



*Nearly out of lockdown, light at the end of the tunnel getting brighter, (or is it?) special edition*

**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

# Durham Drinker



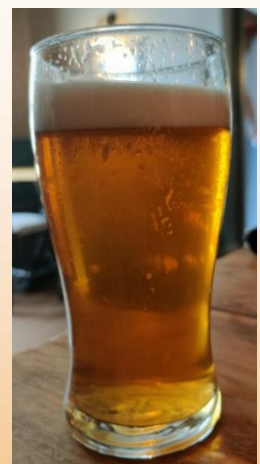
## Celebrating 50 years

CAMRA was founded in 1971 with the simple vision of improving consumer choice of great beer and pubs. 50 years on, there is a lot to celebrate!



## Inside:

- More wanderings with Chris and Wendy
- Campaigning with our MPs and councillors
- A personal perspective of how safe pubs and clubs are
- Beers from shipwrecks
- A very small picture quiz
- A bit of a do, the alternative to the 40th Durham Beer Festival
- New brewer at McColl's of Evenwood
- Marston's gets bossy
- First brews from Bishop Auckland Brewing Company



***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....***

Well, June 21st came and went without the hoped-for relaxation of rules, regulations, and advice—unless you wanted to go to the Royal Ascot race meeting, or an international football match, that is ...but we'll not go too much into that. We'd hoped to be sort of back to normal by the time this issue of DD was published, but we'll just have to wait and see how the pandemic pans out over the next month and hope that the situation allows relaxation of restrictions from late July. Our licenced trade have continued to bust a gut to keep us thirsty customers happy and to keep their premises open under the most trying of circumstances, for which they deserve enormous credit, especially with the European Championship football tournament a potentially big draw for customers. It's coming home, and all that.

CAMRA Durham have thus been restricted to online meetings, to which we've invited guest speakers. Many thanks to those who've joined us thus far, who have included Andrew Ferriman of George Samuel brewery in Shildon, Danny McColl of McColl's brewery of Evenwood, and Keith Thomas of Brewlab in Sunderland. A write-up of Keith's talk on ancient brews and their recreation can be found in this issue, and I'd recommend anyone with an interest in beer to have a read. And if you're not interested in beer, read it anyway, it might just set you off on an interesting journey.

As we announced earlier in the year, there'll be no 40th Durham Beer Festival in 2021, but we plan a series of events around pubs, clubs, breweries, and real ale and cider in the autumn. You can also read about that in more detail in this issue.

Of the pubs that have successfully reopened, and that is the vast majority, the Black Bull at Wolsingham has a new licensee in place, and the Half Moon in Durham is to take another short break from July 5th to 28th as a refurbishment takes place. You might remember the objections, which were along the lines of "if it aint broke, don't fix it", to the original plans were mostly upheld, so it will be interesting to see how that pans out when the doors reopen.

Up in Tow Law, the fledgling North Pier brewery produced its first cask offering, which went to Blues micropub in Whitburn and was very well received. Brewer Josh Atkinson intends to take the positive comments on board and get some cask into the CAMRA Durham area as soon as possible.

While we're still restricted as to how we can socialise, I'd encourage you to support our hospitality industry as best you can—they deserve it! Please remember that pubs and clubs may well be operating with different opening hours and reduced beer offerings, so do whatever you can to check before making a journey to a pub or club.

As a branch we've continued our discourse with local MPs and councillors, and have shared this information with our neighbouring CAMRA branches, who aim to follow suit. To back up this, there is a newsletter being produced by the local branches for MPS and councillors to keep them up to date with our activities and campaigning.

Meanwhile, enjoy the summer sun—there are more beer gardens than ever for enjoy your pint in!

*Paul Dobson*

# CAMRA Durham campaigning update

In early 2021 CAMRA Durham began lobbying our local MPs and councillors to further our campaigning aims. We particularly focussed on asking for more support for our embattled pubs, clubs, and brewers, as well as for our communities. We asked for MPs to influence the Treasury for more financial support and also to respond to the consultation to change Small Brewers Relief. We asked our councillors to ensure support for pubs, clubs, and brewers through the crisis and beyond, and particularly to help support pubs and clubs in the planning process to ensure our vital places of community gatherings are protected from developers.

We were pleasantly surprised by how receptive our representatives, of all parties, were. Following our initial round of meetings, we have maintained email contact with our MPs, as well as producing a regular campaigning newsletter for them, to keep them in the picture about our wants, our actions, and to further what we hope will be a long-term relationship. Interactions with councillors were more difficult in the election season, but are something we hope to develop in the coming weeks and months.

We are also collaborating with our fellow branches in the north east to produce a regular campaigning newsletter for all regional MPs and councillors. The north east is currently a focus of all political parties, meaning that it is a region where campaigning for the things that we believe in can make a real difference. The first newsletter will be published in early July.

In the coming three months CAMRA Durham will be meeting again with MPs, indeed, MPs have been proactively asking to meet us. We will be making more contact with Durham County Councillors and working with other branches to have maximum effect. Our aims are to ensure that our pubs, brewers, and clubs are supported as we all recover from Covid-19, to campaign to have more real ale and real cider for everybody to enjoy and to particularly support the development of our local brewers, who are the key underpinning of what we all enjoy.

Outside of campaigning with politicians, the branch has also been supporting two groups who are attempting to save their respective locals. The first is the Smith's Arms at Castle Dene, Chester le Street. The second is Burton House at Burnopfield. In both cases our very own 'Mr Pubs', Dave Thornton has been active in providing advice and support, and helping to coordinate the defence of what are valued locals. Both of these campaigns matter to us because we know many pubs may be under threat and that pub companies may try to cash in on what is a housing boom.

Finally, we will be using our celebration of pubs, clubs, ale, cider, and brewers, to be held late summer/early autumn to campaign for real ale, real cider, good pubs and clubs and for our brewers. If any members wish to be involved in our campaigning activities, please do get in touch!

*Steven Spencer*

*CAMRA Durham Secretary*

# **Hops & Dots Brew Co.** in County Durham has smashed their original target to raise £4,000 to bring more accessibility to the craft beer industry. The Crowdfunder campaign ended at 10.01 am on Tuesday 1st June, and has raised £6,333 already, thanks to the kind generosity of 91 supporters

Hops & Dots are an independent craft brewery, set up in Middlesbrough back in 2018, and now based in Bishop Auckland. Due to COVID-19, they reached out to the local and craft beer communities to help raise money so they can raise awareness of a commitment to #CraftForAll, and become the hub of their new community space in County Durham.

