



RURAD In the Sticks

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In the Sticks

Welcome to the latest issue of "In the Sticks" the newsletter of RuRAD, Rural Real Ale Drinkers. We hope you enjoy reading it.

If you want to receive a copy electronically, e-mail snugdave@outlook.com.

For current & previous issues log on to www.dgmhall.me.uk/rurad. You can also find copies of the newsletter on the Loughborough CAMRA web-site (www.loughboroughcamra.co.uk/newsletters) along with digital copies of other local beer-centric publications.



Beer & Pub News

On 29th October I paid a visit to the recently opened **Alter Ego** brewery tap bar to be met by a lively crowd. Owner Matt and his wife Theresa were manning the bar and I found 2 cask ales and 6 kegs. I had the two cask ales - *Blonde Protagonist* (4.3%) and *Mr Brown* (4.2%) - and have to say they were top quality. They plan to open on the last Friday & Saturday of every month but the dates for December are yet to be decided. A superb addition to Alfreton and an easy walk from the train station. **The Didler**.


Big Al reported that the **York Chambers** micro-pub in Long Eaton is to re-open with new owners but with the old management team of Mark, Phil and Gemma. The official opening date is 1st December although they had one-off openings on 13th and 24th November.

The Tram Inspector reported that the **Old Black Swan** in Crich which closed at the end of August, is expected to re-open on Friday 2nd December. Initially, it will open five days per week (not Mondays or Tuesdays). Opening times are not yet confirmed but might not be

DECEMBER 2022

until early afternoon. At first, it will be for drinks only but a new kitchen is expected next year. The pub will be managed by Corey and Sally who effectively ran the place for the previous licensees, who are no longer in the area. My understanding is that the licensee will be Steve Seaman (of ASD Wholesale) who actually owns the building. **Tram Inspector**.

Oliver ("Olly") and family who run the **Swan Inn** at Milton are taking over at the **Bulls Head** in Wilson with the transfer expected to take place on or around the first week of December. Olly will remain at the Swan and will appoint a manager for the new venture. It is expected that *Bass* plus two other cask ales will be available as is the case at the Swan. **Steve Copestake**.



**The Dew Drop
Inn**
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heritage pub guide
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Saturday: 12.00 - 11.00
Sunday: 12.00 - 10.00

On a visit to watch the football on 26th October, [Matlock Town beat Stafford Rangers, 1-0] Apollo and I called in to the new **Derby Brewing** pub, the **Pointing Dogs** on Dale Road, Matlock. The pub, a former bank, is on two levels with the upstairs mostly for dining. There were 12 craft beers and four hand-pumps but one was not in use. We sampled the *Mercian IPA* at £4.35 a pint. It is a café style pub with lots of wood & chrome. The seating was exclusively high stools which didn't really suit the older gentleman - but then, I don't think the pub is designed for our age group as the music was far too loud for a lunchtime beer. We finished our ale and went somewhere quieter. **the Jedi**.

A planning application has been submitted to Erewash Borough Council to convert the Carousel Hair Salon at 15 Victoria Avenue, Borrowash to a micro-pub which is expected

to be called the Lonely Boy Micro Pub. Viewed from the outside, it perhaps should be called a nano-pub?

As an addendum to last month's "Bus Matters" article, Bald Eagle would like to add that there is a last bus (Notts & Derby, 138) from Heanor Market Place calling at Loscoe, Denby Village, Kilburn Estate, Horsley Woodhouse, Woodside and Horsley, finishing at Kilburn Toll Bar at 19.15. He also apologises for getting his left & right mixed up but since he won't be driving the bus, it probably doesn't matter!

Manchester's smallest Heritage and GBG pub, the **Circus Tavern** on Portland Street, is under threat with owners Star Pubs & Bars wanting a monumental price increase in the rent which the landlord cannot afford to pay. It would be a travesty if this goes ahead and we lose this unspoilt gem. **The Didler**.

It is claimed that the legendary **Old Swan** (Ma Pardoes) brew pub in Netherton in the West Midlands, may "close before Christmas" due to the landlord struggling with reduced trade and rising costs. The local CAMRA branch have approached Star Pubs & Bars and Dudley Council to try to get rent and rates relief. This is another very important pub as many of you will know and I'm praying it can survive. **The Didler**.

