

From the Editor

This issue of Darlington Drinker marks our branch's 30th birthday. On our actual birthday, 19th May, the Snooker Club hosted a beer festival with 30 beers. We have also published an updated Guide to Real Ale in and Around Darlington. This was last published in 2008, and has been thoroughly updated. Although many people have had a hand in its production, special thanks are due to Richard Jones who has given up countless hours designing and entering all the data.

On a rather sadder note, March saw the last Spring Thing Beer Festival at the Arts Centre, which has fallen victim to council cuts. This means there won't be a Rhythm 'n' Brews Festival this September. However, it is now fairly certain that we will have a Spring Thing beer Festival next year on our usual dates of the weekend 22nd to 24th March. We should be able to bring you more definite news in issue 185.

You will find more information about the Guide and both Beer Festivals in this issue of Darlington Drinker.

Vron Burningham

Spring Thing Gone

Yes, the final beer festival at the Darlington Arts Centre has been and gone and what a success; it appeared that most of Darlington's beer drinkers turned out to drown their sorrows at the event's demise. Spring Thing was Darlington's 26th Annual Folk Festival with folk music and real ale and this final event coincided with Darlington CAMRA's 30th year of existence.

The beer started to flow at 7pm on Thursday 29th of March with one of the biggest crowds ever seen. Plenty of regulars and many new faces tasting the quality beer in the festival special pint glass. A total of 54 beers were on tap from local and not so local breweries, including 26 new breweries and 4 beers brewed specifically for the event. It was interesting to see that the brewers are moving to the slightly darker beers from the blondes very popular last year.

The cider drinkers were not forgotten as we had 6 ciders and 3 perries on much easier to dispense push button taps. After Friday afternoon's busy session with the tickers, the evening was filled with anticipation waiting for the first beer to sell out. It was a close-run thing, local brewer Dave Wall with his Kitzenjammer (German for hangover) just beating A Farewell to Arts from Mithril Ales. Third place was a tie between Weard'ale's Art Attack and new brewery Angel's Kismet. The Saturday session set new records with all the spare casks being put on and everything selling out around 8.20pm.

Our regular team of helpers, who gave their time from the Monday with setting up through Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, then serving the many punters to the final dismantling session deserve big thanks - too many names to mention but you know who you are.

So what happens next ?. First we have to move all the equipment into new storage and it's a big thank you to our CAMRA members Sandra and David of the Grand at Bishop Auckland for providing space. We are now actively looking for a new venue for next year and we hope to be able to announce this and the dates within the next few months. Please rest assured that for all you thirsty real ale drinkers, there will be a festival next year and we look forward to your support and help at the event.

Please email with your comments or to volunteer to paul.appleton103@hotmail.co.uk
Thank you for your continued support.

The Beer Festival Committee.

Save Your Pint - Sign the Beer Tax E-Petition

It's time to save your pint and fight back against this year's budget which saw the Government continue its damaging policy of the beer duty escalator. Every year beer tax increases by 2% above inflation meaning your pint in the pub costs you 5p to 10p more. This mounting pressure is contributing to the closure of 16 pubs every single week. With around £1 on every pint going to the Treasury in beer duty and VAT, it's time to save your pint and call time on the beer duty escalator !.

CAMRA is aiming to collect 100,000 signatures to trigger a high profile Parliamentary debate and put pressure on the Government ahead of Budget 2013. To stand a chance of doing this we need your help in reaching as many people as possible. So please sign the online e-petition today by visiting www.camra.org.uk/saveyourpint or on our home page by clicking [here](#) and ask your friends to do the same.

Success at the Foresters

When Kate Umpleby took over the Foresters Arms in Coatham Mundeville four years ago, it was a complete change for her as previously she had run two lifestyle magazines. She has built it back up into a real community pub after finding it very run down. There is a Ukulele Club twice a month, and they have just been featured on BBC Radio Tees. On the second Sunday of the month a Reptile Club gathers with talks by guest speakers, plus general friendship and help for anyone interested in reptiles.

The pub has its very own resident ghosts, all of whom are completely non-threatening, confining themselves to moving things round, turning on the pumps, and on one occasion locking Kate in the cellar overnight. Darlington Ghost Watch has visited the pub and recorded all sorts of interesting phenomena overnight.