The brewery was founded with a love of beer and braille. Before John launched the company with his good friend Hugh, he was known best for his knowledge of braille, especially the production of braille and the use of technology, which is still a large part of his work today.

As the team set up their new brewery and taproom they wanted to expand their approach to making everything as accessible as possible. They also intend to become a community-focused business that engages with all local people, especially with those who experience sight loss. As a small operation with other commitments, they haven't kept up with demand with regards to the hops and the dots as much as they had planned, but hope both of those things change very soon with the new investment.

## **Meanwhile, up the road in Evenwood, McColl's not only have a new look to their taproom, they also have a new head brewer, Simon Whittington.**



Formerly of Durham Brewery, and Camerons, and Tooth and Claw Brewing—where he helped develop the company—Si intends to bring some new, unique brews to the drinkers of McColl's beers in the near future.

Also, the brewery has been leading the way in the tackling of the many and varied mental health issues

that have been exacerbated by the effects of the Covid pandemic and the associated lockdown and massive negative effects that has had on social interaction.

As blokes have always been notoriously reticent about discussing such things, McColl's joined forces with Men's Pie Club to do something about it. Danny McColl, head honcho at the brewery, takes up the story overleaf.



It's fair to say we've been blown away by the response and support 'Let's eat pies and talk about men's mental health' has received. The beer collaboration with Men's Pie Club was meant to be a one-off project but the work they do is so important, along with the amazing response to the beer since launching last December has meant that we are committing to support MPC for the long term.

Men's Pie Club of Sandyford in Newcastle, who work tirelessly in tackling social isolation and feelings of belongingness amongst men, constantly need on-going support to continue their work. As the devastating effects of the pandemic continue and the conversation surrounding loneliness and men's mental health has sadly become even more prevalent, we feel that it's massively important to continue the project, raising awareness and money for MPC.

If you're familiar with the beer you'll be aware it was originally only available in 440ml can and that a massive £1 from every can was donated to MPC, raising £2500 for them to continue their great work. You may also have seen the beer is now available in cask with 10p from every pint being donated to MPC. With this we aim to highlight how important the role of pubs play within the community, helping to start conversations around loneliness, belonging and mental health and getting MPC to a wider audience.

Once we'd committed to MPC for the long term it quickly became apparent that a £1 donation (approx. 25% of the cost) was unsustainable in the long term. The initial project was made possible by the amazing support we received from our suppliers to lower the cost of the initial can, and as much as we'd love to continue donating such a generous amount, we simply can't expect our suppliers to continually 'subsidise' the materials and ingredients at cost price, or even for free in certain instances. So, in the coming weeks and months you will start to see '10p from every can is donated to Men's Pie Club' on cans, this is not a misprint. This also brings it in line with the '10p per pint' on the cask version so not to detract from that offering whilst making a long-term commitment to supporting Men's Pie Club. We are really proud to be shouting about Men's Pie Club, and we won't stop.

Want to get involved?

We are holding an initial meeting at the brewery on Tuesday July 13th at 1-3pm to let people know our plans.

If you are confident and chatty, like making pies and can spare approx 3 hours a month we'd love you to join us and find out more about our plans.

If you're interested please drop us an email at [info@mccollsbrewery.co.uk](mailto:info@mccollsbrewery.co.uk)

Let's eat pies and talk about men's mental health.





# **CAMRA Durham's Celebration of Pubs, Ale, and Cider**

## **Background**

As 2020 ticked over into 2021, thoughts turned to what the new year would bring. With a judicious blend of hope and realism, the committee discussed the possibilities for a branch festival in 2021. We concluded that we really wanted to hold one, but that we could only do so if the conditions were right. We adopted a holding brief.

By February it was clear that even if restrictions on social contact and travel had been rescinded by the autumn, our pubs, clubs and brewers, along with the communities they serve, would have been through a long, dark, winter and would need support to recover. The committee took the difficult, but necessary decision to postpone our 40<sup>th</sup> festival for the second year running and instead to pursue the idea of a celebration of ale, pubs, and cider in our branch area. We felt that this style of event would support the recovery of pubs, clubs, and brewers in a way that holding our own festival simply would not. It is noteworthy that many other branches and indeed, CAMRA nationally have chosen subsequently to follow the same route, with even the GBBF becoming a localised banner to support events.

## **Our celebration of pubs, ale and cider**

We aim to hold a branch-wide celebration of pubs, ale, and cider at the very end of summer or in early autumn. This will take the form of lots of signing up of pubs, clubs, and brewers to take part, with each offering locales and real ales/cider, as well as other events in the venues to attract people. This will be complemented by excursions, education events, and activities organised by the branch. All will be advertised under one banner, using as many channels of advertising as possible to ensure as many people as possible get up, go out, and enjoy time in our many, varied, and wonderful venues.

The aims of the celebration are several:

- To increase business for our pubs, clubs, and brewers
- To campaign for real ale, real cider, and pubs and clubs
- To campaign for brewers in our branch area (and nearby)
- To provide opportunities for our communities to gather, eat, drink, and make merry
- To provide opportunities for our brewers and publicans to network and socialise.

## **What will make it a success?**

In a word, participation. We need all of our pubs and clubs to join in, our brewers to back the event, and most crucially, people to go out and enjoy themselves. We also hope to have support from the Durham County Council, our MPs, and other civic organisations. We want this celebration to be just that; we have all lost many things in the last 16 months, and no one event or happening can make up for that, but a branch-wide celebration event can be one small piece of the recovery for us all.

Watch out on branch emails for more information and for opportunities to join in, as a drinker, a publican, a brewer, or as a volunteer.

