



KEEPING YOU INFORMED ABOUT YOUR BEER

ISSUE No. 26

AUTUMN '88

FREE

WILL THERE BE ANOTHER?



Staff Crisis Threatens Festival Future

Derby CAMRA faced a potentially disastrous staff shortage at the eleventh hour of its eleventh Beer Festival. Only days before

setting up for the festival was due to begin, levels of volunteers were still critically low for most of the seven sessions.

Meanwhile, at Committee level, many possible solutions — some drastic — were being discussed: we could close some of the bars for part of each session, concentrating the available staff in the remainder of the hall; we would limit the numbers of the public admitted to the worst-hit sessions, to allow the staff to cope; we would mailshot all CAMRA members in the Derby Branch area, asking for their support; we would advertise for staff in key pubs in Derby, offering to make a donation to a charity of choice on behalf of anyone volunteering their help.

In the final reckoning, the measures we took to remedy the situation were in some cases too successful, and there is no denying that we were actually overstaffed for some of the time. Though we came through unscathed, we would be foolish to ignore the warning we were given. We feel that the problem lies within CAMRA itself, and that the solution is simple to state but difficult to achieve: **new blood**.

Over the years, local CAMRA members who brought in lots of non-CAMRA helpers at Festival time have become inactive or have left the area. Many of them have not been replaced.

Some members of this year's Beer Festival Committee have been involved with the organisation of the festival since it started in 1978; others have been around almost as long. Some of them, I feel sure, would like to take a less active role.

There will be a major discussion on this topic at Derby CAMRA's branch meeting on Thursday, 13th October at the White Hart, Aston-on-Trent. Member or not, you're invited to come along and air your views, or better still, offer your help.

To answer the title's question: maybe not — unless you're prepared to do more than just enjoy the Derby Beer Festival.

Your Festival Queries Answered — see page 3.

THE ALEX — LAST ORDERS?

Ivor Clissold hopes not.

In the early months of 1974 a tall stranger rode into town. His mission was to 'test support' for a Derby branch of CAMRA and as his mode of transport was rail he unsurprisingly discovered the Alexandra. So it was that Derby CAMRA was born in this pleasant edifice at the end of Siddals Road.

The Alex started life in the 1880's as a Zachariah Smith's house and it is possible that early deliveries from the Shardlow brewery were via the Derby canal, which had a branch passing the side of the pub. But by the time of our association with it Shipstone's mild and bitter were sold, usually in superb condition by Flo Fox and Albert. Little had changed within and the pub still had its wood and glass dividing screens with brass snicket latches. The original back fitting contained a fine set of spirit taps, once fed from casks on the top shelf.

The Alex had obviously seen better days. Perhaps its heyday was during the Great War, when all three bars were a sea of khaki as youths awaited their trains to the docks, the front and Armageddon. But it was still a popular pub and

though the upstairs bar had not been used since the 50's the ground floor was lively enough, with thrice-weekly sing-songs round Connie's piano in the lounge.

When Flo retired one wondered what would become of the place, but Peter Chambers ran the house along similar lines and with similar regard for the clock. The last tenants however closed promptly, and a lot of trade seemed to melt away. The tenant hung on hoping to get some spin-off from the re-opening of the nearby Brunswick but the Alex was not made welcoming enough to take advantage of the situation. The piano had by this time been replaced by a pool table — beery sing-songs replaced by clicking balls and sips of lager.

The final blow appeared in the form of the Public Health inspector, who found the outside gent's urinal not to his taste. The ladies, too, lacked a certain style. The bill for bringing these facilities up to scratch is believed to be around £7,000, which was too much for Messrs. Shipstone. The pub's last trading session was on Monday, 27th June and the shutters were up by Wednesday. It is understood that one or two locals attended the wake armed with screwdrivers, so we may never see those snicket latches and spirit taps again.

The brewery has refused to discuss the future of the Alex. We understand that Desborough's, the opposite neighbour, is interested in the site. We are far more interested in the Alex as a pub. It can be made to work profitably, but it needs the sort of vision exhibited at the Brunswick and so rarely found amongst breweries.

