

Darlington Drinker - Issue 188

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Darlington Drinker 188

Newsletter of the Darlington Campaign for Real Ale - Autumn 2013

From the Editor

Welcome to Issue 188 of Darlington Drinker. Since the last issue came out at the beginning of May, we have had somewhat of a "Real Ale Renaissance" in our branch area with pubs in the branch area both reopening and starting to stock real ale.

Barnard Castle has had two real ale pubs reopening, while in Darlington two pubs have begun to stock real ale and one has reopened after a long period of closure as a real ale pub with plans to have a microbrewery in the cellar - the first brewery in Darlington in a long while.

Despite the current climate in which approximately 25 pubs have been closing every week, it is pleasing to see in our area we are bucking the trend. Remember pubs are an integral part of our way of life and they cannot survive on their own so it is vital we support them so "Use it or Lose it!"

Continuing the renaissance theme, we are pleased to announce the return of our CAMRA Beer Festival. Following the closure of the Arts Centre last year, we have managed to secure a new festival venue, this time the home of Mowden Park Rugby Club at the Northern Echo Arena on Neasham Road. The festival will be running from Thursday 1st to Saturday 3rd August and we will be running it in the same format in terms of size as the festivals we held at the Arts Centre.

Once again, we will be looking forward to seeing old faces again and meeting new ones, and above all we hope to see you all continue to support this festival in the many ways you did with our previous ones.

Ian Jackson, Editor, Darlington Drinker

The Real Ale Renaissance

Darlington Branch has witnessed something of a "Real Ale Renaissance" over the last couple of months with pubs stocking real for the first time and increasing their range. In Darlington the Red Lion, Round Tree and Sloans are now stocking guest beers while the Turbinia in Newton Aycliffe now has a guest beer alongside Shepherd Neame Spitfire.

Even more pleasing is that five pubs reopened. Three Horseshoes and Black Horse are open again for business in Barnard Castle along with The White Swan in Gilling West and the Locomotion No 1 at Heighington Station who are both have at least three real ales each.

The biggest change though has been in Darlington where the Half Moon in Northgate was taken over by John Anderson and Dave Walker, the owners of The Crafty Pint bottled beer shop in Darlington's Indoor Market. When their plans for the Half Moon appeared on the Crafty Pint Facebook page back in May, they received well over 10,000 visits and plenty of good luck messages, one even from as far away as Colorado in the United States of America. Due to the limited opening times for The Crafty Pint bottled beer shop in Darlington Indoor Market, they both felt the next step was running a pub due to their interest in real ale. The Half Moon had been closed for a few years, so Dave and John got in touch with the owners and following a viewing decided to take over the lease.

After a refurbishment which includes church pews as part of the seating and moving the Crafty Pint shop to the pub, it reopened on Saturday June 1st with six hand pumps adorning the bar offering beers personally sourced plus a real cider. By the end of June, the number of hand pumps increased to ten with a craft keg lager on tap. Their ambitious plans haven't stopped there with plans to have a nano (small) brewery installed in the cellar.

Nationally, when it is reported that around 25 pubs are closing every week, it's very pleasing to see pubs in Darlington and the surrounding area are somewhat bucking the trend.

Beer In The Borders

By Ian Jackson

Being a keen mountain biker, I had heard raving reports about Glentress Forest Trail Centre in the Scottish Borders. Located in the Tweed Valley between Innerleithen and Peebles some 20 miles or so south of Edinburgh, I recently got the chance to go there. Post berms, blowouts and swooping singletrack, I also got the opportunity to see what this part of Scotland has to offer in terms of real ale.

Just a few miles south of Innerleithen is Traquair House, Scotland's oldest inhabited house and home to Traquair Brewery. Although it dates back to 1700, Mary Queen of Scots visited there in 1566 and it is rumoured brewing was already taking place. Peter Maxwell Stuart revived the brewery in 1965 using all the original equipment including oak vessels which are still in use today for fermentation. When Binns' bottled beer shop had monthly tastings, some of you may have recalled Lady Katherine Maxwell Stuart visiting on a number of occasions to do tastings of the Traquair beers. Most of the beer produced is bottled but the nearby Traquair Arms Hotel in Innerleithen is a rare outlet for their beers on draught with Stuart Ale being the regular brew however Bear Ale was available on my visit.