*Steven Spencer, CAMRA Durham Secretary*

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

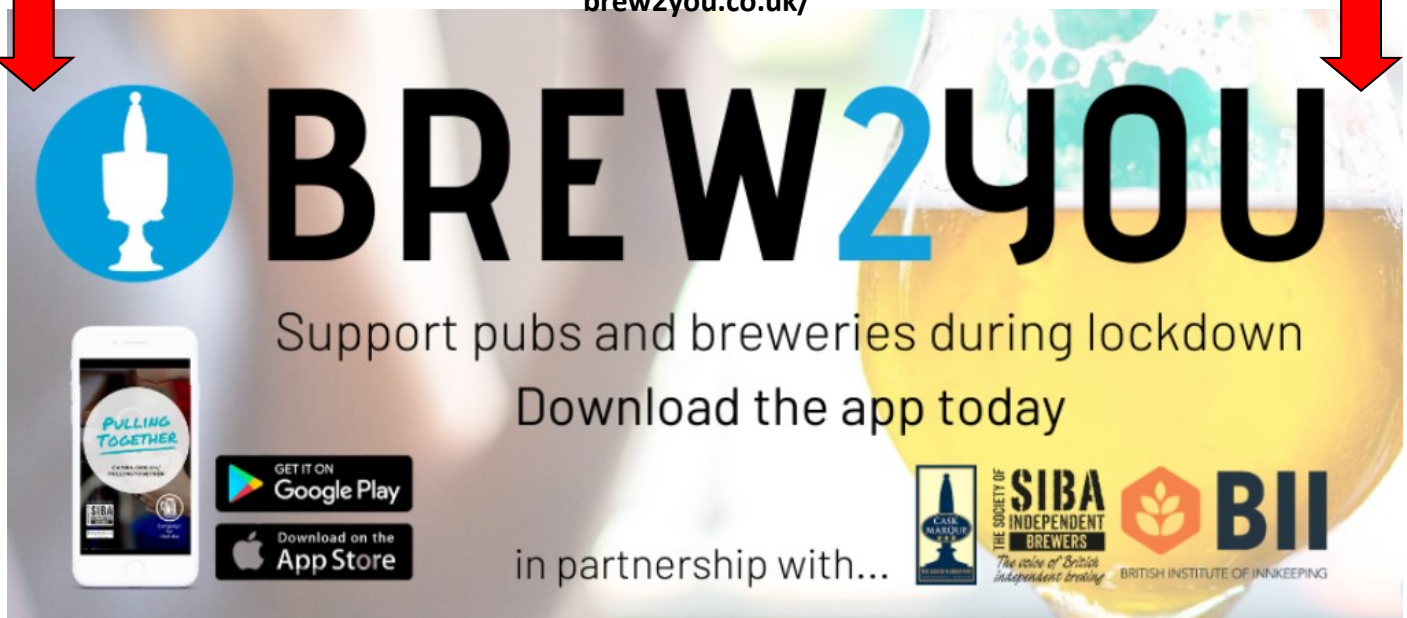


If Peter Crouch can do Podcasts, so can CAMRA! <https://camra.org.uk/podcast/>



CAMRA can help you find and order beer and cider to be delivered to your door  
[brew2you.co.uk/](https://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](http://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](http://www.camra.org.uk/benefits)

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

[join.camra.org.uk](http://join.camra.org.uk)





# How safe are pubs and clubs? A personal perspective

Since April 12<sup>th</sup> 2021, it has been possible to meet with friends, strangers and (sadly for some) family outdoors in public spaces, including our pubs and clubs. Since May the 17<sup>th</sup> it has been possible to do the same indoors, albeit with limitations and mitigations in place. Some of us, like me, were straight to the pub on the 12<sup>th</sup> and indoors as soon as it was legal. When heading indoors, I, like many, do my own mini-risk assessment, followed by a 'would it be fun?' assessment.

My risk assessment is based on being a keen student of the ins and outs of this pandemic. I have a science background, a deep interest in politics and, of course, an interest in pubs. Due to this, I have read many articles, listened to countless hours of radio, and generally tried to find the 'truth' in relation to what risk, if any, our pubs and clubs (and by extension, other hospitality venues) pose. So, what does the evidence say? (Note, due to the sheer number of sources this is derived from over time, I won't provide references).

The evidence can be divided into five categories. Are pubs and clubs a risk to people who enter them or work there?

## 1. People

In the early part of the pandemic, the main risk of negative health outcomes was to older people, and those with clinical vulnerabilities. This meant that, wisely, even before lockdown, many had stopped going to public places. Now, with many older and vulnerable people fully vaccinated, the risk of infection and negative health outcomes for these groups are lessened. For younger people, the main risk was of long Covid, but again, with high levels of vaccination, and those over 18 able to access jabs in most areas, the risk of negative health outcomes is reducing from the already low risk pre-vaccination.

**Conclusion: As it stands, in June 2021, unless you are in an area of low vaccination rates or high rates of infection, the risks from people in pubs and clubs is low.**

## 2. Ventilation

SARS Covid-19 is spread mainly by very close physical contact and aerosols (particles in the air). When we breath, cough, sing, sneeze, urinate, defecate, or vomit, we produce aerosols that vary in size. Everybody does this, and the only way to prevent this is to have a fully isolating PPE outfit (think "forensic suit"). Clearly, this is not practical at the local, so mitigation measures are in place. The most obvious is to be outdoors, meaning any aerosols produced are quickly carried away. If indoors, mechanical ventilation or having windows open. If you cannot feel a draft, it is likely your space is not well ventilated. This is most important in smaller rooms, where a build up of aerosols happens more quickly, and will be more extreme as more people remain in the space.

**Conclusion: This is perhaps the most important aspect of providing an environment that is safe, despite Covid-19 being present in the population. All available evidence shows that risk of transmission is very low outside, and much lower in indoor spaces that are well ventilated and have lower levels of occupancy. In spaces that have high occupancy rates, and that have poor ventilation, the risk of transmission is higher.**

## 3. Surfaces

Larger droplets that are produced as we all speak, breath, sneeze, and cough land comparatively close to the source. So, for an average pub table, if a person has been sat there, there will be droplets of saliva and potentially snot on the table, and anything transferred from the hands of previous occupants. Similarly, we all touch our faces many times per hour and thus our hands can have droplets of saliva and snot on them. If surfaces are then touched, this can act as a place of transmission. There is a lot of debate about how long Covid-19 can remain viable on a surface, but it is at least hours for most surfaces, and possibly days for others. Toilets are a key site for transmission by surface contact. The mitigation is to clean surfaces regularly with disinfectant and for people to wash their hands, particularly after sneezing and using the toilet, and to use hand sanitiser regularly.