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BAR FACTS

By Phil McCarrykeg

Ashbourne Ales

Ian Woolley of the **Bowling Green**, Ashbourne, tells us he's trying out guest beers at weekends. Taylor's Landlord, Burton Bridge and Archer's are just some he's had on recently. Sounds worth climbing the hill for!

Cellar's Market

Unprecedented activity in the marketplace of late has seen the sale of no less than three pubs in Belper — the **Queen's**, the **Thorn Tree** and the **Railway** — and the **George**, Alfreton. The **King's Head**, Duffield was up for auction at press-time, and the **Tiger** at Turnditch is also up for sale.

Robin Head

Two pubs in Mickleover have received a recent facelift: the **Robin**, a Bass pub on Devonshire Drive, has been refurbished, and the **Nag's Head**, as reported last time, is now open again after a major revamping, and very popular it is too, I'm told.

Amber Nectar

Good news for drinkers in Ripley and Heanor: the **Talbot** on Butterley Hill, Ripley, formerly a Shipstones pub and closed for a while, has been bought by John Smith; and the oddly-named **Rays Arms** — sounds like a holdup in a health clinic — on Ray Street, Heanor has been acquired by Hoskins from Allied.

More from George

Bateman's are making their presence felt in our local free houses: Their beers are on trial at the **King William IV**, Milford, the **Crompton Tavern**, Crompton Street, Derby and the **Bull's Head**, Denby.

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Low-Down on Low Alcohol

CAMRA'S CONCLUSIONS

• **HOODWINK:** Low-alcohol brews are all image and nothing much else. Our taste test found them either bland and characterless or else downright revolting. Much more effort goes into the packaging than goes into the taste.

• **IMPURE:** Not one UK-produced brand was found to be free of additives and adjuncts, some of which may be harmful. Only the German and Swiss brands are pure.

• **RIP-OFF:** Pub prices of low-alcohol drinks are higher than those of almost all types of normal strength beers, despite the brewers' saving on Excise Duty.

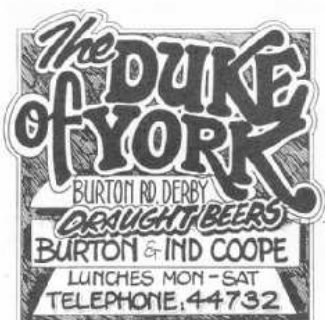
• **DRIVING:** Low-alcohol brews are little use to drivers. Terms used to define strengths, which vary a great deal, create confusion.

• **VARIETY:** 17 of the 22 brands are lagers. There are no low-alcohol milds or stouts and not many ales.



ADDITIVES

Low-alcohol brews may contain: Caramel (E150), used for colouring; Sodium Metabisulphite (E223) and Potassium Metabisulphite (E224), used as preservatives; Ascorbic Acid (E300), Sodium L-Ascorbate (E301) and Citric Acid (E330), used as antioxidants; Propylene Glycol Alginate (E405) which has a range of uses; Aspartame (a synthetic sweetener); Papain (an enzyme used for chill-proofing).



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CAMRA has just published a major report on these currently-fashionable drinks. Its findings (see box) do not make pleasant reading, either for the brewers of these substances or those who might be tempted to try them.

The authors back up their conclusions with a wealth of fascinating historical and technical detail which shows that, not surprisingly, what the Big Brewers are telling us is by no means the whole story . . .

Small Beer

Low-alcohol beer is not new; it's been drunk in the UK since the Middle Ages.

The earliest examples were made simply by re-mashing of the barley malt — like a second cup of tea from the same tea-bags. Naturally the end-product was pretty weak, and was known as Small Beer. It was used as a substitute for water, often a dodgy drink in those days, and by heavy manual labourers as part-payment for their work.

How It's Done

There are two basic approaches to making low-alcohol beers. You can modify the fermentation process so that less alcohol is produced, or you can brew the beer normally, then take the alcohol out — sorry, out — afterwards. Most of the best brands on the market use a combination of both methods.

The problem is in getting a product that tastes like standard beer. What passes a small taste test may fail as a 'session' beer.

