

Derby Drinker



KEEPING YOU INFORMED ABOUT YOUR BEER

ISSUE No. 16

AUTUMN '86

FREE

EAST MIDLANDS TAKEOVER CHAOS

RUDDLES SWALLOWED

A small family brewing concern, based at Langham, Rutland, where the locals refuse to admit that they are now officially part of Leicestershire, Ruddles were, until now, independent, like the locals.

In the 1970's, Ruddles surprised everyone by selling off 35 of their 36 pubs, all except for the Noel Arms, adjacent to the brewery. This raised capital for expansion at a time when few other brewers were interested in real ale. Ruddles led the way, getting its premium County bitter into free houses all over the country, making particularly strong inroads into London and the South East.

Trading conditions became harder in the last few years as other brewers took up the challenge and now Ruddles has been swallowed, like so many small brewers before it, by one of the industry giants.

Grand Metropolitan have given convincing guarantees and assurances to Ruddle's Chairman, Tony Ruddle, that the future of the Langham brewery is in brewing Ruddle's beers.

Such assurances were given when Grand Met. took over both the Norwich Brewery and Wilsons of Manchester. Both have since been closed.

CAMRA fears that one of the most famous real ale breweries in the land will soon become yet another tombstone in the real ale graveyard.

The brewing industry in the East Midlands was thrown into confusion last month by the shock news of two brewery takeovers. First to go were Ruddles in rural Leicestershire, whose Chairman, Tony Ruddle, sold a majority shareholding to Grand Metropolitan, brewers of Watney's beers. Then the Farr family sold their 67% shareholding in Home Ales, in a 120 million pound deal with northern giants, Scottish and Newcastle.

Both predators have given assurances that their swallowed independents will continue brewing and retain their identities but, as we go to press in mid-August, there is increasing City speculation, denied by Scottish and Newcastle, that they might be about to make a bid for all or part of the Courage Group, themselves recently taken over by Hanson Trust.

Such a deal would give S & N a surplus of brewing capacity and closures would almost inevitably result.

In addition, S & N have made it clear that they have no intention of relinquishing their 30% stake in Matthew Brown, after their bid to

take over the Blackburn-based brewers failed by a hair's breadth in December last year.

Meanwhile, Australians Elders are thought to be turning their attention away from Allied-Lyons to a more affordable target. Since Elders' initial approach last year, Allied have been "beefing themselves up" by acquisitions of their own, to the extent that they are now worth 3 billion pounds, rather than the 1.8 billion which the original Elders bid amounted to.

An alternative bid for Courage at around 1.5 billion might be more within the reach of the Aussies' pockets.

COMMENT

Not too long ago in DERBY DRINKER we warned that it was only a matter of time before the East Midlands was hit by takeovers: now it's happened, and with a vengeance.

Just what is it about the brewing industry that so often stirs the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the Office of Fair Trading into action?

The tied house system is the main reason why breweries behave in this predatory manner. The takeover target is not the brewing plant, which is usually closed down pretty soon (despite assurances to the contrary), enabling the buyer's own brewing capacity to be better utilised and hence become more cost effective; the principal prey is the tied estate, which has no option

but to take the new owner's beer once this "rationalisation" is complete.

Simple, isn't it? But the tied house system is not the only iniquity. What about local monopolies, licensing hours, short measures, missing price lists, the excise duty system - in fact the whole kit and caboodle. We are pleased, that the Government has agreed to the proposal by Sir Gordon Borrie, director general of fair trading, that the M&MC should begin a new two-year enquiry into the brewing industry - but how much of it will there be left to report on in two years' time?

Meanwhile, how long before we're "treated" to Watney's County and Nottingham Brown?



**HOME
ALES
SCOTCHED**



**RUDDLES
SWALLOWED**

A SPECIAL TAKEOVERS REPORT
BY DAVID GEORGE, MIKE MEARA
AND NICK MEAKIN.

HOME-LESS!

The Home Ales takeover began last November, when the controlling Farr family approached Scottish and Newcastle with a view to selling. At the time of the takeover in mid-August, Home would make no comment, had not told their licensees and refused permission for CAMRA's East Midlands Organiser to be interviewed by television in any Home Ales Pub. S & N's Alick Rankin, however, was more forthcoming, giving details of the Farr family's approach and stating that, as the giant brewers needed the brewing capacity, the Daybrook brewery would remain open.

