

NORTH NOTTS



Campaign
for
Real Ale

DRINKER

The Magazine of the North Nottinghamshire branch of the Campaign for Real Ale

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NORTH
NOTTS
CAMRA

<https://northnotts.camra.org.uk/>

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Chairman's Chat

Its been a while, but the North Notts Drinker is back!

It has been a busy time since becoming North Notts CAMRA chairman in April 2023. I have been on a steep learning curve throughout the year, assisted by branch colleagues and my regional counterparts.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the outgoing chairman, Dave French, for his many years of dedicated service to the branch. Dave is well respected across the District and his help and advice has been invaluable and very welcomed. We were pleased to present him with a special award during our 8th July branch meeting.



During the past 6 months the branch committee have made several changes to the North Notts branch. The biggest change has been to the 'Pub of the Season' voting process. Previously, each member could vote for only a single pub – Due to their higher populations, this was considered by the committee to overly favour the pubs in the towns of Worksop and Retford, so gave village pubs less chance of recognition. We therefore replaced each 'Pub of the Season' award with 2 separate awards: 1 Pub of the Season for town pubs, and 1 Pub of the Season for village pubs. No pub can be given a season award more than once in 12 months.

Turning to the North Notts CAMRA social calendar, there have been some wonderful trips to various destinations this year. The highlight is probably Skipton in September, where over 40 people, mostly CAMRA members, joined us on the coach. All of us were very impressed at the wide and varied offer of venues and will no doubt be returning there in the future!

We hope you enjoy reading this publication – Thanks to Mike Tagg for putting it together. if you have any comments or suggestions, please don't hesitate to get in touch!

Rob Green

Chairman, North Notts CAMRA

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North Notts CAMRA Pubs of the Season 2023

The **Spring 2023 Pub of the Season**, the last vote to be for only one pub, was fiercely contested between a number of our finest venues. Ultimately, the **Idle Valley Tap** in Retford finished a very deserved winner. Here's the branch secretary, Terry Johnson, during the presentation speech alongside the hard-working staff.



The **Summer 2023 Pub of the Season** voting was the first to include both a town and village award. The new regime brought a much-increased number of member votes for the village pubs, and we were pleased to present Chris and Sally at the **Grey Horses Inn** at Carlton in Lindrick with the first village Pub of the Season award. This was a fantastic event, attended by many of the local community with standing room only during the award presentation. Pictured are Terry, Chris and Sally.

Of the town pubs in summer, **The Mallard** in Worksop was a clear winner. The Mallard, located alongside the south platform of Worksop Railway Station, remains one of the most visited real ale destinations in the North Notts branch area. NNC branch Secretary Terry Johnson (pictured left) was delighted to present the award. Well done to the landlord Wayne Cadman and to Carol Wade (pictured right) for all your hard work!



The **Autumn 2023 Pub of the Season** winners were the **Ferryboat Inn** at Church Laneham (villages) and the **Black Boy Inn** in Retford (towns). The presentations of the awards will be made soon!



Ferryboat Inn, Church Laneham



Black Boy Inn, Retford

North Notts CAMRA Pub of the Year 2023

For the second year in succession, **Beer Under The Clock** in Retford won the North Notts CAMRA Pub of the Year back in March 2023. A regular visitor to BUTC, The Retford Town Mayor, Councillor Sue Shaw, was also in attendance for the presentation. Congratulations to Andy, Russ and all the team!!



Meet the brewer

**Kevin Thacker – Idle Brewery, West Stockwith
(Located behind the White Hart Inn)**

- 1) When was the Idle Brewery established?
"It was back in 2005."
- 2) What is your favourite style of beer?
"It has to be a pale ale."
- 3) What are your thoughts on the future of brewing?
"Diversification, as seasonal demand and customer preference dictates."
- 4) What got you into brewing?
"Early introduction to a small brewery at age 13 on family holiday in Leveva Belgium. Then around 16 years ago was introduced by partner Claire to Brian Cooper former Idle Brewery owner & brewer."
- 5) What do you enjoy most about brewing?
"The ability to experiment and keep the tradition going, at the same time partnering the family business by providing a quality product at a competitive price."
- 6) If you could go back in time and give one piece of advice to yourself when you started brewing what would it be
"To ask others more experienced for advice. Also think about preparation, practice and perseverance."



