



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE



*Nearly out of lockdown, light at
the end of the tunnel, special*

Durham Drinker



***Inside: Two more pubs under threat, putting the C back in
CAMRA, meeting the MPs, listening to the brewers, counting the
County's historical GBG entries, another lost brewery, and a quiz***

Hello and welcome to another limited edition, online only, advert-free, paperless issue of Durham Drinker. Perhaps the last in this format, but you never know....

To say it's been a trying time for the hospitality industry over the last year is an understatement of gargantuan proportions, but at last there appears to be a glimmer of hope for it to come back to life. After lockdowns being imposed and partially lifted, before being imposed again, the industry appears to have been made the scapegoat for all sorts in the last twelve months, with restrictions based on no scientific evidence whatsoever.

At least now some dates have been set for pubs and clubs to reopen—April 12th for outdoor spaces (weather permitting) and May 17th for indoor, with a proposed return to whatever passes for normal social interaction on June 21st. This is, of course, all dependent on infection rates continuing to fall and the population “getting the jab”, amongst other things.

Since Christmas, CAMRA Durham has begun a series of Zoom meetings with our local MPs in an attempt to pressure them into getting as much help for pubs, clubs, and breweries as they possibly can—there are more details on this elsewhere in this DD. One outcome of this is a regular newsletter, produced by CAMRA Durham, which is sent to all the local MPs so that they all know what each other is achieving. newsletters from CAMRA Durham to you, our MPs and Councillors. The aim is to foster and enable on-going dialogue with the purpose of supporting pubs, clubs, brewers, drinkers, communities and workers involved in the production and consumption of ales (and other drinks) as part of the social fabric of our region.

We've also carried on with our plan to have guest speakers at our monthly meetings—all carried out via Zoom—and so far have had great two-way chats with Danny McColl (of McColl's of Evenwood), Andrew Ferriman (of George Samuel of Shildon), and the owner and the head brewer of Vaux (of Sunderland). Future guests will include Keith Thomas from Brewlab (Sunderland) speaking on the subject of using shipwrecked and Edwardian beer samples to produce modern beers (May), and Ian Jackson of Consett Aleworks about being a brewer and CAMRA's North East Brewery Liaison Coordinator (June). Please join us online if you can—hopefully we'll be able to revert to physical meetings later in the summer.

One thing that the hospitality industry in our region has proved is its resilience. George Samuel brewery opened up early in the pandemic, in Shildon, and is going strong, while the Bishop Auckland Brewing Company is planning to launch its first brews in April. The Little Tap pub opened in Spennymoor in the middle of last year, and will hopefully have survived to reopen. Many of our pubs have taken the opportunity for a refit, and in the case of the Merry Monk in Bishop Auckland, a reversion to its former name of The Sportsman. Considering what we as a nation have been through in the last year, it's a miracle that so few of our pubs have announced closure, although it remains to be seen how many do actually reopen. Likewise, we don't know what lasting effects the lockdown will have had on the drinking habits of the general population. Will drinking at home be the new norm, or will we greet the open pub doors with equally open arms and a desire to re-establish our social lives? I know which one I'm opting for — see you at the bar.

Cheers, and stay safe

Paul Dobson

Another two pubs under threat...

We have learned that the **Burton House** in **Burnopfield** has been put up for sale by owners Admiral Taverns. This two roomed pub serves a changing selection of beers from the Marston range, and is a lively and central part of the local community., which is why a number of local residents have formed a supporters group to investigate the possibility of community ownership.

Their campaign can be found on their dedicated Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/burtonhousecommunity> so if you can help in any way, please get in touch with them to add your support.

"Welcome to this page which has been created to assist with the aim of saving the Burton House Burnopfield from permanent closure by creating a community task force to coordinate the purchase and reopening of this long standing community asset.



We aim to draw together both the local and wider stakeholders who can in any way join together to facilitate this aim....

Thanks in advance for your support."

If you want to help save the Burton House, please act fast

...and the **Smiths Arms at Castle Dene**,

near Chester le Street, is also under threat, with plans submitted to convert this well-known real-ale outlet to residential use. Initial work on the site has already taken place, but there is still time to lodge objections to the recently-submitted plans, so please do so if you believe this pub should remain a pub.

A campaign to save it, "**Save the Smiths**" is up and run-

ning, and details can be found on their Facebook page [\(4\) Save the Smiths | Facebook](#)



A site notice was erected on the 19 March, and objections or representations about the change of use application need to be submitted **WITHIN 21 days**, which is by **9 APRIL 2021**. You can register your opposition to the application through the DCC planning portal (link below - you will need to register to comment), or by emailing planning@durham.gov.uk or in writing to Planning Development (North), Room 4/86-102, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UL

DM/21/00702/FPA | Conversion of existing pub into a single residential unit, with associated landscaping, demolition of outbuildings, construction of new workshop and garage | Smiths Arms Forge Lane Castle Dene Chester-le-street DH3 4HE (durham.gov.uk)

If you want to help Save The Smiths, please act fast

Putting the 'C' in CAMRA Durham

As 2021 dawned, and the full import of the restrictions put in place registered with publicans, brewers, drinkers and of course, your CAMRA Committee, it was clear that we had entered a new phase of this long pandemic. What was different? Options, this time. We, pubs, and brewers had fewer options. From the fear of new variants that kept more people indoors, to the prohibition on pubs selling takeaway alcohol, what limited choices had been available in 2020 evaporated in the new year.