Immediately prior to the takeover, Home Ales had removed traditional cask conditioned beers from at least 17 of their pubs in the Nottingham area and were the subject of a Nottingham CAMRA campaign to reverse this policy and re-instate real ales.

The takeover, which takes S & N into fifth place in the pub ownership league with 2000 pubs, will almost certainly be the subject of a CAMRA submission to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, although they are thought to be virtually powerless to act in this case.

STEP BACK IN TIME TO THE
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Draught or Overdraft?

Mike Meara shows how pubs are taking a pounding

Any observer of today's pub scene will have noticed some disturbing trends of late:

- more licensees moving from pub to pub;
- more licensees leaving the trade before retirement age;
- more pubs up for sale or "temporarily closed".

Check the Bar Facts column in this issue to find just a few examples from recent weeks.

Financial pressures imposed by breweries and the Government, in the form of increases in rent, rates and the buy-in price of beer and other stock, are the main cause of these symptoms.

When you find that the price of your pint has gone up yet again, this is often because the brewery has increased its wholesale prices. Some licensees try to absorb such increases, wholly or partially, but this can't be done indefinitely.

Other causes of increased costs may not be so obvious. Faced with declining beer sales, many breweries try to claw back the cash from the publican, by increasing the rent when a pub changes tenants. Many instances have been reported to us.

If the new tenant then finds he can't make a living at the new rent, he may be forced to leave, whereupon the brewery can increase ... It's easy to see how this can become a vicious circle.

Michael Parkinson, writing in the Daily Mirror recently described his version of a "proper pub". He was slating pubs where "young people can play jukeboxes, slot machines, pool, and the like, thus breaking the Golden Rule that any game noisier than dominoes is not allowed in a Proper Pub."

He went on to attack lager, saying that fun pubs "sell the dreaded lager which is to decent beer what Kenneth Williams is to weightlifting." He continues: "a Proper Pub will contain large handpumps and creamy ale in straight glasses and there will be sandwiches made with tea cakes and none of that sliced bread."

Rural pubs face further threats which may ultimately prove fatal: the recent change in the way in which the Government distributes rate grants has placed a disproportionate financial burden on country pubs; to this must be added the threats to trade from the reduction in public transport in rural areas and the increasing healthy reluctance of people to drink and drive.

Naturally the pubs affected are fighting back as best they can, but the results are not always to the benefit of the beer-drinker. You must have had the experience of returning to a favoured but seldom-visited country pub, only to find yourself dodging the diners as you approach what's left of the bar, the clash of cutlery drowning even the musak and the taste of your pint losing out to the smell of cooking.

More and more pubs are becoming restaurants-with-bars in an effort to

survive - and who can blame them? - but generally they're no longer pleasant places to go just for a drink.

This piece was prompted by my recent discovery of a South Derbyshire licensee - both he and his tied house shall remain nameless - who has been forced out of the trade by just such financial pressures.

He's keen on real beer, serves an excellent pint, and his pub had been selected for 1987's National Good Beer Guide. However, he's recently suffered a swingeing rate rise, and was shortly expecting a rent rise to be imposed by the brewery.

He could cope with all this on his summer trade, he told me, but in winter? No chance! So in October he's leaving the pub and the trade possibly for good.

Derby CAMRA are sad to see him go, but I wonder how many other licensees too good to lose are contemplating or have already taken the same course of action?

A pub, however fine, is little good to its customers without a good licensee behind its doors and in its cellar. We are in danger of losing that great asset, and if we do, we (to quote Hilaire Belloc) "have lost the best of England."

RED BARREL

The next Labour government plans to introduce a series of controls on the advertising of alcoholic drinks, according to a new health charter published by the party.

Where's this Pub then?

by DAVID GEORGE

He continues: "The landlord will be a master of one of life's great sciences - the upkeep of ale. The Proper Pub is one of our great traditions and an important part of our heritage. Today's alternatives are obnoxious impostors."

