

MILD & BITTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DERBY BRANCH OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

ISSUE 2
DECEMBER 1975

REPORTS

Camram Draf-Tales (News from around the pubs)

If you rush off to the Staff of Life at Ticknall, you can now sup the fine Ruddles Ordinary Bitter (handpumped), temporarily available until it is replaced by Ruddles County. The Staff also has Pedigree on handpump. The next nearest available Ruddles Ordinary is at the Three Crowns at Somerby, near Oakham, according to the Loughborough Real Ale Guide.

At the Chequers at Ticknall, as well as Ind Coope Bitter and Ruddles County on handpumps, is the find of the month; on the lounge bar now stands a cask of Ruddles newly introduced on draught Rutland Barley Wine. The O.G. is 1080, and the price 24p a half pint, but very drinkable for its strength - if you are not driving. Marstons Owd Roger (O.G. 1080 also) is again available on gravity this Christmas, for example at the Coach and Horses, Horsley. The re-vamped Crown at Spondon (Marstons) now does meals in baskets, and, further afield, the Red Lion at Litton (near Tideswell) now has Theakstons Best Bitter on handpump.

Courage withdrew Barnsley Bitter from the East Midlands in November, including from the Trip to Jerusalem, Nottingham. Now the good news - the Trip (which also has Ruddles County) is replacing it with Pedigree. The Boathouse at Matlock (Hardy Hansons), which has hung on to its handpumps despite opposition from the brewery, now finds the demand for keg so low that they are thinking of taking it out. Sam Smiths are looking for outlets in the Derby area, so here's to a Merry XXXXmas to all.

(Dave Johnson)

Last Month's Socials

Masterbrew - Interbranch Quiz Saturday 22nd November. It was a Mastermind type grilling at the St. Anne's Well Inn, Nottingham, for members of six local branches, as they answered, or tried to answer, individual questions on beer and general knowledge. Derby's representatives: Ian Forman, John Kearney, Nick Potter, and Tim Williams, managed to survive this ordeal and qualified for the final.

After a well deserved beer and buffet break (Shipstones straight from the cask), it was fingers on the button Nottingham versus Derby. Seconds out, and after a closely fought contest, Nottingham were the 'Masterbrew Champs' with 37 points to our 31. Nottingham very sportingly shared their prize - a pin of Castletown Bitter - inviting everyone to try some. It went in about 15 minutes! Our reward for coming second was a selection of Isle of Man bottled beers. These were smuggled out for a branch raffle. In total about 100 attended.

North Derbyshire Mystery Trip, Saturday 29th November. After some chasing around Belper, we eventually rounded up the last of about 30 members for our venture north. First call the Boathouse Matlock for a quick pint of handpumped Kimberley, then away to the Bull's Head, Ashford in the Water, for an excellent pint of Robinson's. (Some sampled some nearby Stone's too). Next stop was the Red Lion at Litton, where there was Theakston's Best Bitter.

All aboard again for our final objective; but as this was mainly an uphill journey on a bus with two gears, no clutch, and no heater, we began to wonder if we would make it before being frozen to death. At last, in the village of Bradwell, our bus came to a halt when the lane got too narrow, then it was a brisk walk to the Old Bowling Green. Inside some moaners complained about the electric pumps, but the landlord was pleased to let us have Theakston's Bitter or Old Peculier straight from the casks in the cellar. On the way home the Old Peculier, together with a singalong with the Belper lads, helped keep us warm.

(Terry Morton)

What's Brewing Sales Social, Monday 17th November

What's Brewing was again sold around pubs in the branch area during November. Their sale makes Camra better known, increasing support both from customers and most landlords. The sales meetings are really local socials which have an added purpose and (whisper it) are a good excuse for a pub crawl.

A lucky few who turned up at the Green Man were given a cellar visit by the landlord. A route via the Neptune and the Castle and Falcon, took us to a large Keg Palace where a lot of copies were sold, and the manager asked if we knew the Barley Mow at Kirk Ireton (gravity Bass), where he drank on his night off! Ye Olde Dolphin Inn, Queen Street, (Bass Special - no draught real ale sold) was most unfriendly when Camra was mentioned, and joins the Barley Mow, Osmaston Road, on the Camram Blacklist. (If Guinness can have one, then so can we!) The New Flower Pot, King St, (draught Worthington) was the last stop.

Total sales for the month reached 100 copies, thanks to the Belper group's efforts, and to a second trip out, taking in the Bridge and the Rose and Crown at Chellaston (where the landlord bought 10 copies) and all pubs in Ticknall.