In this somewhat depressing situation of a cold, hard January, we decided that action was the order of the day. We could not directly effect changes, but we knew people who could. Our branch area encompasses the constituencies of six MPs and is largely governed by Durham County Council at a local level. This led us, as related elsewhere in more details, to meeting (via Zoom, the saviour of social interaction these days) Richard Holden MP, Mary Foy MP, Dehenna Davison MP, Paul Howell MP, Grahame Morris MP, and Kevan Jones MP. In each case, a small delegation, containing members, brewers, publicans, and committee members have pressed the MPs on the issues that matter, asking them to support us and work together for the whole area. We plan to meet remaining MPs and local councillors in the near future.

Why bother with MPs and councillors? We know that pubs, clubs, and our local brewers are not only economically important to our area, but are essential venues for communities to gather, to exchange ideas, and to create and maintain an identity. Meeting over a pint is central to local culture and is threatened in this pandemic like never before. Of course, it is not the pandemic alone; other issues, like the purely commercial and inhumane attitude of many pubcos have been amplified. We know that it is only political action that will remove many of the threats to our pubs, clubs, and breweries and we also know that the North East region is a political battleground. In this context, we think that engaging with MPs and councillors can do some good.

What are our aims? We have both short term and long term aims. In the first instance the aim is to create communication channels.

In terms of specifics, we want:

- Action on supporting pubs/clubs/breweries out of lockdown, including business rates relief and furlough extending, as well as more generous grants, particularly for 'wet' pubs.
- Action on small brewers relief, including a reversal of cuts in volume at which the 50% rate relief applies.
- Action to support the retention of pubs/clubs in villages, with automatic presumption of 'Asset of Community Value' for the 'last pub in the village'.
- Action to remove BID (Business Improvement District) bills from business that have spent most of the last year closed.
- An immediate resumption of off licence sales for pubs/clubs.
- Extending the 5% rate of VAT to alcohol sales 'on premises'.
- A credible local and national plan to support the pubs and brewing industry, including action on pubcos to promote and enforce humanity and fairness in contracts with tenants.

This is an ambitious list and matches much of what CAMRA nationally is asking for. Without these actions, will we have pubs open in the summer? In a year's time? We think there is a clear and present danger of many pubs, and consequently brewers succumbing to impossible realities, and know that this would lead to the social impoverishment of communities, as well as the economic and personal cost of job losses. We also know that once closed, many pubs will not reopen.

Our MPs have been receptive to these arguments and have already acted. Richard Holden has lobbied the Treasury and BEIS, whilst Kevan Jones has asked the County Council for action to create and implement a local plan to support our pubs and brewers. There is unlikely to be one moment or action that produces a big change, but by being involved we can help shift the debate and action closer to what we all know is needed if our culture, jobs, communities, and freedom to enjoy pubs/ale/clubs/cider is to be preserved.

Steven Spencer

Branch Secretary



Try CAMRA's national online pub for chat and socialising



House of Commons Hospitality Debate 24th March 2021



*The House of Commons has held a much-needed backbench debate on the hospitality industry. The debate was lively, well attended and involved lots of MPs from the length and breadth of the UK. We were lucky to find four MPs from our branch area on the call paper. Grahame Morris, MP for Easington, Paul Howell, MP for Sedgefield, Richard Holden, MP for North West Durham and Mary Kelly Foy, MP for the City of Durham were due to speak. Sadly, **Richard Holden** was unable to speak due to time constraints, but on the same day he had authored a letter signed by many MPs to have reduced beer duty for ales sold on licensed premises.*



The Branch had a keen interest in this debate, having invested lots of time since Christmas meeting all six of our local representatives. We thank all members, committee members, publicans and brewers who have engaged in this effort, and are pleased to report that our MPs presented a united picture of the need to support pubs, clubs, and breweries now, and into the future.



Mary Foy was keen to highlight the need to make employment in pubs more sustainable and fairer, whilst recognising the importance of pubs to our region. 'Esh Winning needs the Stag's Head; Brandon, the Brawn's Den', before she stated that the current support for the whole hospitality industry is not enough, given the pain of the last year. Mary asked for long term change, on the back of 5500 pub closures since 2010, saying she wants the government to create 'a hospitality commission that can identify the needs of the sector while helping to move it away from its reliance on low-paid, insecure work'.

Grahame Morris was unequivocal that a year of lock downs, the nature of government support and covid suppression measures have had a serious impact on the overall hospitality sector, costing 650,000 jobs already, which is the sharpest impact of any sector. He went on to state, 'I want to place on record my thanks to those businesses, which could have traded and employed people, for doing all they could to cut covid transmissions.'. Grahame voiced support for the extension of the time period that 5% VAT on food sales will apply, as part of helping businesses survive.



