

DURHAM DRINKER!

News for Discerning Drinkers in the City and County of Durham



ISSUE NO. 49

FREE

BREWERS CRY FOUL

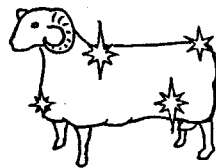
Having had a month to consider the Monopolies Commission report into the supply of beer, many of the countries regional brewers have decided that they like its recommendations even less than the Big Six brewers! In a double page press advertisement they blasted many of the reports' findings, arguing that full implementation of the report would lead to the demise of many smaller regional breweries. This is in stark contrast to what some breweries were saying shortly after the report was issued, when Boddington and Greene King in particular welcomed the reports findings.

The proposal to allow landlords in 'tied' pubs to sell a guest beer outside the tie was criticized in particular as likely to lead to the introduction of heavily advertised national or international brands of lager, as these brands could be offered to landlords at a considerable discount, thus allowing them to make more profit. This argument could be countered by banning the advertising of alcohol, thus allowing the regional brewers a chance to compete on slightly more level terms.

The depressing thing about this campaign by the regional brewers from the consumers point of view is that it is these same brewers who stand to gain most from the report. The proposal to allow no brewer to own more than 2,000 pubs, would, if implemented, release over 20,000 pubs onto the market, presumably to the benefit of many regional brewers. We can only presume that they have been 'lent on' by their bigger brothers in the Brewers Society to support their own campaign of resistance to the report.

WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT? SEE CENTRE PAGES FOR A SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE MMC REPORT.

THE GOLDEN FLEECE



Coulson St , Tow Spennymoor

A traditional quiet local now serving :-

RUDDLES COUNTY
RUDDLES BITTER
WEBSTERS CHOICE
+ OCCASIONAL GUEST

Home cooked food a speciality &

Quiz night - Tuesday

courtesy

of

JOAN & ALLAN

THE JEWEL IN DURHAM'S CROWN

It is generally regarded that the city is the best place in the county for a concentration of real ales. However, there is another area which is better for choice and has long been a favourite haunt for those who prefer cask beers. Framwellgate Moor together with Newton Hall now offers no less than 15 regular beers plus up to six guest ales in a total of 8 pubs, so if you fancy a good pub crawl on a round trip of 3 miles then let's go.

First stop, if you like ostentatious pubs is the Salutation which usually serves Ward's Bitter and Samson and occasionally a guest beer. If you're now ready for peace and quiet walk along Front Street to the Victoria Bridge and sample the Camerons Strongarm and Traditional Bitter at a very reasonable price. Next stop about 100 yards on is the Flagship of the real ale pubs in the district namely the Tap and Spile, selling three regular beers, Strongarm Premium, Robert Newton Ale, and Marston's Pedigree and complementing these brews are up to five guest beers. The prices in this re-juvenated pub may not be cheap but the quality is such that you will always get a good pint. The Tap and Spile is one of the few pubs in the county with bar billiards. Literally across the road is one of the few Sam Smiths' houses in the region, the Marquis of Granby, a Good Beer Guide regular for the last fifteen years, selling Old Brewery Bitter.

Now is the time for a breather, because the next leg is a half mile hike to the end of Pity Me and the Lambton Hounds, but the effort is well worth it. On sale at this congenial pub is Lorimers Best Scotch and Double Maxim at it's best. If your constitution and sense of direction are still intact, you now face a mile slog east along Abbey Road towards the Jovial Monk on the Rothbury/Canterbury Road junction, where you can sample Tetley Bitter or Imperial, kept in good condition by manager Tony Blackburn. Your next visit is a half mile distance which will take you to Carr House Drive and the Newton Hall now owned by Grand Metropolitan (Watney/Websters). Manager Steve Davies, who changed over from previous owners Camerons, is shifting a fair amount of Ruddles Bitter complemented by County, and its encouraging to see such fine beers as Ruddles regularly on sale in the region.

One more to go, half a mile up Finchale Road towards the Happy Wanderer and Stones Bitter in comfort. By this time you're probably too late for a meal at the Wanderer but there are Chinese and Indian takeaway restaurants close by or plain fish and chips - if you have the room. Of course this little sortie can be executed in reverse direction, either way you'll enjoy the best range of beers in the county - happy crawling.

**TETLEY'S
YOU'VE GOT
TO HAND
IT TO THEM.**



THE MONOPOLIES COMMISSION REPORT

What did it say?

The two and a half year investigation found that:-

Beer prices had risen faster than inflation

Prices in many areas of the country are inexplicably high

Lager costs the same as beer to produce but is priced much higher.

