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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DERBY BRANCH OF CAMRA

FEBRUARY 1977

The Past Month.

A BIT OF SNOW brings Derby to an absolute standstill, and this was the undoing of the January Branch Meeting. Only about 20 managed to brave the elements and get to the Victoria, Cowley Street, Derby; this included about half a dozen new members, and two from the Nottingham Branch, who had heard that we held well supported meetings, and wanted to see for themselves. The spirit of Scott and Amundsen may live on - but not in Derby.

One result of a bad night like that is that a lot of our members loose touch with what is going on in the way of socials and activities. The number who subscribe to M&B, and thus keep informed when they can't get to meetings, is still very low. Perhaps now is the time to think of investing a mere 30p, which will provide a M&B by post the next three times that you can't get to the meeting. See Paul Gibson.

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IT IS HOPED that we will be ready to start signing on Branch Members at the February Meeting. To become a member you will need your CAMRA membership form, which will be duly stamped, and a completed application form. Membership costs nothing, and will entitle you to vote at our Branch General Meetings, and to reduced rates for certain items (eg coach trips) where applicable.

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CAMRA IS STILL financially embarrassed, and members may have noticed that we are one of the about 50% of branches that have yet to make a contribution to funds. The problem is a simple lack of cash. However a collection box was circulated at the January meeting for the benefit of those who had not got round to sending off their £1 to Chris Bruton's appeal fund. The surplus deliberately made on the Davenports trip will be added, and the box sent off after the February meeting. Its contents anyway!

We have been specifically asked to buy copies of the Waterways Beer Guide, which is lying around in great quantities at St Albans, and will be doing so. This will also help central funds. See Jeff Fletcher if you want a copy.

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RECRUITMENT is a great help to the St Albans cash-flow problem, but although we didn't think we were doing too badly in recent weeks, the records show that our total for the three months up to Christmas was only 12. We thus came well down in the list in the East Central Region membership drive. Ipswich won with 47, and Loughborough came second with 37. Losing does not itself matter, but CAMRA needs the cash and the new members to replace those who are sadly letting their membership lapse. So please keep trying.

MEMBERS MAY HAVE recently had their drinking suddenly interrupted by Dave Johnson pressing forms on them to fill in for the Prices Survey. This is part of a national effort to find out who is charging what for which and where; very basic information for the campaign nationally. Many thanks to all who are helping in this chore.

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THE SECOND (JAN/FEB) EDITION of the Notts and Derby Drinker is now with us, and a great improvement on No 1 thanks to a lot of effort by a number of people. So far very few of our 500 copies of No 1 have been returned, and the 750 copies of No 2 are well on their way to a sell-out. The signs are that there will be a regular demand for the paper, and it is hoped to increase the total print (Nott'm and Derby combined) to 2000 before long. This assumes that Dave Johnson gets more help with distribution.

Given a large and regular sale, it will be possible to incorporate advertisements, and these will bring in the cash to increase the contents, in turn bringing greater demand and giving CAMRA a powerful voice in local pubs.

The deadline for non-news items for the next edition is February 21st. Our local editor, Rog Robinson, will want them in advance of this date. Please see Rog if you want to chat about your ideas for contributions, or to hand in your finished articles. Illustrations need now to be in certain specified sizes as far as possible; see Rog about this and about the requirements for photographs, which are now also possible.

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THE MORE OBSERVANT READER may have noticed a dramatic improvement in the quality of the heading for this newsletter. This, and the cartoon on page 3, is thanks to Bob Dilbury. For the next few months it is hoped that new headings will appear (all collectors' items) and there will eventually be a grand 'competition' to decide which to permanently adopt. Bob is also hoping to do some cartoons for the Drinker, and would welcome any ideas, roughed out or written down. But before you saddle our professional with too many of them, why not have a go yourself - the ones in the last issue were mainly done by complete beginners.

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THE BEER GUIDE SUB-COMMITTEE will be holding the first of the new season's meetings on Thursday 24th February. This committee looks after the compilation, production, and publication of our local beer guide, and the compilation of our entries for the national guide. The last BGS-C meeting, in October, discussed the lessons learnt from our current guide, and it is now time to start actively thinking of the next, so that it is ready to meet a target publication date of November this year.