**Conclusion: surface transfer is not the main cause of transmission, but it is a significant one. Our saliva, tears, snot, urine (to a small extent) and faeces (48% of those infected) can contain Covid-19 in infected people. If pubs and clubs clean regularly and the clientele comply with washing hands and using hand sanitiser, the risk of transmission is low.**

#### 4. Proximity

The evidence on proximity is pretty clear. If a person is infected with SARS Covid-19, the longer you spend with them and the closer you are to them and how well ventilated the space is all determine how likely you are to be infected. At 2 metres you are 10 times less likely to be infected than at 1m. When in a public space, if you don't know the people around you, not being too close is the best idea. This is why we still have distancing in indoor spaces, with fewer tables allowing for more separation. It is also the justification for limiting movement, to prevent logjams in what can be small, poorly ventilated areas of venues. If you are sat next to somebody that you don't know, that is less risky than being opposite because you avoid droplets, but in a poorly ventilated space, it will not save you from aerosols. Outdoors, even a space of 50cm (1foot 8 inches in old money) provides substantial protection.

**Conclusion: Whilst there is still community transmission, enabling people to spread out and stopping bunching of people, such as standing in a crowd indoors to watch football, make sense. The amount of risk that proximity represents depends on what the rate of community infection there is at the time, how many in the space have been vaccinated, and how well ventilated the space is.**

#### 5. The statistics

This is the most difficult area to explore because there are not many official statistics or scientific studies. In short, nobody has done a study that set up a pub as a site of possible infection and then measured what happens. What the evidence does show is that using pubs and clubs is much less risky than visiting friends and family indoors and no more risky than being in a gym. Staff were, in some studies, found to be at higher risk than customers, but this could be due to the age profile of the staff (how active younger people are, for example).

**Conclusion: Pubs and clubs are less risky than many venues and activities and particularly with mitigations in place, like lower capacities, mask wearing, and regular cleaning. The overall risk of infection is determined by how much Covid there is in the community and also, as of now, how many people are vaccinated.**

A final thought. Pubs and clubs have been unfairly treated during the pandemic, being closed when other statistically riskier environments, like shops, have remained open. You might expect a CAMRA secretary to say that they are universally safe and 'get yourself in there for a good time', but no, that would be irre-

sponsible and would not follow the evidence. I would not enter a small, poorly ventilated bar full of twenty-somethings who are shouting, for example. The presence of many active, probably unvaccinated and aerosol-producing people, at a time when community infection still exists, would present a risk of infection to me as someone who has only just had a second jab two days ago.

But a well-ventilated, clean, pub or club that is ensuring distancing is possible and that sensible mitigations, like mask-wearing and using hand sanitiser are being encouraged, yes, that to me is safe. It is even safer when most or all inside are vaccinated. We are towards the end of this pandemic period in the UK, hopefully, but it is up to us all to decide what our level of tolerable risk is and to act accordingly. Pubs and clubs that are well run and careful are safe - I have certainly enjoyed being back in them and the social contact they have provided has gone a long way to helping me feel a happier and healthier person. My only plea is to follow the evidence. We know pubs and clubs are suffering because of a lack of proper financial support and continued mitigations, but the former is the real issue, not the latter. I want to be back, stood at a bar, ordering a drink and talking to a stranger, but only when it makes sense to do so from a public health viewpoint. Until then, I will go out and be grateful for places being open.

Steven Spencer

CAMRA Durham Secretary

**Meanwhile, just over the Pennines, Marston's** appear to be getting a bit big for their boots. After recent revelations that the Jennings cask beer offering is now down to three ales, people were understandably upset. With only Cumberland, Atomic Theory, and Night Vision on offer, there's no more Snecklifter, Best Bitter, or Golden Host. None were very common on our side of the hills, while the ubiquitous Cumberland was and is a regular in Marston's pubs in CAMRA Durham's area. However, the three were sought out by visitors, including many from Durham, when visiting the Lakes.

As if this wasn't bad enough, they're now to replace the tenants in five Keswick pubs with managers, in some cases at very short notice. What was once a seemingly pleasant regional/family brewery has grown to be the modern day equivalent of one of the dreaded Big Six that was one of the main reasons for the formation of CAMRA half a century ago. Back then it was the Big Six's seeming intention to drown us in fizzy beer at the expense of cask conditioned. Now, Marston's, and some other Pubcos, seem intent on nothing but profit at all costs.

The Oddfellows, the Bank Tavern, the George Hotel, The Twa Dogs, and the Royal Oak in Braithwaite will not have the leases renewed, and will become managed houses, with the tenants of the Oddfellows, who've been in the pub for 39 years, being forced out after recently spending their life savings into a refurbishment.

Obviously, there is a precedent being set here, and it's one that we should look out for in our area. Here's what the folks at the Oddfellows had to say:

*After 39 years in the Oddfellows, Marston's have taken the decision not to renew any of the Jennings Pubs leases.*

*They intend to walk in and operate the business our family has built up over two generations the day after they turf us out.*

*The Oddfellows Arms*

*The George Hotel*

*The Bank Tavern*

*The Twa Dogs*

*The Royal Oak Braithwaite*

*Will all become managed houses.*

*This comes at the worst time possible, Marstons convinced us to do a full refurbishment before the new lease was signed by telling us it would be renewed and they would compliment the refurbishment by undertaking the renewal of the exterior of the pub as a time-sensitive incentive.*

*So we poured our life savings into our home and business, with the expectation of having time to make it back.*

*They are yet to pick up a paintbrush, in short, they lied to us.*

*In a meeting with John Green from Marston's (which I recorded), he said that the employee that presented the offer to us wasn't aware of the conversations going on at the time to take over the five pubs as managed houses, even though John Green was the person who would ultimately sign of permission to do any work.*

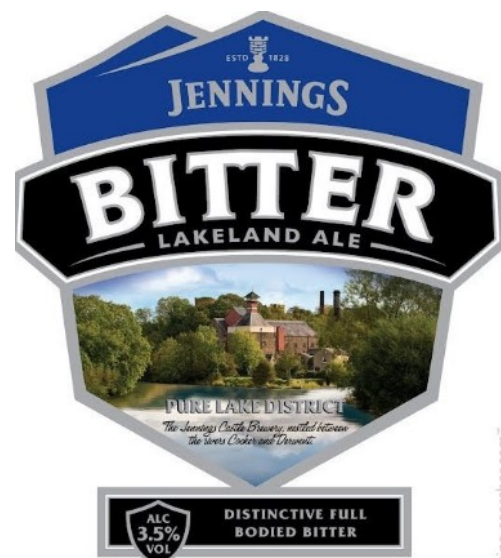
*We opened for one week after our work was completed only to be put into Lockdown.*

*We aim to fight this.*

*Please sign the petition to either change the Law or reverse the decision and share it far and wide.*

<http://chnq.it/L5dZdhJMDw>

<http://chnq.it/qMYDJyWndj>





# Short picture quiz. Where am I? *Answers on back page*



1



2



3



4



5



6

# The Keith Thomas talk on ancient brews - 12<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Keith Thomas, of Sunderland's Brewlab and Darwin brewery, joined our May meeting, to which we invited the whole NE Region. A good turnout heard a fascinating insight into Keith's work to understand 'ancient' brews so that we can recreate them and also contribute to modern brewing practices.

