



CAMPAIN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

# DD

## DURHAM DRINKER

SPRING 2010

ISSUE 103



**HERITAGE PUB**

PHOTO BY MICHAEL SLAUGHTER LRPS

## Another one Bites the Dust

We were hoping to write an article about the Blackhorse Inn at Cornsay village which closed last April, to highlight the plight of rural pubs but the ex-Landlord and property owner, Gary Natrass has ask us to refrain and we will respect that wish except to quote Hilaire Belloc:

*"When you have lost the last of your inns, drown your empty selves for you will have lost the last of England."*

"Nearly 6 pubs a day closing"  
– Mike Benner, CAMRA Chief Executive.

*Cover photo: Victoria Hotel, Hallgarth Street.*

## Pub Shorts

Durham CAMRA *Pub of the Year 2010* is the **Surtees Arms**, Ferryhill.

Durham CAMRA *Club of the Year 2010* is the **Chester-Le-Street Cricket Club**

*The Half Moon* in the city has installed a 5<sup>th</sup> hand-pull.

The **Dun Cow** in Seaton Village is now run by the owner and serves Black Sheep Bitter, Taylors Landlord and a guest ale.

Also in Seaton the GBG **Seaton Lane Inn's** hotel extension opened last year with 18 rooms, one of which has disabled facilities.

Peggy's Wicket at Beamish now called the **Beamish Arms**, reports increased cask ale sales and has a beer festival planned.

Still with Beamish, John Taylor at the **Stables Bar** in Beamish Hall plans to run his 2<sup>nd</sup> beer festival in September.

Weatherspoon's International Real Ale Festival is running at the **Waterhouse** North Road, from 7<sup>th</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> April

Alan Hogg of the **Surtees Arms**, Ferryhill has won the Darlington Spring thing Beer Festival *Beer of the Festival* with "Yards Spring Triple Tipple" – 4.2%

The **Duke of Wellington**, High Barnes, Darlington Road, owned by Ember Inns has re-opened after a "facelift" and features (3)-1/3 pint glasses in a rack for tasting for less than £2.

Fancy a meal ?

[www.blackhorsebeamish.co.uk](http://www.blackhorsebeamish.co.uk)

The old Vaux pub with the ceiling matchbox collection, extensively refurbished.

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## It Takes All Sorts

Beer Tickers are "enthusiasts" who visit CAMRA and pub beer festivals in the hope of finding a new or obscure brew and mark it for quality. At the Durham Beer Festival, we cater for this section by trying to obtain "ticker" beers at 33% of the total order. Then there are real ale anoraks, who love to combine a train journey with a pub crawl.

In the BBC program *Oz and James Drink to Britain* Oz Clarke and James May visited small breweries, pubs and cider makers throughout the country. In one episode these two attempted the *Transpennine Real Ale Trail* or "Rail Ale Trail" travelling between Stalybridge and Batley on the cross country trains and sampling the ale at pubs near the stops.

The website [www.realaletrail.net](http://www.realaletrail.net) has a full description with photos of the good pubs nearest the stations, so even if you don't consider yourself a ticker or anorak but want to do something different.....

*Eddie Turner*

## Beer Winners

The Durham CAMRA *Beers of the Year* 2010 are:

<u>Bitters:</u>	Consett Aleworks Cast Iron 4.1%	<u>Best Bitters:</u>	Mordue Workieticket 4.5%
<u>Strong Bitters:</u>	Allendale Wolf 5.5 %	<u>Golden Ales:</u>	Wylam Gold Tankard 4.0%
<u>Speciality Beers:</u>	Durham Vice 4.6%	<u>Stouts:</u>	Jarrow McConnell's Irish Stout 4.6%
<u>Porters:</u>	Wylam Haugh 4.6%	<u>Bottled Beer:</u>	Durham Temptation 10%

## Sneaky and Cynical

When the Chancellor reduced VAT in December 2008 to 15%, the Treasury increased the duty on alcohol and petrol so that drinkers and motorists would not benefit by lower prices. The Chancellor cited health and the environment as his excuse for this rise. When VAT reverted to 17.5% on January 1<sup>st</sup> this year the measure amounted to 2.5% increase in alcohol and petrol duty as can be seen by the swift action of the petrol companies at the pumps and the increase of a pint in many pubs. On top of this is the budget duty increase of 5%, which means beer duty has risen 25% in the last two years.

In another time and place such a shameless move would be met with howls of protest and derision but shame is in short supply these days at all level of society especially among the political classes.

*Eddie Turner*

### The Half Moon Inn

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### **Does your beer smell of Butterscotch?**

It's the Diacetyl which is a natural by-product of the fermentation process. It is detectable at 50 parts per billion to some people and at 3000 parts per billion to almost everyone else. At lower levels it can give the beer a "slick" mouth-feel but at higher levels it takes on a toffee butterscotch flavour and at really high levels it will produce a taste like rancid butter.

