

# Danny Bevvvy

Tyneside & Northumberland CAMRA

FREE

Issue 268 • Summer 2026



Local Pub and  
Brewery News

Political Lobbying  
- We Meet MPs

Summer Ale Trail

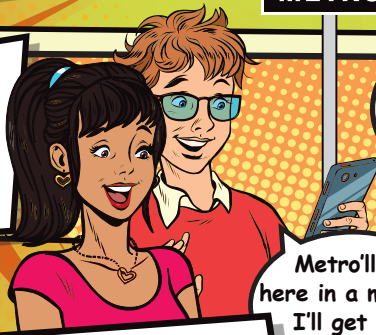
INTRODUCING

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In this packed edition of the *Canny Bevvy* we review the annual Newcastle Beer and Cider Festival, which was once again a great success. We celebrate pubs and breweries in our branch area, and summarise national issues that the Campaign is actively working on.

At the Newcastle Beer and Cider Festival we invited every MP in the Tyneside and Northumberland branch area to a beer tasting and reception. Some MP's unfortunately were unable to attend and sent apologies. However, we had a successful meeting with local MP's who were not only interested in learning more about the Campaign for Real Ale, but have also followed-up by contacting relevant ministers.

CAMRA has a great social calendar, for a number of our members the regular CAMRambles are a great way to combine a country walk with discovering great pubs. In this issue the CAMRamble explores Wylam and Ovingham.

If you have any pub or brewery news, please let us know. The news section is compiled by branch Chair Paul Hillhouse.

*Canny Bevvy* Production Team

Front cover: *White Swan* - David Haddon

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# Branch Diary

**10 June**

Branch meeting - Mosaic Tap, 7.30pm

**4 July**

Cider Pub of the Year presentation

- Curfew Berwick

**13 July**

Branch meeting - Station East, 7.30pm

**8 August**

CAMRAmble

## Beer Festivals

**18 - 20 June**

Tynedale Beer and Cider Festival, Corbridge

**4 - 5 July**

Horncliffe Beer and Music Festival

**18 - 19 July**

Ryton RFC Beer Festival

**14 - 15 August**

Berwick Food and Beer Festival

**15 - 16 August**

Ale by Rail Beer Festival (Stephenson Railway)

**28 - 30 August**

Whitley Bay Beer Festival

**End of August (Dates TBC)**

Durham Beer Festival

All events are subject to change.

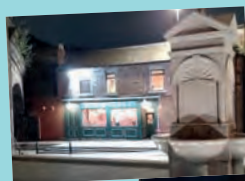
Please check the *Canny Bevvy* website

[www.cannybevvy.co.uk](http://www.cannybevvy.co.uk) for up to date details.

## Enter our Cover Shot Competition!

We are looking for budding photographers to submit their photographs for our front cover, featuring pubs or the brewing industry of Tyneside and Northumberland.

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First and Last winning SIBA award

**SIBA's** (Society of Independent Brewers and Associates) National Indie Beer Awards have seen numerous awards for north east breweries, including **Almasty** and **First and Last**, who won overall champion awards, with **First and Last Spruce Saison** winning gold in the bottle/can continental style category and silver overall in the can/bottle category. Brewed using hand-picked spruce tips foraged from the local Northumberland landscape, *Spruce* is part of the brewery's Made in Northumberland series, and the award comes as the brewery celebrates its tenth birthday.

Meanwhile, **Almasty's Believe IPA** was awarded the best independent cask beer. The six per cent New England style IPA previously won gold at the North East Regional Indie Beer Awards to make it through to the final judging in Liverpool making it **SIBA's** best cask beer in the country!

The **Almasty** taproom reopens for the summer on 22 May located next door to **Anarchy Brew Co.** near Walkergate Metro the outdoor space will open at weekends and they hope to have local street food traders as part of the line up - check social media for full details.

