

JIM'S JAUNT

Tracks of my beers
by Jim Reay



Narborough Arms

Narborough & Littlethorpe

Narborough and Littlethorpe are two distinct villages bisected by the River Soar and railway tracks. In 1086 the Domesday Book made no mention of Narborough, probably because it was too small, however it is supposed to have been founded by Saxons in the 7th century when they advanced across Leicestershire and it became an outpost of their civilisation. Its name was originally nor burh, which means north fort or fortified house, probably a defended house of the Croft Estate that, until the 10th century, encompassed Croft, Narborough, Huncote, Cosby and Littlethorpe. In

the 9th century the Danes conquered Leicestershire and the word Thorpe derives from the Danish for a small village dependent on a larger village nearby, hence Littlethorpe. With no church of its own the village is part of the parish of All Saints Church, Narborough. In the 18th and early 19th century there was a flourishing framework knitting industry in Leicestershire. Although important in Narborough, the occupation died out in the late 19th century. More recently, Everards Brewery moved to the area in the 1980s.

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Trains I plumped for a short rail journey as a start to my pub ramble.

On the Narborough side of the tracks, a short distance from the station, the Narborough Arms' large car-park doubles as a community pay & display facility with a refund of fees being given to pub customers when making their first purchase. Adjacent to the car park was a large block-paved area furnished with picnic tables. Far more impressive, however, is the hotel's front elevation, indicative of its beginnings as a coaching inn dating back to the 17th century. Tudor style timber-framed construction walls erected on top of Mountsorrel granite foundations extend out of the ground to waist height and it is topped with a Swithland slate roof. Inside, the bar area consists mainly of one large irregular shaped room with balustrades and pillars breaking up the area into more congenial spaces, the "olde worlde" ambiance enhanced by exposed original ceiling joists and beams. Card-carrying CAMRA members receive a 10% discount on real ales, on this occasion the pub's two regulars Black Sheep Best Bitter and Wells & Young's Bombardier plus three guest offerings; Flipside Random Toss, Flipside Clippings IPA and Westons' Rosie's Pig Cider.

Turning left out of the front door when leaving The Narborough Arms and almost immediately bearing left at the mini-roundabout, I soon came to the impressive Grade 2 listed Elizabethan Manor House, Narborough Hall, on the right hand side of the road. Believed to date from 1596 when it was built by local landowner, James Meade, it wasn't known as Narborough Hall until the mid-19th century following extensive alterations. Constructed with Leicestershire building materials in the form of the distinctive pink Mountsorrel granite walls crowned with a Swithland slate roof, the property was first listed in 1952 and the following years saw a sad decline, culminating in a threat to demolish it in the early 1970s. When the current owners bought it in 1976 it was a dilapidated wreck. Years of extensive renovation followed, and the Hall was brought back to its former glory. In 1992, to help the funding of this considerable undertaking and maintenance, the front rooms of the house were opened as a



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CAMRA GOOD BEER GUIDE

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shop that has grown in popularity and size and now occupies five rooms on the ground floor even though the house is still very much a family home. After passing the Hall, Coventry Road soon merged with the busy by-pass and The Dovecote was visible on the right hand side of the road.

Following a lengthy period of standing empty and run down, The Dovecote was extensively refurbished and reopened in May 2013. The interior consists of one large ground floor area made up of adjoining sectors and a cosy intimate first floor loft type room. Exposed timber trusses, beams and joists are an imposing feature throughout. Real ales available were the pub's three regulars; Theakston Best Bitter, Courage Directors, Theakston Old Peculiar, though the usual guest ale was unavailable.

Leaving The Dovecote I turned left towards the Honda garage and crossed over the Huncote Road junction and down the jitty opposite. Reaching the first road I turned right and followed the road round, bearing left, into The Coppice and second right which is still called The Coppice and then left at the crossroads. At the end of this road I continued straight along the sign-posted "Bridleway to the Shops" and The Copt Oak was situated on the left, at the end of the path.

The Copt Oak was built in the late 1980's along with the adjacent housing estate; this is a modern looking pub that blends in well with its surroundings. The interior basically consists of one large room, but, due to its layout, provides separate diverse seating areas. With a dartboard, pool table and table football, as well as diners catered for, this pub seems to have something for everyone including two regular real ales, Marston's Pedigree and Ringwood Best Bitter.