All the staff have food hygiene certificates and the food is becoming so popular that Sunday lunch is regularly sold out. There is a marquee for hire and a summer courtyard for the better weather. In only four years, Kate has turned the pub around to the extent it is featured in the Good Beer Guide 2012, and has come second in both the Darlington Country Pub of the Year and the Pub of the Season, no mean achievement for someone who didn't know anything about being a landlady. She is also 5th out of 67 listings on Trip Advisor. Kate

loves to see people happy and you only have to talk to her to know how much she loves her job.

Giving And Receiving

The branch's very own local brewer Pete Fenwick has been busy giving and receiving awards lately.

Pete, in his capacity as our Pubs Officer presented an award to Peter Cockerill of The Old Well in Barnard Castle for winning our branch's Teesdale Pub of the Season Summer 2011. As Pete remarked, certificates can take some time to come through from headquarters, but are well worthy as the award presentation was made during the Old Well's very successful Beer Festival which ran from the 6th to the 15th of April.

Also during a beer festival (how does our branch arrange these things !), an award was also made by Pete for our Country Pub of the Year to The Crown at Manfield, and was presented to licensees Peter and Karen Hynes on Friday 4th May at the pub's "Star Wars" themed Beer Festival. Our congratulations go to Peter and Karen and the staff on yet another well deserved award !.

On the 'receiving' side, Pete received his certificate for winning Beer of the Festival with Mithril Ales' Flower Power at last year's Richmond Beer Festival, and the presentation was made by Vince Rutland, the chairman of North West Yorkshire CAMRA Branch. This award now goes alongside Flower Power's award for winning Beer of the Festival at the Darlington Rhythm 'n' Brews Festival back in September 2010.

Finally, there was the 'Making a Difference in Richmondshire Awards' for 2011-12 and Mithril Ales won the Business of the Year Award for Richmondshire. A presentation was made to Pete by the Mayor of Richmond at a ceremony at the St. Francis Xavier School in Richmond.

All in all, awards well deserved on both the 'giving' and 'receiving' side of things.

Wales Ales

Have motorhome will travel, this time to Wales which we last visited about six years ago. We found the real ale scene had improved generally with wide availability. This was especially so of some of the smaller brewers.

The first stop on our travels was Llanrwst, where the Pen y Bont Hotel in the town centre had beers from the local Nant Brewery, including Mwnci Nell, which turned out to be a smooth black stout. Further on at Caernarvon, Nant Rrst, a golden ale, was found at the Black Boy along with Purple Moose Ysgawen, delicately flavoured with elderflowers.

If you're stuck in Snowdonia on a really wet day, what do you do ?. You find a brewpub with a campsite attached, of course, and hole up there for a while. Especially if the said brewpub provides really good ale, a warm and welcoming bar and tasty food. It's also in the National Park, next to a steam railway and a bus stop. The Snowdonia Park Tavern and Brewery at Waunfawr (don't try and pronounce it – the closest we got was "wine-vor") ticked about

every box a dedicated CAMRA drinker could think of. The brewery supplies only the pub with very good ale and a warm and friendly welcome with reasonable prices. Even wet days have their compensations.

Porthmadog, on the west coast at the entrance to the Llyn Peninsula is a lovely little town served by one standard and two narrow-gauge railways and boasting no less than three GBG pubs. The Station Inn, situated on the main line platform, had St Austell Tribute and Greene King IPA on the bar .

The Ship in Lombard Street is the current local CAMRA Pub of the Year 2011, with frequently changing guest ales. Warm and welcoming with good food, there was Big Boy WPA on the bar as well as Tribute. The celebrated Spooner's Bar, at the station which serves both the Festiniog and Welsh Highland steam railways definitely lived up to its deserved reputation. Serving locals and travellers alike, it offers hot and cold food together with a mix of national and local ales, the latter coming from the town's Purple Moose Brewery. Items of railway memorabilia decorate the walls, whilst no one can miss locomotive No 1 "Princess", displayed just inside the entrance, built in 1863 and used by the Festiniog Railway until its closure in 1946. For CAMRA members, a 5% discount is available on production of membership card at the time of ordering.