Strong stuff - and it got me thinking about my idea of the perfect pub. Michael Parkinson's views have many supporters in CAMRA, but what about the warming glow of a coal fire on a dank winter's evening, or the colourful blooms of a well-tended garden where you can lazily sup your ale on a hot summer's day.

Then there's the tinkling of the piano and the tuneless vocalising of the Friday night rabble and their ale-induced tone-deafness, or the ever-so-serious darts team as they take on the opposition in a last-gasp effort not to finish bottom of the league - and when they have, they treat the sandwiches, pork pie and black pudding as though it were champagne and the World Cup was theirs.

The surroundings are basic, but clean - simple wooden furniture and a tiled floor laid by Italian migrant workers in the last century, and the walls are filled with the landlord's second love be it steam trains, racehorses, breweriana or the local football team - anything but horse-brasses!

What's your idea of the ideal pub? We'll print any well-written descriptive personal view of around 200 words, and there's a pint on us for each one published.



BAR FACTS

By Phil McCarryKeg

IND COOPE SELLING SPREE (Pt 311)

The George Hotel, King Street, Alfreton, the Three Horseshoes, Long Lane and the Durham Ox, Derby are the latest Ind Coope & Allsopp pubs to go on the market. The George Hotel, a Grade 2 Listed building, has been sold; shops and offices are planned as well as a restaurant and cocktail bar in the basement.

MANSFIELD SELLING SPREE (Pt 1)

Mansfield don't do things piece-meal - they've sold 78 pubs to Camerons. Locally, there are two: the Glass House at Codnor and the Prince of Wales, Butterley Hill, Ripley. Is "real" Camerons too much to hope for in these pubs?

FREE CHANGE!

More pubs for sale! The York Tavern, York Street, Derby and the Cock Inn, Mugginton are both on the market. Another "real" free house to change is the Knight Fall, Agard Street, Derby, which has reverted to its former name, the Golden Eagle and has handpumped Wards and Darley Thorne Bitter. Also selling the latter is the Bartlewood Lodge at Ockbrook, and beers from the same group (Vaux) are also available at the Lawns, Chellaston and the Cavendish, just across the Leicestershire border from Shardlow.

VINE HOPPING

Vines in Sadlergate, Derby now serves Ind Coope Bitter, Burton Ale and Ansells Bitter, whereas at the Vine, Whittaker Street, Derby you can now drink M&B Mild as well as Bass before the short walk to the Baseball Ground.



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FESTIVAL RECORDS SMASHED

The Ninth Derby CAMRA Beer Festival was the most successful yet as Derby's drinkers again flocked to the biggest event in the City's social year.

At the biggest regional or local Beer Festival in Britain - only the Great British Beer Festival in Brighton is bigger - record after record tumbled;

- The 1510 Wednesday night attendance was the best opening night crowd yet.
- Friday night revellers drank more than in any other session of any Derby Beer Festival.
- The Saturday lunchtime crowd of 1094 set an all time best.
- The total attendance of 9322 was 22 more than the previous best in 1984.

- A total of 31,550 pints drunk smashed all previous records.
- 108 people joined CAMRA.

Add to that the general improvement in beer quality and availability and the usual superb entertainment and you can see why both organisers and punters alike were happy.

Next year's Festival - the Tenth Derby CAMRA Beer Festival - will also celebrate the 10th anniversary of Derby's City Charter granted in the Queens Silver Jubilee year and will be held from July 8th - 11th.

Bass Label

BASS has paid £8.5m for the Carling and Carling Black Label trade marks, which they have used under franchise for the last 30 years. The money was paid to Canadian brewers Carling O'Keefe, a subsidiary of Rothmans of Pall Mall. The deal gives Bass the lager trade marks in Britain and the rest of Europe.

Hot Souvenir Glasses

We always intended that the distinctive souvenir glasses we produce for each Derby Beer Festival should form part of a collection but we didn't realise until now just how collectable they have become.

We heard about someone who had a break-in at his house last year - and the main items taken were his collection of Beer Festival glasses, dating back to the very first, from 1978. This particular story had a

happy ending, however, as the regulars at his local got together and presented him with a replacement set on his birthday this year.