Contributors: Bald Eagle, Big Al, the Didler, the Jedi, Rodders, Steve Copestake, Tram Inspector

Tracy and all the staff welcome you to the

OLD OAK INN

176 Main Street
Horsley Woodhouse
DE7 6AW Tel: 01332 881299

East Midlands Pub of the Year 2016

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In The Papers

The Derby Telegraph (17th November) reported that **Derby Brewing Co.** will be opening their eighth outlet in a former maltings and garage in Aston on Trent. The

new venture is described by **Derby Brewing** boss, Paul Harris, as a "hybrid café, deli and bar" and will be open all day - being more "café" in the daytime and more "bar" in the evening. The as yet un-named bar is expected to open in late January.

Angels Micro Pub

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Amber Valley CAMRA Cider POTY
Winner 2020

Amber Valley CAMRA Mild Trail
Winner 2019

CAMRA GBG 2023

As most readers are probably aware, the 50th Anniversary Good Beer Guide 2023 was released in October. Even before publication, I was informed that the **Holly Bush** in Makeney did not make the cut this time and I was interested to know why since it's made every one of the previous five editions. A reliable source informed "In The Sticks" that the Amber Valley branch of CAMRA is allocated 10 pubs in its area and this is borne out when I was looking back through past editions. Who makes this decision? The CAMRA Blob I presume, either nationally or regionally. There is also evidence to suggest that the shortlist for inclusion is more than this, usually 11 or 12 pubs (in the last 6 years) while in 2022, this was bumped up to 15. So obviously some candidates have to be dropped. According to information found online, pubs are assessed by CAMRA members on the quality of their beer - it is the Good Beer Guide after all. Only CAMRA members can submit scores mind you, other interested parties have no vote. Rather bizarrely, the membership of CAMRA and the Tory Party is almost the same ($\pm 160,000$) so I suppose it's a bit like only allowing Tory Party members to choose the last Prime Minister - and look how well that turned out.

Pubs are scored based on the quality of their ale on a scale which goes from 1 (poor) to 5 (perfect) - half scores are permitted so why didn't CAMRA just make it 1 to 10? There is also a zero score for pubs with no cask ale but why would anyone score a pub for the Good Beer Guide when.... I can't even be bothered to finish this sentence. Apparently, the numbers are loaded into a giant spreadsheet and the results pop out at the bottom.

But this begs the question, how are the "dropped" pubs selected? Again, there is evidence to suggest that those pubs just didn't receive enough scores - nothing to do with beer quality, just too few scores. Going

back to the **Holly Bush** (and yes, I do drink there), it's a grand old-fashioned pub with open fires, it generally serves 6 or 7 cask ales (along with a wide range of craft beers), has an experienced cellarman and two excellent beer festivals each year and serves high quality food, all factors which contribute to its regularly getting 5* ratings on Google and TripAdvisor. The whole process is rather opaque and I'm sure that Amber Valley CAMRA will not be rushing to justify their decision making process. The matter was even brought to the attention of Colston Crawford who wrote a small piece in the Derby Telegraph (18th November) which concluded with "Have we really got so many great pubs in the area that the Holly Bush, with all of its history, with its unique architecture, with its consistent quality of beer and food, is not worthy of a place?"

It is interesting to note that **Arkwrights Real Ale Bar** (Belper), the **Old Oak Inn** (Horsley Woodhouse) and the **Steampacket** (Swanwick) were all dropped from the 2022 guide and restored in 2023 so I can guarantee that the **Holly Bush** will be reinstated in the next edition.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that the GBG is in need of reform but I don't suppose this will happen any time soon. Having said all this, it has to be admitted that there is still no better guide to the distribution of the best cask ale pubs in the UK. However, to drop pubs which deserve inclusion merely because the guide has run out of space, hardly seems fair. **Snug Dave**.



Erewash Valley CAMRA
Pub of the Year 2017, 2019, 2020 & 2021
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black puddings, pork scratchings etc.

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Out & About

Trips to Syston, Burton-on-Trent and Stockport feature in this month's issue but first, Rodders and his companions, having explored Exeter, Totnes and Plymouth on their West Country tour, now move on to Truro, Falmouth and Taunton.

West Country Tour Part 3, August

Then it was back to the station and on to Truro where, after having a lot of difficulty getting a taxi, Charisma and I decided to start walking to the **GBG Rising Sun** whilst

HH persisted (which turned out to be a good call as he beat us there). Of the 3 beers on offer **Treen Sunbeam** was preferred (after ascertaining it wasn't **Banks**)! We sat out the back but on departure HH decided to have an impromptu lie down (not a good idea when you're holding 2 half pint glasses) as he missed the step. A minor cut is all he suffered you'll be pleased to know. We moved on to the other GBG pub in the city, the **Skinners Old Ale House** to find 5 of their beers on the go with **Chapel Rock** being favoured.

April and the team welcome you to the

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Real Pub

A taxi was sorted back to the train station (probably the least time I've spent in a city, but then I've not done Wells yet) and on to our final destination of the day, Falmouth. After checking in to our digs and de-bagging we got a taxi into town where our first port of call was the GBG **NI Seven Stars**, an absolute gem of a pub that has been in the same family since 1868. There were 4 beers on gravity and we went for **Firebrand Patchwork Rocket**. Unbeknown to us it was Falmouth week and there was plenty going off including a band of marching bucket bangers who invaded the pub, thankfully just as we were about to leave. We moved across the road to the GBG **Pennycomequick** (I think it's all one word) and found 3 hand pumps in use dispensing **St Austell** beers with **JB's Best Bitter** being preferred, before we moved on (with a little help from a local) to find the GBG **Beerwolf Books**, which is secreted up a little alley and could easily be missed. The place was heaving and had a good selection of 5 beers to choose from with **Penzance Potion No9** in good order. Then it was up.... and I mean up..... to the GBG **Seaview** where the beer selection was hardly worth the effort but of the 3 to go at, **Dartmoor IPA** was procured. HH couldn't get a taxi so it was back down to our final port of call, the GBG **Oddfellows Arms** where **Treens Local** was the best of the 3 beers on offer. The barman managed to get us a taxi back to our digs, much to HH's relief, and we called it a day.

On Sunday, to break the journey, we stopped off at Taunton and called in 3 of the 4 GBG pubs in the town starting with the **JDW Coal Orchard** where **Hop Union Brewery Maiden Voyage** was favoured of the 2 noteworthy beers. Next it was on to the **Ring of Bells**

(HH organising a taxi from the next pub *en route*) where they were still using table service only (which was somewhat slow). We eventually got our halves of **Moor Illumination** - there were 5 other beers on offer - but we had to neck it to get to the **Bank Bar & Kitchen**, which again, was using table service, though it was a bit quicker. **Cellar Head Session Pale** was the only cask ale on offer, so partaken and thankfully our taxi arrived on time. We then headed back to Paddington and coming back from St Pancras the train manager saw our friends and family tickets and said that we could go and sit in first class, which made the last leg of the journey a whole lot better. A superb weekend with HH coming up with the goods yet again. **Rodders.**

**Barrie & Sarah would like to
welcome you to the...**



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Thurmaston & Syston, 1st Oct 2022

As the Old Fruit was visiting family in Leicestershire, I took the opportunity of a lift and piled out by the Watermead Country Park. I was immediately joined by a helpful local who thought I was lost but I explained that I was actually taking a picture on my phone. After a brief chat on walking and beer I left him and took a walk of about a couple of miles through the park to reach Thurmaston. I had left the more scenic waterside route too early and had to walk half a mile on a very boring road to reach the **Harrow Inn**. Here I found **London Pride**, **Landlord** and **Black Sheep** available and found the former to be very good. There were a lot of meal deals on offer with plenty of, mainly elderly, diners but I made do with a cheese & onion cob. I might try a meal here next time as it's a decent and friendly pub with good if not imaginative ales.

Not wishing to retrace my steps on the "harrowing" walk back, I got on a bus straight across from the pub which took me into Syston. Getting off by the railway station I made my way into the Midland Railway but came straight out again as it had ceased selling cask ales. It was then a 10 minute walk to the backstreet **Dog & Gun** which is an attractive **Steaming Billy** pub with a modern twist on a traditional 2-roomed pub with wet sales only. As I entered, I could hear a fearful noise from a group of male drinkers but I got my drink from the agreeable staff and went round to the other room where I

promptly met my local friend from earlier. He invited me to join him and his friend so I sat with them and much enjoyed the conversation whilst indulging in **Charnwood Old School** to such a degree that I felt obliged to have another, especially as my driver had told me not to rush. The other available ales were **Steaming Billy Billy Bitter** and **St Austell Tribute**. My new associates Owen and Andy then left for the **Queen Victoria** and I soon caught up with them again there. Here I did not fancy the guest **Maggie Cherry Raven** so went with the **Everards Old Original** as it was similar to my last drink, and also tried **Everards Smash Mittelfruh Hop**. Both were good and there was also **Everards Tiger & Golden Hop** available so a pretty varied selection and again very friendly staff.