It is worth repeating Grahame's whole section on Small Brewers' Relief. 'I want to say a few words about the small brewing industry, which is under threat from Government policy. In my constituency, the Castle Eden brewery is not only suffering from lack of demand and a lack of grant support, its business has been put at risk by the Government's proposed changes to small brewers relief. There is a simple solution: retain the relief at 5,000 hectolitres and stop the proposed cut to 2,100 hectolitres. It would be a scandal if small brewers survive covid only to be put out of business by ill-conceived reforms to the small brewers relief.'



Paul Howell spoke with passion about the place that hospitality venues, including pubs and clubs, have in people's lives and communities. He mentioned individual pubs, that included the Surtees Arms/Yard of Ale Brewery, and its landlord, Alan Hogg, as being typical of the places he was lending support to. Paul said, 'The actions taken to frustrate the pandemic could not have been more focused on this industry if they tried.' He welcomed the support offered, but wants it to go further, in line with our Branch's aims.

Paul said, 'I would encourage another look at extending the 5% VAT rate to alcohol sales on licensed premises, as well as an extension in time.' He also supported Richard Holden's letter that supports lowering beer duty on sales on licensed premises, which is another way of achieving the same effect of enabling our pubs and clubs to compete on a more equal footing with supermarkets. He went on to suggest that more support beyond the current deadlines of grants, the furlough scheme and business rates holidays will be needed, given that many pubs and clubs will likely only open in June/July.

Paul finished by placing in perspective the scale of the issues at hand. Pubs and clubs, the places that are the heart of our community and all of their supporting suppliers are at risk and put simply 'We need to go above and beyond for them to give them the opportunity to give us our good times back.'

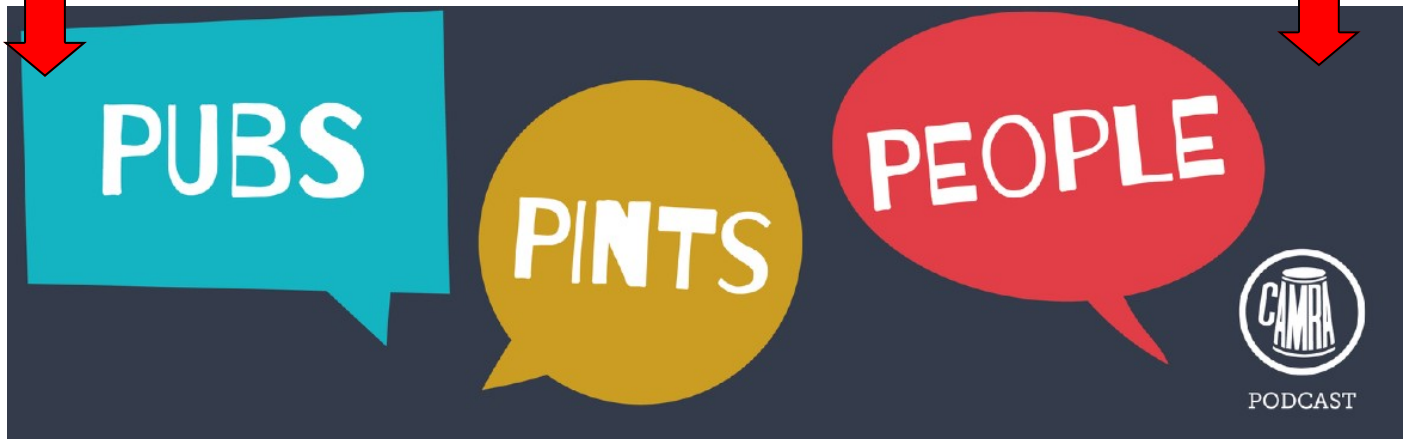
From a branch perspective, having three of our MPs speak and all mention issues that are central to our campaigning was pleasing. We were particularly pleased to hear them supporting the idea of a 5% VAT rate for alcohol sales on licensed premises (or beer duty reduced to achieve the same effect), to hear they wanted further targeted support for pubs and clubs, that Small Brewers Relief changes should be halted and that they asked for the sheer scale of the problems facing pubs, small brewers, and clubs to be recognised and confronted. We thank our MPs for highlighting these issues and will continue to work with them as we all find a way through this time, hopefully into a brighter future of ale, cider, pubs, clubs, and vibrant brewers, all at the heart of our communities.