Harlech is a small town, with a magnificent sandy beach, overlooked by one of Wales's finest medieval castles, and with its business district reached up a fiendishly steep hill !. The Good Beer Guide listed Branwen Hotel

offered Purple Moose Snowdonia and Sharps Doom Bar, whilst up the hill the Lion Hotel had Purple Moose Dark Side of the Moose, Wychwood Hobgoblin and Everard Tiger, together with a welcoming fire and a cheerful landlady who without hesitation went straight off to put on another cask as soon as the Purple Moose ran out.

A stay at Devil's Bridge meant a trip to Aberystwyth on the scenic Vale of Rheidol railway, as well as a strenuous walk to view the magnificent Rheidol Falls. Strenuous not because of its length, but because of the 200 and more steep steps down to the bottom and then the same up the other side. Fortunately the Hafod Arms stands immediately across the road from the exit, with its beers from the Evan Evans Brewery in south west Wales. On offer were Brewery Bitter and Easter Ale, the latter being paler and more hoppy than the other.

Reaching St David's and the southern limit of our travels, we found Wales's smallest city to be charging big city prices, with our pints of Felinfoel Double Dragon at the Bishop's Hotel costing an eye-watering £3.75 each !. Brain's SA Gold at the Grove Hotel was a little cheaper at £3.30.

Llandovery is home to the King's Head Inn, a CAMRA National Inventory pub. It only had Sharp's Doom Bar, so we opted for the Castle Hotel, which offered Evan Evans Cwrw and Brain's Reverend James. It also boasted an amazingly good cream tea, which demanded another visit the following afternoon. Just to the south lies Llangadog, with two GBG-listed pubs one of which, the Telegraph Inn, was closed. The Red Lion had Doom Bar and Reverend James, so we visited the Black Lion, to enjoy Felinfoel Cambrian Bitter and Double Dragon.

Hay-on-Wye is best known as a 'book town', but it also boasts an excellent Good Beer guide pub in Kilverts, featuring ales from the Brecon Brewery. Beacons To The Sea was a refreshing golden ale, brewed to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, while Genesis was a tasty dark porter. As Hay-on-Wye merited a second day's visit, so did Kilverts!

Then it was time to head for home, but in the finest tradition of 'saving the best until last', the Bridge End Inn at Ruabon was to be our last stop. Just a month previously it had proudly received the award of CAMRA's National Pub of the Year, the first in Wales to do so. As well as guest beers, the pub features McGivern Ales, brewed on site by the owners. "Codebreaker" and "Enigma" immediately had us thinking of wartime Bletchley Park, but it turned out that the brewer happens to be a crossword fan !.

Our favourite among all the Welsh beers? It was probably the Ochr Tywyll Y Mws !.

Mike and Vron Burningham

30th Birthday Beer Festival at Darlington Snooker Club

Our Branch was 30 years old on 19th May and as part of the celebrations, Darlington Snooker Club hosted a Beer Festival from Thursday 17th to Sunday 20th May. There were 30 beers on, and on the Saturday (19th) beer was £2 a pint all day for CAMRA members showing their membership cards.

At each Beer Festival we ask visitors to donate unused beer tokens to a local charity. At this Spring Thing the chosen charity was St. Theresa's Hospice and the sum raised for them was £208.28. The Hospice services are free of charge, and it costs £2.4 million to run each year, all of which comes from fundraising and donations. They work in partnership with local businesses, including CAMRA, so it was a very suitable charity to choose for our last festival at the Arts Centre.

It was also a good week for the snooker club's proprietor Peter Everett as following the festival, at one of our regular Committee meetings, John Magson, Branch Secretary presented him with a certificate for once again being voted Darlington Branch of CAMRA Club of the Year 2012.

National Beer Scoring System

Have you ever wondered how CAMRA members select pubs for the CAMRA Good Beer Guide ?. The National Beer Scoring System (NBSS) is a 0-5 point scale for judging beer quality in pubs. It is an easy to use system that has been designed to assist CAMRA branches in selecting pubs for the Good Beer Guide and also monitor beer quality by encouraging CAMRA members from any part of the world to report beer quality in any pub in the UK.