Time was up for my new friends as they were recalled for domestic duties so I said my farewells and walked further along the main road to the **GBG Syston & District Social Club**. As I arrived I helped a departing stall holder by opening the boot of her car but declined the offer to purchase her perfumes as I thought I smelled OK as I was. Perhaps she was correct as I failed to shake off the attentions of a very friendly small dog once inside. I had halves of **St Austell Anthem**, **Dark Star Pale** and **Grainstore Rutland Panther** which were all OK but I did not bother with **Wainwright**. Once again I found this place very accommodating and as a non-member I was made very welcome. My final call was not far away at the **GBG Pharmacie Arms** but it became a bit of a rush here as my lift home was approaching. I just had time for their regular **Mild** and the **Original** from **Shipstones** but there was no time for **Good Chemistry Gyle 400** or **Hollow Stone Krubera Blueberry & Mocha Stout** as it was hard enough writing the latter in my notebook. The old chemist shop theme would have been interesting given more time and the landlord was OK but the skeleton failed to correspond. This was my first proper beer tour in Syston and the 3 pubs and the club visited were all first class for ale and camaraderie so I look forward to doing it again sometime. **Chris P Duck.**

*Sally, Jean & Steve
welcome you to the...*

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Autumn Crawl in Burton

Pubs Galore would like to thank the RuRAD members who joined them on their Autumn

Crawl around Burton-on-Trent. Bald Eagle, Charisma Bypass, Clockwork Kev and Mrs Clock, Heinz 57 and Pacamac met up with everyone in the first pub of the day, the **Roebuck**. The more traditional ales in here such as **Bass**, **Old Peculiar** and **Burton Ale** was a nice way to kick off the day. Next stop was the **Coopers Tavern**, where we all congregated and we had our group photograph. We stayed in this beautiful historic pub for a while enjoying the **Joules** ales, plus a couple of guests. The **Joules** stout ale was a nice pint. With 22 people in the group, we split up into a few groups and met up throughout the day in various pubs. The **National Brewery Centre** was next on our list where we found a nice selection from the **Heritage Brewing Co.** the **[Charrington] Oatmeal Stout** being a particular favourite. A shame this place is due to close shortly, so we were keen to have a look. A stop at the **Old Royal Oak** was next, now owned by **Fownes Brewing Co.** where we found 6 of their ales on the bar, with **King Korvak's Saga** in great nick.

**Pete and Tracey welcome you to
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The **Dog** was next, a **Black Country Ales** pub, which was very busy on our visit. A big selection of ales here, as is usual for **BCA** pubs. I enjoyed the **BFG** in here. On to the **Crossing**, which curiously on such a sunny day, had the radiators on full blast - nevertheless a nice selection here with **Dancing Duck Aye Up** the popular choice. **Burton Bridge Inn** proved to be a particular favourite amongst the group, a beautiful pub inside and a first visit for me. The cobs were also popular. **Brews of the World** was another excellent stop, and the **Little Critters Blonde Bear** was an equally excellent pint. They had a German Beer Fest in here and I could easily have stayed longer. We went to the **Devonshire Arms** next where we found **Oakham Inferno** amongst the beers on offer. The **Last Heretic** was next and a nice conversation was had with some friendly locals. **Dancing Duck Dark Drake** was the beer of choice in here. Some of our group, including RuRADians, made it to the **Tower Brewery Tap** with the rain coming down. They were very impressed and enjoyed the range of **Tower Brewery** beers on offer. The brewery is housed in an old Victorian water tower and is a must visit when in Burton, but only opens on a Friday from 4.00 pm. We called it a day in the

Weighbridge, one of my favourites in Burton. The range was mostly made up of **Muirhouse** beers and we stayed quite a while with various pub crawlers calling in for a last one before the train.

A great day was had by all and Burton certainly exceeded expectations with a fine selection of ales. Cheers to all our RuRAD friends. **Real Ale Ray**.

Stockport, 17th Nov. 2022

A very wet November afternoon was spent in Stockport by the Last Drinking Skoole for an early quafftide. The roads were torrents but we only had a two minute walk from SPT rail station to the **Wellington**. Lesley behind the bar was pleased to see us and we were pleased to see her warm and dry establishment - full of clocks and mirrors, which appear to be a theme of Stopfordian* pubs. We stopped for two drinks here, which exhausted the cask choices as there was just **Weetwood Cheshire Cat** and **Joseph Holt Two Hoots**, both decent enough, although one reprobate chose the keg **Beavertown Neck Oil**. Lesley permitted us to open our food hamper, which lightened my load considerably.