The MPs' full speeches are on Hansard: [Hansard, Hospitality Debate, 24th March 2021](#)

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

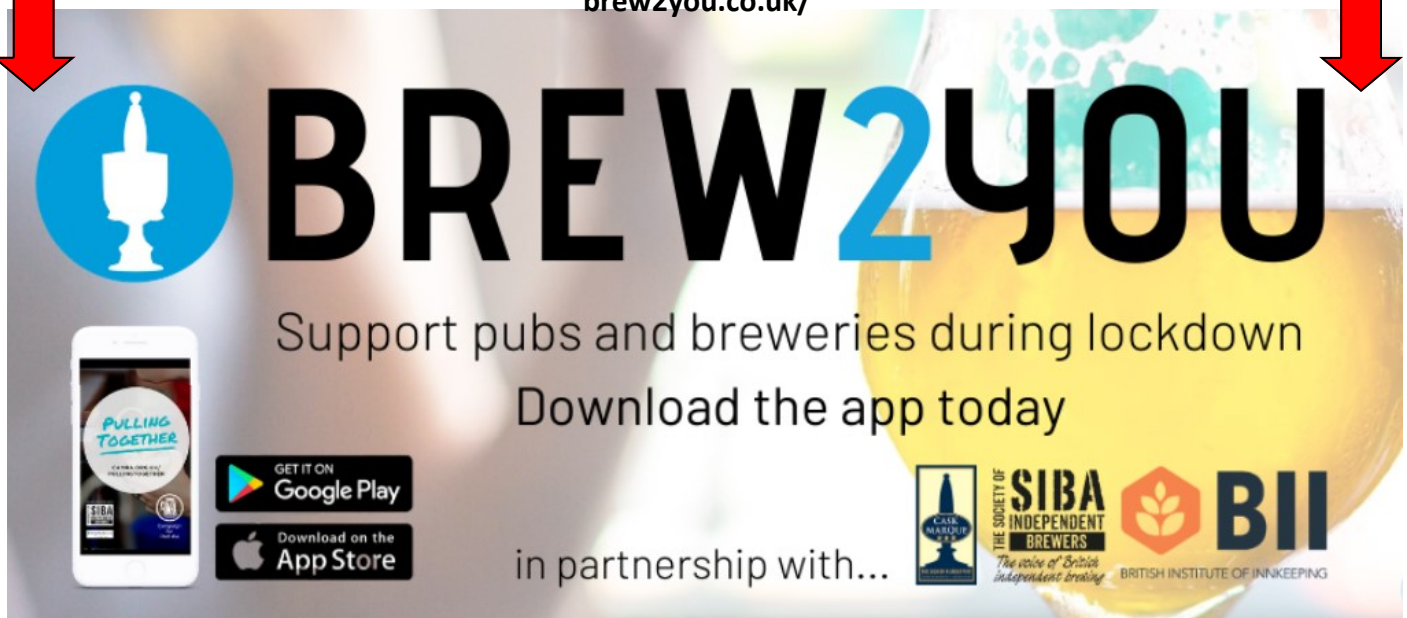


If Peter Crouch can do Podcasts, so can CAMRA! <https://camra.org.uk/podcast/>



CAMRA can help you find and order beer and cider to be delivered to your door
brew2you.co.uk/

[https://](https://brew2you.co.uk/)



CAMRA MEMBERSHIP COUNTS

Campaigning for pubs, pints and people since 1971.

We're leading the fight to keep pubs alive and thriving in every community, serving a broad selection of quality ales and ciders.

Here's how CAMRA makes a difference

www.camra.org.uk/campaigns

Our Campaigns ▼

Promoting live beer, cider & perry

CAMRA promotes local, small and independent producers. Initiatives include *LocAle* (promoting locally brewed ale) and the *Real Cider Served Here* scheme.



Helping you save your local

Our in-depth pub-saving guides for England, Scotland and Wales, and advice on Assets of Community Value listing and Community Pub Ownership, provide campaigners with all the tools required to save your local, if it is under threat.



Lobbying Government at all levels

CAMRA members across the UK actively lobby their MPs, devolved elected representatives and councillors via email and social media. Our branches talk to politicians about a range of vital topics including taxation, regulation and consumer choice.



Pubs as a force for good

Pubs play a vital role in tackling loneliness and social isolation, foster community spirit and encourage social interaction. Research commissioned by CAMRA found that people with a local pub are happier, have more friends and are more engaged with their local communities.



Pub Company Reform

CAMRA campaigned for over ten years to introduce a Pubs Code and Adjudicator in England and Wales, to address the imbalance of power between pub companies and tenants. We continue to make sure tenants are treated fairly by pub companies, so they can thrive and run great pubs for us to enjoy, and are seeking a Pubs Code for Scotland too.



COVID Campaign Response ▼

Pulling Together

Our cross-industry campaign supports pubs, clubs, taprooms, breweries and cider makers through the COVID-19 crisis. They need your support now more than ever. We are campaigning on their behalf and providing resources to help them survive. This includes promoting *Cheers for Choice* to ensure beer stocks in reopened pubs, *Brew2You* and *Save our Pubs*.



Brew2You

This digital platform has been a vital tool in connecting beer lovers to local pubs, breweries and cider makers offering takeaway and delivery during lockdowns and beyond.



Speaking up for pubs, clubs, brewers and cider makers

CAMRA is at the forefront of lobbying for better support, and against unfair restrictions during the Coronavirus pandemic. We support a cut in beer duty on draught beer served in pubs to ensure fair competition with supermarkets and changes to the Business Rates system to end the unfair burden on pubs.



For member benefits visit
www.camra.org.uk/benefits

If you love beer and pubs,
CAMRA membership is for you!