Big Business

In the past two years, consumption of low-alcohol beers has quadrupled to create a market worth over £45 million per year. This is expected to increase tenfold by the end of the century.

Here's Health

We're consuming less alcohol (at least in the form of beer) anyway: the average gravity (strength) of UK-produced beer has fallen by 32% since the turn of the century, and the consumption per head has fallen 12% since 1979.

Weight-watchers beware: some of these beers are low in calories (e.g. Barbican, 71 calories per pint) but some are not (Clausthaler has 159 per pint). Confusing for calorie-counters.

Lastly, anyone concerned about more healthy living who does switch, even partially, to low-alcohol brews must weigh up the disadvantages of consuming all those additives (see above left) that are found in so many of the brands.

Drink-Drive Dangers?

The majority of the brewers surveyed by CAMRA seem to have little idea of how consumption of their low-alcohol products affects blood alcohol levels. Replies such as 'you would drown first', or 'we don't know for the large volume drinker', or no reply at all, are not very helpful. Only six brewers had clear ideas or had run any sort of test.

Additives

The presence of additives may be a cause for concern (see box); brands which fail to specify all their ingredients certainly are. CAMRA thinks that terms such as 'flavourings', 'enzyme' and 'stabiliser' are evasive, and will be taking up these cases with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

No Taste

A CAMRA panel of five tasters including Michael Jackson, author of *The World Guide to Beer* and Andrea Gillies, editor of *The Good Beer Guide*, tasted 18 of the 22 low-alcohol brews regularly available in the UK. They were asked to give marks out of 20 for Taste, Appearance and Durability. The panelists' scores were then added to give a score out of 100 for each category.

The best overall were Sainsbury's LA Lager/Clausthaler (they're the same beer packaged differently), scoring 57%, 70% and 51% respectively in the three categories; 'Pleasantly sweet . . . good nose . . . perfumed aroma' was what they said.

At the other end of the scale was Allied's St. Christopher, scoring 19%, 52% and 10% respectively; 'Tastes of added chemicals . . . vile aroma' was the verdict.

Note how even the lowest-rated on taste scores well for appearance. This was a common feature, and shows the importance the brewers put on looks and marketing.

Paying the Price

CAMRA's latest annual prices survey shows an average price of 82p for ale in the 1030-1035 gravity band; the average low-alcohol ale cost 99p. The discrepancy for lager is even greater: 97p for standard 1030-1035 OG lager, £1.22 for low-alcohol lager.

The Low-Down

Low-alcohol brews are basically the latest faddish manifestation of the Great Lager Rip-off which is blighting the good name of British beer and having disastrous effects on the traditional British pub.

Me? I'll have an orange juice, thanks; freshly-squeezed, is possible.

DRINKER!
Comment

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OPTICIAN To test the vision of managers who presently couldn't see a business opportunity if it stared them in the face.

DONORS To give guts and spine to decision makers who, when faced with competition, cut and run at the first opportunity.

1. Guess which Nottingham brewer to apply to.
2. Guess which one we made up.

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Further information on all aspects of Derby CAMRA can be had from any of the following contacts: Chairman — Phil James, 1 Hill Brow, Derby (Tel: Derby 385933), Mild and Bitter Editor — Mike Meara, 61 Borrowash Road, Spondon (Tel: Derby 663332).

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Wagons Roll Again in Long Eaton

The recently-opened **Tapper's Harker** on Main Street, Long Eaton is Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries' first pub in the town.

Named after the hammer used to detect cracks in the wheels of rolling stock, its stands on the site of the former Long Eaton waggon works.

In common with W & D's other pubs in the area, it sells only cask-conditioned beers, with no keg available except for lager.

By 1990 the brewery hopes to have a second pub in Long Eaton, on Wilsthorpe Road, and to have built a further two in Derby to keep the **Grandstand** and the **Needles** company. Bank's fans will be pleased to know that they also have two pubs in Nottingham: the **Milestone** and the **Navigation**.



Axe the Ash!

Frank Brown of Redwood Road, Sinfin Moor, writes in response to our item last issue on smoke-free bars:

Perhaps the fairest decision on smoking or non-smoking would follow a referendum of bar (or lounge) users.

As more and more pubs are providing meals, where children can accompany adults, I would like to see segregation more clearly adhered to.

As a non-smoker I have, on opening windows, had smoke blown in my direction — in a jovial manner, I might add, but I find little amusement in such activities, and would welcome segregation, or at the very least, better extraction that doesn't need reminders to bar staff to switch it on.

I would like to see a return to Smoke Rooms in pubs, but I feel that the more modern approach of open-plan pubs would make it impossible.

Perhaps one way of segregation would be to have different days for smoking and non-smoking; maybe a good day to start would be the next 'No Smoking Day' in 1989, and if it proved successful, have one a month, one a week, or every other day.

Thanks for writing, Frank. Anyone care to argue the opposite viewpoint? (We should point out that the editorial team are strictly neutral — one smokes, the other doesn't!)

Please pass this copy of Derby Drinker to a friend

YOUR FESTIVAL QUERIES ANSWERED

1. Do the breweries provide all the beer free?

They certainly don't! Derby CAMRA buy all the beer at commercial rates — normally the brewer's Free Trade tariff.

2. Can unsold beer be sent back?

Certainly — but we only get our money back if the beer is faulty or if the cask hasn't been vented. A co-operative brewer may allow us to claim back the Excise Duty paid on unsold beer returned, but it means extra paperwork for him.

3. How does the beer get here?

Those brewers — usually five or six — with local outlets will deliver; the rest of the beer we have to collect. Volunteer HGV drivers make one or more collection runs using hired lorries. After the Festival, the empty casks have to be returned or collected.

4. Who pays the staff?

Nobody. Our barpersons and other staff are all volunteers who help for the love of it rather than for money. A couple of free pints per session worked is their only reward — apart from aching limbs, bloodshot eyes

and the satisfaction of a job well done!

5. Why have a special floor?

Understandably, the City Council doesn't want beer spilt on its nice, expensive, sprung wooden dance floor. To stop any spills getting through, layers of carpet, underlay and polythene are put down over the entire area before the false floor is laid.

6. Where does this false floor come from?

It was once used at the King's Hall, to enable the swimming baths to be used as a concert hall in winter. Fortunately it suits its new role just as well.

7. How does it get there?

A team of hired 'humpers' collect the floor sections from storage, delivers them to the Assembly Rooms and loads them onto the stage lift at ground level. CAMRA members and other volunteers then bring the lift up to Great Hall level, unload and lay the floor, then stagger off exhausted for several pints with chip-butties chasers. (Well, I do, anyway).

Why Alcohol and Sex don't mix

Alcohol's reputation as a sexual stimulant for men is, I'm afraid, undeserved. Doctors rate it high on promise, low on performance!

According to Dr. Morris Chafetz (former Director of America's National Institute of Alcohol and Alcoholism), 'Alcohol has aphrodisiac gifts, but all have a price. With more than moderate amounts of alcohol, desire persists but performance dies.' In everyday parlance this is known as 'brewer's droop'.

But there's more to it than this; the heavy drinker may have the appetite of Don Juan but the

performance of Tiny Tim because the natural balance of the male sex hormone (called testosterone) is upset by alcohol.

The rate of elimination is greater in heavy drinkers, and its production goes down at the same time. A male drinker with liver disease can even develop feminine characteristics such as enlarged breasts and feminine distribution of body hair.

We just thought you'd like to know — but don't worry too much. A 'heavy drinker' here is defined as 'coming close to a pint of spirits a day'. (We make that about twelve pints of beer).

