

MILD & BITTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DERBY BRANCH OF CAMRA

ISSUE 6

APRIL 1976

THE LAST MONTH

The 2nd Derby Branch AGM was held on Thursday 11th March, and, it has to be said, went more with a whimper than a bang. Sadly the turn-out was a very average 50, despite a lot of publicity effort, with circulars to many of our apparently lapsed members. In view of the resulting shortfall in drinking power at the meeting, we are not in the good books of the management of the Meadows. Tony Broadbent again put on a selection of Marston's beers on gravity, travelling to Burton himself to collect the Owd Roger. The normal room hire at the Meadows is £40, and there's no shortage of bookings; we can't expect to continue getting it (or any of our rooms) for free, unless we provide enough elbow power.

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On Monday 15th March, the chairman was seen drinking a pint of Worthington F in the Friary Hotel. But this sacrifice was merely to provide a visual aid in his talk to the Derby 18 plus Club on beer. The talk described the history of ale and beer from 4000 BC to the present day, with particular emphasis on the reasons for the unfortunate changes in the last couple of decades. There were about 20 there, and although there wasn't exactly a mad rush to join CAMRA, one or two were definitely interested. If anyone knows of any other groups of people who would like to be bored for 45 minutes or so, let us know.

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The month has seen four socials (reported elsewhere in this issue) of greater and lesser size. One problem has been the variable turn-out, and Terry Norton would like to know what you, the members, would like (or don't like). Another problem has been the amount of committee effort expended on selling What's Brewing. The committee is beginning to think that the numbers ordered must be cut down unless we can get more help from members. Happily Clive Moore has now volunteered to organise this very important aspect of the branch publicity effort.

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The committee held its own social on Saturday 20th March to celebrate the past year. There was one special feature - all talk on beer and CAMRA matters was banned. It makes a nice change to be able to concentrate on drinking for once.

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The Good Beer Guide Sub-Committee met on Monday 22nd. At present the work on the guide mainly involves tidying up loose ends, and getting the editorial content, drawings, and maps done. The situation on printers and advertisers looks promising. One thing that is difficult to predict is when the guide will actually appear. Most of the work going on now has to be very much an individual effort, as and when time permits. One particular area where more help can be used is in typing the proofs - Reg Newcombe is the man to see about this. The branch should have copies of the National guide in May.

(The Last Month - Contd.)

A chance visit by Mick Chambers to the Miner's Arms, Marehay, led to a small delegation paying it a visit on the 25th to find out more about a possible threat to its beer. The pub is a small one in a redevelopment area, and is found by turning off the A61 down a small lane by a Courage pub. It serves an excellent pint of handpumped Worthington BB, which is deservedly popular with the locals. Apparently there are plans to renovate the pub, and these may include conversion to top pressure. The landlord and locals are not happy. Luckily it seems unlikely that anything will happen in the near future. However, Mick is keeping an eye on it, and the landlord has promised to contact us if he needs help. In the meantime - why not pay it a visit ?

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The Committee Meeting was on Sunday 28th. After sorting out the committee jobs (see page 8.) much of the meeting was given over to discussion of the organisation of the year ahead and of the problems the branch currently faces. It was agreed that to get more done, more help must be sought from members on a formal basis. The non-committee official posts already filled are shown on page 8, and situations vacant on page 6. A serious problem, related to getting more done, was how to keep the membership level up. It was decided that meeting should be shorter, with more emphasis on discussion. Where possible, information would be presented in Mild and Bitter, rather than verbally. Concern was also expressed that at meetings and socials, members tended to remain with their own groups. This was understandable, but could be one of the reasons for our failure to attract and keep new members. One major, and sad, decision finally ratified at the meeting, was not to proceed with running a beer tent at the Derbyshire Show. The background to this is given on page 4.

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A final event in a fairly crowded month was a meeting in Loughborough on the 31st to discuss an East Midlands campaign directed at Allied Breweries. This is reported on page 4.

THE SOCIAL SCENE

Long Eaton Crawl, Saturday March 13th.

Nine of us from Derby turned up at the Old Bell to sample the real ale around the town centre. We visited 6 pubs and sold 30 copies of What's Brewing.