**Whitbread PLC** has bowed to

shareholder activist pressure and sold £1.5 billion of Premier Inn properties as well as closing **Beefeater** and **Brewers Fayre** pubs that over the years had become incorporated into the hotels. Nearly two thousand locations will close affecting nearly three thousand eight hundred jobs or twelve per cent of the workforce with others offered new roles within the hotels.

**Beefeater** has been part of Britain's restaurant scene for over fifty years with **Brewers Fayre** not far behind.

Sites closing in the north east include **Beefeaters'** in Whitley Bay - North Tyneside, **Broomside Park** - Durham, **Morton Park** - Darlington and **The Talpore** - Stockton.

**Brewers Fayre** sites closing include **Royal Quays** - North Shields, **The Wessington** - Sunderland, **Old West Quay** - Hartlepool and **Tindale Crossing** - Bishop Auckland.

**The Mosaic Tap** has moved onto Pink Lane in Newcastle. The Micropub was previously located in the railway arches in Forth goods yard; however, with the area's redevelopment fast approaching, the pub has relocated to the former Prohibition bar on Pink Lane.

With a larger premises, the bar now has three cask ales, fourteen keg taps, and a still cider, and often rotates the line-up to keep things fresh. Tap takeovers and other beer-based events will regularly take place.

The building is boldly painted in blue and cream with a local artist adding extra artwork to the exterior.

There is an exciting expansion ahead for Newcastle's **Luckies** brewpub as they take over the **Flying Gang** site in Ponteland in June. Able to brew up to 24hl per week, production is increasing

# Pub and Brewery News

considerably. Keeping the **Luckies** site in Jesmond as a tap room and adding pizza ovens. As well as a new tap room at the Ponteland brewing site. Expect to start seeing plenty of **Luckies** beers across pubs in the north east.

Newcastle's **Brewdog** bar was not closed for long after the national closure and sale of the company on 2 March with the new owners Tilray brands quick to reopen the bar. The initial announcement of the **Brewdog** sale included the closure of 38 bars and the loss of 484 jobs around the UK. I would also like to highlight the assistance and new jobs quickly offered to those affected in the Newcastle bar by local bars. It was heartening to see support offered when people need it most.

**The Fog on the Tyne** reverted to its old name, **The Schooner**, at the end of March, with former landlord Paul Smith back and promising to restore the original vibe bit by bit. There has been a bit of a refresh to the pub and outdoor areas, and a new menu alongside the entertainment that made **The Schooner** popular, with a weekly pub quiz and live music throughout the week.

**The Blue Bell, Amble**, has reopened after a refurbishment costing over £250,000. Admiral Taverns hopes that the new look will cement the **Blue Bell** as a go-to community hub for residents. The new-look **Blue Bell** will host a schedule of regular entertainment, including live music, bingo nights, and quizzes. It also has a history of hosting charity events to support local good causes, a tradition that will continue in the refurbished function room and lounge.

Villagers in Northumberland have been given six months to save **The Crown Inn, Catton** as the landlords prepare for retirement.

The pub is listed as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) which means as it has been put on the market, the community has a chance to raise the funds and buy the pub to protect its future.

Recently, the English Devolution Bill was granted Royal Assent and passed into law in England. Part of this law allows for the compulsory purchase of community assets such as pubs. It may not take long for the first use of the new powers, as the Ulgham Community Benefit Society has already approached Northumberland Council to move forward with the compulsory purchase of **The Forge** pub in the village.

They had previously made a bid for the pub; however, the owners refused the offer, and the building still sits unused. The branch is offering any support we can as well as looking to learn how local councils will facilitate the bills use at a local level.

**Take a Seat** micropub has opened on Plessey Road in Blyth Harbour with three real ales and a range of other drinks and snacks.

**The Oldgate Tavern**, a new micropub in Morpeth has applied for a license, applicant Victoria Arnott is converting the cafe on Oldgate Street into a pub with ten cask and keg lines with a short term rental accommodation upstairs.