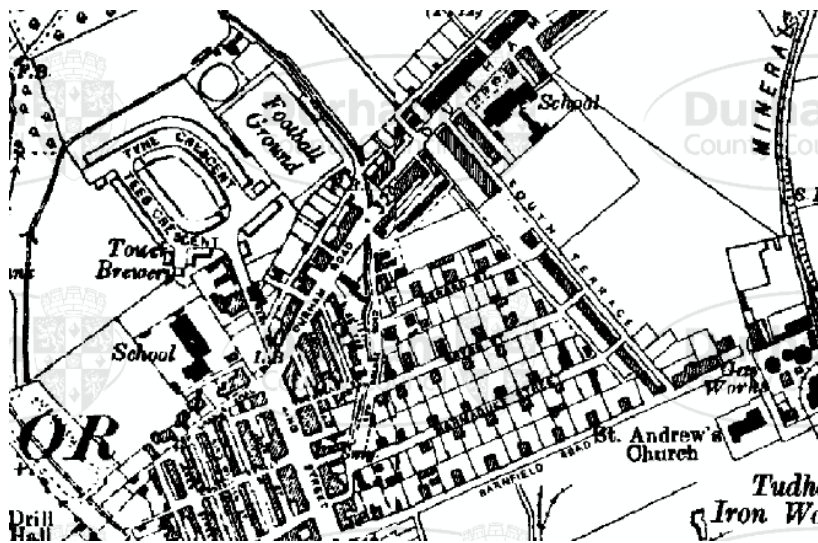
join.camra.org.uk



Lost breweries of County Durham

Tower Brewery, Tudhoe

This brewery was in Tudhoe Grange, to all intents part of Spennymoor, which in 1900 was a thriving town with population of 6,000, 850 of whom were employed at the Tudhoe Iron works. There were also four collieries, with the largest being Tudhoe colliery which employed 1,700 people.



All of this was heavy work which created some thirsts that needed quenching, so not surprisingly there was a brewery in town. The site of the Tower Brewery in Tudhoe Grange - which lay at the north end of King street (where you'll find ale at the Little Tap and the Moors Tavern) – just to the west of the playing fields known as Brewery Field, today the home of Spennymoor Town FC of the Vanarama National League North, and winners (at Wembley Stadium) of the 2013 FA Vase.

The brewery was started by George H Ogleby on land leased from the Salvin estate of Croxdale Hall in 1871, although some records indicate that it was in operation from 1864. He wasn't there long, retiring six years later in 1877, when he put the brewery up for sale - although it did close for several years when its water, which was taken from a spring in the dene behind Wood Vue, became contaminated, probably because of local mine workings.

It was eventually purchased and re-opened in the mid-1880s by Patrick Bruce Junor, who had previously been involved with the West End Brewery in Durham. (*I cannot find much information on this brewery at present, but I live in hope*) and one of his first acts was to change the name to Tudhoe Grange Brewery, although the buildings were still known by their original name.

It had an estate of twenty five pubs, but I cannot find the names of any of them – however, as Spennymoor and Tudhoe had forty pubs in 1900, I suspect a good proportion would be tied to this brewery.

Nor can I find anything about the beers they produced, but we do have an advert which reveals that they produced “Mild and Bitter Ales and Stout” in Mr Ogleby's time, and the fact that this advert is dated 1870 adds credence to the claims of the earlier opening date.

The brewery covered 2,888 square yards, comprising of a brewhouse, malt store, tun room, wash



GEORGE OGLEBY, BREWER, WINE & SPIRIT MERCHANT, Tower Brewery, TUDHOE GRANGE, SPENNYMOOR.

MILD AND BITTER ALES AND STOUT.

house, engine
room, pumping
room, boiling
room, cooling
room, and malt
mill.

In 1896 the brew-
ery became part of
the much larger
North Eastern
Breweries Ltd,
which was based in
Sunderland, and
they closed the
Tower Brewery in

1902, but continued to use it as a depot by until after the first world war. No evidence of the buildings survives today.

In 1927 North Eastern Breweries merged with C. Vaux and Sons to become Associated Breweries, which was renamed as Vaux & Associated breweries in 1940. This gives a clue as to which pubs belonged to the Tower Brewery/Tudhoe Grange Brewery, as there were a number of Vaux pubs in the town, such as the Half Moon, the Crown, the County, and the imposing North eastern Hotel. The last three are today, respectively, a fast food takeaway, a private house, and in the process of being converted to sheltered accommodation – an unfortunate sign of the times, and fates typical of many former pubs across the country.