If you are just starting your collection, or are maybe just searching for that one elusive year's glass that you missed, we would advise you that the two years which seem to be the most difficult to find are 1978, when relatively few were produced for the first Derby Festival, as we had no idea of likely demand and, surprisingly 1983 (with the yellow logo). As there were plenty produced, there seems to be no reason why this year should be more difficult to find.

And before you ask, the Derby Branch of CAMRA sold the last of its stock of previous year's glasses at this year's Festival.

So, if anyone offers you a full set of Festival glasses going cheap, I should check with Shaw Taylor first, know what I mean, John?

Give us strength

THE Government has rejected the idea of health warnings on alcoholic drinks. Junior health minister, Ray Whitney, however went on to announce that the EEC has just decided on measures that require the alcoholic strength to be indicated on all drinks in excess of 1.2pc alcohol.

Nottingham Beer Festival

Thursday 16th - Saturday 18th October
at the
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(nr Sneinton Market)
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*Around 100 Beers from 40 Breweries
Subject to availability
Plus a range of soft drinks and ciders
Souvenir Glasses on Sale*

Live Evening Entertainment

11.00 - 2.30 Lunch 6.00 - 10.00 Evening
Admission - Lunch - FREE, Evening - £1.00
(Free to card carrying CAMRA members)

PASS THIS COPY OF DERBY DRINKER TO A FRIEND

DRY THORNE

Darleys of Thorne in South Yorkshire whose beer is becoming increasingly available locally has brewed its last batch at Thorne. All production has been transferred to fellow Vaux subsidiary, Wards of Sheffield. The Group says both trading names will be retained.

TRINIANS

The Beer Festival programme notes on Mansfield Ales stated that "Derby's Trinians on London Road is due to be renamed and reopened this autumn". At the time of the Festival Trinians was still open and Derby CAMRA regrets and apologises for the implication that the pub had already closed.

The now unnamed pub is (as we go to press) closed and we look forward to its reopening and being able to drink Mansfield XXXX in Derby once again.

Join the 'INN' Crowd

CAMRA membership is steadily increasing - 108 new members at the Beer Festival joined the campaign to fight brewery takeovers, preserve our traditional pubs and beers and enjoy ourselves.

Our meetings are lively and informal, as are our much varied socials and coach trips and we need all the help we can get to run the Beer Festival, distribute Derby Drinker and survey pubs. Needless to say, most of our activities involve the consumption of traditional beers so if you would like to join us or find out more about CAMRA see us at one of the meetings or socials shown on the back page.

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- 1/We agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.

NAME(S)

ADDRESS

Full/Husband & Wife Membership for one year £9.00

or Full/H & W overseas membership for one year £12.00

* Delete as appropriate.

Please send your remittance (payable to CAMRA Ltd) with this completed Application Form to: Tim Williams, 39 Breedon Hill Road, Derby.

Festival Competition Winners

IF YOU didn't go to the Derby Beer Festival, - shame on you! - you didn't just miss over 40 beers and ciders in superb condition, served in convivial surroundings, you also missed THREE editions of Derby Drinker.

Retitled FESTIVAL DRINKER for the occasion and, admittedly lacking the usual high quality typeset finish, the Drinker was distributed free to all who attended the festival, with one issue each on Thursday, Friday and Saturday bringing the latest news of the progress of the event. It's all part of our aim to bring you an all-round entertainment package

- rather than just a massive boozing session.

After the Saturday lunchtime editions had been distributed, two Festival Drinker competitions were judged and, as a result, Festival Fivers are on their way to Steve Hand, 47 Peet Street, Derby, the first correct entrant drawn from the "Word Game" entries and Matt Pollard, all the way from 103 Sandall Park Drive, Wheatley Hills, Doncaster, who contributed the caption; "The guy with the big ears just pinched my bum!" to the Prince Charles Visits The Pub Competition. Our thanks to all who entered both competitions.



Pen a Caption - Win a Fiver

Put a witty caption to the above cartoon, send it to us on a postcard together with your name and address and the pub where you picked up your Derby Drinker and you could be a fiver better off! The most witty caption - in the opinion of the editorial team will be judged the winner. Entries should be sent to: CAPTION COMPETITION, 40 Weston Park Gardens, Shelton Lock, Derby, DE2 9EU to reach us no later than 25th October. Everyone (including Grannies) may enter.

