

Barnsley Town Centre Survey – 2

Date 7th March 2007

Pubs Visited: Joseph Bramah, Base, Belfry, KGV, Livingston's, Treadles, Browns and the Gatehouse

Early March saw the CAMRA stalwarts in town again on the second leg of our town centre survey. This time we didn't expect to get real ale in most outlets and were prepared to do the best we could ... certainly a bit more savvy about midweek price offers and bogoffs! Having said that, an excellent pint of Acorn Bullion for £1.69 at **Joseph Bramah** was a good start to the night – exceptional value for the town centre.

Out of the back door and into **Base** and the expected bottle offers. Small, very noisy and quite frankly boring to someone of my years. They only have plastic glasses here, but give you the glass bottle to drink from? The **Belfry Bar** was kitsch but fun and even had some music that sounded familiar. The sticky carpet was a reminder of a previous town centre survey. In my youth, theme pubs were very rare and the first I came across was the Stonehouse in Sheffield centre when a student. It struck me that today's younger drinkers at least have some interesting looking places to sup and a bit of fun never did any harm.

Next was **KGV** which was stylish and mercifully quiet. Draught Guinness on an offer again and the best bar service of the evening. A trip to the Gents brought the novelty of someone selling aftershave and other items in there. Next door at **Livingston's** and it was clear where all the trade was. Busy, noisy and obviously the place to be that night. In a sort of reverse Shangri-La moment I aged about twenty years as I went in the door. A further surprise was the prevalence of hot pants – something I thought was dead for all time after their outing in the 1970's when a lot of girls who shouldn't have worn them did. No complaints at Livingston's on that score.... probably an age thing. 3 for 1 deals on bottles will have been another incentive to pack them in. At one stage I was quizzed by the manager who'd seen me making notes in my little black book. She needn't have worried as she appears to be running a tight ship and it wasn't her premises where the smell of exotic tobacco was noticeable. Besides, my notes after a night such as this one are virtually indecipherable the day after.

Treadles was noisy and the ultra-violet lighting made me feel a bit nostalgic. Certainly lit up the CAMRA logo on my sweatshirt a treat but did nothing for my gin and tonic. **Browns** was busy and a bit more traditional so I didn't feel such an old scroat but again no real ale. Never mind, its not a bad spot compared to some we'd seen on our outings so far.

Finally to the **Gatehouse** and a drop of Wards Best Bitter (now brewed in Stockport) in surroundings I'm used to. Time for a sit and a think about what we'd seen. I'd enjoyed my night out and there is no doubt that Barnsley centre outlets have something to offer for most people but it has to be said that you pay heavily for the privilege. If punters can only be attracted midweek by bogoffs and an occasional 3 for 1 offer then something is wrong. Probably too many outlets overall and the number that are closed midweek would support that argument. Where will we go on the next leg? Still plenty of places to try!

Colin Wilson