

Walsall Jolly Boys Itinerary 25 Nov 2021.

According to Google, Walsall is one of Birmingham's 7 metropolitan boroughs, the others being the 3 cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton and 3 other towns - Dudley, Sandwell and Solihull. Quite an impressive collection. Historically it goes way back and its name derives from the Saxon for "Valley of the Welsh" (but best not to mention to any of the locals in the pubs we visit that they may be of Welsh descent). By the 13th century it's a small market town and that was mainly that until the Industrial Revolution, which saw the population grow to 86,000 by the 18th century, and it became an industrial town manufacturing "chains, buckles and plated ware" and also importantly saddles, from which came the nickname "The Saddlers" still very much used today, including by the football team. Notable people include Sue Nicholls (Corrie), Meera Syal, Frank Windsor (of Z Cars fame) and Noddy Holder (of the pop group Slade), whose horrible voice we still have to listen to every Christmas.

Recce carried out on 21st October by Howard Lowndes and Brian Gardner to whom all donations from grateful punters should be directed.

Arriving at Walsall : The station is somewhere underneath the Saddlers Shopping Centre. So if arrival is on platform 3, often used by Rugeley-bound trains from Brum, exit directly from this platform and go right up Station St (which now is really just a gap between two shopping centres) to Park St. Exit from other platforms is either back across to Station St or through the shopping centre, past Costa on right and out on to Park St. Turn right along Park St, left at Lloyds Bank, and along Bridge St. Ahead on the left is an imposing white building with 4 Greek columns which may once have been a proud civic building housing a museum or art gallery, but now of course it has to be :

1. Wetherspoons St Matthew's Hall , Lichfield St, Walsall. And quite a good Wetherspoons. Leave at the time-honoured 11-ish. Cross the road and continue along Bridge St to Upper Rushall St. A major landmark here is the Flan O'Briens pub and although we will not be entering this worthy establishment we will encounter it a few times. Turn right and opposite Town Hill is :

2. The Lyndon House Hotel, Upper Rushall St, Walsall. 6 real ales and, although primarily a hotel the bar is as good as, or better than, most pubs. Leave 11.45 but no rush. Exit left along Upper Rushall St past Flan O'Briens again, continue into Lower Rushall St and on the corner with Intown Row is :

3. The Victoria, 23 Lower Rushall St, Walsall WS1 2AA. Opens 12. Also known locally as The Katz, which I think was its former name. 6 real ales. This could be a food stop. Leave 12.30 and back to Flan O'Briens, once again resisting the temptation to go in, and along Ablewell St., left into Bott Lane and right into Bank St. On the left is

4. The Walsall Arms, 17 Bank St. Opens 12. A nice little back street pub. 6 real ales including beers from Salopian and Wye Valley. On the recce Brian and I were outside this pub which was not open and wondering what to do, when this nice lady turns up and took us inside. I think I can safely say that this has not happened to me before on a recce, I don't know about Brian. No further details of what happened next will be divulged. Unlikely to be a food stop although

traditional crisps and pork pies might be available. Leave 13.00-ish and retrace steps to Ablewell St and left up Town Hill. We pass the Lyndon House Hotel again and cross a car park to the rear of an Asda. Hopefully we emerge on George St and along on the right is :

5. The Black Country Arms, High St, Walsall. Opens 12. We finish with the jewel in the crown, a pub with 20 handpumps, 16 ales, too numerous to mention, and 4 ciders. This might be the best bet for food, it certainly is for beer. Jolly Boys who remember The Wellington, near Snow Hill from earlier Birmingham visits will notice the resemblance between the two pubs, and indeed they are both owned by the same people.

To get back to the station turn right on exit from pub and head downhill into a new-build open area, where there might be an outdoor market, at the far side is the entrance to High Street. Continue along this mainly pedestrianised thoroughfare, which becomes Digbeth and Park St., past Lloyds Bank and eventually arriving at the entrance to the Saddlers Shopping Centre on the left. Go into this and follow the signs for the station.

Train Information.

Walsall is on the line from Birmingham New St to Rugeley and effectively it's a branch line.

There are frequent services from Brum - usually 3 an hour at roughly 10, 25 and 50 mins past the hour and the trip takes just over 20 mins. Strangely there seem to be only 2 trains returning to New St at roughly 18 and 47 mins. I would guess most JB's would travel via Brum but, as in Brian's case (from Crewe) there is the option to travel via Rugeley, thus avoiding New St. (never a bad idea) but anyone wanting to do this can sort the timetable out for themselves.