Crossing the road and bearing slightly to my right I walked down the lane opposite as far as the bridge where I turned left up a metal staircase and left again at the top and along the redundant railway embankment. This disused mineral railway line, formerly known as the Enderby Branch, left the main line at Narborough and ran 2¾ miles to Enderby Quarry and was used entirely for freight; it is now a popular walk known locally as Whistle Way. The embankment soon became a cutting before



The Plough

reverting back to an embankment and crossing over Huncote Road via a blue brick and metal girder bridge, eventually leading to a kissing gate where the footpath ended at Coventry Road. I crossed the main road and turned right onto the causeway alongside the road until just before the road rises to cross the railway bridge, I reached and took the footpath to my left, signposted Littlethorpe. The footpath soon traversed the railway via a pedestrian level crossing before turning left and I followed the yellow way marker posts until emerging at the end of Oak Road, Littlethorpe. I walked the length of Oak Road, continuing over the staggered crossroads with Sycamore Way before turning left into Biddle Road from where I could see Littlethorpe Village Hall up the road on the right. Turning right along the jetty next to the village hall, The Old Inn was visible just over the road.

The Old Inn consists of public and lounge bars plus a skittles long alley which doubles as a function room. The public bar is the oldest original part of the building with the flat roofed lounge bar being added some time later. An interesting picture in the public bar depicts the pub as it was before the extension was added. Exposed pseudo ceiling joist in the lounge bar succeed in giving the room a cottage ambiance. The back yard doubles as an attractive beer garden and smoking area. Real ales available were the pub's three regulars, Sharp's Doom Bar, Bass and Greene King Abbot.

Turning right out of The Old Inn, along Station Road, The Plough was just down the road on the left.

This is a traditional pub, the oldest thatched roof part of which dates back to the 17th century and it comprises a public bar, a separate refurbished lounge bar/dining room and, across the yard, a skittles long alley. Functional fireplaces, exposed

ceiling timbers and genuine leaded light windows all combine to create an olde worlde ambiance. CAMRA members receive a 10% discount on real ales, which were Everards Beacon, Tiger and Original, Brunswick Call to Arms, St. Austell Proper Job and Titanic Captain Smith's Strong Ale.

From The Plough, I continued a short distance along Station Road to the railway station, and my train home.

It's worth mentioning that there are two other licensed premises in Narborough, both situated on Leicester Road. The former Bell Inn is now an Indian Restaurant named Spice 45 and, as it no longer sells real ale, I didn't pay it a visit. The only visible indication of its former existence remains is the "Bell Lane" street name sign on the gable wall.

The Heritage Hotel incorporates an Indian Restaurant serving Indian & Continental Cuisine to residents and non-residents alike. The interior is spacious and modern and the dining room has many stylish features and discretely separated areas. For those just wanting a drink before or after a meal there is a comfortable lounge bar area or alternatively picnic tables in the front garden. Although my wife and I have frequented this establishment previously I didn't visit the hotel on this occasion, as it doesn't open until 5pm by

which time I was on my way home. Unusually for an Indian Restaurant this Hotel does have one, regularly changing, guest real ale.

A short train journey, a combined urban and rural ramble encompassing five pubs between them having 18 real ales available pretty well sums things up. Ain't life grand! Now you've read the talk, get your walking boots on and do the walk.

Cheers,
Jim Reay



The Heritage Hotel



Spice 45



2014

In Association with The Britannia Inn and Q Brewery

Friday 24th October: 7:00 pm – 12:00 midnight : Saturday 25th October: 12:00 noon – 11:00 pm
Village Hall, Rearsby Road, Queniborough, LE7 3DH

Friday night is "Pub night" including background music, Saturday Afternoon is "Family fun" including children's games.

Saturday night is "live Acoustic music night" with open mic from 5pm and Acoustic artists from 7pm

£5 entry includes your glass and two half pint beer tokens - £4 entry for card carrying CAMRA members

Free entry for non-drinkers and under 18's if accompanied by an adult.

18 real ales including brews from local breweries & from further afield. Traditional ciders, wine, soft drinks, tea, coffee & food available.

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