Keith took us through the golden age of brewing, from 1850 to 1914, in which advances in the brewing process, particularly the involvement of laboratory-based science, resulted in beers that were purer, and much more dependable. Much of this work stemmed from the discoveries of Pasteur, though Keith's analysis of older beers has revealed bacteria from skin and horses!

There was also the use of better ingredients, including barley that had low Nitrogen, and hops with appropriate bitterness, that resulted in beers that could be replicated. Perhaps most importantly there was microbiology to refine and purify yeast strains. Hanson, in Denmark, was the first to isolate a pure yeast strain for Carlsberg and a method of reproducing it, which they sold around the continent. The resulting beer had stable and longer lasting characteristics, and considerably less contamination.

Keith showed us some micrographs from circa 1900 that show different types of yeast in the beers of the time, and in places included lactic acid and a variety of bacteria. At this time British brewers tried the pure yeast strains, but they did not like how it affected the flavour of 'stock ales'. It was at this time that the government started a national culture collection of yeasts, including a preserved sample from 1914 that is in use today.

All of this brought us to the subject of beer recreations. How do you do it? Do we simply need the old strains of barley? The right hops? The yeast strains of the time? Or the old equipment? In each case it is arguable as to what is needed. For example, wooden brewing apparatus and barrels were a source of microorganisms, but you don't have to do this to achieve the flavours. What you really need is recipes! These can be either written records, or those created by analysing rare samples of ales that have survived.

An example is Darwin Brewery's Flag Porter. By chance there was a ship that had sunk near Littlehampton in 1825. A technician who worked with Keith and dived on shipwrecks in his spare time told Keith about this shipwreck. The technician brought some bottled beer back from wreck and it was tasted by a group of volunteers. It had gone stale, but it was interesting. Microscopy was used to identify the yeast, which was isolated - and when placed in the right conditions, it grew. This was the basis of recreating the porter. But, is it the same as an 'old' porter? Well, a First World War veteran thinks so. A man at a care home wanted good porter, Flag porter was taken to him, he said it was more pure than the draught he had been used to as a Tommy recovering from a gas attack, but otherwise was a good match.

Sadly, many recipes disappeared when brewers closed, but in some cases, they have survived. Keith showed us some recipes, which included Smith and Warmington hops. Chilean malts were also used! Recipes were detailed and include revenues and expected yields. Is this of value today? At Sunderland university there are trials of heritage barley. You need high starch and low protein for brewing, as this stops Nitrogen production. Chevalier barley was grown 100 years ago, but was susceptible to mildew due to it being a short variety, though it is resistant to blight. Chevalier is now used in brewing the historic beers.

What were people drinking 100 years ago? Mainly bitters, milds, browns, stouts, porters, and barley wine. 1903 beers had characteristics that are different to those found today. In general, the higher the ABV, the more bitter the beers were. This may have been deliberate to make it less drinkable. For example, an 8% ale would have been six times as bitter as a modern best bitter. An example was given of Hammond's brewery, which could produce 170 barrels at top; enough to satisfy one town. A full recipe book includes details about the hops used, the fermentation, the barley, and even which farm the barley and hops came from! Brews ranged from 4.1% to 9.5% ABV and 35 to 119 on a scale of bitterness -and, as over 40 tends to irritate people, 119 would be interesting! A final point on old beers is that they contained some nasty surprises, including lead, arsenic, and strychnine. Why? Probably because malting in late 19<sup>th</sup> century often made use of poor-quality coal, which contaminated the malts.

What next? Genome sequencing is being completed for all types of yeast and could include finding new and interesting varieties for use in ales. In the past wine yeasts were used, so why not again? Genome sequencing and flavour matching could be especially fruitful. Continued work on analysing old ale samples could lead to new flavours and varieties of brewing barley being developed that are resistant to blight.

The talk could be summed up by one attendee who said that they had never considered beer to be quite so complicated, We could have asked Keith many more questions, but as with all good things, the talk came to an end. You can sample Keith's brews at Darwin Brewery, mail order is available.

Steven Spencer

CAMRA Durham Secretary

*Images courtesy Keith Thomas. The full report can be seen online, and the BBC's news item, by following the links below*

**Preliminary microbiological and chemical analysis of two historical stock ales from Victorian and Edwardian brewing - Thomas - 2021 - Journal of the Institute of Brewing - Wiley Online Library**

**The treasure inside beer lost in a shipwreck 120 years ago - BBC Future**



## Wallachia Ale: McEwan's Stout, 1895

Chemical analysis of basic beer characteristics of alcohol by volume, specific gravity, colour, pH and bitterness are reported in Table 1 for the three Wallachia samples. As the analysis of bottle W2 showed very different concentrations of the parameters, chloride levels were determined to test for possible dilution by seawater ingress. This indicated levels of 0.3 g/L for the beer in bottle W1 and 7.5 g/L for the beer in bottle W2.