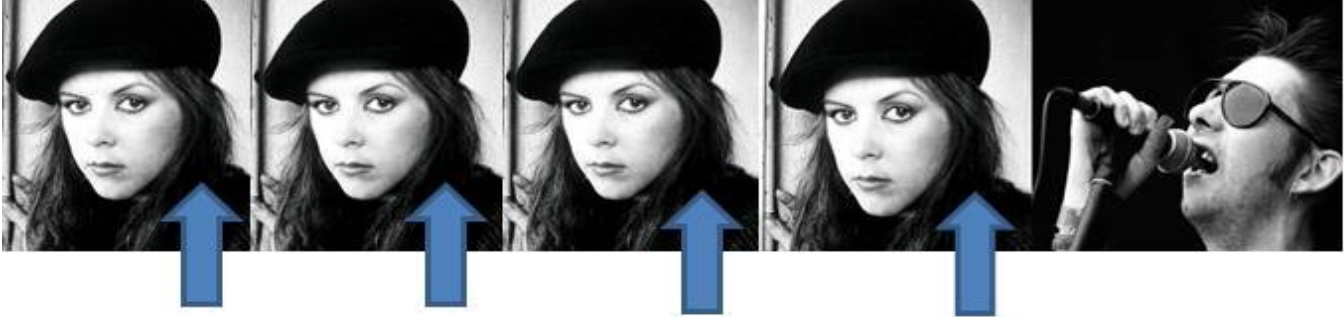


Weard'Ale Brewery



Picture quiz

See if you can recognise some of our local breweries



1

2



3



4



5



6



7



8



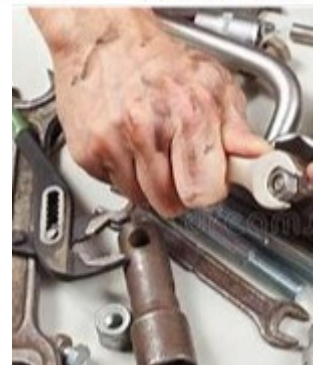
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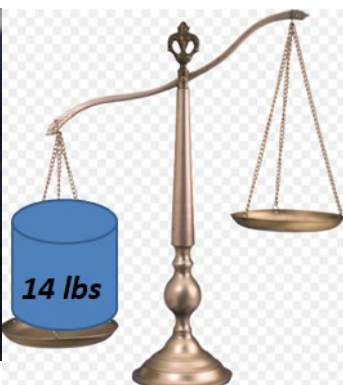
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15

Just a bit of fun, and the answers are at the end of this virtual Durham Drinker.

Thank you!

To all our brewers, pubs, and bottle shops who have striven to supply their communities with takeaway food, and bottled and draught real ale wherever possible, often providing door-to-door delivery services. Your commitment to those who are normally socialising in your bars is a credit to the hospitality industry in County Durham, and proof that it will survive the restrictions imposed on it during the pandemic.

We at CAMRA Durham look forward to you welcoming back your regulars, your irregulars, and your passing trade, and once again becoming the hub of your community. It's what pubs and clubs are all about.

Cheers!

A brewer talks brewing....

Danny M^cColl joined our branch meeting in February, as the latest in our series of talks in CAMRA Durham. Danny, alongside his wife, runs M^cColl's Brewery, which is a small, independent producer of real ales tucked away in Evenwood, a few miles south west of Bishop Auckland.

Danny started his talk, as is usually best, at the beginning. His first foray into brewing was with a home brew kit, which fed his curiosity enough to take a job at a brewery. He learned, but wanted to forge his own path, so decided to look for brewing apparatus. A second hand 20 barrel set-up arrived and he set about deciding his style. The inspiration is from both Danny's own experience, drawing on British and Belgian beer styles, to produce a core range of easy-going, drinkable ales. Alongside these, Danny enjoys an occasional experiment with something more exotic.

What is it like to be brewing now? Danny took us through the challenges and opportunities of this current more limited period. With pubs closed, and no possibility of supplying through them, he has brewed thrice in January and twice in February, with 90% of this output going into cans. Danny also produced bag in box ales, and has an extensive network of delivery, which he intends to expand further. Sales have been steady, which is keeping things going, but is quieter than desirable – a sad reality of this lockdown.

In more normal times his beers appear in the Lord Crewe Arms, Blanchland, and are also available through his Tap Room. The quiet times over the last year have been an opportunity to invest in this lively corner of the brewery, which Danny assures us produced good craic! M^cColl's have continued to sell their 'let's eat pies and talk about men's mental health' ale during the pandemic, £1 from each sale of which goes to Men's Pie Club, a charity that advocates for mental health issues. This community impact is a huge advantage of small, local, independent businesses, which are in tune with their communities, and the branch congratulated Danny on this innovative initiative.

Danny also offers brewery tours, which our audience enthusiastically imagined attending when we can. The format is for a tour of the brewhouse with Danny, to see up close how a modern small brewery operates, and Danny on hand to answer any and all questions. Then, tour-goers are first to the bar before opening, to sample the ales with the brewer. For the more ambitious, they also offer a whole day brewing experience, involving the participants in all parts of the brew process, and at £100 per place, represents real value for money.

We were curious about the effects of Brexit and the pandemic on the supply of raw ingredients. Danny told us that for now suppliers are well stocked, having anticipated reduced trade flows and that he avoids the most in-demand hops to ensure guarantee of supply. Brewers, he tells us, are not competing for ingredients and in fact, despite a very competitive sales environment, are cooperative and collegiate as an industry. This, he says, explains why there are so many collaborations between small breweries, which not only produce some excellent ales, but also shared experience and techniques, which aid innovation and explains why small independent brewers are so important to the overall industry.

