

## Darlington Drinker 180

Regional and local cask ale brewers recorded volume increases of 1% and 5% respectively, while the multi-national brewers, who have been abandoning traditional British beer in a dash for mass-market international lagers, saw their cask volumes fall by 11%.

An estimated 121,000 people started drinking cask beer during the year, taking the total number of cask drinkers to over 8.6 million. The number of 18-24 year old cask drinkers grew by 17%. Meanwhile, 3,000 more pubs started selling cask ale. Pete Brown, said, "Considering everything else that was happening in the beer market, with continuing pub closures and consumers switching from on-trade to home consumption, it's hard to view this as anything other than a strong performance from cask ale."

"More interesting than the bald figures are the changing market dynamics and patterns of consumer behaviour. We've become more thoughtful about our purchases, looking for tradition, provenance and wholesomeness - all values that cask beer can provide in spades." "Cask has an advantage in that, unlike almost every other drink, it can only be enjoyed in the pub rather than purchased more cheaply in the supermarket, but brewers and licensees still need to work at convincing consumers that a pint of cask beer is worth the detour."

## Loosen That Tie

THE CAMPAIGN for Real Ale is to continue its campaign to reform the beer tie, despite an announcement by the Office of Fair Trading that it will take no action.

CAMRA says the inaction of the OFT, whose responsibility is to ensure markets work well for consumers, is all the more remarkable given that the Commons Business Select Committee and the government recognise that a competition problem exists.

Business Secretary Vince Cable has publicly stated that large pub companies are on probation and will face legislative action if they fail to reform by June 2011. Mike Benner of CAMRA said: "The OFT's decision is based on a blinkered and selective consideration of the evidence. It recognised the concerns of tied pub landlords but failed to recognise the impact on consumers.

"The OFT's own analysis found that tied pub landlords on average pay around £20,000 more for their beer every year as a result of being tied and unable to purchase beer on the open market. CAMRA, unlike the OFT, recognises that higher costs imposed upon tied pub landlords will inevitably be passed onto consumers through higher prices, under-investment and pub closures."

Dr. Rick Muir of the independent Institute for Public Policy Research think-tank added: "IPPR research shows community pubs are not just places to drink, but also places where people meet friends and neighbours and where local clubs hold meetings and events.

"Community pubs are the embodiment of the 'Big Society' principle yet many risk being squeezed to death as a result of restricted competition. The OFT has failed to stand up for individual pub landlords and ultimately it will be consumers who suffer as yet more pubs close."

Darlington Drinker....Twenty-Five Years Ago

“BRITAIN’S second largest brewing combine, Allied Breweries, is desperately fighting off a bid by the Australian owners of Fosters lager. The Aussie firm, Elders IXL, is only a quarter the size of Allied yet is confident of success in a £1.8 billion deal.

Allied have six British breweries including Ansells, Ind Coope and - serving this area - Tetleys. They own 7,000 pubs, most of which sell real ale. Elders talk openly of ‘brewery rationalisation’.”

Darlington Drinker 40, December 1985

Nigel Picks Up The Bill

A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT has agreed to take up a Private Member's Bill which could reform the way the planning system deals with threats to pubs and other local services.

Every year a small number of MPs, drawn from a ballot, are allowed to introduce a parliamentary bill on an subject of their choice. This year, CAMRA persuaded Nigel Adams, MP for the Ribble Valley and a long-standing supporter of traditional pubs and beer, to adopt the Protection of Local Services (Planning) Bill (England).

If carried through into law, the Bill would give councils the power to ensure that local services - including community pubs - could not be demolished or changed into another use without first going through the planning process, including consulting local people. Developers would have to apply for planning permission before they could demolish, or change the use of, a defined local service.

Every week pubs, post offices, community centres, small shops and other local services are lost forever, with communities and councils powerless to act. At present, 39 pubs a week are closing across the country. Some 12,000 independent shops shut in 2009. Whilst 2,500 post offices have been lost since 2007.

Local people are frequently unable to object as, unless a building is listed or is in a conservation area, permission to demolish is not required. Similarly, pubs can be converted into a range of commercial uses, such as a restaurant or betting shop, without needing permission. Residents are thus denied a say in the future of the areas in which they live.

Mr Evans will need the support of a great many other MPs if the Bill is to stand a chance of successfully passing through Parliament. So CAMRA and community organisations are asking as many people as possible to press their own local MPs to support it.