Compilation is a big job as it will be necessary to update our knowledge of the quality of the beer in all the real ale pubs in our area. It will be essential for all branch members to help as much as possible in this task. The members of the BGS-C will co-ordinate this activity, and investigate borderline cases, as well as doing much of the basic surveying themselves. They will also deal with the editorial content, format, and production details of the guide, etc.

Experience has shown that a smallish band of regular attendees, who are prepared to get on with the tasks they volunteered to do between meetings, is a lot more effective than a large army of irregulars. So with this in mind, would all those who would like to become a member of this vital sub-committee, please see Reg Newcombe.

The Social Scene.

"Have we got time?" "OK then, just a quick pint." So our coach of 30 pulled up at the Crown at Brownhills for a lunchtime pint of Banks. Then excellent map-work by Kegbuster Johnson got us to the Davenports Brewery one minute early for our afternoon visit.

Soon we were in the cellar (a report on the actual brewery tour appears on page five) where we were privileged to sample the full range of Davenports beers stouts and lager before the filtration and pasteurization stage.

Then all aboard for West Bromwich, arriving in the High Street 15 minutes before the pubs were due to open - a near disaster, but it allowed everyone to get some food in. Some went to Chippies, some went to Restaurants, but all met later in the Wheatsheaf, a locals' pub serving Holdens mild, bitter, and special bitter, all on handpumps. It was raining heavily outside so most were dripping wet. A fine collection of beer mats and bottles in the pub was of much interest.

Next stop the Old Swan, Netherton, where Doris Pardoe's home brew was at its best - a marvellous pub to visit. But there were still three to visit, and each with a different brew, so it was soon time to go.

It was still teaming down by the time we got to the Cottage Springs, Brierley Hill for a pint of Hansons, but that did not deter most from nipping round the corner to the Vine for some Bathams. This pub is right alongside the brewery.

It was getting on for 10.20 as we arrived at the Foley Arms, also at Brierley Hill, for a pint of Simpkins. Again the brewery was at the back, and one or two found themselves in the brewery yard when looking for the loo. "Last orders" "Have we time for another one driver" "Of course you have".

This had indeed been a severe test for the discerning drinker. One or two had begun to regret the high gravity cask conditioned Top Brew de Luxe at Davenports. Others had the misfortune to be suffering from a distinctly manx curry. The rest were trying to brush off the effects of a soaking from the outside in due to the rain.

But all was well, and the Black Country ale proved itself to be well worth passing a few pubs for.

(Terry Morton)

TUESDAY SOCIALS are proving increasingly popular, with attendances that would do credit to the meetings of many branches. The only snag with these occasions is that there is sometimes so much animated conversation that it's very easy to miss last orders being called. See Derby Diary for the next venues.

Branch Annual General Meeting

March is AGM time, and to avoid stealing the thunder of the National AGM, we have moved our own to the week afterwards; the third rather than the second Thursday in the month.

For some reason AGM's in general appear to be poorly supported. Certainly ours was last year. Perhaps members think it will be dull and long, or that they might get roped into something they didn't want to. The truth is a little different; certainly there are some formalities to be observed (but these take no longer than any ordinary meeting) but above all the AGM is a time to celebrate the past with a few pints, and to look forward to the future. In Derby we don't go in for speech making, but present our annual report of achievements and failures in M&B. So please make every effort to come along and lend numerical support - it helps morale. Non-members are welcome to attend. MEMBERS, BRING CAMRA MEMBERSHIP CARDS.

One of the important items at the AGM is to elect a new committee. Of the present committee there are two retirements - Paul Gibson and John Kearney. Both feel that during the coming year they will not have enough time to do justice to a position on the committee (Paul for example is doing a Tech course). The remaining five are seeking re-election, with Tim Williams and Nick Potter standing for the specific posts of Chairman and Treasurer respectively.