Turning to the political, Danny assured us that Durham County Council had been brilliant in the pandemic, with grants supplied quickly and support available. MPs have been a different matter, with no response, despite several approaches. Danny wanted to talk to them about the upcoming changes to Beer Duty relief for small brewers, which currently provides a 50% reduction up to 5000hl of beer (880,000 pints) and then tapers off up to 60,000hl. Changes due to come in soon will cut the 50% rate to just the first 2100hl, which will place severe limits on the expansion of small brewers, threatening the future of this essential element of the overall industry.

It is this issue and others, such as expanding the 5% VAT reduction to alcohol sales on licensed premises, and extending business rates relief, that have led CAMRA Durham to engage with our MPs and in fact, we met Danny's MP, Dehenna Davison, on the 5th of March 2021, with Danny in attendance to put this issue, and others directly to her.

We ended by wishing Danny well and offering whatever support we can, both now and in the hoped-for recovery. Readers who wish to know more, order beer, find the tap room, book a tour or an experience can find all the information you need on the brewery website.

Steven Spencer

CAMRA Durham Secretary

Durham CAMRA meet Dehenna Davison, MP for Bishop Auckland

On the 5th of March, at tea-time, two brewers, a publican and the branch chair and secretary met with Dehenna Davison MP. For context, Dehenna's seat is a so-called 'blue wall' constituency and her reputation for being active in her constituency precedes her. The timing of this meeting was interesting, being two days after a budget that offered some support for pubs, clubs and brewers, but, for many of us, did not offer quite enough.

We began with an examination of support offered to pubs and breweries. Grants from the council have been well-administered, but the interpretation of what is and is not allowed in relation to takeaway sales was illustrated by the fact that a brewer can do take away from the back door, but not from the tap room. Dehenna heard first-hand how this has led to absurd situations and has been injurious to pubs and brewers alike during 2021. This current lockdown has been much worse than the first two due to the changed rules.

This part of the discussion also reinforced that thinking within government is not rooted in the reality of the premises and communities their rules affect. The complexity of the models of businesses in place versus the rules presents tensions and barriers for already hard-pressed landlords and brewers to negotiate.

The impact of public transport on pubs and clubs was examined, and this is an area that Dehenna is keen to support. The reality of pub companies and how and why they operate was examined in detail, which is an area we have found MPs consistently have little idea of, but once informed are keen to know what can be done. Let us hope they take up the issue in government circles.

We discussed the current support arrangements, including that business rates relief whilst welcome, is not a help to those who already have it via funds linked to supporting deprived areas. VAT at 5% on alcohol was strongly supported in the meeting as a way of enabling pubs and clubs to compete with Netflix and supermarkets when they reopen. That this was not in the budget seems to be a glaring omission.

We finished with two large issues. The first is costs. Whilst all would welcome that the living wage is increasing, for pubs, clubs and brewers, this is a new cost that will come in before pubs and clubs are really up and running again. Nobody knows how quickly people will come back out to socialise, but it is likely to be gradual, and in this uncertainty any new costs are not conducive to success. Finally, we discussed Small Brewers' Relief, which, given the complexity involved, we agreed to provide a more detailed report on.

All in all, this was a productive and positive first step with Dehenna, and we shall report back to the branch on how this develops.

Steven Spencer

Branch Secretary

Changes to Small Brewer's Relief

Does Small Brewers' Relief mean anything to you? If you were a small, independent brewer, it would. SBR began in 2002, as a response to calls to help small brewers to grow and provide more competition and invention in the brewer's market. The relief means that brewers pay 50% of the full rate of beer duty on the first 5000 hectolitres (880,000 pints) produced, with a taper up to the full rate at 60,000 hectolitres. This regime has witnessed a flourishing of small brewers, including in the Durham Branch area.

Alas, as with most things in the UK, if they are working, somebody steps in to make a change. In this case, after lobbying by mid-size brewers, the government is proposing to change the limit of 50% relief to 2100hl and to move the upper limit far beyond 60,000hl, meaning mid-sized brewers, like Theakston, stand to benefit from the changes, whilst small brewers, like our own McColls's stand to lose.

The basic problem is one of scalability. Some might argue that the rules as they stand have worked too well by encouraging many into the industry, which is causing a serious headache to those in the mid-range who cannot compete with the big boys but are being nipped at by the 'minnows'. But, for a small brewer, the 5000hl limit is far distant enough when starting out to allow for the first stages of growth to be more about beer type, quality, finding a local market and concentrating on innovation, rather than thinking about how to really 'scale-up'. If 2100hl, which amounts to 369,000 pints per year, or circa 1000 pints per day which is 99 firkins per week, becomes the new limit, this will become the point at which serious decisions have to be made about what comes next.