The Cobbles Inn at Kelso, situated just off the market place is currently Edinburgh and South East Scotland's CAMRA Pub of the Year. Although a gastropub, it is the Tempest Brewery tap but the brewery is based in an old dairy nearby. Known for producing pale ales, my tipples were Cascadian Blonde at 4.1% and Pale Ale at 4.5%. I also had to have a taste of Long White Cloud at 5.6% as the recipe originates from Christchurch in New Zealand where I have visited relatives on a couple of occasions. Maoris called New Zealand 'Aotearoa' – the land of the long white cloud.

Based at Lanton Mill on the outskirts of Jedburgh is Scottish Borders Brewery. The brewery's motto is "From Plough To Pint" as owner John Henderson had been growing barley on the farm so brewing began in 2011. They supply local outlets including The Canon in Jedburgh and have acquired the Cross Keys at Ancrum, thus making it their brewery tap.

Despite my visit only being a brief one, I was pleased to discover what I had found. Another visit to Glentress again perhaps to find much more?.

Darlington Drinker ... Ten Years Ago

Camerons' new £500,000 mini-brewery and bottling line, "The Lion's Den", was officially opened at a convivial ceremony in Hartlepool on June 18th.

The 10-barrel plant, which can brew up to four times a week, was commissioned from the Czech Republic to enable small scale brews to be produced at the Lion Brewery. Managing director David Soley announced the one of the first brews would be Conciliation Ale, originally produced by Butterknowle Brewery in the early 90s. The brand was bought when the brewery closed.

Mr Soley said: "This facility will allow us to experiment with new lines on a relatively small scale. I am looking forward to launching and promoting an exciting range of quality cask conditioned ales."

Until recently bottling of Camerons' beers took place at Brakspears in Oxfordshire. The Lion's Den is already bottling Strongarm for export to Texas. It will soon be sending a 'chocolate' beer to Finland: the Finns enjoyed this so much last year, they want more.

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A City Wall Crawl

By John Magson

The Romans founded Chester in 79 AD and it is one of the best preserved walled cities in Britain and an ideal venue for a beer related 'Wall Crawl'.

Starting point was a little way from the wall with the first pub being The Old Harkers Arms which had eight real ales including Purple Moose Snowdonia Ale, Montys MPA, Weetwood Cheshire Cat, Bruning & Price Original Bitter plus the one I sampled which was Burscough Mere Blonde. Over a

period of time most were tasted to accompany an excellent meal.

Across the road was The Cellar serving Red Willow Directionless, Titanic Stout, Weetwood Cheshire Cat, Boggarts I Am Beer and the very welcoming Boggarts Rum Porter considering the cold windy weather.

Next door is the Canalside Inn (pictured) with a downstairs bar which advertised Swifty's beers but I was informed that they had not been brewed for some time so I settled for Jade, one of the four Liverpool Organic beers on sale with the others being Styrian, Bier Head and Joseph Williamson. Crossing a bridge over the canal a short walk was the Mill Hotel serving ten real ales which to my surprise were only £2.60 a pint, so I took advantage and had Phoenix Cornmill and Beartown Bearly Literate.

Next day I joined the city wall at the clock at Eastgate and proceeded past the King Charles Tower round to its junction with Northgate to visit The Pied Bull which is an historic coaching inn with a micro brewery in the cellar. I sampled the two Pied Bull beers on offer, Matador and Bull's Hit plus Red Willow Brewery's Wreckless and Shameless. Back onto the wall and a long and pleasant walk took me past St Martin's Gate and the Water Tower to descend to visit the Architect near to the racecourse. This is a conversion from a two storey regency home of the famous Architect and Bridge builder Thomas Harrison and an exemplary job of restoration has been done. Beers eye pleasing as the interior were Titanic Storage, Castle Rock Black Gold, Red Willow Feckless, Wood Street Best Bitter, Weetwood Cheshire Cat and Weetwood Eastwood.

Along the wall again I passed the castle until I came to Bridgegate and went down on to Lower Bridge Street which had three hostelrys to visit. The first was to the stunning 17th century town house named the Bear & Billet which has retained much of the original woodwork both inside and out. I took advantage of the offer of a paddle of beer with three third pints for £3.20 which was good value and drank Phoenix Dry As A Desert, Lancashire Red, Ltd Edition Hopzilla Gorilla, Art Brew Art Nouveau, Totton White Queen and Okells Bitter.