If you are a CAMRA member, we want you to tell us about the quality of beer in the pubs you visit. You can get all the information you need, including beer scoring cards, from the CAMRA website.

Britain's Bingeing On Beer - Actually, It's Not !.

This was the headline for an article in the Guardian of 23rd March by Pete Brown. He makes the point that the press coverage of liver disease and minimum alcohol pricing falsely implies that beer drinking is the problem.

The numbers make it very clear that the rise in liver disease fatalities is due to a combination of obesity, alcohol and hepatitis, but few in the media focus on the obesity epidemic and choose instead to focus on booze, paving the way perfectly for the announcement of a new minimum alcohol pricing strategy.

Alcohol consumption is actually falling. Between 2005 and 2010 the number of men drinking more than 21 units a week fell from 31% to 26% and the proportion of women drinking more than 14 units a week fell from 21% to 17%. More frustrating if you enjoy a decent pint – or accurate news reporting – is that the news media seem convinced that the main driver of alcohol related liver disease is beer. All the main newspapers and the BBC use images of beer – just beer – with this story.

So it may come as a surprise that, if you look at the actual data beer is not the problem at all. Figures from the British Beer and Pub Association reveal that over the same period as this rise in liver disease, beer sales plummeted by 18%. Within that, standard lager, typically 3.5-4.4% alcohol by volume (ABV) fell just 4%, while premium lager (around 5% ABV) was down 18% – so the strongest beers are falling fastest. Over the same period, sales of wine grew by 4%, and became significantly stronger in alcohol. And sales of spirits shot up by 18%.

So it's obvious that if there's any link between rising liver disease and alcohol, it's not beer that's causing it. People are trading up to higher ABV drinks, and beer sales are plummeting as liver disease rises. So why does the media blame beer ?.

British beer and pubs are a magnet for tourists – 85% of visitors to Britain prefer the pub to bars in their own countries. We're in the middle of a craft ale boom, we make an artisanal, flavourful, nutritious, relatively low-alcohol product that makes £28bn for the British economy and supports 600,000 jobs. If you take the trouble to ask binge drinkers, they'll tell you they don't drink beer because it doesn't get them wasted quick enough. But beer's democracy, sociability and approachability mean that in a snobbish and self-loathing age, we dismiss it as "just beer", ignoring its virtues and blaming it for the bad news.

With 16 pubs closing every week, and spiralling beer duty (up more than 40% in four years) killing one of our last manufacturing industries, this kicking of beer has to stop. Can't we please start to take pride in something we do brilliantly, something that enhances millions of people's lives ?. And can we please start by illustrating stories about the negative effects of drinking with pictures of the drinks that actually cause the trouble ?.

Cheers.

Editors Note: The above is mainly from the article by Pete Brown.

We Have Lift Off

The Guide to Real Ale in and Around Darlington was launched in style at Number 22 in Darlington on Tuesday, 29th May. Featuring around 100 pubs in our branch area that stock real ale, it is designed to be of use for those visiting the area or looking for new places to try.

The launch was attended by a number of Darlington CAMRA members, as well as Regional Director David Brazier, Tyneside and Northumberland Branch Chairman Richard Dollimore, several previous chairmen of Darlington Branch and the Mayor Councillor Paul Baldwin.

CAMRA National Chairman, Colin Valentine, also attended and in his speech he mentioned that our first Chairman, Brendan Boyle, had been short listed for CAMRA Campaigner of the Year. He also emphasised the importance of the e-petition that CAMRA has launched to try and overturn the beer duty escalator. We need 100,000 signatures and already have half that. He spoke about a government defeat in January over self-regulation of pub companies, so that now there has to be an independent review.

Colin said that, being Scottish, he was especially pleased with the minimum pricing legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament. This will affect supermarkets and off-licences, but not a single pub. He hopes it will get more people drinking in the controlled environment of the pub.

Peter Everett then launched the guide and thanked all those who had helped with the production of the Guide, especially Vron and Richard.

News, Brews and Views.

The Spotted Dog at High Coniscliffe has been reopened by Tony and Joanne Furphy of the Baydale Beck. It currently has 2 real ales, Black Sheep and Speckled Hen.

