

Stafford Jolly Boys 9 May 2024

This trip to Stafford is a substitute for the planned visit to Cannock. Briefly Cannock was recce'd twice, the first recce on the 14th March had to be abandoned after 3 pubs due to me not being well. At that stage things looked OK but the 2nd recce on 2nd April for the remaining 2 pubs revealed one pub closed and the other serving no real ale ("no call for it") despite having 9 (nine!) handpumps. So Cannock was a non-starter. Peter Barton suggested Stafford. Our last visit here was on 30th August 2018 and as I needed to get this itinerary circulated ASAP I had to do the recce in the week ending 12th April. As I am short of time the pubs will have to be more or less those from 2018. Also my apologies for this being circulated later than is usually the case.

About Stafford :

The county town of Staffordshire has a pleasant compact town centre with some very nice olde buildings among them the Ancient High House which is Elizabethan and the largest timber-framed townhouse in England. This is quite close to the Swan Hotel which is one of our venues and itself a very nice building. The Borough of Stafford was created by King John in 1206. There are the remains of a castle, originally built by the Normans about 1090, to the west of the town. The railways arrived in the form of the Grand Junction Railway in 1837.

Itinerary :

Crossing the road from the station a nice 5 mins or so walk thro Victoria Park leads to Mill Bank with the River Sow on the right. There is an aviary in the Park which is worth a look. Along Mill Bank to a mini-roundabout where we turn right down Bridge Street. Not far on the right is The Picture House. This is a conversion of an old cinema and is JD Wetherspoons at it's best, a brilliant renovation and very well run. Real ales available were the usual 'Spoons ones plus something called Red McGregor.

Leave at 11.00 Back along Bridge St across the roundabout and along Greengate St, a couple of hundred yards on the left is the Swan Hotel. (46a Greengate St). Handily this opens at 10 and was fairly busy with folk having coffees and whatever in various rooms. There are 2 bars but on this occasion serving only 1 real ale called Coachman's Wheel unlike the 3 on offer when last visited. Leave at 11.35.

Retrace our steps back past the Picture House and left into Lichfield Rd. Just on the left is the Sun Inn (7 Lichfield Rd). As in 2018 they do not open the front door until 12.00ish (although they may be open from about 10!) but access can be had thro the car park at the rear, which can be reached via a cut-through about 20 yards past the front door. It's a Titanic pub with at least 6 ales from their range and about the same number of guest beers. It is also the only real candidate for a food stop, having a good menu including most of the pub lunch favourites. Leave at 12.40.

Back along the well-trodden path to Greengate St, turn right down Tipping St and on the corner where Tipping St meets Eastgate St is the Shrewsbury Arms. (75 Eastgate St). This is a Black Country Ales pub with 4 or 5 of their ales and also about the same number

of guest beers. Leave at 1.15. Continuing along Eastgate St, past the Gateway Theatre (sadly now boarded-up) and left into Market St, and just on the left is **Ye Olde Rose & Crown**. (10 Market St) This is a Joules pub with their full range of ales and maybe a guest beer. Unfortunately this time it was not open, but being a Joules place I would think it normally would be. However if it is not open on the day, not many yards away is the **Market Vaults**. This had Wainwright and Banks Sunbeam available. Leave at 1.45. Exit along Market St and across Market Square then left down Greengate St and right by McDonalds, passing by the Church of St Mary and on the corner of Earl St is the **Bird in Hand**. (1 Victoria Square). This is also a Black Country Ales pub with the full range of their beers (4/5) plus at least 3 guests. About 5 mins for the return walk to the station. Cross Earl St along the path with the Court buildings on left and on reaching the main road the station is visible ahead at the end of Victoria Rd.

Recce carried out by Howard Lowndes on a wet Wednesday 11th April 2024.