Across the road is The Cross Keys, a red-bricked corner building with a wood panelled interior with stained glass windows and as it is a Joules brewery tap it sold Slumbering Monk, Blonde and Original Pale Ale which had a superb caramel taste and is brewed from a 1779 recipe. Further up the street is the Spitting Feathers Brewery Tap, an old first floor former Jacobean banqueting hall with stone floor and tapestries. Surprisingly Thirst Quencher was the only Spitting Feathers beer on the bar but alongside it were six more beers: Rat Brown Rat, Elland Sing Song, Brains Dark, Facers Landslide, Derventio Old Chester Stout and Northumberland Bitter. I walked a little further on the wall to the amphitheatre and dropped in to the multi award winning Albion to finish off with a couple of halves of Adnams Southwold Bitter and St Austell Tribute before it closed.

I also found time to enjoy the cathedral and museum and I must add that my visit took place over three days with the help of a likeminded drinking chum and the beer was consumed responsibly.

Did You Ever Wonder?

By Alan Blacklee

Did you ever wonder what happens on a monthly CAMRA Surveying trip - "The Beer Bus?" - if so read on and I will tell you.

Once a month on a Friday evening the usual suspects are hanging around the Dolphin Centre around 7pm to be picked up by our driver for the evening. We visit around six pubs, all selected because they sell real ale and hopefully fit into the expectations of CAMRA and its members.

After a short run down the A1 we arrive at our first destination, The Shoulder of Mutton in Middleton Tyas. This is a traditional pub, open fire, friendly locals, very welcoming hosts and four real ales. Jennings' Cumberland Ale was as good a pint as always in this wonderful village pub. The other beers on offer were Black Sheep Best Bitter, John Smiths Cask and Marstons EPA. After a pleasant goodbye we were on our way up the road to Gilling West. Upon opening the door to the Angel you were greeted by the warmth of not only the fire but also the locals and the landlord and landlady. The Angel is well worth a visit from those of you who like a real village pub and has a really good community spirit about it. My tipple here was Time for Another from Just a Minute Brewery, a

first time for me from this one and definitely not my last as it was a really cracking beer with a real story about its name but I will let you visit this pub to get the story first hand from the landlord.

Onward and westward to the Fox Hall Inn at East Layton, well truthfully on the A66 and a place I wasn't really expecting much from as it was about 15 years since I had entered this place and vowed I wouldn't again – but I am glad I did!. The Fox Hall Inn has undergone a refurbishment and a transformation not least a change of exterior colour from tango orange to a very pleasant magnolia kind of colour but the real transformation awaited inside. Quite often when a place is refurbished it becomes all new and flashy but here they have managed to make a very contemporary design and décor feel very traditional and homely with open fires and good beers and a great atmosphere with a good mix of young and older clientele.

Three beers were on offer here, all immaculately kept especially the one I had, the appropriately named Route A66 from Mithril Ales and at £2.90 a pint. Other beers were Copper Dragon Golden Pippin and Timothy Taylors Landlord all equally as well received and reviewed by my fellow imbibers and if the smell is anything to go by the Fish and Chip restaurant will be getting my attention soon, well done the Fox Hall Inn!.

Back on the bus and westward again to the Smallways. There was only Wensleydale Bitter on here and good it was too. It is a pity that this pub is on a fast stretch of the A66 so a lot of people fly past without giving it a second look which is a real shame as the landlord and locals are accommodating. But as time was moving on it was time that we were too.

Next stop was the lovely and always welcoming Bay Horse at Ravensworth which had Timothy Taylors Landlord and Shepherd Neame Spitfire, which I settled for and again a good pint was enjoyed in good company and a lovely landlady in a truly picturesque village. My only disappointment came at this pub and that was the fact that at about 9.30pm on a Friday evening we were the only people in there and I personally think this place really does deserve more support. Come on the good people of the area "USE IT OR LOSE IT" I am sure the locals do but a bit of support from around the area would be nice.