A Visit to Shippo's (and Their Defence of Keg !)

It was in a Shipstone's house, the Alexandra, that the Derby Branch of CAMRA had its birth. It was, then, something of a pilgrimage to visit the source of the Shipstone River in Nottingham - especially in the company of Auntie Flo, from whose premises we departed on a wet Wednesday afternoon. Alighting from the bus we were escorted up Whitbread Street (!) through great iron gates and across a cobbled yard to the small, manually operated brewery - a red-brick barrack-like building with white tiled interiors and an all pervading aroma of malt and hops. And, inevitably, stairs. (Ask Auntie Flo about the stairs !)

Brewing is a fascinating art (or do they call it "science" nowadays ?) and our microbiologist guide lucidly explained the various stages from malting to racking. For those who are interested, Shipstone's bitter is brewed to an Original Gravity of 1039, which is about the same as Bass, and their mild is 1033. The mashing temperature is 149 F, but varies somewhat with the size of the tun. The flavour giving hops boiled in the wort

(Shippe's Contd.)

are Fuggles, a firm favourite for strong flavoured beers; but dry hopping at the priming stage is done with the more delicately flavoured Goldings, at the rate of 2oz per barrel. One pound of yeast is mixed with one barrel of wort for pitching, from which four pounds are recovered after fermentation.

What may be more interesting to the less technically minded is the fact that our friendly guide, a professional brewer, says he finds keg beer no less acceptable than "ordinary". Admittedly, to counter the cries of disbelief, he did profess a "slight preference" for ordinary bitter. In his opinion, however, the distinction "did not justify the great outcry against keg beer".

His case was that in Shipstone's, as in many smaller breweries, keg beer and ordinary beer are not made from different materials or brewed by different methods (except in their case at least by the addition of caramel to make the keg darker). The difference comes at the end, when the 'ordinary' goes into the cask for priming and fining to condition naturally, while the keg is chilled and filtered and artificially carbonated (but not pasteurised). He claimed that all this made no material difference.

Much of this argument had taken place in the Sampling Room, where I had actually swallowed a glass of keg to show my lack of prejudice. "So you see" said the benign brewer, drawing me another glass of ordinary, "I can't see what you people are making all the fuss about". I contentedly quaffed my gravity-drawn bitter and fondly imagined that it really was different.

(Reg Newcombe)

Instant Social (17.3.76)

For the benefit of those who had not managed to fulfil their drinking needs for the day in the two hours spent in the Shipstone's Sample Room, a lightning social was suggested. An hour or so after we got back those who didn't spend the evening snoring on the settee met in the Exeter Arms and later toddled around the corner to the two Marston's houses. In the Liversage the pace began to tell, and tired feet caused many of us to sit down, and some members were actually seen to drink only half pints. Never mind lads - we were the last to be thrown out of the bar.

(Terry Morton)

Normanton Area Real Ale Trail (24.3.76)

The local social of the month attracted the fantastic number of - wait for it - five. But the good news is that about two were not committee members. From the Mafeking we made our way to the Cavendish, the Pear Tree (good welcome), and the Sun in Middleton Street. The landlord of the Sun, Chris Lees (!) is a very keen CAMRA supporter, and came to our rescue when a drunken customer (who turned out to be the manager of a pub in Nottingham) started verbally attacking CAMRA for its involvement in trying to get 11pm weekend closing in the city. The pub appears to be very popular, serves an excellent pint of Kimberley, and is worth a visit.

(Terry Morton)

Wyaston Coach Trip (27.3.76)

What a great social occasion this turned out to be, with members arriving from Belper, Ashbourne, and Uttoxeter, and coaches from Nottingham and Derby; about 70 of us in all, but plenty of room in the pub. Arriving where? At the New Inn to drink up the very last delivery of Thwaites ale before the pub was sold as a free house.

One highlight of the evening was a boat race beer drinking contest, Notts v Derby. Swilling ale for us were 'Captain' John (psss artist) Kearney, Paul Breeze, Dave Todd, Geoff Vincent (on loan from Uttoxeter), Sue James, (thanks Sue for being such a good sport) and last and by all means least, Boozy Ben from Belper (complete with licensed

(Wyaston contd.)

to swill card). In just over 25 seconds almost £3.00 worth of bitter was knocked back and Notts had won by $\frac{5}{4}$ of a pint (we'll have to get some practice in folks).