So far we have indications of one other nomination to the committee. There must therefore be at least one more to fill the complement of seven, but we are hoping to see quite a number contending. Nominations must be in the hand of Paul Gibson in advance of the meeting; preferably a couple of weeks in advance to allow names to go on voting slips. Once the AGM has started the constitution prohibits further nominations unless there are less than the requisite number already standing.

Nominations should be in writing and be to the specific posts of Chairman, Secretary, or Treasurer, or as an 'ordinary' committee member. Candidates for the specific posts may, if defeated, also stand for election as an 'ordinary' committee member. (Consecutive elections). Nominations should be signed by a proposer and a seconder, and be accompanied by evidence of the nominee's willingness to stand. All three must be Branch Members. Any member anxious to stand should see the committee or get their mates to nominate them.

It is worth noting that most of the present committee were co-erced into doing the job and started out knowing nothing about it, or what we could possibly contribute. All of us have wondered from time to time whether it's really worth it - like when you are chasing up a member who promised to do some job but forgot, or having to go out and investigate a pub when you wanted to stay in, or having to stay in to finish something off when the minutes are ticking towards closing time. But it says a great deal for the satisfaction of the job that two of us are standing for the second time, and three for the third.

January Branch Bulletin Summary

Prominence was given to the national Whitbread campaign. Thankfully our branch area has only a few of their pubs so the campaign will probably need less attention than the Allied one. Another issue which is not, as yet, a matter of great concern for us, is the one of free houses selling only high gravity real ales. It is notable that Marstons Pedigree seems to be favoured as an introduction into the free houses around here. Meanwhile, CAMRA'S Technical Committee is to investigate the strengths

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and methods of brewing of British lagers with a view to making the public aware of lager's many fallacies.

As reported in February's What's Brewing, cider will not be featured in the 1978 Good Beer Guide. One notable venue for 1978 is Cardiff, which will be the host for the AGM.

An honorary membership recruitment officer has been appointed at St Albans. We should benefit from this as he will be providing us with regular, probably quarterly, lists of lapsed members in our area. After July alternative ways of recruitment will be considered, so if anyone has any ideas on this important matter please let Nick Potter or myself know.

(Paul Gibson)

Beer At Home

Many of us think of Davenports more as a delivery service than as a brewery, but as we passed through the posh portals into the tiled interior it soon became evident that the home of Davenport was indeed a brewery much like any other - except notably smarter: the whole place had been freshened up for Lord Robens' visit the previous week to open the new high-speed bottling line with a capacity for 27,000 bottles an hour! Madder still, the nearby canning plant handles 500 cans a minute! Another new feature, to increase brewing capacity, is the four tall "conicals" being erected beside the old fermentation room with its open, square tanks. ("Conicals" are cylindrical batch fermenters, holding 300 barrels each, with conical bottoms for collecting the yeast.) The older square fermenting vessels are painted with china clay a surface level to prevent the yeast-crop sticking to the copper linings. (The head of a 3-day ferment can be anything from 3' to 5' deep, depending on the brew.

Davenports have only 127 tied houses and 51% of their beer production goes for home consumption. As well as their own beers, they also bottle and can such well known (if not well liked) brews as Newcastle Brown, Carlsberg, Harp, and Makeson, all of which pass through the pasteurizer, and Guinness, which of course does not.

As in most contemporary commercial brews, copper hops are a blend of several varieties to minimize the effect of seasonal variations. While that continuing favourite, the East Kent Golding, still goes in, that former standby, the Fuggle, has now been supplanted by new and hardier varieties such as Northdown, Challenger, and Bramling Cross. These do not go in as cones, however, but are first frozen, powdered and pelletized - the redundant seeds being sieved out in the process. The hop used in "Continental Lager" is the Styrian Golding, from Yugoslavia, which - unusually - is also used for dry-hopping the bitter. (The "Continental Lager" by the way, is not brewed by the continental method, nor fermented with bottom-working lager yeast. It is, however, the right colour.) As to quality and strength, the Original Gravity of the lager is 1034⁰, as is that of the bottled BB; the pressurized Drum Bitter is 1036⁰, Draught Bitter a respectable 1039⁰ and Brew De Luxe 1075⁰. Since the finishing gravities also vary, these figures are not always directly comparable as a measure of strength, but - as Keith Normington was to confirm - they are nevertheless a good indication.