Stocksfield has a new pub, the **Tyne Valley Taproom** has opened in Stocksfield Hall Business Park promising curated world beers and stand out local brews on four handpulls and eight keg lines as well as live music and food vans on the weekends.

If you have any pub or brewery news to share with the branch then please contact [chairman@cannybevvy.co.uk](mailto:chairman@cannybevvy.co.uk)



*MPs Catherine McKinnell, Chi Onwurah, Mary Glindon and Emma Foody at Newcastle Beer Festival reception*

## By Mike Allaway (Branch Public Affairs Officer)

Since CAMRA's inception in the early 1970s, campaigns and lobbying on behalf of members, consumers generally, breweries and pubs have always been an important part of its activities. Something that, in the current climate of large multi-national brewing conglomerates dominating the UK brewing and pub scene, is perhaps more necessary than ever. Much of this activity takes place in the background and, unlike high profile events such as the annual publication of the *Good Beer Guide*, is not always obvious. I hope in this, and future articles, to highlight key campaigning issues nationally and local issues pertinent to the Tyneside and Northumberland branch area. Space will not permit coverage of everything.

However, if the articles whet your appetite and you want to find out more, please have a read of the comprehensive monthly 'Public Affairs Updates' published on the CAMRA Experience website.

### **MPs visit to Newcastle Beer Festival**

A huge thank you from the branch to those MPs who took time out of their busy schedules to visit the Newcastle Beer Festival.

The reception with MPs was well received. We spoke about how beer is made, with a few samples to showcase the ingredients and brewing process.

The main discussion was about support for independent breweries, including energy costs, the five international companies that dominate the market, point of sale, and giving the consumer the information they need to make an informed choice, the pubs code review, and asking for a guest beer option for leased pubs.

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# Campaigning

It was encouraging to learn that, following the meeting, both Chi Onwurah and Mary Glendon tabled written questions to the Secretary of State for Business and Trade covering issues raised during our discussions. Specifically, whether the Minister had considered the benefits of a guest beer agreement in England, the time frame for the Pubs Code review and the merits of extending the code to cover all leased pubs.

Given the success of this meeting, we hope to include something similar at next year's festival.

## Beer Origin and Strength

Do you know where your beer is produced? Do you know how strong it is? These seem like simple questions, don't they? However, CAMRA has become increasingly concerned about the trend for potentially misleading branding of beer. For example, a beer dear to the hearts of many Northeast drinkers, Newcastle Brown. Since first being brewed in Newcastle nearly 100 years ago it has, of late, journeyed far away from its city of origin. Following the closure of the **S&N Brewery** in the middle of Newcastle it first crossed the river to the **Federation Brewery** in Gateshead with production transferring again when that brewery closed. Currently production of this iconic beer mostly takes place in Manchester. So, Newcastle in name only then? Earlier this year the issue came into sharp focus with **Molson Coors'** proposals to close **Sharp's Brewery** in Cornwall and transfer production elsewhere. CAMRA has worked closely with North Cornwall MP Ben Maguire who has asked several parliamentary questions, both specifically in relation to the closure and more widely on beer provenance. Ben's questions

and the Government's response can be found on the aforementioned CAMRA 'Public Affairs Roundup'. Turning to beer strength, it is not always clear to drinkers how strong (or weak!) beer is. The law requiring pubs to ensure that ABV is indicated for beers, ciders wines and spirits is often not adhered to in practice.

## Changes to the Pubs Code

First introduced in 2015 in England and Wales, the Pubs Code aims to regulate the relationship between tenants and pub companies owning 500 or more pubs. Similar legislation is in place in Scotland with a key difference in that it applies to all pub owning companies irrespective of the number of pubs owned. The code covering England and Wales is currently under review and was subject to a consultation process last year. CAMRA are seeking changes to the code that would increase protection for tenants and increase access to market for smaller independent breweries. It is hoped that a revised code will see the inclusion of a right for tenants to sell at least one independent beer (cask, keg or can) of their choice and potential alignment with Scotland in terms of coverage.