The first step is for constituents (that’s you!) to encourage their MPs to sign Early Day Motion (EDM) 1009. The more people who ask an MP to do so, the more likely they are to support the Bill.

\*Write to your MP at: [MP's name; Jenny Chapman in the case of Darlington town], House of Commons,  
London, SW1A 0AA.

## Petes Win Prizes

DARLINGTON CAMRA members don't just talk about good beer - some make it and sell it too. And pretty well, as a couple of recent presentations show.

Long-time committee member Pete Fenwick realised a lifetime ambition earlier in 2010 when he opened his very own commercial brewery, Mithril Ales, next to his home in Aldbrough St John. And it hasn't taken long for the 2.5 barrel plant to produce some award-winning brews.

Pete's 4.3% abv Flower Power was voted Beer of The Festival by drinkers at autumn's Darlington Rhythm 'n' Brews. Then the following month Route A66 (4%) was named runner-up at the Richmond beer festival. Local stockists of Mithril ales can be found listed on his blog on [www.mithrilales.co.uk](http://www.mithrilales.co.uk). Or call Pete on (01325) 374817 or (07889) 167128.

Meanwhile, for the sixth time in seven years, Darlington Snooker Club - run by current branch chairman Peter Everett and his mother Rita - has been chosen as North East real ale Club of the Year by judges from across the region's CAMRA branches. Peter received the 'NECOTY' award from former national executive member John Holland.

\*THE TEESDALE HOTEL, in Middleton-in-Teesdale, was voted autumn Pub of the Season by Darlington CAMRA members. And well-deserved too - it's the first time the classy little hotel has won such a beer gong. The runner-up was the Red Lion at nearby Cotharstone, with a recent real ale convert, the Black Swan at Staindrop, in third place.

## Hard Lines

MALCOLM Dunstone's Hard Times?, a tale of thrifty real ale drinking in Darlington town centre in the previous edition of DD posed a question at the end: "Detect a thread running through this?"

Here he announces the results - and the winner of the tasty prize.

"The thread was - books written by Charles Dickens. The full list was Hard Times, The Chimes, Great Expectations, Bleak House, Old Curiosity Shop, A Tale of Two Cities, Oliver Twist and A Christmas Carol. I had several entries but only one that was correct. It was from Adrian Bell of Darlington, who will get his beer when I find him..."

## Welbury's Duke Rides Again

THE DUKE of Wellington at Welbury, between Darlington and Northallerton, reopened at the end of October after more than a year in darkness - and a determined attempt to change it into a house.

And, yes, it is called the Duke again, not the Monks Table as it became when made 'restauranty' by the then-incoming owners, Mike and Carol Oldroyd, in 2007. By September 2009 the couple decided the business wasn't working, closed it and applied for planning permission for conversion.

Objections from villagers - who live miles from any other pub - and the Darlington branch of CAMRA resulted, and Hambleton council refused the application. A government planning inspector dismissed the Oldroyds' appeal this September, saying they had not "demonstrated a lack of need for the pub" and couldn't show that "proper attempts have been made to sell at a reasonable price".

Andrew Ferriman and his wife Laura and mother Dorothy have now taken over. Their first decision was to revert to the traditional name and run the business first and foremost as a village pub. The Monks Table signs were ceremonially scrapped.

Some 60 people attended a meeting at the village hall at the beginning of October to hear Andrew's business plans and to respond to his request for preferences and ideas. The village's own excellent website, [www.welbury.com](http://www.welbury.com), said "the new management seems full of energy, enthusiasm and experience, and were warmly welcomed".

THE FIRST event to centre on the Duke, on its reopening day, was the Hurworth Hunt. The Northern Echo reported a bigger than expected turnout, which the joint huntmaster said could have been helped by the reopening of the pub, where they stopped for refreshments: "We have met there for at least 60 years. We were made to feel very welcome". And the huntmaster's name? A Mr Fox. Ken Fox.

\*Duke of Wellington, Welbury, North Yorkshire, DL6 2SG. Tel. (01609) 882464. Open from 4pm Mon-Thurs and from 12 noon Fri-Suns. Food available.