**Table 1.** Chemical analysis of beer from Wallachia bottles.

| Sample | ABV (%) | Original gravity | Present gravity | pH   | Acidity % (v/v) as lactic acid | Colour EBC | Bitterness EBU |
|--------|---------|------------------|-----------------|------|--------------------------------|------------|----------------|
| W1     | 7.5     | 1.0648           | 1.0075          | 3.63 | 0.576                          | 299        | 18             |
| W2     | 3.2     | 1.0421           | 1.0165          | 3.2  | 0.450                          | 91         | 2.45           |
| W3     | 7.5     | 1.0636           | 1.0068          | 3.28 | 0.630                          | 209        | 25.20          |



# The News

## *The Good News*

- Black Bull at Wolsingham has reopened, and is serving real ale, with one of the first offerings being Farmers Blonde from Bradfield Brewery, near Sheffield.
- The nearby Black Lion will be reopening very soon after having major refurbishment of the gents.
- The Bishops Lodge at Toronto, near Bishop Auckland, has opened. Formerly the Toronto Lodge, it is currently offering one real ale (Wainwrights when I visited) and plans to increase to two, one light and one dark, and possibly a third, which should be a house ale. It's part of the small group of pubs that includes the Travellers Rest at Witton Gilbert.
- The Three Tuns in Shildon has installed three handpumps which dispense all local ales, which have so far included ales from Firebrick of Blaydon, Maxim, and Consett Aleworks.
- Across town, the Railway Institute (known locally as the Stute) has installed a pump and is selling Locomotion No.1, brewed a few yards away by George Samuel—a handy combination of local history and local ale.
- Real Ale is now available at the Travellers Rest at Broomside, near Belmont.
- Wadworth 6X is available at the Blacksmiths, Low Pittington.
- Demand for real ale has been so good at the Smokehouse on Railway Street in Bishop Auckland that they've built a new cellar to accommodate the casks.
- The City (or City Hotel) on New Elvet in Durham has reopened with real ale on offer, and a CAM-RA discount. Of 20p a pint. They serve Marston's Pedigree, and a second from the Marston's range, which has so far included Robinson's Dizzy Blonde.
- The Lambton Arms in Chester le Street has reopened after refurbishment, and has real ale on sale.
- The Red Lion at Ouston, north of Chester le Street, now has real ale which has included Jennings Cumberland Ale.
- The 1815 bar at the Royal County Hotel in Durham has been renamed the Cast Iron Terrace Bar
- The Tap & Spile at Framwellgate Moor has reopened under new management, and offers three real ales
- The Fighting Cocks in Durham is due to reopen in July after a refurbishment
- The Big Jug in Durham now seems to be open on Fridays and Saturday, but without real ale



*The Lambton Arms, Chester le Street*



*The Red Lion, Ouston*



## ***The Not So Good News***

*These don't seem to have made it through the lockdown - at least they don't seem to be trading yet, unless anyone knows better ...please let us know of any corrections.*

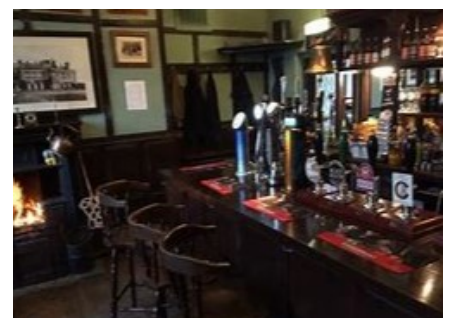
- Burton House, Burnopfield
  - Smiths Arms, Castle Dene
  - Woodman, Durham City
  - Travellers Rest, Crook
  - Seven Stars, Shincliffe
  - Half Moon, Kirk Merrington
  - Queens Head, Chester-le-Street
  - Royal, Stanley
  - Crown & Thistle, Catchgate
  - Eldon Arms, Ferryhill Station
  - Crossroads, Sacriston
  - Post Boy, Ferryhill—becoming an Italian restaurant, The Olive Garden
  - Railway, Spennymoor
  - Bridge, Chester-le-Street
  - Red Lion, Chester-le-Street
  - Court Inn, Durham City
  - Rookhope Inn, Rookhope
  - Black Bull, Frosterley
  - The Station, Langley Moor is displaying a *To Let* sign, but we're unsure if it's trading
- 
- ...and no more real ale at the Belmont, in Belmont (formerly the Sportsman)

## ***A little more detail on the Smith Arms situation...***

The planning application to convert the Smiths Arms in Castle Dene near Chester-le-Street to a residential dwelling was turned down by Durham County Council after a number of objections to the proposal, and it has also been listed by the Council as an Asset of Community Value. An appeal has been made against this decisions.

The property has now been put up for sale again as a pub. The local ***Save the Smiths*** group continue to look into the possibilities of community ownership should a new owner not be found, and has secured some initial fully-funded support from the Plunkett Foundation - a national charity who have supported many local communities to save valued amenities (including many pubs!) through community ownership.

The group has met with the existing owner and further information is available on their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/savethesmiths>



# Cider in County Durham

The North East's newest cider producer will be launching later this year. Set up by branch members Su-sannah & Chris Mansfield (of The Station House and Fram Ferment), in conjunction with their Fram Front Street. neighbours Sarah & James Brenan (of The Weigh to Shop), Elvet Cider Company aims to produce an annual vintage using local apples which would otherwise not get used. With the Brenans' passion for waste reduction and the Mansfields' passion for fermented beverages making the ideal partnership, it is hoped that this year's production will be ready to drink in Spring/Summer 2022. A surplus apple appeal will be launched in due course, but anyone who expects a glut this year from their garden trees would be very welcome to get in touch via [elvet.cider@gmail.com](mailto:elvet.cider@gmail.com).

On a related note, CAMRA's Real Ale, Cider and Perry Campaigns Committee has just launched a new definition of Real Cider & Perry:

CAMRA defines real Cider or Perry as being fermented from the whole juice of fresh pressed apples or pears, without the use of concentrated or chaptalised\* juices.

In the UK the majority of cider drunk contains as little as 35% apple juice (the legal minimum), plenty of water, as well as all manner of artificial sweeteners, flavours and colourings. It is often also made from concentrate imported from abroad, which given how well apples grow here is scandalous. 'Fruit ciders' are classed as made wine for duty purposes, and don't have a minimum apple juice content!

Even the method of dispense doesn't tell the whole story - unlike with real ale, where a hand pull almost guarantees real ale, cider dispensed from a bag in box via a hand pull is often not the real thing, and can still be a low juice content product made with lots of water and additives. With its new definition CAMRA aims to champion full juice, low intervention cider & perry made with fresh juice, regardless of dispense method, i.e. kegs and bottles are just as capable as a bag in box of containing real cider.

A full set of pointers to best practice can be found on the CAMRA website: [https://camra.org.uk/campaign\\_resources/camras-definition-of-real-cider-and-perry/](https://camra.org.uk/campaign_resources/camras-definition-of-real-cider-and-perry/)

Updates on which ciders are being sold in pubs across the branch (especially outside of Durham City) would be very welcome if you are out and about. Please send any info you have to [ap-ple@camradurham.org.uk](mailto:ap-ple@camradurham.org.uk). You can also use this address if you have any queries about the new definition or the ciders you have been drinking.

