

DURHAM DRINKER!

News for the Discerning Drinkers in the City and County of Durham



Issue No.4

FREE

April / May — 1979

COCKERMOUTH COMES TO DURHAM

Jennings Bitter will be available at the Seaton Lane Inn, Seaton (near Seaham) from the 1st April (*NO JOKE*). We hope that this is the **FIRST** of many in the County.

TRAVELLERS REST, DURHAM CITY GOES REAL

'The Travellers Rest' in Claypath has become the latest pub in Durham City to serve real ale. Cask-conditioned Theakstons Best Bitter, Old Peculier and McEwans 80/- are now available on handpump and first impressions seem to be that the beer is in excellent condition. Like 'The Dun Cow' in Old Elvet, this pub has long been sought by CAMRA members as a real ale outlet and we are delighted to see the licencees at these two excellent pubs offering their customers a wider choice of beer. The Travellers Rest already has an excellent reputation for its restaurant. Now a good meal can be supplemented by a pint of good beer.

LAMBTON HOUNDS PITY ME, First Pub of the Month

Prior to the DURHAM CAMRA AGM the Landlady of the Lambton Hounds, Pity Me received the first Pub of the Month Trophy, the occasion being suitably recorded by VAUX Breweries. Members from all over the County attended the Annual General Meeting which formulated policy for the succeeding year.

THE K.G.B. SPREADS

Peter Kelly has now commenced brewing at his Darlington Brewery. He hopes that eventually a number of pubs will sell Kellys Golden Bitter on a regular basis. At present it is available at selected times at the Newbus Arms, Neasham and The White Hiefer, Scorton. If you are interested in having Kellys Golden Bitter available for a party of other function, why not give Peter a ring any time after 6.00 p.m. at Darlington 283554.

CARRIED AWAY

Real ale can also be taken away in containers from a number of pubs in the county such as 'The Elmtree' in Crossgate, Durham City. Why not try it? Its so much better than cans of gassy. In Newcastle of course all six brews can be taken away in gallons or firkins.

DARLINGTON — NEW ACTION AREA

The Darlington Area is a veritable Beer Desert, was the quote of a recent visitor. This means that very few Real Ales are available in very few pubs. In order to stimulate interest the Branch is holding an inaugural meeting in the Highland Laddie, Howton-le-Skerne, on MAY 9th (Wednesday). Enthusiasts are invited along to launch the Campaign for improved drinking in Darlington.

DURCAM TO IMPROVE UNIVERSITY LINKS

The Durham Branch have appointed Rodger Francis, Beer Festival Director, to be liason officer between CAMRA and the Durham University Real Ale Society.

BEER ENTHUSIASTS INVADE BARNARD CASTLE

At the end of February CAMRA enthusiasts braved the snow on a visit to Barnard Castle. A pleasant time was had by all sampling the CAMERONS Strongarm at the RABY HOTEL and THE CRICKETERS followed by some draught BASS at the THREE HORSE SHOES together with an excellent Bar Meal. The evening was rounded off in style at the WHITE SWAN over the river bridge. Despite the weather everyone left with memories of a pleasant evening in the knowledge that visits like this will be always be enthusiastically supported.

PUB OF THE MONTH

THE BAY HORSE, Evenwood (Free House) will receive the Pub of the Month Trophy following there nomination. The Trophy will be handed over on April 25th.

COMING SHORTLY

The 1979 National GOOD BEER GUIDE, a must for the discerning drinker.

CAMERONS – A CAUSE FOR CONCERN

The attitude of Camerons, the Hartlepool brewery, is causing considerable concern amongst CAMRA officials. Camerons probably supply more real ale to the North East of England and North Yorkshire than any other brewery and although the number of outlets has not increased significantly, it has at least remained reasonably steady over the years. Now however, it appears that Camerons are starting to take real ale out of a number of their managed pubs. This trend was first noticed by the North Yorkshire branches of CAMRA whilst they were preparing their new guide to real ale pubs. However, it appears that pubs in Durham and Cleveland are now being similarly affected. The initiative to remove real ale seems to be coming solely from the brewery. Since sales of real ale are now increasing steadily all over the area, it would appear the Camerons cannot possibly suggest that there has been a fall in demand.

