



► **Somnium, by Amy Rosa**

Colin Davison

and four years ago was diagnosed with a condition called fibromyalgia which also causes cognitive problems. Recently she has had to use a stick as her mobility has been affected.

She described never being able to fall into a deep sleep and consequently struggling to feel fully awake.

"I take things very slowly because I only have a limited amount of energy," she said at Baltic 39.

Much of it she expends on making art to convey something of the pressure she labours under. "I make work about my life and my life is as a disabled woman," she said.

Don't imagine she holds back. As a performance artist, Amy has lived dangerously with materials including electrified copper wire and ice.

Her year-long work *Untitled (Ice)*, about "celebrating the sometimes really difficult adaptations we all have to make throughout our life", concluded with her lying on a block of the stuff for three hours.

At Baltic 39 there's a reminder of this work alongside a new creation called *Somnium* which is a sort of cabin built around a bed and packed with things with supposedly soporific qualities, including lavender and hefty novels.

According to Amy, bed boxes such as this were once common in the north of England.

To many visitors Amy's box might hold the tantalising promise of a restful retreat from the world. To an insomniac it's likely to be just another reminder of forbidden fruit.

■ The Adam Reynolds Memorial Bursary Shortlist Exhibition can be seen at Baltic 39, 31-39 High Bridge, until November 17.

The gallery opens Wednesday to Sunday, 12 noon to 5.30pm, and admission is free. Find details online at baltic.art/baltic39 or tel. 0191 2613830.



► **Adam Reynolds in about 1983**

More journeys could take us to nationalisation

Paul **Benneworth**



I'VE been moving house this summer and I haven't had time for a summer holiday. Working away meant I built up a long to-do list that I am I am busy trying to catch up with.

I study beer both from the perspective of an academic as well as an enthusiasm and member of the Campaign for Real Ale.

The brewing industry was one of the first to embrace now-fashionable ideas of craftsmanship, slow food and the circular economy, and they are a fascinating case of how local production can drive growth and regeneration.

One of the biggest changes in the last decade is the exploding number of micro-breweries alongside the rise of craft beer. The North East has over 100 local breweries, and it's increasingly easy to buy local beers from Wylam, Brinkburn Street or Two by Two beyond the region and abroad.

This growth has come despite the steady decline of the tied public house, renowned for selling a limited range of mass-produced, tasteless brews. But the growth has been driven by the rise of micro-pubs.

Sometimes dismissed as a hipster fad, the fact they are springing up in former shops, lock-up garages and even a railway waiting room suggests they are here to stay. There's a few micropubs on my to-do list, so a fortnight ago I decided to head to Berwick to visit the Curfew.

It's a long journey and so I made it a mini-break, taking my son to stay at a B&B for a couple of days walking in the Borders. Time pressures meant that I didn't make it to the Curfew but it didn't matter because the walking was fantastic around the coast, across to Scotland and round the impressive Castle walls.

And to my great surprise, the trains to Berwick made the travelling a positive part of the whole holiday experience! My jaded view of the East Coast Main Line was formed by bad experiences with Great North Eastern

Railways and Virgin Rail when working at Newcastle.

They hiked ticket prices and squeezed ever more passengers onto their ageing trains. The new company LNER seemed modern in comparison to the decrepit GNER carriages, even offering free wifi now standard elsewhere on European railways.

In contrast to GNER, these new trains are operated by a government owned company. That's not so unusual in the UK these days, but what is unusual is that it's the British government.

Reports recently showed the vast majority of UK train franchises now being operated by foreign governments. Led by the German owned Deutsche Bahn, we entrusted our trains to the German, French, Dutch and Italian governments, ensuring that heavy subsidies from UK taxpayers benefit overseas rail passengers.

These foreign companies have no interest in improving the UK passenger experience, just creaming off profits for their parent companies and local rail systems. The Dutch-owned Abellio even pointed to how it was ripping off British taxpayers to help its parent company NS lobby the Netherlands government to stop privatisation in Holland.

It also shows that rail franchising has had its day and is sucking the industry dry. LNER demonstrates how domestic ownership provides pleasant, fast and reasonable travel services that connect the North East to the rest of the country.

We should stop seeing nationalisation as a "loony lefty" bogeyman and the chance to take back control of vital services. These nationalised trains were a joy to ride and evoke the romance and adventure of the age of the train.

And they've left me no excuse not to make the journey to Berwick, and hopefully this time continue my research into real ale!

■ Paul Benneworth is a Professor at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Bergen.