Later a collection was made for Mrs. Cunningham, the displaced landlady. Trays of free sandwiches appeared on the bar, and Spyke Golding, the Nottingham chairman took the mike to act as comedian and compere for the rest of the evening. Spyke, with his rather large stereophonic beer belly is rumoured to be about to give birth to a firkin, probably Shipstone's. Barry Coope, Belper's own answer to Liberace, provided backing on the piano for a variety of songs.

Not reported in the local press, is that during the evening we managed to shift over 75 gallons of ale.

(Terry Morton)

THE DERBYSHIRE SHOW

This issue has not been previously discussed in open meetings because we wanted there to be no chance of commercial pressures being brought to bear until we had thoroughly established our position. But behind the scenes, the possibility of running a beer tent has been under consideration for some months, and one of our members, John Griffiths, has been conducting a thorough feasibility exercise. We now believe that it would be foolish to try for a tent this year and take the substantial risk that we would fall flat on our faces, or have to withdraw at a late stage, thus ruining the good relationships that we have built up with a number of people in connection with the event. The basis for this is as follows :-

1. It was considered (and the NE require) that, if it were done, it must be done properly - no running out of beer at some pathetically early hour etc.

2. The statistics of the show, combined with CAMRA beer exhibition experience, and information about various costs, give a figure of £800 as a baseline total investment in the event if we were to cater properly with enough beer and space in which to drink it. John reckoned that by cutting a few corners, and taking advantage of personal contacts to get necessary items at reduced rates, this figure might be reduced to £500. (Figures are approximate).

3. Unfortunately the show is on May 31st, at which time we are likely to be heavily in debt for the money required to produce our beer guide. It is unlikely that we will get further loans to underwrite the show as well, and it seems foolish to commit ourselves so heavily all at once. Beer shows are not particularly profitable, and in view of the high overheads, bad weather could in our case, turn the maximum possible net profit of about £100 into a substantial loss.

The committee remains very keen to do a show this summer, and alternative, smaller events on which to cut our teeth will now be sought. We would like to thank John Griffiths for all the work he has done on the Derbys. When you get into the detail there's a lot to think about : glasses, beer taps, stillaging, fire extinguishers, hot water, security, etc. etc. John has done an excellent job in investigating the regulations, pursuing contacts, and doing the essential groundwork.

THE EAST MIDLANDS ALLIED CAMPAIGN

The first campaign meeting was held in Loughborough on 31.3.76, and was attended by three of us from Derby plus representatives of the Lincolnshire, Nottingham, Leicester, and Loughborough Branches. It was convened by Nick Hawkins, the Leics. and Northants. Area Organiser, as a result of earlier informal discussions. These had identified, first, a need for a local campaign, and, second, Allied Breweries as the major 'fizz merchants'

(Allied Campaign contd.)

in the area.

A quick survey around the bar revealed that we in Derby have the worst problem with the 'yellow peril' - out of about 700 pubs in our area, about 200 are Allied, and only two have draught bitter. Other areas had fewer pubs, and in some areas up to about 20% of these were on traditional beer. Another piece of relevant news is that we are getting persistent rumours that Allied are about to market a new high gravity draught beer.

The feeling of the meeting was that a campaign was needed, in particular to protect Ind Coope bitter. It has long been rumoured that this is about to be phased out, and it was felt that a new high gravity beer, although welcome, would not really meet the needs of the average drinker. The campaign would hopefully be one of co-operation, not coercion.

A further meeting date was fixed, in the meantime Allied would be contacted and branches would investigate which pubs would like draught bitter back. Would Derby members who would like to help in the latter, please contact a committee member. Please use discretion in discussing this issue for the moment.

SUNDRY MATTERS (By Our Rochdale Correspondant)

It was pleasing to note that, on BBC 1's Illustrated Economics programme on Sunday, Neil Hyde of Hyde's Brewery thanked CAMRA for its part in their brewery's real ale revival. Chris Hutt (executive director of Camra Investments Ltd) was interviewed at the White Gates Inn and spoke of the 'Big 6' monopoly and their removal of freedom of choice. The economist concluded that the best way for a consumer to make his voice heard was to combine in numbers and form an organisation. Well fancy that !