These facts are damning evidence that the big brewers have used their dominant position to exploit the consumer. The Commission said that at present the industry did not offer the consumer enough choice of pubs or drinks - unless action was taken, there would be fewer brewers offering less choice and eliminating local preference in drinks and pubs. They made a series of radical proposals, which the Government is presently considering.

Good news for real beer and real pubs

The proposals will safeguard the independent breweries, who are essential for the future of real beer and real pubs. Many of them have already welcomed the package as an opportunity to increase competition and improve the service available to the customer. The only long-term protection of good quality is a variety of producers, and a variety of pub owners, which the report sets out to achieve. However, to save us from bland beer and plastic pubs, the Government will have to look again at some areas only touched on by the Commission.

Pubs

The most newsworthy item in the report was the decision that no brewer can own more than 2,000 pubs. There are plenty of smaller brewers, pub-owning groups and individuals lining up to buy them. This could radically increase the choice available. On the other hand, there is a danger that some non-profitable pubs may close. CAMRA urges that all pubs sold be offered first to the sitting tenant, and that the brewers offer the pubs for sale for a year before closing them. As the smaller brewers are often able to make a go of the smallest pubs, we believe mass closures are unlikely.

More choice in the tied house

The Commission intend to give each tenant the right to stock an outside beer or lager, if he feels his present range doesn't suit the customer. This should mean more variety and will encourage brewers to widen their stocks, perhaps offering guest beers automatically as part of the range.

Real free houses

The Commission found that over half of the "free houses" are in fact controlled by brewers, through cheap loans to the publican. (CAMRA surveys suggest an even higher degree of control.) These "loan ties" stop smaller brewers being able to sell their beers in the free trade. They may deceive the public, who think of free houses as free to sell beer from any source. The Commission want to ban the "loan tie", meaning more genuine free houses, free to serve products from any brewery.

REPORT INTO THE SUPPLY OF BEER

It is worth noting that these cheap loans (5% interest) are not cheap for the customer, who pays for them in higher prices.

More rights for pub tenants

The Commission want to give more security for the tenant and the opportunity to stop breweries charging exorbitant rents. There is no doubt these proposals will be excellent for the tenants already in place. What concerns CAMRA is that brewers will dump long-standing tenants before they are covered by legal protection - a shabby way to treat loyal staff. And they may bring in managers instead, who have to run the pub as the brewery wants it.

Prices .

CAMRA has always found it is competition from the independent breweries that keeps prices down. We hope to see the enormous difference in prices across the country reduced. The Commission want the brewers to print their wholesale price lists, which will make interesting reading in some areas.

In some tied estates, the prices of soft drinks, wines, spirits, ciders and low-alcohol drinks are even more extraordinary than the beer. The Commission want to let tenants buy these drinks from sources other than their brewery. This should mean a better deal on prices.

So, are there problems?

There is one enormous problem. The 2,000 pub limit does not apply to companies which don't own breweries. This is a ridiculous loophole, because it means some of the big brewers will sell their breweries and hang on to all their pubs. They could then buy all the pubs sold by the other breweries.

What's wrong with that? Well, if the Big Six brewers can force up prices and limit choice, a future of say three enormous pub-owners would be worse. Across the country, pubs owned by the chains would come from a common mould, like supermarkets - however, people don't go to supermarkets for the atmosphere. These vast companies might make spectacular profits by trimming their range down to a handful of bland, nationally advertised products, by-passing the local producers. The Government wants to expand choice and value for money - if they let enormous pub-owners emerge from the Big Six, it will be a massive leap backwards.

Common sense - and the interests of the consumer - demand they put the same limit on pub-owners too. That way we will get a real choice over who owns our pub and whose beer it serves.

CAMRA

CAMRA is delighted to see that the Commission have accepted many of our arguments. Obviously we have to press to see that the good points in the report are implemented, and the bad points altered. The threat to independent breweries from takeover has not been dealt with. While the Commission (rightly) blocked the takeover of Scottish and Newcastle by Elders, they have not offered smaller brewers any clear protection. There is still every reason to join CAMRA in our fight for a future with real beer, real choice and real pubs.

CANNEY LANDLORD RETIRES

The next few weeks see the end of an era at **The Sportsman, Canney Hill**. After 12 years at the reins, mine hosts Tommy and Jeanette Nevin (and the rest of the family) have decided to call time and take a well earned rest from the licensed trade. The fact that the **Sportsman** has not missed a **Good Beer Guide** entry since the Nevins took over is testament to the consistent quality of the beer on offer, as is the reputation it has throughout the county (and beyond). The pub has been improved and extended without changing the essential structure or character of the place. It is to be hoped Camerons can find someone who can maintain the excellent business which has been built up over the years. CAMRA Durham extends its thanks for the enjoyable times past, and extends best wishes to the family for the future - let's hope Tommy enjoys pulling teeth full-time as much as he enjoyed pulling pints.