Finally onto the last destination of the evening, The Shoulder of Mutton at Kirby Hill and again another fabulous setting especially on a lovely spring or summer evening looking out across the valley. There were four beers on offer namely, Black Sheep Progress, Daleside Bitter, Wensleydale Number Yain and Mithril Titanic Gold. My choice here being the latter and in my opinion the beer of the night. All the other beers seemed to selling well among our group and by now a lovely relaxed atmosphere was being enjoyed by all. Thanks must go out to the landlady for the chips which were an unexpected treat and appreciated by all. Here we boarded the bus for the journey back to Darlington and the end of a lovely evening.

So now you know what happens feel free to join us one Friday night, the trips are open to members and non-members and a very friendly sociable nights in good company. So stop wondering and come on in ...The Beers Lovely!.

Rochdale Ale Trail

By Ian Jackson

Situated on the northern outskirts of Manchester, Rochdale has a bit of everything when it comes to its entries in CAMRA's 2013 Good Beer Guide. Those listed include a brew pub, a JD Wetherspoon outlet, a National Inventory pub, three hotels while another pub is CAMRA's National Pub of the Year and the main reason for John Magson and me visiting there.

Travelling by train from Leeds through scenic Calderdale, we arrived at Rochdale station to be greeted by the ongoing Metrolink extension from Manchester. Running only as far as the railway station at the moment, the tram route will eventually go as far as a brand new terminus in the town

centre. Picking our way through road works and newly laid rail lines we reached the Cask & Feather on Oldham Road. On walking through the door, the greeting was not only from the barmaid but also the smell of malt!. As the pub is the home of Greenmill Brewery, the mashing stage during the brewing process was taking place. As the brewery is only ten yards from the bar, it is visible when brewing takes place otherwise it is hidden behind a very large swing door with a dartboard on it. The beer selection was the brewery's own Greenmill Gold, Phoenix Navy and Bridgehouse Porter. Greenmill Gold was our choice and eminently drinkable it was too - especially so at £2.10 a pint!.

Back on our ale trail we carried on through the town centre, heading towards the Co-op Museum (home of the world's first ever co-operative store). Next door is the Baum and this year won CAMRA's National Pub of the Year. There is a choice of seven handpumps serving beers both local and further afield, while another handpump is dedicated to cider plus there is an extensive bottled beer range. We had a chat with Simon Crompton, the licensee who said how popular the pub has become since winning the award. Card carrying CAMRA members are also rewarded here with a 40p discount per pint. Some rather excellent baguettes were washed down with pints of Cottage Deltic Gold, Pin Up Beers Honey Brown and Wychwood Battleaxe.

By now the rain was starting to come down heavily and a short taxi ride just out of the town centre took us to the Cemetery Hotel, pictured, a National Inventory pub. Named after the nearby cemetery, the entrance and bar area is tiled with side rooms one of which is a parlour with distinctive, numbered seating areas. Phoenix Brewery's Pale Moonlight was supped in seating area one while admiring the decor.

A return taxi ride back to the town square brought us to the Flying Horse Hotel, an Edwardian free house. The range this time was Moorhouses Blonde Witch, Phoenix Tornado, Timothy Taylor Landlord from which we chose a couple of pints of Blonde Witch. Next stop was the Regal Moon, a JD Wetherspoon outlet next to the bus stop and future Metrolink terminus. Formerly the Regal Cinema, this became Wetherspoon's Cask Pub of the Year in 2011. With eighteen handpumps, there was an extensive selection of beers from the North West of which I chose Bon Don Doon from Wilson Potter Brewery in nearby Middleton while John had Windermere Pale from Hawkshead Brewery in Cumbria.

From the Regal Moon, we headed back to the railway station for the return journey planning to do a couple of stops along the way. Getting off the train at Todmorden, the rain unfortunately was still with us but a short walk from the station was the Good Beer Guide listed Polished Knob, where part of it was once a lock up for local villains!. From the five handpumps, we chose XT Brewery's Six, a 4.5% ruby red ale which was malty and very quaffable!. Heading back to the station to catch the train, we came across the White Horse, a JD Wetherspoon outlet and second one of the day so we popped in for a couple of swift halves of Ikley Pale – rude not to really!.

