wassail and wassail all over the town
The cup it is white and the ale it is brown
The cup it is made of the good ashen tree
And so is the malt of the best barley
For its your wassail and its our wassail
And its joy be to you and a jolly wassail
Oh master and missus, are you all within?
Pray open the door and let us come in
O master and missus a-sitting by the fire
Pray think on us poor travellers, a-travelling in the mire
Oh where is the maid with the silver-headed pin
To open the door and let us come in
Oh master and missus, it is our desire
A good loaf and cheese and a toast by the fire
There was an old man and he had an old cow
And how for to keep her he didn't know how
He built up a barn for to keep his cow warm
And a drop or two of cider will do us no harm
The girl dog of Langport he burnt his long tail
And this is the night we go singing wassail
O master and missus now we must be gone
God bless all in this house until we do
come again

If you want to hear (and join in with!) such traditional songs being sung try the following places:- 2nd Tuesday at The Cottage of Content at Barton (over the river from Bidford), B50 4NP; every Thursday at The Fleece Inn at Bretforton, WR11 7JE.

here We Come a Wassailing

Here we come a-wassailing among the leaves so green
Here we come a-wandering so fair to be seen
Love and joy come to you and to your wassail too
And God bless you and send you a happy New Year
And God send you a happy New Year

We are not daily beggars that beg from door to door
We are your neighbour's children whom you have seen before
God bless the master of this house, likewise the mistress, too
And all the little children that round the table go

Trunch Wassail Song

Here we come a wassailing all among the leaves
That isn't very easy when they're still all on the trees
Wassail, wassail, we'll tell you wassail
It comes in bottles brown and pale
Comes in bottles, so bring some here
And we'll have a happy new year

Lets us now be thankful that the old year had departed
But there's no time for feast before another one has
started

Now the year has passed away, passed away your sins
There's lots of lovely new ones as the year begins
Pouring cider on the apple trees seems rather wrong
We'll drink it first and then we'll water the trees before
too long

Bring food from off your table and beer from out o' your
barrel
For if you don't, we'll stop and sing another ancient carol

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Should be
Hallmarked



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Shakespeare Branch Diary and Beer Festival Round up



Meetings and Branch Events

December

7th, 8.30pm - The Fleece Bretforton
Beer Festival 2011, 1st meeting

10th, from 7.30pm - The Boars Head,
Hampton Lucy, Christmas Dinner

15th - 8.30pm Alcester Christmas pub crawl, meet
Holly Bush

January 2011

19th, 8.30pm Branch Meeting Stratford
Meet West End, on to Thatch Tavern and Bear

February

16th, 8.30pm Branch meeting Evesham
Meet Old Swanne, on to Old Red Horse and Trumpet

March

16th, 8.30pm Branch meeting Edge Hill
Meet Castle, on to Peacock, Tysoe then Peacock Oxhill

Beer Festival

January 2011

19th - 22nd

National Winter Ale Festival, Manchester

Over 200 British and foreign beers plus cider and
perry. **Free entry to CAMRA members 20th January**
only.

Local Festivals

February 2011

3rd-5th

Tewksbury CAMRA Winter Ale Festival

Watson Hall, Barton Street, Tewksbury.
Over 70 Beers - All sessions free to CAMRA members.
Thursday 3rd CAMRA members only.

4th - 5th

Redditch Winter Ale Festival,

Rocklands Social Club, Birchfield Road, Redditch.
30 plus ales and ciders. Entry £4.00 (discount for
CAMRA members).

**Keep an eye on the branch website for
updates to the diary and what's on at**

www.shakespearecamra.org.uk

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