The Morritt at Greta Bridge serves Timothy Taylor Landlord, their own Major Morritt and 2 guest ales.

Thanks to the following for hosting our monthly branch meetings:-

Quaker House (March), Darlington Cricket Club (April), Glittering Star (May).

Branch Diary:

JUNE

Friday 9th: 2nd Darlington Town Pub of the Season surveying trip
Meet at The Glittering Star for a Walk Around Darlington Town Centre 7pm

Wednesday 13th: Branch Meeting Britannia, Archer Street, Darlington 7.30pm

JULY

Tuesday 10th: Branch Meeting Hole in the Wall, Market Place, Darlington 7.30pm

Friday 13th: Pub surveying trip Upper Teesdale.

Middleton in Teesdale x 2, Holwick, Mickleton, Cotherstone x 2. Bus from Dolphin Centre (Feethams) 6.30pm

AUGUST

Sunday 5th: Games Day with North West Yorkshire CAMRA Branch

Fox and Hounds, West Witton (Details to be confirmed)

Tuesday 7th: Branch Meeting Foresters Arms, Coatham Mundeville 7.30pm

Friday 10th: Pub surveying trip around Mid Teesdale.

Greta Bridge, Barnard Castle x 2, Eggleston & Bowes x 2. Bus from Dolphin Centre (Feethams) 7pm

Sat 18th: North East Regional Meeting. Chester-le-Street Cricket Club, Chester-le-Street. 1pm

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday 11th Branch Meeting Darlington Snooker Club, Corporation Road. 7.30pm

Fri 14th : Lower Teesdale Pub of the Season Surveying Trip.

Going to Ovington, Staindrop x 2, Gainford x 2 & Ingleton. Bus from Feethams 7pm

Visitors and new members are always made welcome

Details for all trips from Pete Fenwick 01325 374817 or 07889 167128

Other Events:

Friday 15th June 50 and 60s night. Strathmore Arms, Holwick. Live music. Good beer. Fancy dress.

Over the weekend beginning Friday 13th July The Quaker House, Number 22, Vesuvio and the Voodoo Café are joining forces for a joint Beer Festival . The Voodoo Café will have South American bottled beers, Vesuvio unusual European and British bottled beers, while the Quaker House and Number 22 will have extra cask ales.

27th—29th July Beer Festival at the Strathmore Arms at Holwick. There will be up to 20 beers, mainly from northern breweries, with cider, perry and British wines. Free soft drinks for designated drivers. Live music Friday and Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon. Camping. Barbecue. Open 12- late every day.

The Who's Who of the Branch ?

Chairman: Peter Everett

Tel: 01325 241388

Email: peterdsc@yahoo.co.uk

Secretary and Branch Contact: John Magson

Email: john.magson@ntlworld.com

Treasurer: Colin Chidzey

Email: colin.chidzey@gmail.com

Membership Secretary: Mike Burningham

Email: mikeb09@btinternet.com

Darlington Drinker Editor: Vron Burningham
Tel: 01833 640587
Email: weavervron@gmail.com

Social Secretary, Pubs Officer and Cider Officer: Pete Fenwick
Tel: 01325 374817 (home), 07889 167128 or 07792 093245 (mobile)
Email: mithril58@btinternet.com

Darlington CAMRA website (you're surfing it at this moment in time !):

www.darlocamra.org.uk

Find us on Twitter ([@darloCAMRA](https://twitter.com/darloCAMRA)) and on Facebook - log in and search for 'CAMRA Darlington' and 'Like' us !.

Darlington Trading Standards Telephone: 01325 388799.

Email: tradingstandards@darlington.gov.uk

Advertising Rates for Darlington Drinker:

Quarter-page: £33

Half page: £55

Full page: £88

Back cover: £100

If advertisers pay in full when submitting their copy, they will qualify for a 10% discount. Regular advertisers will continue to be rewarded with every 6th consecutive advertisement free. However, please note that this only applies if the previous five issues are paid promptly.

To book your space, please contact Peter Everett on 01325 241388 or email:

peterdsc@yahoo.co.uk.

The views and opinions expressed in Issue 184 are not necessarily those of the Editor or Darlington CAMRA