At a recent Rochdale meeting a senior brewer from Robinson's agreed with the Hyde spokesman, and said that their record profits were due to CAMRA and the interest in real ale created by them.

As we were just happening to pass the Red Lion at Market Bosworth on our return journey from Brighton, we called in to sample the Hoskins. The beer is just as good as when the Derby Branch visited last year, and we were pleased to learn that it will be supplied to the new Camra Investments pub in Cambridge. Bad news though from the Hercules Inn, which the branch also visited - Banks' won't spend the money on it to bring the accomodation up to standard, and it is to be closed. Bad news also nearer home - the Lion and Dragon, Sawley (Kimberley) has a new landlord, who has replaced the electric pumps with top pressure meters. The social club at Derby Kedleston Rd Tech are voting to see if they should have Grotney's or Grudgie's (Anyone know thw outcome - Ed.). If they wish to become a high powered seat of traditional British learning it's about time they had a real ale society like Nottingham.

(Dave Johnson)

RE-RACKED BEER - THE NEXT BIG ISSUE ?

Recent information suggests that there may be a certain amount of hitherto unsuspected re-racked beer around our area. The issue of such beer is a difficult one, and CAMRA at National level has yet to make any pronouncements. Quite simply it's beer that has been drawn off after conditioning in the brewery and re-casked, leaving most of the yeast behind. This makes it simple to keep but with a short life once tapped (unless a blanket pressure is maintained). It is arguable whether a re-racked beer can achieve the same maturity and depth of flavour as a fully cask conditioned beer. (Some landlords we know dismiss it as a very second rate). The problem is that when we do come across a second rate pint (or a beer with which we are not particularly familiar) - is the cause poor conditioning or some interference like re-racking? Home, Kimberley, and Marston's, at least, do such beer. We would like to know more, particularly in the case of Marston's, who sell it under the designation PX. There are nasty rumours of PX being sold by unscrupulous landlords as BB or even Pedigree. Use discretion though, such trading practices are illegal so we understand.

HOW (ELSE) YOU CAN HELP

It's really great that the Derby Branch of CAMRA has so many people eager and able to help out with the campaign locally. But we can always use more help - all the time there are things (many suggested by members) which could be done but aren't because of lack of time. Below are listed some of the ways in which members can help.

Situations Vacant

Newsletter Sub-Editor. Applications are invited for a sub-editor to help the chairman in the production of Mild & Bitter. The job will involve planning and organising contributions, editing them, and getting them typed. There is a lot of scope for re-vamping the newsletter and improving its graphic design. The sub-editor will preferably also handle the subscription scheme.

CAMRA Sales Organiser. We could do with someone to look after the sales of CAMRA items at meetings. The job involves buying in items, such as beer guides, within a fixed budget, and selling them to members at meetings. We aim to provide a good service to members, and at the same time help augment branch funds.

Special Publicity Materials Officer. The branch has splendid printing services available, but these are sadly under-used. We could do with an artistically minded person to work in conjunction with the Publicity Secretary in the production of such things as posters, handouts, letterheads, etc. etc.

Other Help

Poster Distribution. Branch posters and handouts are available at every meeting. The idea is that members can take them away and get them put up when an opportunity arises. Please note that there are two versions of the poster (different wording), one is for real ale pubs, one for elsewhere. Please also note that posters should not be put up without permission, nor should attempts be made to get them up in keg only pubs.

Newsletter Subscriptions. Even the most active member has to miss a branch meeting from time to time, and when this happens it's helpful to the branch if you are still in touch via Mild & Bitter. This helps keep up attendances at socials, and ensures that if some important issue arises, members know what's going on, and can come along and help if necessary. We can't afford to post it to you free, but the subscription is fair at 50p for three, and 85p for six, issues. You only get your issues sent when you're not at the meeting. If you would like to subscribe, contact Paul Gibson (Wayside, Main Rd. Brailsford).

Beer Guide Loans. The response to our urgent appeals for more promises of loans to help finance our local beer guide, has been encouraging. However we are still a bit short, so if you can lend a fiver, or preferably more, please see the treasurer.

Your Own Ideas. There must be any number of possible CAMRA projects that can be done on an individual basis as and when time permits. For example opinion polls and surveys, the preparation of exhibition material, historical studies, etc. etc. If you have any talent or interest that you would like to apply in a CAMRA direction, let us know.

Whats Brewing. WB is prime publicity material, why not take a couple of copies to sell to your mates at work or whatever. It helps make things simple if you would pay in advance at 10p a copy, but if you bring them back unsold we'll refund 5p (or even 10p if they're back in time to sell at a WB sales social. In any case, don't throw your own copy away after reading - give it to someone or leave it on the bus.

APOLOGIES to some of our regular contributors, whose items were not included in this month's issue of M & B, even with the extra page and a half we're a bit short of space.

DERBY DIARY (Non-members welcome at these events) Tear Off Section

Saturday 10th April. Pub Crawl around the Willington Area. Meet at the Boot Inn, Repton (OS 304270) at 8pm.

Saturday 17th April. Pub Crawl around Nottingham centre. The Nottingham crowd will show us around the best pubs in the city. Meet 8pm at the Peacock (Mansfield Road - near Victoria Bus Station).

Saturday 24th April. Ripley Ramble. Meet 8pm at the Three Horse Shoes, Ripley Market Place. Buses from Derby 19.00 or 19.20, last back 22.59. (Pent Truss Co. I assume).

Wednesday 28th April. Informal Social. Hardened elbow men (of either gender) with nowt else to do meet at the Garden City, Vivian St. (Derby) at 8pm for a crawl back towards town; those wishing just for a quiet drink later on will find the first team at the Liversage (or the Peacock) after 9.30.

Saturday 8th May. Coach Trip to the Black Country, which is described in the 1976 GBG as one of the finest areas in Britain for choice of beers. We shall certainly be going to the Old Swan at Netherton to sample some of Mrs. Pardee's famous 'beautifully balanced' home brew, but in the area there's also Banks, Hansons, Simpkins, Batham, and Holden, to name but a few, and we'll try one or two or three of these as well. Bus leaves Derby Market Place at 5.30pm. Book with Terry Morton at meeting or phone Derby 674025.

Wednesday 12th May. Branch Meeting 8pm at the Liversage Arms, Nottingham Rd, Derby. (Upstairs Room).

Every Sunday 1.30pm. Informal gathering for a pre-prandial pint at the Coach and Horses, Horsey. Pedigree, No 5 mild, and (at present, during renovations) brick dust,

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Other Events Committee Meeting Monday 3rd May; GBG S-C Wednesday 14th April.

Future Socials Future beer exhibitions include: Market Harborough (May); Wolverhampton, Nottingham, and Birmingham (all June); and Cambridge (July). We hope to be running trips to one or more of these depending on support.

WHO TO CONTACT ABOUT WHAT

Committee: Chairman - Tim Williams, Derby 676027 (also Newsletter Ed.) (Derby 61461 Ext 3152)
Secretary - Paul Gibson, Brailsford 365
Treasurer & Membership Secretary - Nick Potter, Derby 511355. (also pub info.)
Social Secretary - Terry Morton, Derby 674025
Pub Liason Secretary - Dave Johnson
Publicity Secretary - John Kearney, 5 Ormskirk Rise, Spondon.
Beer Guide Secretary - Reg Newcombe, Derby 45399.

Other Officers Belper Area Sub-C'tee Chairman - Ian Grimshaw, Belper 3270 (H&W)
Matlock Area Sub-C'tee Chairman - Trevor Peacock, 62 Dale Rd, Matlock
Historic Pubs Officer - Chris Gale, Derby 58847
Raffles Organiser - Keith Normington.
What's Brewing Sales Organiser - Clive Moore.

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| NB The June Mtg. will be on Thursday 10 th. |
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APRIL BRANCH MEETING AGENDA

1. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising.
2. Branch Bulletin (News and decisions from St. Albans).
3. Branch News and Matters Arising.
4. Social and Other Notices.
5. Beer Break.
6. Discussion - The Year Ahead, and Any Other Business.