By now the rain was unrelenting so we chose to give Hebden Bridge a miss and travelled back to Leeds where our final port of call was the renowned Grove Inn, just a short walk from the station. All in all a great day out visiting CAMRA's National Pub of The Year and with it a brew pub, a National Inventory pub, a couple of hotels, two JD Wetherspoons outlets plus other fine hostelries thrown into the trip for good measure too.

Inn Brief...

Continuing the real ale renaissance in Barnard Castle, the Three Horseshoes Hotel on Galgate reopened in May after a long period of closure and major refurbishment and is now selling guest beers from the Marstons range. Meanwhile Rob Dominic has taken over and reopened The Black Horse on Newgate and is serving a guest beer.

In Darlington the lease of The Half Moon on Northgate has been taken over by John Anderson and Dave Walker of The Crafty Pint bottled beer shop. They have now closed the shop in the indoor market and incorporated it into the pub. With ten handpumps offering up to nine personally sourced

beers and a real cider, a craft keg lager and the bottled beer shop, pub wise it arguably has the largest choice of beer under one roof in Darlington. Plans are also being made to have a nano brewery in the cellar serving house beers, more of this in the next issue of Darlington Drinker.

Following refurbishment The Red Lion on Priestgate now stocks two guest beers from the Greene King range - note the original signage is back again on the outside!. The Round Tree in Duke Street (formerly the Atlantic Bar) now has a guest beer while Sloans on Grange Road has two handpumps also serving guest beers. The Tap & Spile on Bondgate has changed its name back to the Old English Gentleman, again more of this in the next issue.

The Locomotion No 1 at Heighington Station reopened again in late May and now stocks three real ales with two being sourced locally. It is now been run by Keith and Jade Johnston who were previously regulars at the pub and have given the bar area a much cleaner and brighter feel. In Newton Aycliffe The Turbinia on Sid Chaplin Drive now has a second handpump serving a guest beer to go alongside Shepherd Neame Spitfire. In the North Yorkshire part of our branch, The White Swan in Gilling West reopened in early July with Dean and Victoria Hodgson at the helm along assisted by Roberta, Victoria's mum. Black Sheep Ale and up to three locally sourced guest beers will be available which includes one from Mithril Ales. Also on draught are two Czech beers, Kozel and Pilsner Urquell plus Erdinger Wheat beer while a craft lager from Cumbria is also in the pipeline. Congratulations go to Neil and Helen Maddison-Potts of the The Stanwick in Aldbrough St John who have won the 2013 North Yorkshire Pub of Season award thus repeating last year's success.

Finally, following the closure of The Grand in Bishop Auckland, branch members Dave and Sandra Wilkinson have now taken over the lease of The Queens Head in Stokesley near Middlesbrough. Meanwhile Rob Watson, formerly manager of the Tanners Hall on Skinnergate has now taken over as the manager of another JD Wetherspoon outlet, this time The Angel Hotel on the quayside in Whitby and we wish them all every success in their respective ventures.

News

As you may recall in the last issue of Darlington Drinker, a competition was organised by The Castle Players, Barnard Castle's community theatre group to name a beer being brewed especially for this year's production of A Midsummer Night's Dream in the grounds of The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle.

The winner selected from 45 entries was David Bellow from Barnard Castle who named the beer – "Bottom's Up", after the Shakespearian character Bottom from the play. The 3.8% ale brewed by Mithril Ales was available during the production of the play between the 9th and 13th of July at The Old Well Inn in Barnard Castle plus other local outlets. David's prize included tickets to the play and he also had the honour of adding the late hops during the brewing of the beer.

Other Events

QUAKER TOURS:

SATURDAY 24TH AUGUST:

Trip to the Captain Cook Inn Maritime Beer Festival at the Captain Cook Inn, Staithes, North Yorkshire.

Depart Dolphin Centre at 10.00am, £12 per person.

SATURDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER:

Mini north east crawl visiting the Three Horseshoes in Leamside, Barley Mow in Birtley, Beamish Mary Inn at No Place and Stables Bar at Beamish Hall in Beamish.

Depart Dolphin Centre at 10.00am, £10 per person.

SATURDAY 5TH OCTOBER:

Trip to Huddersfield for the Huddersfield CAMRA Oktoberfest or alternatively a pub crawl of Huddersfield.

Depart Dolphin Centre at 09.00am, £16 per person.

All tours arrive back in Houndgate, Darlington no later than 7.45pm

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