Even with a healthy profit margin per firkin, that is still at the two-man band stage of operations, and far before any sensible decisions can be made for growth from a position of stability. CAMRA care because we think that a thriving, inventive and vibrant local brewing industry is central to our desire to have high quality real ale, in many styles, in each region of the country, including our own. Additionally, local production has the benefits of both reducing the carbon footprint of each pint and providing jobs and wealth creation locally.

If you are wondering what you can do, there is currently an open consultation, run by the UK Treasury which you can find on this link. Alternative, please write to your MP, telling them you want the SBR to remain at 5000hl to support your local brewers and ask them what they are going to do about it. We have MPs in this region who are likely to be responsive to constituents, due to political reality surrounding the so-called red and blue walls. So, make your voice heard to support your local brewers and preserve our local ales from our excellent brewers. Your Branch already have, during our regular meetings with MPs.

Steven Spencer

Branch Secretary

The Durham branch pubs in the GBG over the years

You are probably aware that CAMRA is celebrating 50 years since its inception in 1971, but you might not be aware that it didn't produce the first Good Beer Guide until 1974. One often sees mention of the few pubs nationally that have featured in every edition, but I have often wondered which of the Durham branch area pubs have been in the most. During the lockdown I had the opportunity to acquire the bulk of Lesley Fyfe's collection when she decided to leave the **Tap & Spile**, and together with a few Ebay purchases and the loan of some early missing editions from Peter Jones of Sedgefield, I have managed to get all the entries into a spreadsheet to satisfy my curiosity.



The Bird, high Handenhold

There have been 48 editions overall, and there have been 295 pubs in the current branch area that have been listed at least once. As today we only have around 220 pubs in total serving real ale, many of which have never been included, you can imagine there are lots which no longer exist, some I have never heard of—indeed even some villages, now with no pub - and I had to look on the map to see where they were.

None of our pubs have been in every issue, and in fact in the original 1974 there were only six pubs listed for what was then County Durham, and five of those are not in our branch area or even the county now (Gateshead, Houghton-le-Spring, South Shields and Sunderland). So our one and only entry and founding Durham GBG pub is still going but sadly does not sell real ale now, and that is **The Bird in High Handenhold**, Pelton - described as a 'Very friendly country local, with singing in the lounge'! It made three other appearances, with the last one being in 1983.

There were only 11 entries in the area in 1975 but our 'winner' made its first appearance in the third edition in 1976 when the branch entries had jumped to 45. It has been included every year since with the exception of 1998 when, although it did not have its own entry, it did appear in a 'try also' note in the Durham City entries. That pub is the **Half Moon in New Elvet** where you can still enjoy an excellent pint of Draught Bass, with an impressive 45 out of a possible 48 entries and that's 6 more than the **Dun Cow** down the road in Old Elvet with 39. Maybe we could bend the rules a bit and accept the 1998 mention to say it has featured for 46 consecutive years



The changing face of the Half Moon, Durham



The Colpitts and the Dun Cow, Durham, and the Dun Cow, Old White Lea

since 1975?



The Square and Compass, Doggy

Here, as a taster, is the top 10 for CAMRA Durham area:

Durham	Half Moon	45
Durham	Dun Cow	39
Durham	Colpitts	38
Witton Gilbert	Glendenning Arms	38
Durham	Victoria	37
Durham	Old Elm Tree	35
Durham	Tap & Spile	32
West Cornforth	Square & Compass	32
Witton Gilbert	Travellers Rest	32
Chester-le-Street	Smiths Arms	30



Travellers Rest, Witton Gilbert



The Smiths Arms, Brecon Hill is closed and under threat of becoming residential

All those are still going, at least they were before lockdown, but the



The Sportsman, Canney Hill in its heyday, with the Nevin family at the helm—Tommy, Claire, Jeanette, Sean, Joanne, and Kathryn

Photo courtesy Sean Nevin

2003, is closed but still standing, and level 16th with the **Sportsman at Canney Hill** near Bishop Auckland - which was demolished some years ago with its final entry being in 2010.

There will be more on the pubs that have disappeared in future issues of Durham Drinker, so please let us know if there are any you are particularly interested in.

Oh, and if anyone comes across a copy of the 1980, '81 or 1974-78 editions please drop a line to pubsofficer@camradurham.org.uk – it would be nice to complete my personal set!

Dave Thornton

Pubs Officer

Smiths may have pulled its last pint if the current planning application to convert to residential use goes through. You don't need to go much further below the top ten to find pubs no longer with us. The **Lambton Hounds in Pity Me** is 12th (now an Italian restaurant) with 29 entries, the **Dun Cow** (aka Cows Tail or Dode's/ Doad's) at Old White Lea, near Billy Row, whose final and 24th appearance was in

Picture quiz answers

1) McColl's 2) Caps Off 3) North Pier 4) Hill Island 5) Hopper House Farm 6) Durham
7) Hops & Dots 8) Yard of Ale 9) Weard'Ale 10) Consett Ale Works 11) Castle Eden
12) Working Hand 13) George Samuel 14) S43 15) Devilstone



A pub through the ages....

With the news that the Merry Monk in Bishop Auckland has reverted to its original name, we thought it was a good opportunity to dig out a few photos of its various incarnations over the years