

Birmingham Jolly Boys 31 January 2019

I think this is our first trip to the home of the Brummies since 2013 which on that occasion mainly did the Jewellery Quarter, and prior to that in 2008 the Midland Metro tour which only visited 1 pub in the city centre, the Wellington, which we will revisit this time. With the help of Brian Gardner (who deserves a Jolly Boys campaign medal for trudging around miles of Birmingham on his dodgy knees), 2 recces and Plans A, B and C we have got an itinerary that might be OK. On the 2nd recce, to paraphrase Eric Morecambe, we did most of the right pubs but not necessarily in the right order, as I realised after that we did not have a food pub at the time required. So plan B needed a drastic reshuffle and became plan C (and fingers crossed).

Two things to say : there is a fair amount of walking, as you would expect in a big city but I have reduced this by introducing a tram ride and leaving out one of the furthest pubs. Also I am fairly useless at maps so have not included one but I hope all or most JB's have a smartphone and Google Maps to locate the pubs if required (although if you have an iPhone I have no idea what you would use). I am not sure if Keith will have any of this technology as he probably uses maps on rolls of parchment with things like "Here be Monsters" on them. However since he has the money he will not be allowed to go missing.

Itinerary :

Exit New Street station on the tram terminus side, cross the road and walk up Lower Temple St, passing the Shakespeare. Then left along New Street and 1st right up Bennetts Hill where you will find on the right our obligatory Wetherspoons **The Briar Rose**. Leave here at 11.00.

Back down Bennetts Hill and right along New Street. On the left there is a red door between Greggs and a Vaping shop. This is the **Post Office Vaults**. Beware we have to descend some fairly steep stairs. This pub is about 5 years old I think so most JB's will not have visited it. The staff are fairly young but very knowledgeable about real ales and craft beers. There are 7/8 real ales, several ciders and craft beers. Leave at 11.45.

We exit the pub by the back door so happily climbing back up those stairs is not required. Turn left and New St station is just down the street. We then jump on a tram and pay £1 for a City Hop ticket, getting off at St Chads which is just past Snow Hill station. Descending to street level we cross a busy road at the other side of which is St Chads, Birmingham's Catholic cathedral. We walk past the double-tower frontage of this with one of Birmingham's scenic ring roads to our right. This bit was not recced (as we actually arrived from a different direction via the canal - ask Brian about it!) but I am fairly confident that we will eventually arrive at the **Gunmakers Arms**. This pub is the brewery tap for the Two Towers Brewery which is just behind it. There are 7/8 real ales on handpump, mainly from the Two Towers brewery with a good range of beer types and the ones I have tried have been excellent. Also a Real cider and a Barley Wine. Although this pub is the furthest from the city centre I hope Jolly Boys will agree it's worth the visit. Leave at 12.45.

We then dive into the underpass just across the street emerging on the other side of the ring road. Things get a bit hazy at this point (and not just because of the beer already consumed) as this next part was also not recced, but the idea is to follow the ring road back to the intersection, cross the road, dive under the tram/railway lines from Snow Hill and after emerging, blinking, into daylight take the 1st left which should hopefully be Livery St. and up the street to the right is our next pub the **Old Contemptibles**. This is a classic city pub from the imposing Victorian exterior to the chandeliers and dark wood panels inside. It is also the food stop and if you like Chops or Sausages this is your place (see Menu included as attachment). They do the usual pub food too. There are usually about 6 real ales on handpump, Leave at 1.40.

Our next pub is just around the corner in Cornwall St. **The Old Royal** is another classic city pub with an elegant and recently cleaned-up frontage and being so close is worth

popping in, although only 2 real ales were on offer - Moorhouses White Witch and Salopian Oracle. Leave at 14.05.

Crossing the road and heading up Church St brings us to St. Philips Anglican Cathedral which completes the set (come on now, how many tours offer this sort of all-inclusive cultural experience with some highly-decent pubs thrown in?). Although by no means a York or Durham it is of Georgian Baroque-style in a pleasant small park surrounded by grand buildings through which probably passed much of the economic power of Birmingham in its industrial heyday. They are now most likely to house bars or restaurants. Right along Colmore Row then left down Newhall St and into Bennetts Hill. On the left is our final pub the Wellington. This is certainly in the Premier League of real ale pubs and on our visit had 16 available. See the photo of their list of beers. Keith note the prices - these seem to be about the average for the recce. About 5 mins for the return walk to the station but add extra minutes for getting to your platform.

Should any Jolly Boys be thirsty (or desperate) enough to need another drink between the Wellington and the station there is always the Shakespeare at the bottom of Temple St, a stones-throw from the station entrance.

Train Information : There are lots of them to and from New Street to and from most places. Too many to mention really so I won't bother. Virgin Euston services are every 20 mins. There are loads of Cross-Country's. And a crappy service to Shrewsbury (which I have to use) now being run by an outfit called Transport For Wales which is achieving the near-impossible by being even worse than Arriva Wales who were kicked out a few months ago.

I hope we all have a Nice Day.

Cheers!

Howard.