(Dave Johnson)

(Dave, being modest and retiring, forgot to mention that on the first trip he signed up two new Camra members, and sold a copy of What's Brewing to the conductor on the bus home. Also it should be explained that the Camram is a legendary, but discriminating, beast, with an aversion to keg beer. It is believed to still live in several parts of Derbyshire. Ed.)

Belper Area Sub-Committee

First of all let me apologise for the Belper Sub-Committee's bawdy drunken singing on the Peak District trip (you all enjoyed it anyway). Now, down to serious matters (pass that pint Bob) about the recent Bass situation. For all those who have not heard, some people from the brewery have been trying to replace hand pumps with electric pumps. We only found out about this by chance from a friendly landlord in our area. We immediately went to a few other pubs to see if the same thing had happened, and horror of horrors, it had. BUT all the landlords we spoke to told them to go away (or words to that effect).

Anyway I wrote a letter to the brewery, pointing out the obvious error of their ways, and saying we hoped that installation of these pumps would not be done against the wishes of the landlord or his customers, and also the fact that we didn't understand this change in view of Bass's recent traditional image campaign (Draught Bass Great Ale of England etc.) After having the letter scrutinised by Tim, we sent it (a fortnight ago) and have as yet had no reply (cowards). So now we are thinking of sending them a copy just to jog their memories. (It's the keg beer they drink, it burns out their brain cells). We thought it would be a good idea to issue a list of beer engine manufacturers to landlords, so that when breweries say spares are unavailable, the landlord will have a list of six companies making spares.

(Boozy Ben from Belper)

Good Beer Guide Sub-Committee

Following last month's plea for help (in this newsletter), Nick Potter reports a good attendance at the last GBG S-C meeting, and that a handful of other members have made the effort to send in voting forms (much appreciated). Hopefully a lot more forms will come in at the branch meeting. Although a number of dedicated (and now red nosed) members have each covered 50 or 100 pubs, a lot of members have still to prove that they drink beer at all. It cannot be over-emphasised that more help is needed, if all members sent in just five votes (particularly for the less popular pubs and those outside Derby), we may be able to overcome the considerable problems we now have. Trying to be optimistic, we are now looking for printers (and possibly advertisers). Anyone with contacts, please see Nick Potter or John Kearney.

(Tim Williams)

EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The conference was attended by Nick Potter and myself, about 40 other delegates from branches in the region, and several members of the National Executive and Staff. Regional Conferences are forums for discussion, a means for improving communication between branch members and the NE. Formal motions are not debated, and any conclusions or suggestions are not mandatory. The agenda covered most aspects of Camra, only a summary is possible here.

Branch Business: Several delegates stressed the need to attract new members by making Branch meetings as attractive as possible, with business cut to a minimum. Several ideas were suggested for improving branch finances, and on local campaigning.

Local Beer Guides and Newsletters: Mike Hardman suggested that guides should be individualistic (apart from using standardised symbols) prestige publications, aimed at non-committed drinkers. Where possible they should include all real ale pubs. It was generally felt that advertising, except for individual pubs, was acceptable. It was also suggested that Branch Newsletters be distributed to the public.

What's Brewing and 1976 Good Beer Guide: Next year's guide will have a first print of 50,000 (same as this year's sales). It will be better bound and cost £1.40 (!). Several detailed points on the guide were raised. Not many branches were selling What's Brewing.

Camra Ltd : Chris Holmes said that the main reasons for forming the company were to solve the contractual problems, and to give the campaign the same standing as the people we are up against. Several areas of concern were discussed, but the general feeling of the meeting seemed to be that the proposals were necessary and satisfactory. It was stated that Camra Ltd. would really involve no change as far as members were concerned, but branches would tend to become more autonomous, and the directors (Nat. Exec.) more limited.

Other Aspects of Camra Organisation: Joint husband/wife (mistress) membership was accepted as desirable, and being looked into. Camra finances were now fairly sound, What's Brewing had become virtually self-financing, and the sale of Camra products and publications was expected to make a big contribution to funds next year. It was expected that subscriptions would not have to increase. Membership was now 31,000 and increasing, but the renewal rate was poor. Branches were urged to actively recruit. All admin. complaints to me please.

Local Beer Exhibitions: John Bishopp gave a worrying account of the hard work and pitfalls involved; it was easy to lose money. Specialist advice (and in future equipment) was available. The number of major festivals would have to be regulated in future.