The problems with Camerons are compounded by the fact that the brewery are desperately trying to pretend that their tank beer is real. In a recent edition of 'The Durham Advertiser' a full page advertising feature appeared announcing the re-opening of 'The Grange Inn' at Carrville. The feature suggested that the range of beers available at the pub made it a 'real ale bar'. Unfortunately, much as Camerons try to suggest the opposite, real ale is not available at The Grange Inn'.

A number of pubs selling cask-conditioned Camerons beer have been asked to consider selling tank beer. A prime example is 'The Durham Ox' at Coundonm, where the landlord, a CAMRA member, has twice been asked to consider taking keg or tank beer. Fortunately, he has refused. It therefore seems possible that in an attempt to rationalise their business, Camerons are trying to dispenche with real ale. If this is the case, it may well mean that CAMRA will have to launch a major campaign against Camerons in the near future. In the meantime, there are a number of things we can do. First, if you drink in a Camerons pub selling real ale, make sure that the landlord is aware of your feelings about the beer and contact a CAMRA official if you hear of any suggestion that the beer might be taken out. Secondly, write to the brewery itself. Their address is J. W. Cameron & Co, 'The Lion Brewery', Hartlepool. Express your disquiet about their attitude and ask what are their future plans. Finally, keep going into Camerons' keg pubs and asking for reale ale. The more that they hear about it, the more likely they are to realise that a demand exists.

WHITBREAD – CHANGES

There have been a number of changes in the higher echelons of Whitbread East Penines. One result has been that Paul Cox, until recenety in charge of the Castle Eden Brewery, has been promoted and has moved to Sheffield to take charge of operations for the whole of the Northern region of the East Penines group. The new man in charge at Castle Eden is Peter Simes. Apparently he thinks that Castle Eden Ale is an excellent pint of beer, so lets hope that his first move will be to make it available in a much larger number of pubs. Finding Castle Eden Ale at present is a harder task than looking for a spile in Vaux's brewery.

On a wider front, CAMRA's national executive have arranged a joint meeting with the directors of Whitbread East Penines to discuss future policy on real ale. Lets hope that this meeting results in a more co-ordinated and consistent approach to real ale from Whitbreads.

THE COLPITTS

In the 1978 edition of 'Real Beer in the North East', consumers were warned that 'The Colpitts Hotel' in Durham City was selling 'bright' 4X mild on handpumps. We would like to point out that since the guide was compiled and published, the 4X mild has been taken off handpumps and that customers can now be assured of an excellent pint of Sam Smiths Old Brewery Bitter from all the handpumps in this pub. We apologise for any misunderstanding.

"Durham Drinker" is published by the Durham County Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale Limited. Opinions expressed are those of our contributors and not necessarily those of the Branch Committee. All correspondence should be addressed to the Secretary:- Mrs. D. Bending, 6 Eden Close, Hurworth Place, Darlington, Co. Durham.

ADVERTISE IN THE DURHAM DRINKER

The Durham Drinker in published bimonthly and has a circulation at present of 1500 although it is probably read by many more peopie in pubs and hotels around the county. (and indeed the country). It is hoped that within the next few months, the paper will be published monthly and that 2000 copies will be published.

We are now in a position to accept advertising material and our rates are extremely low. This therefore represents an ideal opportunity to reach a much wider market for your business for a very modest outlay. If you are interested in his scheme and require further details, contact, the Secretary or any CAMRA official.

GOOD BEER AND GOOD FOOD

It seems only a few years ago that the most exotic food obtainable in a pub was a slightly stale cheese sandwich. Nowadays, that situation has changed dramatically and many pubs serve food which can rate alongside that provided by the top restaurants in the area. Fortunately, many of these pubs have the good sense to serve cask-conditioned beer and in this and future articles, we shall be looking at some of these pubs.

'The Nags Head' at Sedgefield has its own restaurant and offers a first class choice of food including a wide selection of game. It is probably the only pub in the county which offers frogs legs as a starter. Most people seem to agree that the food is extremely well cooked and offers excellent value for money. A pint of excellent Draught Bass will no doubt be an added attraction to your meal. 'The Centurion' at Langley Park also has its own gourmet restaurant with a good menu and an extensive range of wines. The gateaux are exceptionally good and the Samson is served from the pub's own barrels.