## Proposed planning law changes

The UK government has made proposed changes on its National Planning Policy Framework which could see only the last pub in an area in England protected, instead of all pubs, as is the case currently. If implemented this could aggravate the already worrying trend of pub closures.

CAMRA National Planning Policy Advisor Paul Ainsworth said: "*We strongly object to these plans which could spell the end for thousands of viable pubs across England.*"

# Campaigning

*“Strong planning protections are needed to give people the right to try to save their pub if it is under threat of demolition or conversion. Crucially, this must apply to all pubs so communities can save their local even if there are other pubs in the same area.*

*“Without protections for every pub, we risk seeing greedy developers cash in and try to turn pub buildings into other uses like houses, shops or takeaways. This would be devastating for communities who would lose a vital part of their social fabric.*

*“CAMRA wants government ministers to rethink this proposal and keep strong protections for all pubs in the planning system so our locals can keep serving their communities instead of being lost forever.”*

Members are being asked to make their voice heard by lobbying their MP.

To make this a relatively easy process please see the CAMRA 'lobby' tool which can be found at <https://camra.org.uk/articles/2757>

## Late-night Levy

Last month we published Tyneside and Northumberland branch's open letter to Newcastle City Council concerning the planned review of the Late-night Levy. This was positively received and we have been included as an interested party in the consultation process scheduled to take place in July. At the time of writing, we await the outcome of local elections in Newcastle and whether any changes will impact the process. With that in mind we intend to contact the council once the dust has settled with a request for an update.

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## David Russell visits The Star Inn, Harbottle in North Northumberland

In the foothills of the Cheviots in Northumberland, we've found a pub that's the heart of the village of Harbottle. Just to the west of Rothbury, and although not easy to access using public transport it's well worth a trip out, a designated driver seems to be the best way. It's also very popular with cyclists and walkers.

The Star Inn has been a pub since 1800, originally a coaching inn frequented by drovers bringing sheep and whisky over the border.

The pub was owned for 100 years by the Pitloh family, and passed through a good few families until being taken over by Anne & Robert Dunn around 1960. They were tenants while the property was owned by Vaux for a while then Scottish and Newcastle, before buying the pub in 2009. In 2019 the pub was bought by the current owner Karen Wilkinson, who at the time

had been working as an IT director in the financial services industry. Just prior to covid she was advised by a friend that she needed to adapt the business as there were likely to be pub closures.

The integral shop which was formerly a post office had become a newsagent, Karen expanded this to offer a full range of groceries which were very popular with the locals during lockdown. During lockdown an extensive upgrade was undertaken, altering the downstairs area of the pub extending the bar area, and converting the old brewery building into a wood fired pizza kitchen, offering take out pizzas. The old coach house is now a function room and used as extra restaurant seating during busy periods.

Three guest rooms were added upstairs in what was once the hop drying room, and there are plans to add three more above the old stables. The ground floor area of the stables will be used for cycle storage and a laundry, to service the local tourist trade. In the courtyard there's an outdoor eating and drinking area, with more outdoor seating behind the main pub building.

# The Star Inn

Karen sees the pub as being the heart of the community and is keen to support local enterprise and charities. At the time of our visit one of the cask ales was "Where's Your Head At", brewed especially by First and Last brewery, a donation from each pint sold goes to Heart Wood, a Northumberland based charity which supports men living with poor mental health. This beer is not about down-playing the negative effects alcohol can play in people's lives, but also not ignoring the value of a chat and a pint with a friend who can listen well. Isolation is a major issue in rural communities, all are welcome in the Star for a pint, a coffee, a soft drink or even just a warm and a chat.

Teas, coffees and cakes are available all day, breakfast sandwiches are sold all morning to eat in or to takeaway.

A full restaurant menu is now available,

a French chef is in situ, offering good quality affordable meals, prepared from using, local ingredients wherever possible Karen stressed that although food is a key part of the business, the main focus is on providing a good pub environment.