Membership: Stuart Argyle (our Area Organiser) suggested that Camra attracts 'the middle class and academics' and more should be done to attract 'working class boozers'. There was a lot of support for this, and some ideas on how it could be done. But it was also agreed that to gain supporters, was nearly as valuable as gaining members. Many delegates were worried about the cases of irresponsible members giving the campaign a bad name by acting in a leutish drunken manner, telling landlords how to keep beer, and generally getting the back up of the drinking public, etc. etc. It was felt that unless these were branch members, not much could be done, except to try to counteract the harm by branches being seen to act in a responsible professional way.

National Campaigns and Policies: Campaigning at the National level is at least one jump ahead of what is happening locally, and deals with broader issues. What emerged under this item was that, although real ale must remain the priority, there was now a need to broaden the scope of the campaign. Camra has attracted international attention, and it has been regarded as the most successful consumer organisation. It was suggested that Camra accept the role in which it had been cast - the consumer organisation for all pub goers. (This has already started, for example in campaigning for price lists and the labelling of beer bottles and dispensers). Some delegates had reservations, in particular would branches have the resources and members support for campaigns involving keg pubs.

Personal Comments: The conference was a lively, boozzy, useful, and enjoyable event. I was favourably impressed by the people who attended, and by the fact that everyone seems to be moving by mutual consent towards our common goal. There was lively debate, but little evidence of the sort of political in-fighting or detailed wrangling that can cause any big organisation to grind to a halt.

(Tim Williams)

DERBY DIARY

Saturday 13th December, 8pm. CHRISTMAS SOCIAL. The Beaconsfield Club, Wilson Street (off Green Lane). A charge of 30p (35p for non-Camra members) will be made for the buffet. Samuel Smith's Old Brewery Bitter will be specially available, plus Marston's Pedigree and Bass. Yard of Ale contest and sing-song (if you play guitar, bring it along).

Wednesday 17th December, 8pm. PUB CRAWL with the UTTOXETER BRANCH. Starts at the Exeter Arms (Derby). A large number of Uttoxeter members are expected, come and help show them round the best real ale in Derby centre. Note - if you get lost, or otherwise fall by the wayside, stagger down to the Alexandra Hotel; we will be ending up there.

Thursday 18th December, 8pm. Good Beer Guide Sub-Committee Meeting, Sir Robert Peel. Will S-C members please phone Nick Potter (Derby 511355) if you can't attend. ALSO Matlock Area Sub-Committee meeting (all welcome), phone Tim Williams (Derby 676027) for details.

Saturday 20th December, 8pm. What's Brewing Sales Pub Crawl, meet at the Old Cross (public bar) Long Eaton Market Place. Dave (Keg Buster Junior) Johnson will be in attendance to guide you round the best pints in Long Eaton.

Thursday 1st January (provisional) Committee Meeting.

Tuesday 16th December. Belper Area Sub-Committee informal meeting and social (all welcome). Details from Ian Grimshaw, Belper 3270.

THURSDAY 8th JANUARY, 8pm, BRANCH MEETING. The Meadows, Chequers Road, West Meadows Industrial Estate (off Nottm. Rd, Derby). This time we will have the larger room, and hope to have Marston's Pedigree, No.5 Mild, and Owd Roger, straight from the cask. Starts 8pm PROMPT

DECEMBER BRANCH MEETING AGENDA

1. Register and Levy.
2. Committee Changes.
3. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising.
4. Secretary's Report.
5. Treasurer's Report.
6. Sales and Publicity.
7. Area Sub-Committee Reports.
8. Good Beer Guide Sub-Committee Report.
9. Socials.
10. Branch News.
11. Short Beer Break.
12. Any Other Business.

THE DERBY BRANCH OF CAMRA

Committee (Posts and additional responsibilities) : Tim Williams, Derby 676027 (Chairman; Newsletter) ; John Kearney, 5 Ormskirk Rise, Spondon, Derby (Secretary; advertising) ; Keith Normington, Derby 674446 (Treasurer; raffles) ; Terry Morton, Derby 674025 (Social Sec; posters; Camra sales) ; Nick Potter, Derby 511355 (Good Beer Guide Sec; pub info.) ; Dave Johnson, Derby 61422 Ext. 2405 (Membership Sec; free trade outlets; pub news collator) ; Paul Gibson, Brailsford 365 (Press releases).

Other Officers : Ian Grimshaw, Belper 3270 (Belper Area Sub-Committee) ; Trevor Peacock (Matlock Area Sub-Committee) ; Chris Markham, Derby 22399 (Historic pubs)