Two of Durham City's newest real ale pubs also have their own restaurants. 'The Hare & Hounds' at Gilesgate offers quite an astonishing range of dishes along with the draught Bass and 'The Travellers Rest' in Claypath which now serves Theakstons and McEwans beers on handpump, also offers a wide variety of food including some quite unusual dishes.

It is advisable to book up in advance at any of these restaurants as they, not surprisingly, are extremely popular.

A typical meal in the restaurants mentioned would probably cost about £5-6 a head. A number of other hostelrys have restaurant areas in the pubs itself and offer either substantial snacks or full three course meals at very reasonable prices. The menu is generally restricted but otherwise the food is excellent. 'The Hare & Hounds' for example, besides having a separate restaurant, also serves substantial meals in the lounge, the quality of which is excellent. The popularity of these meals is beyond question as can be seen by the fact that the lounge is generally packed out.

'The Bay Horse' at Evenwood offers meals, the price of which seems astonishingly low in these inflation-ridden days. Try the home-made steak and kidney pie with substantial portions of chips, peas, beans, carrots and lashings of gravy, all for 75p. Or how about a three-course meal with home-made soup, a full roast with as many vegetables as you can eat and home-made cheese-cake for afters, all for £2.25. The landlord is a real ale enthusiast so you can be assured that the Castle Eden Ale will always be in excellent condition. Another Castle Eden Ale pub with a small restaurant area is the 'Cross Keys' at Esh. A pretty extensive menu here and once again a three-course meal for about £3. Excellent value all round.

Another pub with a steadily growing reputation for its bar meals is 'The Red Lion' at Plawsworth which sells McEwans 80/-. This pub was substantially altered and re-opened about nine months ago. It has a small but pleasant restaurant and by all accounts the food is first class.

In our next issue, we shall continue our survey of real ale pubs that serve good meals and also discuss some of the excellent lunchtime snacks that can be obtained in local pubs.

If you know of a real ale pub serving good food in County Durham inform our secretary so that records can be updated. Don't forget Durham Drinker is read all over the county,

VAUX - which way

Vaux have followed up their absurd 'Norse Encounters of the Thirst Kind' advertising campaign with the equally ridiculous 'V sign'. Anyone who thinks this might be more realistically interpreted as a comment on what Vaux can do with their gassy products, should write to Mr. Nicholson, c/o Vaux Breweries, Sunderland, ensuring that the libel laws are not infringed.

There is a rumour circulating that Vaux are so proud of their carbon dioxide, that they are thinking of selling it in kegs and just using the beer to push the gas out. Meanwhile, Vaux will no doubt be using the extra profits they obtain from their recent price increases to buy yet another brewery (Jennings and Hartleys beware), an activity which has absolutely no advantage whatsoever for the ordinary beer drinker. Why don't the breweries spend more of their profits on providing a choice for the drinker in their pubs rather than buying up Traditional Breweries and selected hotels. Vaux of course still insist there is little demand for cask-conditioned beer in the North East. This puzzles regulars at 'The Fox and Hounds', Neasham who have a straight choice between keg and cask beer of the same name, not surprising twice as much cask beer than keg is sold.

In the Berwick on Tweed area (through Lorimers) the story is quite different and pubs selling cask-conditioned Scotch display a plaque outside proclaiming an endorsement from CAMRA. Lets hope this policy forges south into Durham.

CAMRA IN DURHAM

CAMRA exists not merely to promote the sale of cask-conditioned beer, but to act as a consumer organisation for all beer drinkers. We have continuously campaigned over issues such as exorbitant beer prices, the tied house system which severely restricts the number of beers available in a given pub, and many other matters which affect beer drinkers. If you have any complaints about the brewing industry or local pubs, do not hesitate to get in touch with us. We have contacts in all the local breweries and sometimes we can get things changed. Similarly, if you require any advice or information, then ring one of our officers we are not a bunch of 'snobs' or 'interlectuals' as the breweries sometimes try to suggest we are just a group of ordinary people you are fighting for a wider choice of better beer in British pubs, and a fairer deal for beer drinkers.

Listed over the page are Local Branch Officers. They are here to help you:

