
Licencing Magistrates - good or bad?

By Jim McCaffery, Durham CAMRA Chairman

To my knowledge the policy of the licencing Magistrates of Durham since 1864 has been to grant no new 'full' licences within the city centre. Because in 1864, Durham, in terms of arrests per thousand adult population due to drink related problems was fourth in the country behind London, Liverpool and Newcastle.

We seem to have seen the first change in this policy since 1864, some by the back door, some by the front door.

Backdoor

You can request an off license and it seems you can have it converted, e.g. for Archibalds read a new pub in North Road, e.g. a restaurant licence in the Market Place area is now another new pub. The backdoor can also seem to be transfer of licence site, e.g. what has happened to the licences that belonged to the pubs that used to exist on Sherburn Road?

Frontdoor

We have seven applications (yes seven) for named restaurant licences 1-7, for the new Millennium complex owned, in part, by Durham City Council. The Licencing Magistrates were given little information on what kind of 'restaurants' these were, or the number

of people using these areas - nor were the police and fire department. Will these be restaurants by day and pubs by night? Yet the expectation is that licences will be granted.

It appears one licence is for a night club larger than all of Durham's night clubs combined, catering for over 2000 people. Another licence apparently is for a 'Scream' theme pub from Bass. Here cheap beer will be offered to card carrying patrons - who will have to prove their suitability by having DSU cards. So students get cheap beer and the locals don't, a situation which could cause town/gown problems and already opposed by the DSU. Do the Magistrates know the Restaurant licence number? And what about the other five? Any information please?

Sidedoor

The C&G Building Society in North Road will be a Wetherspoons shortly, so I've been told. It has a licence but is still seeking planning permission. Oh yes - don't forget Brown's Boat House on the River. There are planning requests to make it into an 'Ocean Liner' pub (my mate Tom used the term 'Gin Palace'). The Varsity is back again, this time in Saddler Street. The University, so proud of the fact that they are so publicly against alcoholic drinking

are selling the property - for a pub!! I've heard there will be major building and 'servicing' problems.

Not finished yet!!

North Road, remember the Archibald's Gardening Centre? Well we have an application for 'Leisure Activities' how much do we bet this will need a licence? Have you heard about the proposed 'Brew Pub' in the old Police Station opposite the Court Inn? The proposal has come from the owners of the soon to reopen Rose Tree in Waddington Street. Also Bass want to build a 'cheap stay' hotel near the Cock of the North - and every hotel needs a licence - doesn't it? Just ask Bass!!

Finally - O'Neills in Claypath (you know the pub that used to have Real Ale and doesn't now) again owned by Bass is extending. Black's Health Food shop is going.

CAMRA are not opposed to the granting of all new licences but would like Magistrates to have full knowledge of the circumstances in which they are being granted. The general public should also be aware of what is happening and Durham City Council as part owners of the Millennium property should be more forthcoming. Is one purpose to hide the reduction in choice being offered by our new licencees? Have you noticed that Real Ale is not available in Yates Wine Lodge in North Road and has also been withdrawn from the Coach and Eight? Will Durham support all additional licenced properties? Will it be left to those well known 'Market Forces'? Will more properties go to the wall after closing? Will the City become a drinker's (or drunkard's) paradise.

But most important to me is in which

of the thirteen new licenced properties will I be able to get a decent pint of Real Ale? If not a question for the Magistrates, certainly a question of quality, perhaps answerable by Durham City Council planning department.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Millenium!!!!

There have been many changes in the brewing industry in the last century. Mind, we at Durham Drinker, contrary to rumours, cannot remember them all!!

We have said farewell to the likes of Vaux, Ruddles and Morrells and wait to see what will happen to Mansfield and Morlands.

New breweries have appeared and are now well established, such as our own local Durham Brewery. And of course Castle Eden was saved from closure and is now expanding it's estate with a commitment to cask ale.