Interview carried out by John Bowden.

History of Hop Growing in North Notts

Hops were largely introduced to Britain in the first part of the 16th century from present-day Holland and Belgium, although had previously existed as a small-scale industry around the east coast of England. Whilst the majority of hop-growing in England was concentrated in the south east (Kent, Essex, Surrey and Hampshire), Nottinghamshire was also famed for its hops, especially between the mid-17th century to the mid-19th century. Prior to the large-scale establishment of local hop cultivation, the nearest regular hop fair of note was at Stourbridge in Cambridgeshire. However, from the mid-17th century, hops were grown extensively across North Nottinghamshire between Retford and Southwell, in an area referred to as the 'North Clays', a reference to the heavy loam and clay soils in the west part of the Trent valley, ideally suited to the growing of both hops and tree-borne fruits.



At its height in the early-19th century, 35 parishes across the County contained hop yards. This was similar to that found in Essex! The 1835 map (below) shows the distribution of hop yards (shaded green).



1835 Chapman's Map – Showing hop fields around Tuxford/Egmanton area.

Tuxford and Retford had both also held regular hop fairs for centuries, but these grew significantly in their importance during the 18th and 19th centuries (see 1834 article from The [London] Sun, right).

Prior to the 17th century, Nottinghamshire was already famed for its barley, malt and the brewing of unhoped ales, all of which were prevalent across the County. These factors encouraged the growing of hops in the local area.

RETTFORD HOP FAIR.

Our great annual fair was held for the 491st time on Thursday and Friday last, and was the best in almost every respect we have witnessed for a long series of years. As we had anticipated, the quantity of hops offered was considerable, amounting to 3,261 bags, including about 120 bags of yearlings. Last year, the quantity of new and old amounted to 1,557. The quality of the new produce is, generally speaking, fine, but they have weighed off lighter than was expected, owing principally to two causes—first, the very short period in which they made their growth, and secondly, to many of the growers commencing to pull them full a week earlier than they ought to have done. From these causes the crop is not only light, but will prove somewhat inferior in strength to those of 1832.



1835 Sanderson's Map – Showing hop yards around East Markham/Darlington/Askham area.

The cultivation of hops was also encouraged by key local landowners, especially the Dukes of Norfolk (Worksop Manor), Dukes of Newcastle (Clumber), Dukes of Portland (Welbeck), Earls Manvers (Thoresby) and

Saville family (Rufford), all of which had strong links to the south east and had were involved extensively in farming and its related industries.

By 1724, there were over 900 acres of hop yards in Nottinghamshire. Throughout the 18th century, Retford was the most northerly hop fair in the country!!!

The hops in Nottinghamshire were markedly different to those grown further south. These varieties of hops were more hardy than those found in the south and could be grown in poor soils, especially in boggy ground and heavy clay areas. The 1835 maps show most of the hop yards located close to watercourses. These hop varieties also had a much stronger flavour, which is reflected in the stronger ale flavours brewed by local breweries through the centuries.

The construction of the railways in the 1830s and 40s, together with a series of successive poor harvests through those decades, brought about a decline in hop-growing in Nottinghamshire. This coincided with a growth in popularity of lighter flavours of beer across the country, for which the North Clay hops were not well suited. The last commercial hop sales in Nottinghamshire were recorded in 1892. However, hops can still be found growing in the hedgerows of North Nottinghamshire!

Recent North Notts CAMRA social trips

In the past year we have visited a number of terrific beery destinations! Doncaster, Skipton, York, Dronfield, Retford, Mansfield, and a few others! Do you recognise anyone or anywhere from this rogue's gallery?!?







20 photos of North Notts CAMRA socials in 2023 – if you can guess the destination of all 23, you're officially a real ale genius!