Arts Centre: Don't Let It Go

Fifty-six festivals ... Almost 200,000 pints ... More than 75,000 customers ... More than 2,000 small and medium-sized breweries launched or showcased ... Scores of start-ups from the North East and North Yorkshire ... Thousands of visitors from all over Britain ... Hundreds from abroad - Belgium, the USA, France, Austria ... Spending in local hotels and businesses ... Over £1,000 donated by customers to local charities in the past four years alone ... A social and cultural highlight.

A very Darlington celebration !.

But the longer-term prospects for the Vane Terrace facility - including the beer festivals it has hosted for 30 years - still look bleak.

Following severe government cuts, the council proposes halting its £1.2m a year subsidy for the town's Civic Theatre and Arts Centre. Officials acknowledge that that could lead to them closing. The authority hopes to sell the Civic as a going concern but has been silent on sustaining the Arts Centre.

Some council figures are rumoured to have wanted to close the facility for a while, even though it attracts more than 171,000 visitors a year and supports a vast range of community activities. The adjacent Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College has previously shown an interest in expanding onto the site.

As we write, the council's proposals are out for consultation - but it has put forward no alternatives for the Arts Centre.

Arts Centre users, however, are not taking it lying down. A meeting attracted more than 150 individuals and organisations and set up a group, Darlington for Culture, to put an alternative to the council. Their slogan: "We won't let it go". They propose to set up a not-for-profit 'community interest company' to run the building, and continue to provide a hub for the cultural activity.

Spokesman Paul Harman said running the Arts Centre on a reduced basis would still need £200,000 a year to cover the costs. The group would need to convince the council that it had a strong business model based on realistic charges and a combination of trading and fundraising. Funds for the company would be raised by making shares available at £25 per organisation and £10 per individual.

A sub-group will work on a business plan to present to the council. Whether the council will find the proposal acceptable is another matter.

\*SHOW your support by signing the online petition at [www.gopetition.com/petition/40363.html](http://www.gopetition.com/petition/40363.html).

Is Beer Culture ?

Well, aside from the promotion of the once-disappearing art of craft-brewing traditional British beer, every Arts Centre ale festival has been accompanied by live music, often by local performers and thousands of drinkers have taken in exhibitions, etc, while in the building. And as Darlington for Culture says: "Darlington needs a meeting place for clubs and societies, for arts and recreation, for activities and enjoyment, for celebration and discovery, for new partnerships and creative ideas. That is what we mean by Culture..."

56 Festivals: How Many More ?

31 ANNUAL Beer and Music Festivals, starting in May 1980 with the Traditional Jazz & Beer Festival.

It had 17 different beers and was organised by the Arts Centre - in pre-Council ownership days - to raise money to create a foyer, theatre, ballroom and galleries.

In 1981 the event was switched to autumn. Local CAMRA members provided advice to organisers from the formation of the Darlington branch in 1982.

By 1983 the Centre was being run by the Council, who continued to organise the 'Tradfest' with help from Darlington CAMRA.

In 1989, after sustaining a loss the previous year, the Arts Centre management handed over the beer side of the 10th festival to Darlington CAMRA amateurs. All 32 beers, including emergency supplies, ran out by 9.30pm on Saturday.

In 1995, the 16th edition was the first to be promoted as the 'Rhythm 'n' Brews', the Arts Centre Rhythm and Blues Club now organising the music. Pint prices started at £1.20. Beer was still drawn straight from the casks, with primitive cooling by wet and sackcloths.

By 2009, all 56 cask ales were benefiting from CAMRA's state of the art cellarmanship - in-cask cooling and handpull service. Another sell-out event.

25 SPRING THING beer festivals, to date. The festival within a festival - the annual folk festival organised by the Arts Centre Folk Club.

1986 saw the first Spring Thing and CAMRA were invited on board in 1987. A whole nine beers were secreted away in the Garden Bar - The Smallest Beer Festival in the World.

By 1987 it had become the Small Beer Festival, both to distinguish it from its big autumn brother and point to the focus now on micro-breweries. It had also long since moved into a larger space, the-then Ballroom.

It took on the name of the overall Spring Thing festival in 1993, with the beer range having swollen to 23.

2006 saw the first festival cancellation, due to extensive building refurbishment works by the Council.

By 2010 the Spring Thing beerfest - with free entry - was as well-stocked and busy as the autumn festival, with more than 50 real ales and loads of farmhouse ciders.

And so to 2011. Make a date for March 17th-19th. We hope not for the last time.