But despite the doom and gloom often reported cask ale is alive and well, as witnessed by the sell out at the most recent Durham Beer Festival, held at the Penny Gill in Spennymoor.

We at Durham Drinker wish you a very Happy Christmas. We also hope you have a great Millenium and that your celebrations, whatever you choose to do will be enjoyable.

If you do plan to go out on New Years Eve then we advise you to telephone your intended pub to find out what their arrangements are. At the time of going to print not all the details were available and it is not really possible to include all arrangements in the space provided.

Please note

Christmas day

Closures that I know of - Market Tavern, Shakespeare and other city centre pubs quite possible. The Woodman and the Victoria WILL be open - at night anyway.

Millenium New Year

Major breweries have informed Managers/Tenants that staff must be paid triple wages. Some pubs are closing because of this. I have been told the Dun Cow and Half Moon are closing, plus the Market Tavern and Shakespeare, the latter two are apparently available for hire - yes the whole pub, at a fair cost! Some pubs are charging to get in and some are operating a free ticket system - check with the landlord/lady well in advance, some haven't made decisions yet.

All the best!!

Castle Eden spreads its wings

Castle Eden brewery has recently started to build its own pub estate. The first pubs which Durham Drinker can tell you about are:

- The Cleveland, Redcar
- The Dun Cow, Bishop Middleham
- Durham Hotel, Scarborough
- The Falchion, Stockton
- The Fighting Cocks, Byker
- The Grange Inn, Carrville
- Knights, Hartlepool
- The Newton Cap, Bishop Auckland
- Royal Oak, Butterknowle
- The Sportsman, Toft Hill (Camerons only)
- The Tap and Spile, Newcastle
- The Tap and Spile, Darlington
- The Tap and Spile, North Shields
- Bowes Lion, Hetton le Hole

The beer range in the pubs listed has yet to be confirmed but all of the above now stock cask ales. Some, such as the Tap and Spile, Darlington still carry guest ales.

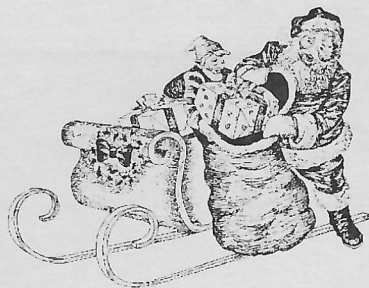
With Castle Eden's continued commitment to cask ales, future developments will be viewed with interest. Plans for a visitor centre, hotel and car parking facilities adjacent to the brewery are well advanced.

On the beer front, Castle Eden Porter (4.6%) makes a very welcome return after a long absence whilst Winter Knights Is again available at 4.7%. Porter is available at the Grange, Carrville along with Nimmos XXXX and Castle Eden Bitter.

Market Tavern refurbished

The Market Tavern in Durham Market Place has reopened after refurbishment. This has been marked by a beer festival being held from 1st to 31st December. As part of a National T. J. Bernards Festival. The beers available will include Caledonian 80/-, Caledonian Deuchars IPA, Tomintoul Stag, Brains SA, Marstons Owd Rodger and Riddleys Rumpus.

The Tavern has seen the reappearance of a guest beer recently so the future may bode well for this pub.



Old Vaux, New Pubmaster

Since the closure of the Vaux Brewery earlier in the year, most of the pub estate was sold to the pub owning company Pubmaster which has an impressive portfolio of cask beers to choose from.

Unfortunately so far there seems little uptake from pubs for much variety in the new Pubmaster pubs. The main reason for this goes back to our old 'friends' Swallow Group who, not content with closing Vaux Brewery, only offered three beers from the Pubmaster range. These were Tetley Bitter, Worthington Bitter and Stones Bitter, probably the most uninspiring of all that was available and all about the same strength.

Since Pubmaster has totally taken over, their full range has become available but many landlords have now found a market for one (or more) of the beers mentioned or have lost custom with drinkers searching for something more interesting.

