

Durham Drinker

FREE

Issue 156 – Autumn 2026

With Darlington

In this issue...

- Touring the beers of the Netherlands (pg 8)
- Durham Drinker in 100 years (pg 18)
- Jennings is back! (pg 26)



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Branch Diary

September

16th: Branch Meeting – The Victoria Inn, Durham (7:30pm)

24th: Cask Ale Week: Good Beer Guide Mystery Bus Trip – limited spaces, pick-up in Durham and Chester-le-Street (times TBC), back in Durham by 10pm

October

2nd–3rd: Snods Edge Beer Festival

7th–10th: Station House (Durham) Beer Festival

21st: Social – Meet at The Water House, Durham (7–7:30pm), then Crossgate Club and up the hill!

29th–31st: Carlisle Beer Festival – CAMRA Tyneside & Northumberland are travelling by train from Newcastle, aiming to arrive around noon

November

5th–7th: CAMRA Sunderland & S. Tyneside Beer Festival – Beggar's Bridge, East Boldon (next to Metro station)

12th: Branch Meeting – Venue TBC

13th–14th: Saltburn Beer Festival, Community Arts Centre (Note: Not a CAMRA event)

28th: Regional Meeting – Cask Lounge, South Shields, NE33 1QQ (1pm)

2027

March

18th–20th: Coxhoe Beer Festival, Village Hall

Check out our socials, website, and the next issue for venues!

From the editor

Hello and welcome to Issue 156 of Durham Drinker, hand crafted in the Land of the Prince Bishops. After the blazing hot summer of 2026, there's thankfully been a lot of real ale supped in beer gardens, but how much of it has been locally produced? Why is there not more North East beer available in the North East? While exotic ales from Norfolk and Cornwall are welcome additions to bars across the county, where's all the local independent stuff?

Every time you choose a pint from an independent brewer, you are backing the underdog in the fight. And right now, they need it. Find a pub that's fighting the fight – go to <https://orlo.uk/ZDMHi>, tick 'LocAle' under 'Features', and look for the pump clip crowner on the handpull when you go. Which independent brewer have you never seen on a bar but wish you could? Let us know, please.

Speaking of independent breweries, the summer also saw the passing of Humphrey Smith of Sam Smith's. Often controversial and divisive due to his zealous enforcement of Sam's House Rules, he nevertheless presided over a brewer which maintained many of the traditional aspects of our pub culture that have been buried under a layer of fruit machines, juke boxes, internet access, and TVs. Oh, and real ale from wooden casks, reflected in the recent crowning as North East Pub Of The Year of Durham's Colpitts by the Society for the Preservation of Beer from the Wood. RIP Humphrey.

..and also RIP to former landlord (and character) Paddy Solan, for many years Mine Host at Durham's Shakespeare, one of a dying breed of "proper" innkeepers. His presence alone guaranteed a good time in the pub.

Over the course of the summer, there has been the now usual raft of pub closures, with various reasons being cited for their demise, but the most common being that the business simply couldn't be made to work. Business rates, utility bills, VAT – the list goes on, and while there have been some positive steps such as the 20% cut in business rates from next year, much more needs to be done. Over to you, government – keep the hospitality industry alive.

Our 44th Durham Beer Festival had a slightly different format this year, with no Wednesday session, but a Sunday afternoon. The queue outside before opening on Thursday justified this change, and it's fair to say it was a success. Thanks to all who came and sampled the ales and ciders – and see you next year!

Anyway, enjoy the beers as you support your local pubs – especially in Cask Ale week from September 17th –27th.

Cheers, **Paul Dobson**

Durham Drinker**Editor:** Paul Dobson**Published by:** CAMRA Durham**Design/Typesetting:** Morgan Davies



Branch Committee

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Caps Off: Paul Dobson

Castle Eden Brewery: Arthur Corner

Consett Ale Works: Sandra Wilkinson

Durham Brewery: Stephanie Salter

Fox Cub Brewing: Paul Dobson

George Samuel Brewing Company: Paul Dobson

Hill Island Microbrewery: Tony Dent

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A little look at the 44th Durham Beer Festival:
Tasting notes, scoring sheets, and the occasional existential pause –
CAMRA members hard at work (again).

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Many Thanks To Our Beer Festival Sponsors

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- The Victoria, Witton le Wear
- Arthur Corner
- That Crafty Brew, Chester le Street
- The Bay Horse, Bishop Auckland
- Beer Gadgies
- The Dun Cow, Witton le Wear

They helped to make the 44th Durham Beer Festival work!



PICTURE QUIZ

Can you name these local hostelries? Answers inside back cover.





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TOURING THE BEERS OF THE NETHERLANDS, BELGIUM, AND GERMANY

In a previous article, **Stephanie Salter** wrote about the beers they found on a trip down to southwest England with their campervan. This time it's all about ones they tried on a month-long tour of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany.

Our trip started with a week of rowing with a group of friends in Woudrichem, south east of Rotterdam. We then meandered through Belgium and into Germany where we sampled different beers in a lot of different places—here are a few.

In Belgium we stopped at the gem of a town, Lier, south east of Antwerp. It's a proper old Flemish town, with a cobbled main square, various UNESCO World Heritage sites, and a reputation for good beer. We ended up staying two nights. The local beer, Caves (pronounced 'ca-vess') is a 5.8% top-fermented amber/red ale which undergoes secondary fermentation in oak barrels for six months. It is unpasteurised and the initial sweet taste is followed by tart notes and a pleasant oaky undertone. We found it in the tiny 't Piepenholleke ("Squeaky Little Hole"), down a narrow alley off the Beguinage, a UNESCO World Heritage area where single religious women used to live in a sort of open convent. It is the home of the Royal Guild of the Lords of Lier, the very people who brought the beer back into being in the late 1970s, after it had disappeared and become nothing but local folklore. The full story can be found at www.herenvanlier.be

There was also Het Belofteland, which boasts an extensive beer list, and claims to serve the best spaghetti in town. The bar is a traditional Brown Bar with lots of original beams and an assortment of wooden furniture and metal advertising signs. We tried Bolleke de Koninck at 5.2%. Described as the beer of Antwerp since 1952, it is a malty amber beer, and being bottled it was quite gassy, but still very tasty.

Something more akin to the "usual" strenght of Belgian beers, I tried



Hapkin blonde at 8.5%, and Mark had Grimbergen Triple d'Abbaye at 8%. The Hapkin has its hops added in four stages during the brewing process, making for a smooth and nicely hopped beer with a bitter finish. It's a beer you could easily drink too much of, so I was careful to make it last. The Grimbergen is a warming and slightly spiced triple, again best savoured to properly enjoy it.

Here's where the UK and Belgian drinking scenes differ. Most Europeans go to a bar not just to enjoy some nice beer, but to meet friends, chat, read the paper, and generally be sociable. Back in the UK we go to the pub to drink. Yes, we meet friends, but we don't take our time over the beers and savour them in the same way. The difference in strength will account for some of the differences, but the bar culture in mainland Europe often seems to be more civilised than back home. Oh, and more expensive too, though I fear we are catching up.

Returning to Het Belofteland, we agreed that they did I serve a decent spaghetti, and it went down well with a Seef blonde for me and a local Tripel from the Brouwerij de Moulekes for Mark, at 6.5% and 7.8% respectively. The hazy blonde was creamy and smooth, winner of at least 6 gold medals in international beer competitions. The local Tripel was a fruity blonde with a slightly spicy finish and tasted all the better for being brewed in the town.

Moving southwards to Bitburg, we didn't have any of their beer, having found it in almost every bar since the Belgian border. By the time we reached Bamberg we were so pleased to find a town where they seemed not to stock it anywhere!

Bamberg is a World Heritage town in northern Bavaria with lots of breweries. We had gone to try the Rauch bier, or smoked beer, and so it seemed had lots of other folk. It was one of the busiest and most touristy places we visited – I'd recommend going out of season

The best known Rauchbier brewery there is the Schlenkerla, a name which ominously derives from the Frankish word for not walking straight. The brewery is in a large old timber-framed building in the centre, dating back to the late 1300s. The interior seems initially very dark, with a lot of heavy mahogany furniture and dark wood panelling. There isn't a bar as such, just a small serving station, and, as in a lot of pubs in Germany, you find a table and they come to you. Before we left the bar I went to the loo, and wondered if I'd



walked into a different establishment—the door slid open to reveal gleaming marble and chrome, and more modern features than should rightly be installed in such an old building!

But to the beer...which has to be tasted to be properly understood. When they say it is smoked beer, it definitely is. None of your hints of smokiness that you might get from a beer from a wooden cask, this is beer made with malt which is dried over a beechwood fire, so is as smoky as you'll get. It is served straight from wooden casks too, which adds to the depth of flavour.



We tried a standard Rauch bier and a Weichsel red lager, which is made with malt dried over a cherrywood fire, apparently giving a fruity, almost sweet smoky aroma. When the beer arrived we both got the full smoky sensation in the aroma alone, which we could tell was from actual smoke. The taste was, well, smoky, and then some! Initially it felt quite overpowering, dominating the flavour, and we both struggled to pick out the actual underlying beer taste. There wasn't a huge difference between

the two beers, although there was a hint of fruitiness in the red lager. Both definitely very smoky, and we felt that whilst we were glad we had tried it – but wouldn't be rushing to buy a case to take home.

We did try a couple of bottled beers back at the van; a Mahrs Brau U (ungespundet, or unfiltered), a hazy, malty amber beer at 5.2% from a Bamberg microbrewery, and a chocolaty Zotler Korbinian Dunkel at 5.1% from Southern Bavaria. Both were good examples of the typical malty styles often found right across Northern Bavaria.

Back in Bamberg the next day we tried another local beer Fassla brewery's Zwergla (dwarf), which as evidenced by the gnome-like character pushing a barrel on the glasses. That was very much not a smoked beer, just a nice malty dark brown beer at a drinkable 6%.

As the forecast temperature was upwards of 36C, we decided to travel east for cooler weather. We stayed close to the Czech border, drove to Leipzig, Bremen and back into the Netherlands via Jever, where we sampled the beer that took its name from the town. In Leipzig we tried the local Kostritzer Kellerbier, and in Bremen the



Franziskaner Hefe-weissbier dunkel, both quite malty but with different characters.

Once back in the Netherlands we were again in the land of fairly strong beers, and beer menus that didn't always give that crucial bit of information. A bar in a town called Sneek (pronounced Snake) provided us with some nice beers from a fairly extensive list. Mostly hazy and fruity, they included a Hangende Harry IPA from the Onderste Boven brewery, a semi-independent part of the Grolsch empire, a Sneker Pypke blond brewed locally in Sneek, and an American Pale Ale from the Uiltje brewery called Dikke Lul 3 Bier. The last name is a Dutch slang term of annoyance or rejection of an idea. Being a lady, I couldn't possibly translate, so you'll have to search the Google for that one!

We had learnt a Dutch word from our convivial rowing hosts – gezellig – which is a multipurpose word that can mean cosy, sociable or convivial. In Zwolle we found a bar called Gezelligheid, or cosiness/conviviality, so we had to try a couple of their beers. They have 16 taps and about 120 bottled beers, so a QR code takes you to their Untapped page where you can choose. We each tried one of their own seasonal beers and then Mark had the Jopen brewery's Mooie Nel North Sea IPA at 6.5%, a hoppy beer with a nice dry bitter aftertaste. I had a Gouden Carolus Classic, a Grand Imperial Beer, and at 8.5% it was deserving of the description.

36 days and 2,500 miles – I didn't keep a count of the beers we tried, but we brought a few bottles home, including one from Spezialitat, the other smoked beer brewery in Bamberg. Not quite as smoky as the Schlenkerla, I think it's fair to say it didn't win any votes for beer of our little "returning home" festival! It is available here from some German beer sellers, so if I've piqued your curiosity... Our next big travels may be to Norway, where we won't be able to afford the beer, so expect lots of info on fjords and mountains!



DARLINGTON DRINKER

 CAMRA

**AUTUMN
2026**



BRANCH UPDATE

Unfortunately, we have to start this edition's update with some very sad news. The efforts to save The Bridge at Whorlton from being converted to housing was being fought by a local community group looking to take the pub on as an ongoing concern. The group was chaired by Elisa Peat who was involved in a car accident at the end of May and sadly lost her life. Elisa had attended one of our branch meetings in the early days of their campaign where she outlined the groups proposals and spoke intelligently and passionately about their aims. We, as a branch, felt the group were in very good hands and were confident that they could secure the pub's future. We were desperately sad to hear the news. A fitting memorial would have been for the campaign to have been a success, but sadly the owner of the pub was granted a change of usage order and conversion to housing will go ahead.



On a more upbeat note, the branch has continued to have an active summer with a surveying trip to the North Yorks part of our branch, a social town walk in Huddersfield, and a rewards day for our Beer Festival volunteers. We also held our second branch 'surgery' in Barnard Castle in



August followed by a survey trip around the town. A big thanks goes out to Roy and Rima at The Old Well Inn for hosting us and feeding us with their outstanding Indian snacks. This is an initiative we kick started last year with the aim of trying to be more inclusive to our members who are remote from Darlington and find it difficult to make branch and committee meetings that are generally held in the town. We fully intend to continue so, if you are a branch member based in the Barnard Castle area and are just reading this, keep an

eye on your emails and the website for news of our next visit. Come along and say hello, you will be made welcome.

PUB FOCUS – THE OTHER SIDE, DARLINGTON

Opened in March of this year on Houndgate on the south side of Darlington's town centre, The Other Side is a micro bar in its truest sense. It is most likely the town's smallest bar, but as with many of the new(ish) micro bars that have appeared across the country in the last decade, what it lacks in floor space, it make up for in character. The décor and background music you will hear is of a rock\goth persuasion but only subtly so. The more obvious character trait is that of history. The building itself is a former alleyway that formed part of a 17th Century Brewery - Plews Brewery to be exact - hence being just about wide enough for a horse drawn carriage. Some of the exposed brickwork dates further back to the 1500s although what was standing pre-brewery remains a mystery.



The Original sign that had been kept by an ex-employee when the Old Coaching Inn closed in 1982

After the brewery closed, the alleyway remained as such as the building surrounding it was turned into an Inn, at one point being called The Tavern in the Town. It's last incarnation as a pub was as the Old Coaching House owned by Schooner Inns up until it closed in 1982. At some point after 1995 the alleyway was converted into a small business unit and has been at various points such diverse things as a Haberdashery and a Kebab shop.

The pub is run by husband and wife team of Rachel and Andy Maughan. Andy is a former Darlington CAMRA Chairman holding the position in the late eighties through to mid-nineties, overseeing Darlington's first CAMRA beer festival at the Arts Centre in 1989. Therefore, it was inevitable that Real Ale and a CAMRA focus was always on the cards.

There are 3 hand pulls with a strong focus on local ale. You will regularly see the likes of Mithril, 3 Brothers, Consett Ales, Yard of Ale and George Samuel, complimented with a nationally sourced guest ale.

The street on which the pub can found is arguably one of the best individual streets for a real ale enthusiast in the North East*. Although the street



changes name from Coniscliffe Road to Houndgate as you head east, a couple of hundred yards on the same street will allow you to visit four other Good Beer Guide entries in the shape of ORB, 22, Vesuvio Wines plus last year's Darlington POTY - House of Hop. Now The Other Side adds a bit of history and a further popping in point.

**Completely biased opinion of Darlington CAMRA. Start the debate!*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday 15th September 7:30pm – Committee Meeting. Upstairs @ The Half Moon, North Road, Darlington

Saturday 26th September, 2:00pm - Games Day with NW Yorks. The Travellers Rest, Skeeby.

Tuesday 13th October, 7:30pm – Branch Meeting. Upstairs @ The Tap on Bondgate, Bondgate, Darlington.

CONTACT DETAILS



FACEBOOK: DARLOCAMRA ---- INSTAGRAM: CAMRA_DARLINGTON

Website: DARLO.CAMRA.ORG.UK

Email: contact@darlo.camra.org.uk

PUB DISCOUNTS

Darlington pubs offering discounts and loyalty schemes

- *CAMRA discount vouchers*
- *William Stead (CAMRA vouchers)*
- *Tanners Hall (CAMRA vouchers)*
- *Tap on Bondgate (discount)*
- *ORB (discount)*
- *Vesuvio (discount)*

Non-CAMRA loyalty schemes that include Real Ale

- *The Half Moon*
- *House of Hop*

If we're missing any from this list, please let us know.



FRI: 2PM - 10.30PM

SAT: 12PM - 10.30PM

SUN: 4PM - 10.30PM

TUE - THU: 4PM - 10.30PM

THE STATION HOUSE, NORTH ROAD, DURHAM, DH1 4SE

VISIT OUR SISTER VENUE:

FRI: 2PM - 10.30PM

SAT: 12PM - 10.30PM

SUN: 2PM - 10.30PM

TUE - THU: 4PM - 10.30PM



FRAM FERMENT, 29B FRONT STREET, FRAMWELLGATE MOOR, DH1 5EE

GRAND AUTUMN QUIZ

1. Which brewing company was founded in Vigevano, Italy in 1846?
2. What logo was introduced to the Newcastle Brown Ale bottle in 1928 and represents the founding breweries of Newcastle?
3. Which brewery sponsored the Grand National between 2005 and 2013?
4. What brewery name do you associate with the Party Seven – a canned bitter popular in any UK throughout the 1970s?
5. Which bitter brewed by Sharp's Brewery gets its name from a ridge of marine sand at the mouth of the estuary of the River Camel, in Cornwall?
6. Which beer brand is also the Thai word for elephant?
7. Which beer took its name from the nickname of a car which was covered in flecks of paint, and was first brewed in 1979 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the MG car factory?
8. What is the German word for cheers?
9. The Oktoberfest, the world's largest beer festival and travelling funfair, is held in which German federal state?
10. ESB is a popular strong ale produced by Fuller's, what does ESB stand for?
11. Boddingtons Bitter was originally produced at the Strangeways Brewery in which city?
12. Which brewery's name, first mentioned in 1746 in the Munich tax records, originates from a 17th-century fresco in the brewing house depicting Daniel in the lions' den?
13. The flagship beer of Fuller's Brewery is London Pride – what is the name 'London Pride' named after?
14. In the 1980s and 1990s which lager's advertising slogan in the UK was "Reassuringly Expensive"?
15. Which organisation was founded in March 1971 in Kruger's bar in Dunquin, Kerry, Ireland?
16. Kronenbourg Brewery was founded in Strasbourg, France, in which year in the 17th-century?
17. Pilsner, a type of pale lager, takes its name from a city in which modern day country?
18. Which market town in Staffordshire, close to the border with Derbyshire, is known for its brewing?
19. The first batch of the 1983 Hofmeister lager "Follow the Bear" commercials were the final directorial work of which film director?
20. Which beer brand manufactured in the UK and India was founded in 1989 by Karan Bilimoria and Arjun Reddy?

CAMRA ANGLE IS BURIED

AND SO IS DURHAM DRINKER...

June 2026 saw the 200th Anniversary of the Castle Eden Brewery in County Durham. The brewery is now located in Seaham, and earlier this year Maxim Brewery moved into the Seaham site as part of the Powder Monkey portfolio. As CAMRA's Brewery Liaison Officer (BLO) for Maxim Brewery I was invited to their celebration of this milestone at The Old Brewery Business Centre in Castle Eden village. This was the original site of the brewery before they moved 20 years ago—which was another milestone.

The event itself was largely a recap of the brewery history with brief talks on Nimmo's, Whitbread, Castle Eden and their new owners, The Powder Monkey Group. As well as sampling some beers, a key moment was the "burying" of a time capsule. I met fellow CAMRA member Dave Thornton from Durham Branch, and we both took our respective branch magazines.

On a table which had been set out memorabilia to be stored inside this time capsule box, including, for an unknown reason, a red bra. Perhaps it's best not to ask, so we didn't. Anyhow, once the box had been filled I asked if we could include a copy each of our magazine for prosperity. "Of course, why not" came the answer.

So with that done we invited ourselves down into a dusty, cobwebbed cellar where the time capsule was to be stored. There is a video on Castle Eden's Facebook page which shows the cellar and where the box was stored, presumably for 100 years. If you are very lucky you will catch a glimpse of me lurking in the background of the cellar, the ceiling of which was less than my height. I emerged with a few bumps on my head and a hat and t-shirt back covered in cobwebs.

At the end of proceedings we were given a goodie bag, including a choice of a bottle of beer (I went for Castle Eden Black), a souvenir glass, and some other bits and pieces.

Altogether an enjoyable few hours spent helping to add to the history of an already historical event. However, a question was asked at the end - if and when it is reopened, will anyone know who or what CAMRA was?





The Old Brewery Business Centre can be found just off the Castle Eden exit of the A19. The brewery is at Spectrum Business Park, Seaham.

Ken Paul



Regional Pub of the Year

For the first time in a while, the winner isn't a pub in County Durham, but Ye Olde Cross in Ryton is a very worthy winner of the North East Pub of the Year award. We popped along to the packed presentation recently to have a couple of pints and join in the fun.

Image: Mick Rolfe of Ye Olde Cross in Ryton receives the certificate from Regional Director Ian Montieth-Preston

DISCOUNTS FOR CAMRA MEMBERS

All discounts on production of valid CAMRA membership card, unless otherwise stated

- The Green Tree, Bishop Auckland – 10p off a pint of cask ale
- The Bay Horse, Bishop Auckland – 10% off real ale
- The Ship, Middlestone Village – 10p off a pint
- The Half Moon, Durham – 20p off a pint
- The Red Lion, North Bitchburn – 20p off a pint of cask ale
- The Pack Horse, Burnopfield – 10% off real ale
- The Church Mouse, Chester Moor – 20p off a pint of real ale
- The Grey Horse, Consett – 20p off a pint
- The Duke of Wellington, Durham – 20p off a pint of cask ale
- The Head of Steam, Durham – 20p off a pint of cask ale
- The Market Tavern, Durham – 10% off real ale
- The Waiting Room, Durham – 5% off cask ale (not keg)
- The Sportsman, Belmont – 10% off cask ale
- Chester-le-Street Masonic Centre – accepts vouchers (card not required)
- The Hare and Hounds, Westgate – First two pints of Weard'Ale beer half price with an evening meal or Sunday carvery. Table must be booked in advance
- The Sportsman, Belmont – 10% off cask ale
- Dancing Betty, Dalton Park – 10% off real ale
- Crossgate Club, Durham – Club member price for real ale

In addition, all CAMRA members currently receive £30 of CAMRA vouchers each year, redeemable in the form of 50p off a pint of cask ale nationally in many pubs. Full details of the scheme can be found on CAMRA's website. In the Durham branch area, these are all pubs operated by JD Wetherspoon, and some by Stonegate Group.

If you are aware of any offers that aren't listed, or have any problems with those which are, please let us know. You can find out more about these venues by viewing their entries in CAMRA's national database at:
www.camra.org.uk



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Durham





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2026 Beer and Cider Festival

Beggars Bridge, East Boldon



November 5th - 7th 2026

(12 noon to 10.30 pm)

20+ Beers and Ciders

Live music all day Saturday



Website : sundfest.camra.org.uk



STOP PRESS

REAL ALE IS BACK!
AT
THE BLACK HORSE,
WILLINGTON

IN THE FORM OF
TIMOTHY TAYLOR'S
LANDLORD



33rd Carlisle Beer and Cider Festival

Station Hotel, Carlisle

29th to 31st October 2026

Thursday 12:00 - 10:00 pm

Friday 12:00 - 10:00 pm

Saturday 12:00 - 10:00 pm

Over 50 Real Ales, Ciders
and Keykegs

Non Members: £5 Entry

Free Entry to all card carrying CAMRA Members

Join at: camra.org.uk/membership

No Advanced Tickets

Festival Programme - £1



WETHERSPOON

The Bishops mill

Walkergate, Millenium Place,
Durham.

DH1 1WA

Five Quarter

Halisham Place, Peterlee.
SR8 1AB

The Stanley Jefferson

5 Market Place, Bishop
Auckland. D116 7NJ

01388 452830

The Grand Electric Hall

2 Cheapside,
Spennymoor. D116 6DJ

01388 825470

The Horse Shoe Inn

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BEER FESTIVAL

September 30th - 11th October 2026

A PHOENIX CALLED JENNINGS

The seventies on Tyneside were a grim period for real ale, so whenever an outlet served something a bit exotic, like Jennings bitter, it was good news.



And of course, any trip to the northern part of the Lakes involved drinking Jennings. So, it was sad news when Carlsberg-Marston's closed the brewery in 2022 and moved brewing of Cumberland Ale, its only surviving real ale, to Burton-on-Trent.

The original brewery stated in Lorton near Buttermere in 1828, and moved to the Castle Brewery in Cockermouth in 1874. Situated at the confluence of the rivers Cocker and Derwent, it was very prone to flooding, and gets its name thanks to its location directly in the shadow of the town's castle.



The brewery uses water from its own well, and has a very traditional structure with a tower and large maltings which are no longer used. It thrived during the 20th century, supplying its 111 tied pubs and over 200 free houses, but the family lost control in late 1990s, and in 2005 the brewery and pubs were bought by Wolverhampton and Dudley brewery (changing its name to Marston's in 2007). Initially they invested in modernising the brewery but in 2020 when Marston's were merged with the multinational Carlsberg the future looked in doubt. The pubs remained under Marston's ownership but in 2022 the brewery was closed and brewing transferred to Burton on Trent brewing Cumberland ale only. The brewery was put up for sale for £750K, and approximately 60 employees lost their jobs.

In 2025, Kurt and Rebecca Canfield bought the brewery for an undisclosed sum and installed a microbrewery inside the existing building – and so the brewery has risen from the ashes. They now employ 17 people and they have reintroduced their four core beers, which will be familiar to those who've drunk Jennings in the past. In case you can't remember, they are...

- Castle Bitter, ABV 4.2% – full flavoured with plenty of body
- Cumberland bitter, ABV 4% fruit and caramel in the aroma giving way to a sweet middle balanced by a gentle bitter finish
- Cocker Hoop, ABV 4.6% A full bodied bitter with plenty of hops and a bitter finish.
- Sneck Lifter, ABV 5.1% A strong dark ale with a complex balance of fruit, malt, sweet and roast flavours the finish.

The only change is that they have struggled to get the correct malt for the original bitter and so have changed its name to Castle Bitter. In addition, they brew seasonal ales and specials.

Since Marston's have retained ownership of their 100 + pubs this may present a challenge in getting their beers out there. They did have an extensive free trade and the new owners hope that local loyalty will encourage sales. However, the two former Jennings pubs I visited served Landlord or Wainwrights. I signed onto a brewery tour, which was both depressing and uplifting. Depressing as we went through the now



disused old brewery with its dozen stainless-steel fermenters, and saw the microbrewery which only brews 10% of previous capacity, but uplifting as a 2nd microbrewery was being installed bringing production to 17% of previous capacity. Even more uplifting as the tour included six third pints enabling me to try all four core beers plus two specials. Another "uplifter" is that the new owners plan to turn the brewery into a hotel, restaurant, and music venue.

Marston's merger with Carlsberg in 2020 ended up as a total Carlsberg takeover in 2024 with the closure of all Ringwood, Wychwood, and Wolverhampton-Dudley breweries. Then Carlsberg merged with the soft drinks company to become Carlsberg-Britvic. Marston's brewery now brews no less than 22 cask beers including such classics beers of the past as Tetley bitter, Youngs Special, and Courage Directors. However, with the company's past record of dispensing with anything with a bit of beery heritage, the future of many of these are in doubt.

Well done, Jennings, for restoring a big chunk of Lakeland brewing heritage, and giving the beers back to the drinking public.





THE GOOD

- The Avenue, High Shincliffe no longer sells keg Wainwright 'fresh ale' from one of its handpumps. Both handpulls dispense genuine cask beer again – Landlord and Ghost Ship when visited. Good news indeed.
- Bellamy's Bar, Consett have introduced cask White Hot from Consett Ale Works.
- Crossgate Club in Durham City now selling cask beer – Sharp's Atlantic first up, then Sharp's Sea Fury. Guests welcome, club members get discount at the bar.
- The Barley Mow, Birtley reopened after brief closure.
- Mayfair opened in Durham City in former TGI Friday's – no cask.
- The Bridge in Durham City reopened after refurbishment, and cask beer remains.
- Congratulations to the Colpitts, Durham city for being voted the 'Society for Preservation of Beers from the Wood's North East Pub of Year.
- The Craft House, Bishop Auckland has reintroduced cask ale in the form of two Theakston beers.
- The Old Mill, Knitsley, Consett has been closed since May but press reports a reopening under new management is forthcoming – no date known.
- The White Horse, Ferryhill has reopened – no cask ale.
- Manor House at Ferryhill duly opened with cask ale available – Camerons Strongarm when we visited.
- The Court Inn, Durham has reopened with two Timothy Taylor beers in handpump.

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- The Crook Hotel is currently closed – future uncertain.
 - Mr Flynn's (formerly the Big Jug), Durham City closed again.
 - New ownership at Red Alligator, South Church offered cask beer again but announced another closure on 12th August until further notice.
 - Long term licensees at the Black Bull, Lanchester announced they will be leaving at the end of the year when the lease terminates but nothing changes before then.
 - The tenants of Black Bull, Trimdon have also given 9 months' notice to their pubco (Stonegate) to terminate their lease. Pub remains open.
 - The Square and Compass, West Cornforth – no longer sells real ale.
 - The Canteen Bar & Kitchen now opens only on Friday and Saturday evenings.

THE BAD



THE BAD

- The tenants of the Bay Horse Wolsingham have also given notice to their pubco (FB Taverns) that they will not be renewing their lease when it ends in the New Year. Remains open.
- The Black Horse, Chester-le-Street has closed with Stonegate advertising for new tenant.
- The Royal Oak, Cornsay Colliery has withdrawn real ale.
- Handpumps have been removed from the Angel, Durham City, so no chance of real ale there again.
- The Freemasons Arms, Consett has been closed since February following the passing of the longstanding landlady.
- Handpulls have been removed from Durham City Amateur Rowing club – no more cask beer.
- The Sportsman, Bishop Auckland is closed.
- The Gate, Framwellgate Moor has closed, and its future is uncertain.

- The long-term closed Wheatsheaf in Leadgate has been given planning permission to convert to residential.
- The fire-ravaged Eldon Arms in Ferryhill Station to be up for auction in August for £60k.
- Kings Head, Cockfield licence suspended pending a full hearing following an incident.
- Whitbread announced the dates for closing all their remaining Beefeater and Brewers Fayre outlets. The effect in our branch is that the Tindale Crossing Brewers Fayre in Bishop Auckland has already been closed and is up for sale, whilst the Broomside Park Beefeater in Belmont will close to non-residents of the adjoining Premier Inn on September 10th. Update: May close earlier but may be reopened at some stage by Queensway Inns. Yet to be confirmed.
- Change of use applied for to change the closed Royal Oak, Medomsley to residential (planning application DM/26/01183/FP Convert existing redundant public house into a single family dwelling.)



THE UGLY

All information correct at time of publishing. We strive for accuracy but mistakes do sometimes happen. If you notice an issue or problem, please contact us via email at: publications@camradurham.org

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ANSWERS

Picture Quiz

1. Staplyton Arms, Hawthorn
2. Turf, Consett,
3. The Victoria, Witton-le-Wear,
4. Blue Bell, St. John's Chapel
5. Duke of Wellington, Durham,
6. Head of Steam, Durham
7. Joiners Arms, Hunwick,
8. Half Moon Inn, Durham,
9. Ship, Middlestone Village
10. The Spinning Wheel, Hamsterley

Grand Autumn Quiz

1. Peroni Brewery (founded by Francesco Peroni)
2. Blue star logo (the star's points represent the five founding breweries of Newcastle)
3. John Smith's
4. Watney's
5. Doom Bar
6. Chang,
7. Old Speckled Hen (the car's nickname was "Owld Speckled 'Un"),
8. Prost
9. Bavaria (Munich in Bavaria)
10. Extra Special Bitter
11. Manchester
12. Lowenbrau (the name means 'lions brew' in German)
13. A flowering plant or flower (tolerant of dry and shady conditions it often rapidly colonised the bombed sites left by the London Blitz of the early 1940s)
14. Religious hermit
15. Jimmy Carter
16. English mustard
17. Czech Republic (Czechia),
18. Burton-upon-Trent
19. Orson Wells
20. Cobra Beer

TO THE WORKERS

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