\* Chaptalisation is the process of adding sugar to increase the alcohol content for storage before more water is added to bring the abv back down to a much lower, consistent level.

Wassail!



# Tuesday June 15th—Beer Britain Day!

We always like to celebrate Beer Britain Day, which falls on the June 15<sup>th</sup> every year - something about the Magna Carta granting rights to the common man (us peasants), and of course Article 35 of that great charter.

We decided to try out a few nearby pubs which don't get visited so often, partly in preparation for some more structured surveying for our Pubs Officer, but mainly just to get out and about.

I might like Beer Britain Day, but Wendy likes value for money from her bus ticket - and/or to make me walk, which makes for an interesting day out.

We got the Lanchester to Stanley (Go Ahead Northern) bus, changed at Stanley, and took the Newcastle bus, which gets us to the edge of the Green Zone for the bus ticket. We got off at Causey Arch, and wandered past the Causey Arch Inn which had a pleasant buzz of just-before lunchtime early diners sitting outside in the warm sunshine.

Just behind the Causey Arch Inn is the Beamish Hotel, but Wendy knows where we're walking to. Down the lane, not too far, to the Black Horse at Red Row. This is a much changed pub, developed several times over the years, and currently owned by businessman Robert (Bob) Fountain who repairs Aston Martin cars in his adjacent workshops.



The Black Horse had quite a few people sitting outside in the courtyard area, with just about everyone was eating. The food here is quite good, maybe a bit more pricey but usually worth it. There was an easy 'Track and Trace' for us (paper), so we chose a sunny table and asked what real ales are available when asked by the waitress what we would like to drink. "No real ales I'm afraid" she replied.

There followed a bit of an unproductive effort trying to find out the real ale situation. Some staff thought there had been real ale and tried to remember the name(s) but weren't sure when the real ale had been available (yesterday or last week?). Obviously if there's no real ale available on the visit it wasn't a disaster but no one seemed to have any knowledge (or interest) so we couldn't find out if it was just a 'blip'. I managed to wander inside but just saw 4-handpulls without any pump clips (not even turned around). We gave up asking, fizzy Strongbow cider for me (£4 pint), Fosters lager (half-pint) £1.80 for Wendy.

The food - lunchtime special sandwiches were quite nice, one each. We left, £25.70 lighter in pocket.

Wendy had the Ordnance Survey map and we followed (sort of) a footpath across some fields and through some hedges. I'm not sure I saw many footpath signs but we didn't seem to backtrack too much, which is always a good sign. Eventually, we came out at the back of Beamish Hall and Stables, another



posh-ish venue, known as a wedding venue although perhaps not as busy as they would like at the moment.



Another lovely sunny courtyard to sit in, also quite busy with people enjoying themselves. More simple paperwork for Track and Trace and while Wendy was completing this I had a quick dodge inside to look at the beers. A better arrangement, Timothy Taylors Landlord (whoever is managing to distribute this is doing a cracking job, it pops up more than most), a couple from Three Brothers Brewing (I didn't know this brewery but Googled it back home), and Allendale Wagtail Bitter. We both like Allendale beers, and Wagtail Bitter is just the job.....but not this time. It was £3.60 a pint, reasonable, good deep brown colour, smelt/tasted OK but cloudy, very cloudy. We waited for the pints to clear but it was cloudy to the end. What to do? Suppose we'll have another, just the same again.

I tried to find out about the microbrewery here. It used to have a good reputation, the brewer made a good range of beer and was also very careful to select his guest ales. Often 8+ plus handpulls on the bar, beer festivals etc. It's gone very quiet since he recently 'jumped ship' and moved to the nearby South Causey Inn and set up a microbrewery there (which we haven't tried yet).

Whilst the staff at Beamish Hall and Stables were very friendly I think most of them have the same lack of interest in real ale as at the pub (Black Horse) we had just left. No information was forthcoming about the microbrewery at Beamish Hall and Stables, other than "it's closed", and "no plans to open it". We never managed to speak to anyone who dealt with the real ale there, so we voted with our feet-again.

It's uphill from the Beamish Hall and Stables, and it's maybe even hotter, late afternoon now. Wendy was striding ahead, me moaning, as we walk past Beamish Museum Home Farm, where someone was on duty (to make sure no sneak-ins) but there were no visitors in sight. We were walking through 'Bobby Shafto' territory here, where some of the houses and cottages have names linking to the famous Member of Parliament although perhaps Whitworth Hall (near Spennymoor) is better known as their family home.



We reached the Shepherd and Shepherdess, another pub that's been extensively altered over the years. The outside seating is not so attractive here, with wooden picnic benches arranged around the outer extremities of the car park. But, under the circumstances, no complaints, it's nice to sit outside. "Just the one handpull I'm afraid" the waitress tells us, 61 Deep. I know this as a Marston's beer, pale, floral and fragrant, but Hobson's choice



so two pints please (Hobson = a medieval horse dealer who appeared to have a large number of horses to choose from but actually only had one, but you already knew this)

The beer arrived, £4.50 a pint. It was cloudy, very cloudy. As cloudy as the Wagtail Bitter at Beamish Hall and Stables, and, warm. Not quite as warm as warm water from the tap but still it was warm. We both agreed, you could feel the glass was too warm before taking the first sip.

What did we do? Ask for our money back? Swap for another beer? (No other real ale) We did what we usually do-didn't complain just drank our most expensive pint of the day.



We whiled away the time watching the owner trying to encourage the young (very young) waiters/waitresses to keep moving around the car park clearing glasses/food plates and checking anyone wanting to place an order. It was an uphill battle for her and the customers either went into the pub themselves, or drove away. It's not very easy trying to manage a pub at the moment.

The Go Ahead bus stop is just over the road, so there was no grumbling from me as we took a bus into Stanley and pondered where to go next. The bus service back to Lanchester during the week on tan evening is a bit lacking, so we decided just one more venue, but somewhere we've never been before.

The Garage Bar and Grill at Burnhope. Cut off for maybe 8 months of the year at wintertime (just joking), but Burnhope does seem like a forlorn place. Once blighted by Durham County Council with Category D status (one of the most stupid schemes ever), Burnhope has never really recovered.