If your local is a Pubmaster house don't blame the company for the poor beer choice for all of these are available to pubs:-

Beer		Supplier
Boddingtons Bitter	3.8%	Matthew Clark
Worthington Bitter	3.7%	Bass
Stones Bitter	3.7%	Bass
Draught Bass	4.4%	Bass
Tetley Bitter	3.5%	Carlsberg Tetley
Theakstons Best Bitter	3.8%	Carlsberg Tetley
Camerons Strongarm	4.0%	Carlsberg Tetley
Marstons Pedigree	4.5%	Carlsberg Tetley
Inde Coope Burton Ale	4.8%	Carlsberg Tetley
Greene King Abbott Ale	5.0%	Carlsberg Tetley
Morlands Old Speckled Hen	5.2%	Carlsberg Tetley
Tapsters Choice Guest Scheme		Carlsberg Tetley

Forthcoming ales are Adnams Broadside, Gales Trafalgar and Adnams Millenium.

All of these beers provide choice in terms of strength and tastes but the real gem is the offer of the 'Tapsters Choice' guest beer scheme which provides a different beer every fortnight, mainly from an independent brewery.

Unfortunately we must sympathise for the poor publican using all suppliers as they now have three to content with instead of one. So please spare a thought for them and not hassle them to get in certain beers but a polite request may result in a better choice.

Two pubs using full advantage of the beers on offer that CAMRA knows of in the Durham area are the Elm Tree in Durham and the Penny Gill in Spennymoor but we need to know if there are any more, so please get in touch if you know any.

(And as for the Swallow Group, we now know that Whitbread has just bought the company).

Guest Beers update

Our last Durham Drinker, (Issue 79, Oct 99), looked at the poor availability of guest beers in Durham's city centre pubs. Since then there have been some developments which are worth a mention.

- The Elm Tree now carries a guest from the Tapsters Choice Guest Ale Scheme. This has seen the likes of Young's First Gold, Jennings Cockerhoop and Elgood's Barleymead appearing over the bar.
- The Half Moon has seen the reappearance of a regular guest from the Durham Brewery and congratulations must go to the pub for making Bass see commonsense.
- The Market Tavern also seems to be stocking a guest ale with Tomintoul's Witches Cauldron, Hop Back Summer Lightning and Brakspear's Grim Reaper having being noted.
- The Dun Cow stocks a guest now, usually from the Castle Eden Portfolio.

Worthy of a mention if you like to try something different is the Tap and Spile, Framwellgate Moor. It's range of guests has improved and at least one beer from Durham Brewery and/or other local micros may be available.

This is obviously good news for guest ales in Durham and the many who like to try them. Let's hope that the improvement continues.

Royal County Has Guests (Beers of course)

The Royal County Hotel in Durham has been experimenting with guest beers from the Bass Portfolio with a view to making this a permanent arrangement. In future it is hoped to have one permanent beer and one guest.

Outside of Durham City.... there is real ale!!!

A survey conducted in October found the following pubs in Sedgfield stocking real ale:

- Ceddesfield Hall Community Centre- one very cheap and constantly changing guest ale.
- Golden Lion, (Pubmaster)-Castle Eden Nimmos XXXX and Castle Eden Celebration.
- Nags Head, (Free House)- John Smiths bitter and one guest ale.
- Hardwicke Arms, (Jennings)- Jennings bitter, Jennings Cumberland.
- Dun Cow, (Ramside group)- Theakston XB, Theakston Bitter and up to three guests.
- The Hope, (now Punch Taverns) did have Cameron's Strongarm but was to lose it's real ale.

Moving on to Fishburn, the Good Doctor (Pubmaster), has Tetley's, Bass and Pedigree whilst the Three Horse Shoes, (east of the village), was in the process of being acquired by the landlord who hopes to have a rotating guest beer from Beerseller.

The Trimdons have two pubs worthy of mention. Unfortunately there are no others to speak of.