The spacious bar area features two wood burning stoves.

There are two cask lines offering ales, usually from First and Last brewery which are regularly rotated, a dedicated speciality keg line which usually features an interesting local craft keg beer, and four other keg lines. A range of sensibly priced quality wines are available and a full range of soft drinks and spirits.

The pub recently ran a very successful beer festival, and plan to make this a regular event.

This very welcoming pub is a star in every sense of the word.

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# Thirsty Moose by Paul Hillhouse



## Paul Hillhouse explores Thirsty Moose brewery's Canadian roots

From mead to a brown ale brewed in his own style, Max Sawyer, the founder and head brewer at Thirsty Moose, has always had a taste for some north-east classics. Still, his rise from cooling homebrew in the bathtub to winning the Battle of the Beers at Newcastle beer and cider festival, This journey in beer, much like the beers he brews, has been anything but ordinary.

This summer, **Thirsty Moose** will host events at Ponteland Memorial Hall as they continue to grow into one of the North East's most exciting breweries.

In the mid 1800s, Max's ancestors were struggling dairy farmers in Ayrshire, so after hearing about an exciting opportunity, they took their relatives, children, and even some of the dairy cows, boarded a paddle steamer across the Atlantic, and settled just outside Montreal.

Over the next century, the farm flourished, and they branched out into producing maple syrup.

Fast forward to the 1970s, and some of the family moved to the North East to work on the construction of the Alcan site in Lynemouth and so from Scotland to the North East via Canada. Max finds himself as a Geordie

with Canadian heritage so decided that this would become the identity of the brewery.

Max got into home brewing aged 24, brewing from the family home and cooling his very first batch of beer in a bathtub before carrying it back downstairs, slipping and spilling it all over a cream carpet (and yes, his first brew was a stout). Instead of taking this as a sign that brewing was not for him, he decided he needed a dedicated space to brew and moved from the kitchen stove to a stable and purchased a Grainfather brewing system, giving him space and time to develop his craft and his recipes through the COVID lockdown. It was during this time that the prototype recipe for *Canny Canuck* was developed.



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# Thirsty Moose

In early 2022, at the age of 27, Max decided it was now or never and found a 6BBL brewhouse and three fermentation tanks for sale and **Thirsty Moose** was born with the first beer *Canny Canuck*, a maple syrup brown ale at 4.5 per cent, showcasing the Canadian family heritage but also the pride of his home in the North East. This was a very shrewd move as the beer immediately caught people's attention with deep malty flavours of biscuit, nuts and caramel and hints of chocolate and fermented maple syrup that gives the beer an amazing aroma, but somehow is balanced and restrained. It caught people's attention, and before long, it was appearing in bars across Newcastle and beyond.

In 2025, the brewery entered the Battle of the Beers at the Newcastle Beer and Cider Festival, *Chocolate Swirl* a 4.2 per cent stout full of chocolate flavours and won the Battle of the Beers category with **Hadrian Border** taking the prize in the second category so the obvious thing to do was the brewery's first ever collaboration and *Struck Gold* was launched that summer during a presentation to both breweries at Station East.

In April this year, the brewery followed up the achievement with *Once upon a Tyne* finishing in the top three of the same competition.

SIBA have also recognised the quality of **Thirsty Moose's** beers, with *Canny Canuck* holding three awards so far, including a gold award for cask speciality beer, *Amber to Dark*.

This summer, **Thirsty Moose** is branching out with the **Thirsty Moose** pop-up pub, a series of events hosted by Ponteland Memorial Hall showcasing the brewery

with three keg lines alongside a full can range, alongside wines, spirits, soft drinks, and alcohol free choices. If trade is good, some cask may soon follow. The Memorial Hall is community-owned and run, with any profits made from the running of the hall being reinvested back into its upkeep and development of the venue that has served Ponteland since 1922.

