



PARISH PUMP

No. 11

2p

the newsletter of CAMRA  
Sheffield & District

CAMRA, the Campaign for  
Real Ale, fights for  
the preservation and  
promotion of beer brewed  
in the traditional way from  
malt, hops and yeast, and  
served the way it always  
has been - without being  
filtered, pasteurised or  
fizzed-up by unnecessary  
carbon-dioxide gas.

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Opinions expressed are  
not necessarily those of  
CAMRA or the branch.

NEWS :: Two Derbyshire pubs which have recently restored  
real ale report good sales this month. The Scotsman's  
Pack, Hathersage, has brought real draught Bass back to  
its hitherto dormant handpumps and can now claim to sell  
as much Bass as it does of the bright Stones which is its  
standard bitter. And the real Tetley bitter which the  
Thatchers Arms at Bradwell has introduced has, in the short  
space of two months, become the dominant beer and is out-  
selling the whole of the old range of kegs.

A beer exhibition venue has been found. The lower refec-  
tory at University House (the Union) will, it is hoped,  
stage our second festival later this year, though no firm  
date is yet available. More news of this at branch meetings  
and in future editions of Parish Pump.

Brian Rich, one of the founder members of the Sheffield  
branch, is leaving the city shortly to take up residence  
in Staffordshire, a county which (quite coincidentally,  
of course) offers just about the finest selection of real  
draught beers in the country. We feel sure that readers  
will join the editors of Parish Pump in thanking Brian for  
the tremendous amount of hard work and enthusiasm he has  
put into the branch, and wishing Brian and Sue a happy  
future in Staffordshire.

The Victoria, Gleadless Road, has changed over to tank  
beer and should therefore be deleted from the national  
Good Beer Guide.

Absolutely the last and final word about Whitbread (until  
the next time they do something silly, of course.) Their  
Shepcote Lane depot was adorned last month by the presence  
of a huge green-and-yellow spotted dinosaur. Not the  
new company mascot, as I at first thought, but merely a  
float from the Lord Mayor's Parade. But I wonder if the  
Whitbread staff may have felt just a little uncomfortable  
looking out of their office windows at something grossly  
oversized, with only a tiny brain, hopelessly unadaptive to  
changing times, and inevitably due to become extinct? You  
never know, perhaps it was the new mascot after all.

Tony Scholes.



**BANDITRY** Myths abound concerning one-armed-bandits of the type found in pubs. Some players hold beliefs about these machines in general ("They only pay out once a day.") Others develop specific beliefs about specific machines, and indeed different people may have conflicting views on any one bandit. "It was paying out too often so they adjusted it." "You'll not get a bell if you've just held a cherry." "Two plums are always the start of a good run."

Perhaps the player's enjoyment of his 'game' is increased by the testing of these private theories, but the plain fact is that they are all myths. Gaming machines found in pubs do not have a 'sequence,' though I find that many people refuse to believe that this is the truth. Their payout cannot be adjusted (except by some skilful - and highly illegal - work with a file or some glue and pieces of plastic strip.) Unless the machine is malfunctioning, there is no predictable relationship between the results of preceding games and successive ones. Runs of good or bad luck are governed only by the laws of probability, and they are only predictable in the sense that any random series of events is bound to contain its coincidences occasionally. Payouts from one-armed-bandits are mathematically determined, and are generally set at around eighty per cent of intake.

This is because the gaming machine is simply a randomizing system with various associated electro-mechanical devices which accept and pay out coins. The three reels are controlled by mechanisms which start them together and stop them separately - to heighten suspense - after a purely random period of time (with a practical maximum of five seconds - the shorter the reel-run the more games, and therefore the more money taken, per hour.)

The mathematics governing payouts are simple. Each reel usually has around its rim twenty symbols of a standard type (plum, cherry, bell, etc.) This gives 8000 possible combinations, some of which pay out and most of which do not. Not all these combinations are different, of course, since the symbols are usually only of about six or seven types. By varying the number of any symbol's appearances on the three reels, its likelihood of payout can be calculated and set. For instance, if plums appeared twice on reel one, three times on reel two and four times on reel three, a plum payout could be expected - on the average - 24 times out of eight thousand, that is about once in every 333 games. The manufacturer can in theory adjust these probabilities to give any percentage payout he chooses, though natural market forces and to some extent the law keep them around the usual figure of eighty per cent of takings paid out again.

When the machine is opened, its cash is divided in negotiated percentages between the pub and the owners of the machine (which is almost invariably rented from an independent company holding the manufacturer's franchise.) In the case of a pub run by a tenant, the terms of the landlord's agreement with the brewery decide how big a cut the brewery get; in managed houses the brewers get nearly all of the pub's share. Takings tend to be quite high since, despite that 80% payout, many people will start playing with, say, fifty pence and feed back their winnings until the machine



has claimed it all, as it inevitably will in time.

So there are some of the facts about bandits. Don't let me put you off; by that law of averages you will sometimes have a lucky run. But gaming machines, like any other form of entertainment, must be paid for. And in the long run they're paid for by 20 per cent of your stake money.