EUROBOOZIN'

The licensee of the Durham Ox, Ilkeston tells us that he is organising a trip to the Oranjeboom Brewery of Rotterdam, continuing on to Brussels and the Wiez Beer Festival.

All this happens during 2nd-5th October at a cost of about £85 a head. If you fancy a Dutch (and Belgian) treat, talk to him on Ilkeston 324570.

Wot, no sweet peas?

Parish councillors at Sandiacre have been giving thought to how best to deal with the problem of late night revellers on their way home having a sneaky leak against a fence near Springfield Park.

It was suggested that thorn bushes, planted at strategic intervals along the fence, would "inconvenience" the cross-legged nocturnal visitors.

One councillor suggested that "the pricklier the bushes are, the better." Why not go the whole hog and plant giant Venus Flytraps?

Truly, the kind of story that brings tears to your eyes.

DERBY CAMRA DIARY

Everyone is welcome at Derby CAMRA socials and meetings. For more information about these events phone Social Secretary Pat Meara on Derby 663332.

TUESDAY SOCIALS - 9.15 pm

16th September - Portland Hotel, London Road, Derby (Home); 23rd September - Rose & Crown, Boylestone (Marston); 30th September - Grandstand Hotel, Nottingham Road, Derby (Banks's); 7th October - Great Northern, Junction Street, Derby (Ind Coope), [N.B. if closed then Junction Tavern (Marston)]; 14th October - Olde Bear, Alderwasley (Bass); 21st October - Alexander, Siddals Road, Derby (Shipstone); 28th October - Bridge Inn, Mansfield Road, Derby (Ind Coope); 4th November - Victoria Hotel, Victoria Road, Draycott (Marston); 11th November - Maypole, Brook Street, Derby (Home); 18th November - Osmaston Park Hotel, Osmaston Park Road, Derby (Ind Coope).

BRANCH MEETINGS - 8.00 pm

Thursday 9th October - Swann Inn, Milton (Marston); Wednesday 12th November - Liversage Arms, Nottingham Road, Derby (Marston).

TRIPS - BOOK EARLY

Wednesday 17th September - Ind Coope Brewery trip departs Council House 6.45 pm; Saturday 20th September - self-drive minibus to Buxton; Friday 31st October - self-drive minibus (route to be arranged); Tuesday 18th November - all-day trip to Matthew Brown brewery, Blackburn.

ALL WELCOME

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BAR FACTS

By Phil McCarryKeg

MORE BEER

Real ale comes to the Osmaston Park Hotel, Derby where Ind Coope Burton Ale and Ansells Mild are available. The Gate at Swanwick has introduced "real" John Smith's Bitter and the Thorntree, Chesterfield Road, Belper is selling Draught Bass.

WEM IN and more Booze Nooze

No, it's not a feminist slogan - the Navigation at Shardlow has taken out the Flowers Original Bitter and replaced it with Wem Special Bitter. Ind Coope Bitter has been replaced by Burton Ale at the Royal Standard, Derwent Street, Derby and at the White Hart, Openwoodgate. The Punch Bowl at West Hallam has both, and the Grampian, Sinfin sells four real ales - Pedigree, Burton Bitter, Mercian Mild and Merrie Monk, and if he could get Border ... but that's another story ...

FERRET FEATURES!

Doris, the mild drinking ferret owned by Derby Drinker reader, Tim Webb, is to feature in a future edition of Omnibus.

Tim's trouser travelling imbibor, we are told, can drink her owner under the table (should that be under the ground - Ed!)

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* THE ONES YOU MISS WHEN NOT A MEMBER!

P.S. THANKS TO DAVID AND TERRY FOR SICK (SIC) JOKE!

Further information and details on all aspects of Derby CAMRA and the Campaign for Real Ale can be had from any of the following local contacts: Chairman/DERBY DRINKER editor: David George, 40 Weston Park Gardens, Shelton Lock, Derby, DE2 9EU. (Tel. Derby 701554). MILD & BITTER editor: Mike Meara, 61 Borrowash Rd., Spondon, Derby. (Tel. Derby 663332).

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