#### Traveller's Travails Go On

NORTH YORKSHIRE villagers attempting to reopen their local pub, the Travellers Rest at Skeeby, near Scotch Corner, have withdrawn their offer to lease the building from property speculator Jon Whitfield.

The Skeeby Community Pub Society say Mr Whitfield "undermined the level of trust" they had sought to develop with him when, without ever disclosing his intentions to them, he bought the also-closed Skeeby Stores, with the intention of reopening it as a shop.

Running a small shop from the Travellers Rest was a key element of the group's business plan and had helped them secure grant funding from the Plunket Foundation.

They say Mr Whitfield had been aware of that for six months - yet the first they heard of his shop purchase was when they were contacted by the Darlington & Stockton Times.

The Society have, however, restated their offer to buy the pub outright, at a price "significantly in excess of a recent independent market valuation". Mr Whitfield is known to have bought it from S&N for no more than £150,000. The villagers' offer would net him a handsome profit, but he has so far held out for even more.

The Society say they have no objection to the reopening of Skeeby Stores but are not be interested in leasing it themselves.

Spokeswoman Marie Church said: "We remain committed and determined to ensure that the Travellers Rest reopens as a pub and we will continue to endeavour to act in the best interests of the community".

Karen, Sam and the Dragon

A MOTHER and daughter partnership is breathing new life into a once-comatose Dragon. And they've picked a 'Perfect' place.

Mum Karen Mitchelson has taken on the tenancy of the briefly-closed George & Dragon in Heighington with her daughter Samantha Spence. Their declared task: to build the attractive old pub into "a top-flight village hub-pub with a serious take on real ale, food, and a lively programme of events and entertainment".

Health service veteran Karen - 23 years with a Peterlee community hospital - decided on a life-changing switch of careers after breaking an ankle and being off work for 15 weeks. "My workmates thought I'd banged my head, not my foot!". With husband David, she saw a chance to give Sam "the break she'd been working towards" after seven years in hospitality, in Durham and Hartlepool.

The area was an important consideration - and in 2006 Heighington was named BBC TV's Perfect Village. The George's regular handpulled beers are Black Sheep and Wells Bombardier, with a guest beer changing twice a week. Tim Cooper - 20 years at Durham's Ramside Hall - is the chef, and all fresh local produce his promise.

Mel Lewis of Shildon is charged with establishing the pub as a 'modern acoustic venue'. "We'll welcome players from the floor every first Friday in the month, as long as they offer quality, interesting music. Any genre, from any era", he says.

If all goes well Karen has the option to buy the Dragon's lease from Enterprise Inns in a couple of years.

\*George & Dragon, East Green Heighington, DL5 6PP. Tel. (01325) 313152. Open for drinks daily from noon.

THE SURTEES Arms at Ferryhill Station has been named North East Pub of the Year for 2010 by judges drawn from the region's CAMRA branches.

Alan and Susan Hogg's street-corner local - which also happens to have a brewery in the back yard - will now compete in a 'super-regional' semi-final, with every chance of making it through to CAMRA's national final. The couple took over in February 2007 and established their Yard of Ale Brewery the following year.

Alan said that the current success was a bit of shock. "It was a massive boost. We've put so much work into this. The brewery seemed to get all the recognition at first, but it's great that the pub has got some too. We've had brilliant support from the local area. This is a real family business and we're fiercely independent.

We've done very, very well since we've opened but the pub can't support the whole family yet."

A Bevvie with Nellie in Beverley

BEVERLEY in East Yorkshire is well worth a visit both for attractions and its pubs, writes David Hill.

There is an excellent museum and gallery and the Guildhall (only open Fridays) is unique. Just south of the Wednesday Market the Minster can be found.

There is a range of pubs selling real ale both in the pedestrianised town centre and surrounding areas. One well known establishment is the White Horse Inn, locally known as Nellie's after a former landlady. It has changed little over many years, has a number of separate rooms and is still lit by gaslights. The only beer is Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter which although on cask breather was in excellent condition.

Nearby, the Cornerhouse has 12 handpumps with a constantly changing wide range of beers as well as an interesting menu. The Green Dragon in the Saturday Market is a Nicholson's pub and has six guest beers. One of those on tap when we called in was Thornbridge Wild Swan, a 3.5% light hoppy bitter. As with other pubs in this chain it sells good value meals.