Meet the publican

Chris and Sally Radzia – Grey Horses Inn, Carlton in Lindrick

- 1) How long have you been in the pub trade?
"For over 14 years".
- 2) What got you into the trade?
"We always loved the 'Greys'. It was owned by a member of the extended family. When he retired, we told him we would buy the pub!"
- 3) What do you enjoy most about running the Grey Horses?
"We love the sociable side, having a catch up with locals and meeting new people, the stories along the way and being part of the village community. We also love the people and characters we meet along the way on a daily basis"



- 4) Any favourite days or events at the Grey Horses?
"Lots of Summer events and occasional winter beer festivals with live local bands. we continue to raise money for local charities through these and other events such as our annual 'Beer and Carols' night, an evening with the Worksop Salvation Army Brass Band during December; it's a lovely start to the Christmas period. We continue to have a very well attended Quiz and Bingo night on a Monday at 8.30pm."



- 5) Any thoughts on the future of the pub trade?
"Obviously over the last couple of years things have been a little different and definitely more challenging, with covid and the rise in prices of products and fuel, but we have a lot of very loyal customers supporting us and a great team. We can see a bright future for the Greys!"
- 6) Do you have any advice to someone starting out in the pub trade?
"Our only advice would be to keep your beer and food top quality, which isn't difficult but very time consuming. You need to be very diligent and spend time in the cellar every day to keep the beer quality consistently good. So, the biggest piece of advice we can give is that you and your team need to be 100% committed every day."

Interview carried out by Michael Tagg.

North Nottinghamshire – Real Ale Pub Guides 2024

The North Notts CAMRA Committee has put together 4 guides for the wonderful pubs in our branch area. These cover Retford, Worksop, North Villages and South Villages. Download them on the North Notts CAMRA website.

Legend:

- 1. Newby, Newark
- 2. Newby, Newark
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- 27. Newby, Newark
- 28. Newby, Newark

History Corner

A trip down memory lane for some, a wander into the unknown for others. Can you name all the ale venues below? Not all of them are still open...



Women in brewing

Claire Monk – General Manager, Welbeck Brewery (pictured right)

- 1) How would you describe your experience in the brewing industry as a woman? Any negatives or positives?

"I usually have a positive experience. Sometimes customers are pleasantly surprised but I have never had a negative comment."

- 2) Is there any advice you would give to other women looking to get into the brewing industry?

"You can be in the industry without actually brewing beer. There are roles in sales, marketing and public relations. Brewing is a really friendly industry."

- 3) How could CAMRA and publicans encourage more women to become CAMRA members?

"I would always avoid patronising women with 'positive discrimination' types of negative advertising. Female-only events only highlight the disparity. Women and men should be treated equally. CAMRA should work with pubs to become more approachable, with events such as 'meet the brewer' beer tasting or beer and cheese evenings."

- 4) Do you see any differences in tastes/drinking habits between male and female ale drinkers?

"Women often prefer to drink in halves and might go for a lower strength beer. We also like to have beer from a nice glass."

- 5) Is there anything you would do differently if starting in the industry today?

"Definitely asking for help from others!"

Interview carried out by Michael Tagg.



Future events

- Newark 'Beermuda Triangle' Festival: 25th-28th January 2024.
- Chesterfield CAMRA Winter Beer Festival (Winding Wheel): 26th-27th January 2024.
- Mallard Beer Festival, Worksop: 1st-6th February 2024.
- Hucknall CAMRA Beer Festival (John Godber Centre): 8th-11th February 2024.
- North Notts CAMRA, Villages North, (Branch Meeting at White Hart, West Stockwith): 17th February 2024.
- Rotherham Real Ale & Music Festival (Magna): 7th-9th March 2024.
- North Notts CAMRA, Wakefield: 23rd March 2024.
- North Notts CAMRA AGM (Mallard, Worksop), 6th April 2024.
- South Notts Real Ale Festival (Nottingham Moderns Rugby Club): 25th-27th April 2024.
- North Notts CAMRA, Louth: 26th April 2024.
- North Notts CAMRA, Hull: 11th May 2024.
- Newark CAMRA Beer Festival (Newark Castle): 24-26th May 2024.