Our next port of call in the centre of town on this pluviose day took us upstream to the **Petersgate Tap**, a modern roomy micro-pub

with a good choice of cask beers and porters, plus interesting kegs, all conveniently displayed with prices on the blackboard. You might have thought a line of ten thirsty drinkers entering your empty micro might bring out a smile or welcome from the person tending the bar, but I must have been looking in the wrong direction. We dug into the beer menu and ordered **Mallinsons NZ Double**, **RedWillow Restless** Vietnam Porter, **Lister's Autumn Ale**, **Three Brothers Midnight Slug** Porter, **Northern Monkey Frank the Tank**. Had we stopped we might have also tasted keg offerings of **Crossover Blendery The Miller** (wild blackberry), **Verdant Headband** and **Budvar**.

But we didn't and moved on to the nearby and friendlier **Angel Inn**. The community-owned pub is recommended for keg fans of German lagers. We sampled **Weihenstephaner Hefeweissbier**, **Dunkel** and **Helles** as well as casks of **Twisted Wheel Speed Wobble** and the house beer (brewed by **District Hills**) **Angel Bitter**. The hamper made another permitted appearance, and contents were shared with customers and staff. Had we stayed, we might also have tasted **Thornbridge Market Porter**.

A close next stop was the **Bakers Vaults**, a Grade II Robinsons house in the marketplace (built on the site of the castle), with more

clocks and mirrors. Here we drank **Titanic Plum Porter**, **Robinsons Dizzy Blonde**, **Unicorn**, **Old Tom** and **Helles Lager Beer**, **Delerium-Huyghe Fruli Strawberry Beer (!)**, **Big Hand Super Tidy** and **Weal Lemon & Ginger Weal**.

We spent our last dollars at the **Arden Arms** on **Unicorn**, **Old Tom**, **Dizzy Blonde** and **Hopnick Citra IPA** from **Robinsons**, and a **Rekorderlig's** cider. With plenty of timepieces to check, we made it back to the station to disperse. Beer of the day was the 8% **Restless** Vietnam Porter, and highest scoring pub was surprisingly, the **Petersgate Tap**.

Our plan had ten pubs in walking distance to choose from, yet we managed a paltry five on this visit. With many direct trains and good connections from all directions, we shall come again after a decent interval and reach the commended Magnet and Crown Inn pubs as well as fit in visits to Stockport's museum of hatting, WW2 air-raid shelters and the mighty Publix 1 Wurlitzer Opus 2120 in the town hall ballroom. Ginger Baker.

* inhabitant of Stockport

Ginger Baker was accompanied by Samson, Psycho, The Reverend Green, Coventina, An IanB#2, 10th Earl of Emsworth, McBeer, Axeman and Lucan Lord.

Beer Festival Diary - Near and Not so Near

- 1st-4th Dec. Redemption Ale House Advent Beer Festival. 3 Ray Street, Heanor. 24 real ales
- 2nd-4th Dec. Belper Brewing Co Open Weekend. Campbell Street, Belper. Open Fri 4pm, Sat 12 Noon, Sun 10.30am
- 3rd Dec. Urban Chicken Tap Takeover@The Burnt Pig Ale 'Ouse. Market Street, Ilkeston
- 14th-18th Dec. Welcome To The Darkside III Imperial Stout Festival. Tom Said micro-pub, Well Street, Ripley
- 17th Dec. Christmas (Tickers Ball) Festival. The Fat Cat, 23 Alma Street, Sheffield. 0114 2494801

29th Nov-3rd Dec. 37th Pigs Ear Beer Festival. The Round Chapel, Powerscroft Road, Hackney, London. 175 ales

We advise confirmation of dates and times before attending the above festivals, as changes may occur.

Well that's all for this issue folks. If you have any info or news which could be included in a future issue of "In the Sticks" please contact Charisma Bypass on 07891 365887 or Snug Dave at snugdave@outlook.com by the 23rd of the month.

Edited by Snug Dave

Many thanks to all our contributors and the "In The Sticks" distribution team: Bald Eagle, The Baron, Big Foz, Charisma Bypass, Jedi, HH, Konrad, and Sooty. Apologies if I've missed anyone. Thanks also to our advertisers without whom this newsletter would not get published.

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Disclaimer: The Editor-in-Chief of "In The Sticks" declares that the stories in this newsletter are inspired by real events and are not fictional dramatisations whatever the likes of Dame Judi Dench and Sir John Major have to say about it.