The final pub we visited in the town centre was the Sun Inn, which is opposite the Minster and has a couple of guest beers. One reason we didn't visit more pubs was that on midweek evenings many of the pubs have quizzes which attract a strong following and we got roped in to participate. The quizzes ranged from light-hearted to serious, with the Sun having its own version of 'Deal or No Deal' as an added bonus.

Now we have a good excuse to pay another visit and sample the remaining pubs we didn't visit.

There is a full list and town map on the Hull & East Yorks CAMRA website [www.hullcamra.org.uk](http://www.hullcamra.org.uk). Very reasonable B&B can be found at the Trinity guest house opposite the railway station.

While we were in the area we called in at the Marine Bar on North Marine Drive in Bridlington. There was well kept Wold Top Bitter (3.5%), which we sampled in the outside area overlooking the sea. There is a 10% discount on real ale for card-carrying CAMRA members.

### Top of the Hops

CAMRA has announced that there are now a staggering 767 breweries operating in Britain - that's four times the number than when the Campaign for Real Ale was founded in 1971.

The discerning drinkers' bible, the Good Beer Guide 2011, reports that 78 new breweries have opened over the past 12 months alone. Even allowing for closures, there's a net increase of 56.

The North East today boasts 21 real ale breweries and North Yorkshire 29.

The newest micro in the former is the Cleveland Brewery at Stillington, while the year's newcomers in North Yorkshire include Darlington's own Mithril Ales at Aldbrough St John

and Wainstones Brewery, Stokesley's second producer in the footsteps of the established Captain Cook set-up.

Good Beer Guide editor Roger Protz says: "The real ale revolution goes on in spite of all the problems facing the brewing industry such as the often anti-competitive behaviour of the large pub companies, the heavy and continuing rise in tax on beer, grossly unfair competition from supermarkets and the smoking ban in pubs. Against all the odds craft breweries continue to sprout like mushrooms."

"The main reason is a simple one: craft brewers are responding to genuine consumer demand. Beer in pubs may be expensive compared to cheap supermarkets but drinkers are prepared to pay a bit extra for beer with taste and quality. More and more people want to think local and drink local and real ale meets that demand."

#### Brews, News and Views

SEASONS 'cafe and kitchen' has opened in the former Old Dun Cow, in Darlington's Post House Wynd. It serves two real ales, Richmond Brewery's Richmond Station Ale (£3.20 a pint) and Black Sheep Bitter. The pub had been vacant for some time after being sold by Punch Taverns in 2009. A 'to let' board bearing the phone number of Darlington letting agents later appeared. Seasons' proprietors Ian Woodcock and Jane Gallogly have spent £150,000 on refurbishment and have a restaurant of the same name in the converted Richmond Station, where Richmond Brewery is also based.

THE BLACKWELL GRANGE HOTEL, on the leafy southern edge of Darlington, is also now selling Black Sheep Bitter.

THE BAY HORSE at Middleton Tyas ('bottom house') looks unlikely ever to reopen, following Richmondshire Council's decision to grant planning permission for conversion into three dwellings and the building of a fourth in its car park.

#### CAMRA Diary Dates:

FRI 3RD DEC: Rural Coach Crawl around the Heighington area:  
Bus departs 7pm from Feethams. Bookings as below.

TUES 7TH DEC: Darlington CAMRA Branch Meeting:  
Quaker House, Mechanics Yard, Darlington. 7.30pm start. All welcome.

WED 29TH DEC: Darlington CAMRA Christmas Social:  
Darlington Snooker Club, Corporation Road, Darlington. 7.30pm start.

TUE 11TH JAN: Darlington CAMRA Branch Meeting:  
Glittering Star, Stonebridge, Darlington. 7.30pm start. All welcome.

FRI 14TH JAN: Rural Coach Crawl around our North Yorkshire pubs:  
Bus departs 7pm from Feethams. Bookings as below.

SAT 5TH FEB: North East Regional Meeting:

Darlington Cricket Club, Feetham South, Darlington. 1pm start. All welcome.

For further information about social trips including reservations contact Social Secretary Pete Fenwick on 01325 374817 (home) or 07889 167128 (mobile) or via email by clicking [here](#).

PLEASE NOTE: If you wish to cancel a reservation on any of the above coach crawls we require at least 48 hours notice otherwise a cancellation fee will be charged.

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