- Bird in Hand (Commer Inns)-Black Sheep Best Bitter and one guest ale. The bottled range of Black Sheep beers are also available. The landlord, from Wakefield, is a keen real ale enthusiast.
- The Dovecote-whose enterprising owner Steve, from Charles Wells country, brews his own beer!!! The Bass here has been joined by his own Busty Bitter and if you are lucky, the Busty Special which may even now be known as Pitprop. Well worth a look!!

Penny Gill a success

The joint CAMRA/Penny Gill beer festival held at the Penny Gill, Spennymoor from the 14th to 17th October once again proved a great success with the beer selling out well before last orders on the 17th.

The first nine gallon cask to sell out was Fullers Red Fox. Durham's Celtic Gold also proved very popular. Tomintoul's Witches Cauldron didn't last after Friday night either!!

Thanks again to the Penny Gill, those who turned up to offer their services and of course the festival drinkers themselves. Well Done!!



Durham Brewery News

Durham Brewery have produced some more beers for our enjoyment. Frostbite 3.6%, the winter cousin of Sunstroke is available. Celtic Gold, a 4.3% version of Millenium City is also in cask.

For Christmas comes Melchior's Gold at 4.5%.

Durham Beers now feature regularly at the Half Moon in Durham with one usually available at any one time.

Gift packs are available consisting of two bottles and one glass in an attractive display pack. These are available direct from the brewery at £8.50.

Durham Brewery have two bottled conditioned beers available. Millenium City, 6.5% is a traditional IPA. Sanctuary makes a welcome return at 6.0%

Black Bishop is also now available in cask at 5.5%, so as you can see Durham have been extremely hard working as usual.

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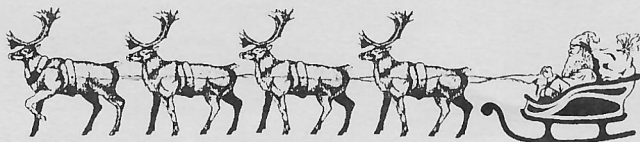
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Ale Trail Sheffield

Sheffield may have suffered the loss of much of it's brewing heritage recently with the closures of the Wards and Stones brewery sites. But thankfully it boasts some of the best, if not the best Freehouses in the country.

It now possesses a cluster of five Freehouses all within a stones throw (no pun intended) of each other.

The Cask and Cutler, the Fat Cat, the New Barrack Tavern, the Hillsborough Hotel and the Gardiners Arms are best described as outstanding. For choice, quality, price and friendliness you just cannot go wrong. Quite frankly they highlight the rubbish we too often put up with in the north east under the supposed guise of free houses. Most noticeable is the lack of a reliance on heavily discounted big brewery brands or the ubiquitous Old Speckled Hen, Bombardier etc. that too often is the token offering for guest beers in our area. The Cask and Cutler has a constantly changing range of beers from micro breweries. Neil and Sheila Clark have both turned this pub into something truly special. And it is right next door to Shalesmoor Tram Station, only a fifteen minute run from Sheffield Railway Station.

The Fat Cat offers a range of guest beers and beers from the adjacent Kelham Island brewery. Meals, all homemade from £2.50 are outstanding. The New Barrack Tavern is also superb and is a regular outlet for the beers from the local Abbeydale brewery. The Hillsborough Hotel offers cask ales on a weekend from Friday evening to Sunday evening and anything goes! Durham's own Magus is one of the fastest selling beers here.

The Gardiners Arms carries beers from the Taylor's range and a choice of guests from a featured brewery. Recent Breweries have included Harvieston, Titanic and Wolf.

Unfortunately space prevents me from saying all I would like to say. Directions though are not a problem as any of the pubs will be only too happy to point you in the right direction. And if you wonder why Sheffield appears in the Durham Drinker it's because it is worthy of mention anywhere. Go and find out what it is like for yourselves. You'll not be disappointed!!!

Late news!!!

Seven Stars, Shincliffe is now a freehouse with a rotating beer range. Beers have included Durham Magus, White Bishop, Greene King IPA and Bass Hancocks HB.

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