Probably at one time it had plenty of pubs but these dwindled away to none. Until, that is, some budding entrepreneur re-opened the long closed Burnhope Ivy Leaf Club & Institute Ltd (CIU affiliated, of course) and re-named it "The Garage Bar and Grill". Living just a few miles away we often see advertising for the place but have never been (no real ale).

I cannot locate The Garage Bar and Grill on WhatPub nor even the earlier Burnhope Ivy Leaf Club & Institute Ltd workingmen's club., so it was good to actually find out what the place had to offer. It just goes to show what can be missed in parts of the county that we don't get to visit very often, and emphasizes the importance of passing on any information you might find to our Pubs Officer, Dave Thornton. You can contact him at [pubsofficer@camradurham.org.uk](mailto:pubsofficer@camradurham.org.uk)

The original theme of The Garage Bar and Grill was to host club meeting events, for bikers (motorcyclists) or car club drivers etc. The inside has some modern motoring memorabilia in the form of seats/tables and wall signs etc. I'm not sure how successful this has been long term but as it's almost the last place in Burnhope for a beer the locals have supported it. There is a basic menu for pub grub, but it's enough and not expensive. There are a large range of lagers/ciders available, all 'fizzy' though, no real ale, there never has been.

When we went in the Hungary-Portugal match was coming to its conclusion, with television screens inside and also outside, and there were plenty of locals watching the football. The atmosphere was very friendly, and despite having never been in before everyone said hello and spoke to us. The bar staff were just as friendly. It was still sunny so we sat outside on the decking where there was also another television to

watch the football, pints of Magners cider at £3 per pint - the cheapest all day. The bar staff chatted each time we got served, and clearly they were



proud of the place. They told us what events happened on different evenings (Thursday evenings are the busiest, as it's bike night)

and answered any questions we had. Wendy said it was the friendliest place she had been in all day and would easily visit again....but no real ale.



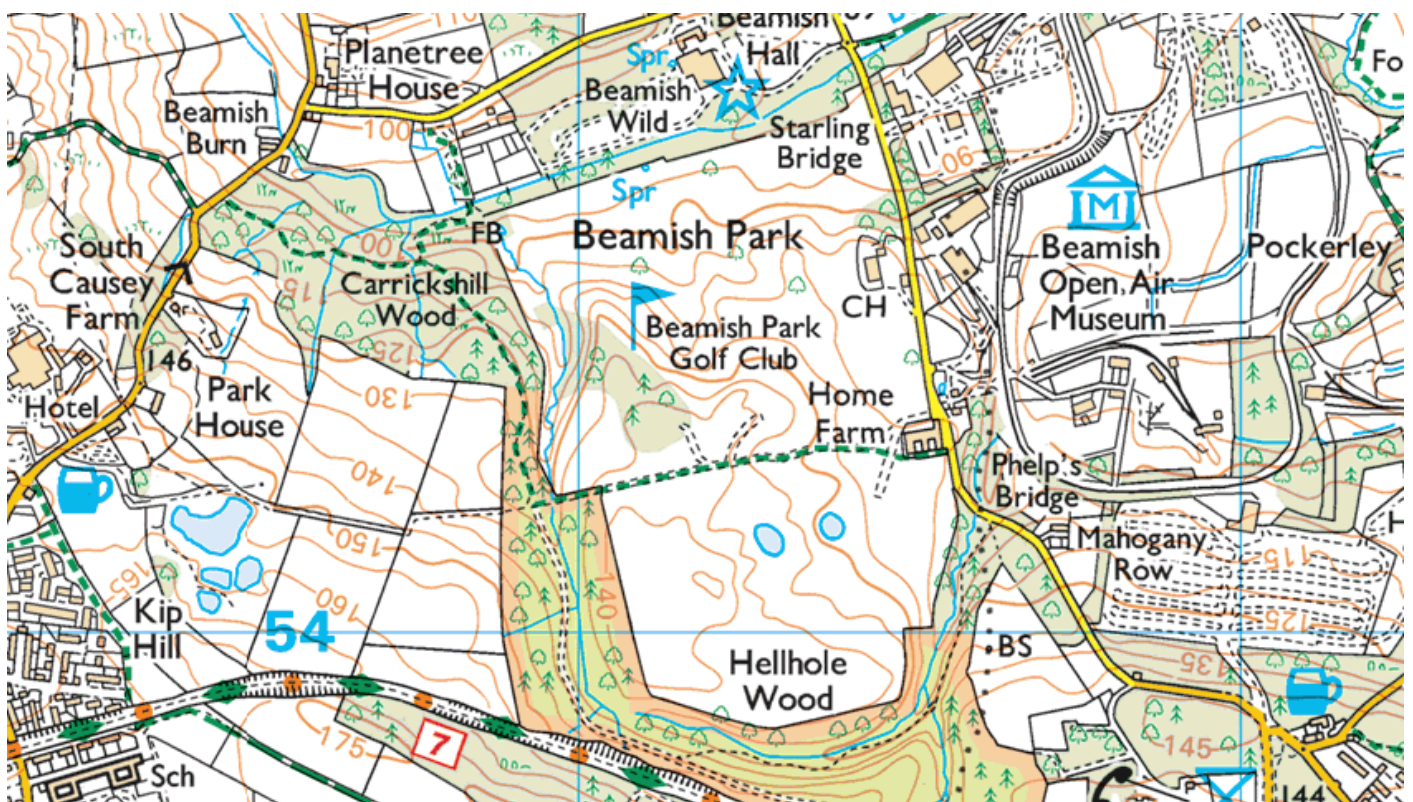
We got back to Lanchester and made it home just in time to watch the France-Germany game, which wasn't the greatest advert for international football. Thankfully the quality has improved since then!



*Oops, wrong bus*

*Cheers,*

*Chris and Wendy*





## Picture quiz answers

1) Dun Cow, Witton le Wear 2) Blue Bell, St John's Chapel 3) Golden Lion, St John's Chapel 4) Hare & Hounds, Westgate 5) Joiners Arms, Hunwick 6) Victoria, Witton le Wear

### *Meanwhile in Bishop Auckland...*

The first ales have rolled off the line at the Bishop Auckland Brewing Company, so look out for **Auckland Gold** and **Betty's** on the pumps at the Sportsman (formerly the Merry Monk) in the Market Place in the very near future.



## ***Thank you!***

To all our brewers, pubs, clubs, 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 being the hub of your community. It's what pubs and clubs are all about.

Cheers!