"The busy man's recreation, the idle man's business, the merchant's sanctuary,
the stranger's welcome ... the citizen's courtesy"

The

TAP & SPILLE

Pay us a
visit soon!

Five fine alehouses bringing
you the distinctive taste of
traditional cask-conditioned
ales from Britain's
independent breweries. Up
to eight different ales in
each house - all regularly
changing and cared for with
time-honoured skills to
bring you beer like it used
to be!

with
TRADITIONAL BAR GAMES
HOME-COOKED FOOD
FRIENDLY SERVICE

NOW OPEN AT
33 Shields Rd
Byker

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE

091 276 1440

(CAMRA Tyne & Wear Pub
of the Year 1987)

99 Bondgate

DARLINGTON

0325 463955

(CAMRA Darlington Pub
of the Year 1987)

Horselair

PONTEFRACT

0977 793468

27 Front St,

Framwellgate Moor,

DURHAM 091 3865 451

and now

29 Monkgate, **YORK**

0904 621473



ALSO AT:- HARROGATE, NORTH SHIELDS, SUNDERLAND, HARTLEPOOL, ROCHDALE.

PUB NEWS

Durham's newest real ale outlet, the Mean Fiddler, faces a change of name just a few weeks after opening. The owners of a well-known music venue of the same name in London have complained that people could confuse the two names (250 miles apart ??!) and have asked that the Durham 'Fiddler' should change its name. It is not thought that they have any complaints about the cask beers on offer; namely **SAMSON**, **DOUBLE MAXIM**, **WARD'S SHEFFIELD BITTER** and a weekly guest!

The **FOX AND HOUNDS** at **KIRK MERRINGTON** has re-opened after an extensive (and expensive) refurbishment. Now an open-plan pub with a large conservatory added, and **THEAKSTON BITTER** and **XB** available on handpump.

Regular guest beers are making an appearance at the **SHAKESPEARE** in Durham. Recent sightings include **MARSTON PEDIGREE**, **TYALORS LANDLORD** and **WARD'S SHEFFIELD BITTER**.

The **CROSS KEYS** at Shildon, the former Cameron house which recently reopened (last year), tried Castle Eden as a "free" house and more recently (December) joined the throng of Cask Trophy outlets, even more recently closed down. It reopened on 18 April. It is currently being run by a manager on behalf of the brewery, for "a couple of months". She apparently has some ambitious plans and ideas for the Keys, but I doubt if these run to the requirements of the brewery for a prospective new tenant to take on the debt which closed the pub in the first place - rumoured to be enough to buy a couple of decent semis (where I come from, at least).

THE NEW BRANCH COMMITTEE

Following the recent A.G.M. of DURHAM CAMRA the following committee was elected.

Chairman	Eddie Turner, 26 Farnham Rd., Newton Hall, Durham, DH1 5LL, (091) 386 9105
Treasurer	Lesley J. Fyfe, 4 Benville Tce., New Brancepeth, Durham, DH7 7HX, (091) 373 1863
Press & Publicity (Durham Drinker)	Dave Bolton, 74 Raby Rd., Ferryhill, Co. Durham, DH17 8EA. (0740) 52760
Secretary:	Michael Leighton, 44 Langmere, Spennymoor Co. Durham, DL16 6UW. (0388) 811446
Membership Secretary	Andrew P. Kirkup, 75 Clyde Tce., Spennymoor, Co. Durham, DL16 7SQ. (0388) 816173
Pubs Officer	Paul Dobson, 21 Waldron St., Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham, DL14 7DS. (0388) 602468
Auditors	Ray Hopper Graham Smith
Beer Festival Director	Eddie Turner
Deputy	Roger Carr

Diary

Tues. 9 May	Branch Meeting, Pot and Glass, Crossgate Moor, all welcome, 8.00 p.m.
Mon. 15 May	E.G.M. Tap & Spile, Framwellgate Moor, 8.00 p.m.
Mon. 22 May	Games, Social, Newton Hall, (Ruddles Bitter & County) 8.00 p.m.
Tues. 13 June	Branch Committee, Prince Bishops, Brandon, 8.00 p.m.
Tues. 27 June	Social, Sportsman, Canney Hill, Bishop Auckland, 8.00 p.m.
12-15 July	Newcastle Beer Festival - Newcastle Polytechnic.
1-5 August	G.B.B.F. Queens Hall, Leeds, staff needed.
31 Aug.- 2 Sept.	14th Durham Beer Festival, Dunelm House, help needed!