Most diacetyl is produced in the early stages of fermentation as a waste product of the yeast and is naturally re-absorbed by the yeast towards the end of the process, however, sometimes the yeast cannot absorb all the diacetyl before the brewer decides fermentation is complete.

All need not be lost, as a post fermentation period of 12-24hrs at around 14°C should allow the yeast to cure the problem.

Brewers don't consider the presence of diacetyl as an indication of poor practice but simply that the beer tastes better without it.

*The flying Brewer*

## Real Ale is good for the Bones

Says who? – The University of California that's who. Their research which was published in the Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture found that beers with a higher barley and hop content contain increased levels of silicon, an element which helps strengthen the bones of the skeletal. Of course if this fact does not also carry a warning, we will have the thought police on our backs, so don't go thinking you can get regularly plastered on the brew and you'll escape osteoporosis. These findings apply to moderate beer consumption.

The silicon found in husk of the barley is much higher than that of wheat and real ale from craft brewers is known to have a higher barley maltose ratio than massed produced beers and lagers from national and global breweries. So what about the hop? Well they

give aroma and bitterness to the brew and the nettle's acids, tannins and resins have a preserving anti-bacterial effect. During research in the U.S. into the hop flower used in beer, the anti-oxidant xanthohumol\* was discovered, albeit in small quantities. Cereals such as barley contain high levels of the B vitamins niacin, riboflavin and folate and beer like wine is a source of antioxidants.

Of course none of this will prevent lazy media journalists and news editors from showing clips of a pint being hand-pulled, when there is another feature on binge drinking. Some people never learn and some things never change.

*Eddie Turner*

\* Oregon State University

### **DOWN MEMORY LANE (3) THE TEENS & TWENTIES**

I think my first taste of beer was a bottle of nut brown ale consumed in a shed on a friend's grandfather's allotment at the age of seventeen in 1959. My next illegal brew was a pint of draught beer, downed in the back room of the Wheatsheaf in Claypath, The landlord at the time was Tommy Wilson who shortly after moved on to the Dun Cow in Old Elvet which was to become one of the great pubs of the city.

My first legal pint on my long awaited 18<sup>th</sup> birthday was in the Dun Cow, the beer being Flowers, then brewed at the old Fenwick's brewery in Sunderland which was later absorbed by Whitbread and inevitably closed. The Dun Cow was a regular haunt and when I meet friends from those days, talk invariably turns to those great times spent in a truly great pub.

During the rock 'n roll years, local groups were starting to play at pubs in the city, such as the Big Jug & the Maltman, now a shop next to the closed Palladium Cinema. The Wearmouth Bridge, demolished for the through road also featured live bands on a weekend and I believe the Hare and Hounds, demolished to make way for Dunelm House, featured live jazz.

Most pubs during the sixties and seventies served real ale, but not all landlords cared enough about the quality. One beer that had a following was Draught Bass, because tradition was that the beer was drawn straight from the cask and often served flat without a head. Both the Wheatsheaf and the Half Moon had a reputation for good Bass. During the sixties the dreaded Red Barrel started to appear along with the slightly better Whitbread tankard and gold tankard and within a few years real ale would be practically non-existent in the City. By 1971 when I stopped working in Durham, the damage had been done and without regard for conservation, 1960's brutalism had destroyed a large area of the City and the car was king. Traditional beer was on the wane and the smaller regional breweries were being bought and closed. In the late 70's when working in Newcastle, I started to discover real ale once again and eventually joined CAMRA nearly twenty years ago.

*John Corbett*



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## **Minimum Pricing in Durham**

The view of CAMRA for minimum alcohol pricing is that it's a non starter unless the supermarkets and off-licenses are included. The government's Chief Medical Officer's proposal for a minimum unit price would be ineffective unless the big retailers agreed.

Apparently however, there is a scheme in Durham, not related to the national proposals whereby the city licensees, together with Sgt Steve Norris of Durham Police have agreed on a minimum price for a pint which is £1.50. This is a "gentleman's agreement" from some time ago but resurrected due to a police initiative. Conditions in the present pub & brewing industry make such a price unrealistic for city pubs anyway, except the Colpitts, where the Sam Smith's OBB is £1.45/pint.

Alcohol pricing is a complicated and contentious topic but here are some views from all perspectives:

*The drinking habits of the younger generation have changed. They get "tanked up" at home on cheap booze and hit the bars around 11pm – Police.*

*Because of this licensees in city bars attempt to compete by price with the off-licenses and apply to stay open later - Police*

*Minimum alcohol pricing in any format would affect responsible pubs without tackling the real cause of excess. – Drinks Industry.*

*Minimum alcohol pricing (per unit) would reduce binge drinking – Health Lobby.*

*Minimum alcohol pricing is an excuse for the government to raise even more stealth tax. – Joe & Jane Public (they don't count).*

### **Eddie's last Hurrah**

Running around like a blue a\*\*e fly trying to get adverts, articles and put DD "to bed" in time has come to an end for yours truly. The format of the next Durham Drinker could be different with a new editor. I wish that person all the best.

*Eddie Turner*

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