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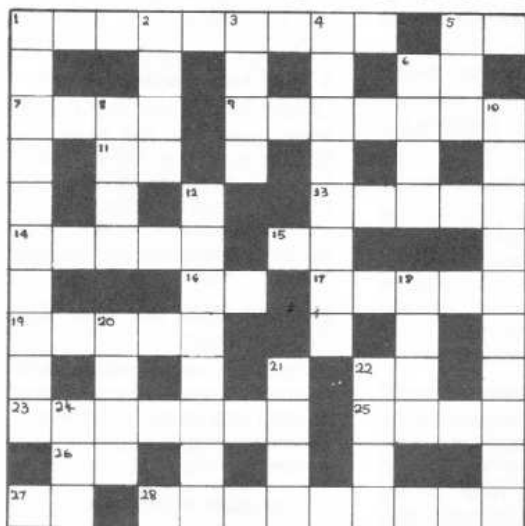
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Across

1. Weak ale, old-style (5,4)
5. In the direction of (2)
6. Number one, personally speaking (2)
7. Cross the ford for their juggled ales? (4)
9. Premium bitter (e.g. Young's) (7)
11. In the same degree (2)
13. Bequeath or give permanent income to (5)
14. Cliffs, stockings and heart attacks are this (3)
15. Not out (2)
16. Indefinite article (2)
17. The sum (5)
19. Combustion products valued by some cricketers (5)
22. Italian river gozunda the bed? (2)
23. Marine condiment (3,4)
25. Heptannual irritation suffered by spouses? (4)
26. Expressing exact or approximate position (2)
27. The thing in question (2)
28. Former venue for your festival fun (5,4)

Down

1. Pub with celestial hosts — Paul and Joanne! (5,5)
2. Brewers of Moonraker (4)

Hitting the Nail . . .

When asked why the sleepy town of Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucs., was expecting its third successive weekend of lager-laced street violence, Acting Inspector Timothy Pennington put the trouble down to rowdy elements 'drinking on an empty head.'



WE'LL WHEAT AGAIN!

North-east independents, Vaux of Sunderland, are launching Britain's first wheat beer for well over a century.

The new 5% alcohol brew, named Weizenbier, is brewed at Vaux's Yorkshire subsidiary, Wards of Sheffield. It went on sale initially in nine pubs, including three in Sheffield itself.

It is made according to Reinheitsgebot purity standards, from only malted wheat, malted barley, hops, yeast and water.

Operations Director at Sunderland, Stuart Wilson, explained the thinking behind this remarkable first: 'We have noted the popularity of wheat beers in West Germany and the USA. Wheat beers are 15% of the Bavarian beer market. So with the increasing interest in

speciality beers, we have decided to brew this classic style.'

Weizenbier is dispensed from ornate ceramic founts. Special badged glasses are used for the brew, and lemon is available for those who prefer to complete the Bavarian picture.

International beer writer Michael Jackson writes: 'Weizenbier is German for "wheat beer" and is the term used in Bavaria, where this style is enjoying a revival. Having formerly owned breweries in Belgium and the USA, Vaux is perhaps more aware than other British companies of the international trends in speciality brewing.'

Vaux invite consumer inquiries on Weizenbier. Call Mike Berriman on 091 5676277.

DERBY CAMRA DIARY

Everyone is welcome at Derby CAMRA socials and meetings. For more information about these events phone Social Secretary, Paul Gibson on Derby 32558.

Tuesday Socials - 9.15 pm

20th September — Travellers Rest, Draycott (Marston). **27th September** — Vine, Whittaker Street, Derby (Bass). **4th October** — Brunswick Inn, Railway Terrace, Derby (Free). **11th October** — Brick & Tile, Brick Street, Derby (Allied). **18th October** — Smithfield, Meadow Road, Derby (Bass). **25th October** — Hollybush, Marchay, Ripley (Shipstone). **1st November** — Brunswick Inn Railway Terrace, Derby (Free). **8th November** — Golden Eagle, Agard Street, Derby (Free). **15th November** — Red Cow, Allestree (Bass). **22nd November** — Navigation, Shardlow (Davenport). **29th November** — Silk Mill, Full Street, Derby (Whitbread).

Branch Meetings - 8 pm

Thursday, 13th October — White Hart, Aston-on-Trent (Marston). **Wednesday, 9th November** — Dolphin (Officer's Room), Queen Street, Derby (Bass).

Beer Festivals

October 20th-22nd: Nottingham Beer Festival. **Saturday, 19th November:** Alfreton Beer Festival.



REV



CORRECTION: Alfreton Beer Festival is on SATURDAY 22nd OCTOBER