(Reg Newcombe)

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THE CASK of "Continental Lager" in the brewery sampling room was labelled "Con". Other brewers of English "lager" please take note of this honest policy.

Pub News

There is very little to report from the pubs this month; either nothing is happening, or we are not getting to hear about it. One sad snippet though is that the Stanhope Arms at Stanton by Dale has changed from handpumps to electric, despite quite a lot of committee time trying to persuade otherwise. On the brighter side, we hear that the Marstons No 5 at the Liversage Arms, Derby, after a shaky start, has now established itself as a popular seller.

Hardys and Hansons sent a prompt reply to Paul Gibson's letter, and assure us that they will offer cask conditioned beers at their forthcoming Sinfin Avenue (Shelton Lock) pub. Grenall Whitley seem to promise the same for their future pub at Sinfin, but their letter seems to have built-in escape clauses.

As you may have seen, the latest round in the Nottinghamshire 11pm weekend closing time saga, has resulted in the magistrates refusing to revoke the late extension granted last year in certain areas. This time it was the Nott'm and Notts LVA versus the Eastwood and District LVA and CAMRA. Our Nottingham colleagues tell us that the majority of customers and landlords are in favour of the later opening option - so lets hope for an outbreak of common sense, and a final end to the Nottingham anomaly.

Whom To Contact

BRANCH COMMITTEE: Tim Williams, Chairman, Derby 676027 (H) Derby 61461 Ext 3152 (W). Paul Gibson, Secretary, Wayside, Main Road, Brailsford, Derbys, Brailsford 365 (H). Nick Potter, Treasurer/Membership Sec, 4 Eastleigh Drive, Mickleover, Derby, Derby 511355 (H). Terry Morton, Social Sec, Derby 674025 (H). Dave Johnson, Pub Liaison Sec, Derby 61422 Ext 2405 (W). John Kearney, Publicity Sec, 5 Ormskirk Rise, Spondon, Derby. Reg Newcombe, Beer Guide Sec, 14 Vicarage Av, Derby, Derby 43599 (H).

OTHER OFFICERS: Ian Grimshaw, C'man Belper Area Sub-C'tee, Belper 3270 (H/W). Trevor Peacock, C'man Matlock AS-C, 62 Dale Rd, Matlock. Tim Burgess, Derby 880656 (H), and Mick Chambers, Belper 5160 (H), C'men Ripley and Heanor AS-C. Chris Gale, Historic Pubs Sec. Keith Normington, Raffles Organizer, Jeff Fletcher, CAMRA Sales. John Broadbent, Handpump Officer, Gill Burgess, Press Cuttings. John Griffiths, Beerex S-C C'man. Rog Robinson, Derby Branch Editor for Notts and Derby Drinker, Nottm 865007 Ext 35 (W), 30 Harrington Av Borrowash, Derby.

Miss Celanese Wants

A lot of good ideas and useful information are coming out of Tuesday Socials and other meetings. A number of these require help from members if they are going to get done.

First a consumer protection job. Don't want to say much about this, except that it involves a couple of instances (they could be dealt with separately) in which it appears that the beer drinking public are being conned - in one case at least it

(Miss Celanese Wants)

could well result in legal action by the appropriate authorities. What's needed is a member or members to fully investigate the situation and report back to the committee with findings, recommendations, and information on the appropriate steps to be taken. It may be necessary to draft out a couple of letters also. See Tim Williams,

Next, a notice board. This would be handy at meetings to pin up cuttings from the papers and letters received by the branch. It would need to be about 2' 6" squarish, light, and foldable to get into a car. Preferably it should be self-standing. Who is prepared to make one, and how much would it cost? See Tim Williams.

Then there are handpumps. John Broadbent is our main agent in this area. He already has a number of volunteers to help him when needed, but would always like to hear from more. He could also do with a chrome plate stripping expert to help him with a current job.

Finally please don't forget that the pub project at the Derby Museum still needs old pub items for loan or as a gift. Expertise also welcome. See Chris Gale or Reg Newcombe.