Tony Scholes

**SOUTH YORKS.** Two dozen parched palates were justly rewarded when our antiquated **MYSTERY TOUR** coach ground its way off the M1 into the village of Thorpe Hesley, where the ex-Rawson's Horse & Tiger sells a pint of Tetley's which is in better shape than the handpumps used to serve it. Some members, apparently distrustful of the transport, had a second pint here.

As it happened, they were wise as the Theakston's-swilling hordes from Rotherham had consumed almost all the Old Peculier at the Rockingham Arms at Wentworth and the bitter pump had gone on strike. Nor did the Green Dragon down the road offer any palatable relief. However, less than two miles away one is in a different world in the uncharismatic village of Elsecar, where the landlord of the Market Inn keeps his pub spotlessly clean, and offers a warm welcome and a reliable pint of Stones.

The Royal Albert at Blacker Hill is hardly large enough to accommodate a coach-load, but the weather allowed most of the party to stay outside. The locals were somewhat disturbed, but only in a good-humoured way, at the sudden influx. Noteworthy features of this pub are its mynah bird, the delightful little lounge, and one of the furthest north pints of Ward's available.

Members of the party were relieved at the later 11 p.m. closing time in Barnsley, which allowed comfortable time to end the tour at the Edmunds Arms at Worsbrough, the second of Joe Foster's pubs on this route, which is a large popular pub selling Samuel Smith's Old Brewery Bitter. Sadly, the handpumps only seem to be in action by prior arrangement, but the real beer seems to be selling well, and that is ultimately what matters.

David Grey.

**THREE MEN** Most readers will be familiar with the Kon-Tiki and the Ra, and even Mr. **AND A VOTE** and Mrs. Robinson's epic voyage from Mortlake to Putney! But I wonder how many will have heard of the recent trips made by myself and three friends to pubs in the area on Friday nights?

After eight such regular trips earlier this year, it seemed a useful exercise to record the opinions of the three travellers, even to the extent of getting them to assess the ales by a marking scheme.

As with most great voyages the planning was meticulous with the need for marital pass-outs, full tanks of petrol and prearranged routes. The first trip involved the Eckington-Brimington area, and that was followed up with the essential tour of Sheffield 9. Other Fridays saw tours of Rotherham, Tideswell, Chapeltown, Clowne,



Holmesfield and Chesterfield, taking in around twenty pubs.

However, even with all the forward planning the unexpected had to be contended with, like the night we visited the Thorncliffe Arms at Chapeltown and, after a mammoth struggle to move on, succumbed to a whole evening of Ward's Sheffield Best bitter and Ordinary!

The assessment provides interesting reading, although it should be emphasised that I don't necessarily agree with the markings. By far and away the most popular was the Horse and Jockey at Tideswell, serving Tetley bitter and mild. Scarcely a week goes by without one or more of the three revisiting Tideswell and sampling the excellent beer and landlord Bill Swindell's hospitality.

Not far behind came the Fitzwilliam at Attercliffe and the Great Central at Brimington, serving Stones and Shipstones respectively. The Fitzwilliam's qualities have been documented in previous editions of Parish Pump. But it does, in my book, serve a pint of Stones ranking with those of the New Inn on Carbrook Street and the Royal Oak on Earsham Street. The Grand Central, on the other hand, tends not to be so well known, perhaps because it is slightly off the beaten track. The fact remains that it provides the most reliable pint of Shipstones within fairly easy reach of the city.

The majority of the pubs surveyed and brews sampled pleased the travellers without really exciting them. Nevertheless, several deserve special mention. The Travellers' Rest at Holmesfield was highly rated for its excellent beer, friendly service and pleasant surroundings, whilst the Lamb Inn at Holymoorside must be one of the quaintest pubs in the area besides selling excellent Home Brewery bitter.

At the other extreme of pub surroundings stands the Anchor Inn at Clowne. Despite the rather brash atmosphere, our distinguished panel of judges certainly revelled in the highly palatable Shipstones bitter, and rated it on a par with the handpumped Tetley's at the Butcher's Arms in Rotherham.

And the highlight of the pilgrimage? When some poor unfortunate ordered a pint of D.D. (can't bring myself to write it out in full) in the Horse and Jockey, the landlord said with some venom: "What do you want to drink that stuff for? We've got plenty of good beer here!"

Bon voyage.

Colin Walker.

THREE COMMITTEE MEMBERS from the Sheffield branch were entertained in style by four from the Doncaster branch on a tour of several pubs in the Conisbrough-Mexborough-Wath area on 9th. July, in the exalted company of the newly-appointed Area Organiser for the York-Hull-Doncaster-Sheffield area (an area which surely not even a nationalised industry nor a public corporation has yet had the ingenuity to invent.) No doubt our colleagues from other parts of his area will join us in congratulating Pete Judge on his new appointment.

The tour took in six of the area's best pubs selling beer from six different breweries - Sam Smiths, Stones, Home, Tetley, Youngers and Theakstons - which shows that even in this John Smith monopoly area, a fine choice of real ales can be found.

David Grey.