**Thirsty Moose** is based in the Newburn area of Newcastle, Ponteland Memorial Hall is on Darras Road, Ponteland (just off main street and well served by Stagecoach X77 and X78 from Haymarket).

The first Thirsty Moose event in Ponteland is on 26 June from 5.30pm to 10pm. They can be found on Facebook and at [www.thirstymoosebrewingco.com](http://www.thirstymoosebrewingco.com)

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# Promoting British Beer to Chinese Drinkers and Brewers

by Martin Ellis



*Lee Renforth meeting Chinese brewer*

## Brinkburn Street Brewery's Lee Renforth explores the Chinese beer scene

I bumped into Brinkburn St Brewery's Lee Renforth, I asked him if he had any plans. He enthusiastically told me he was about to go to Shanghai where he was going to be a guest speaker at the China Craft Beer Exhibition. He was going to talk about running a brewery and tap house in the UK for ten years. It's a huge event attracting 20,000 visitors. We discussed how British traditional brewing is of global interest and considered to be a pinnacle of beer excellence. Hopefully, the Chinese will be keen to learn more and wish to develop cask beer brewing.

On his return, I met Lee for a chat to discover how the trip went. He told me that he discovered it was a congested market with huge investments in brewing plant mainly producing what was called 'craft lager' using German ingredients and techniques. American ex-pats are involved in a number of breweries and he only met one British ex-pat. He saw misappropriated Shepherd Neame branding used to promote what Lee described as 'Star Trek' type beers. Many beers had fruit juices as a key ingredient, were only 2.5 - 3 per cent and served very cold. Most breweries appeared to have an IPA and double dry hopped IPA. Lee was disappointed that they all had an almost identical taste.

Unfortunately the craft beer bars that he discovered during his pre-trip research had all closed. His thoughts were that the premium cost of craft specialist beers was above what the local consumers could afford. Lee told me that Chinese beer drinkers were predominately young and in their early twenties. So, will Brinkburn St be expanding to China? Well probably not, the market is pretty much already sown-up, Lee commented that he was not sure how to develop British beer in China, but there are still opportunities.

On a positive note, Lee met a brewer that he will be sending a recipe to. They are going to match Tyneside's water, with the aim of brewing a sweeter, fruitier, New England style IPA.





Mike Foreman tasting bottled cider

## Newcastle's Bodega wins Regional Cider Pub of the Year award – by Martin Ellis

**The Bodega** has won numerous awards over the years for its beer. It has just won the 2026 North East Cider Pub of the Year award. Located next to the New Tyne Theatre and Opera House at the bottom of Newcastle's Westgate Road, it's a large impressive Victorian pub with striking stained glass domed windows.

Mike Foreman has been the driving force behind developing the cider offer at **The Bodega**, however, when asked he gives credit to his colleagues at the pub. Mike told me, *"I am more than pleasantly surprised to win the Tyneside & Northumberland Cider Pub of the Year award, let alone the regional award."*

Unlike many award winning cider pubs, the **Bodega** concentrates on packaged ciders, Mike said,

*"Many of their range of ciders are in bottles, in much the same as fine wines, which enables us to stock real niche and rare ciders, produced in small batches and one-offs."*

For example **Lantorn Red** from Fife, Scotland was limited to 2,000 bottles. Closer to home from Northumberland's **Rigg & Furrow's** bottled cider **Seedlings '24**. As you would expect they also stock ciders from the main cider producing areas including; Herefordshire, Kent, Sussex, Devon and the south west. In the summer there will be several draught

ciders in bag in box (BIBs), in the run-up to Christmas a mulled cider is always popular, and at quiet times of the year there is always a bag in box cider.

Mike has an almost missionary approach to introducing drinkers to cider, he is also keen to consider requests from customers. I asked Mike which other pubs would he recommend to cider fans, he told me that there are many pubs with a good cider offer, but, in particular he would recommend the **Microbus, Town Mouse** and **Free Trade Inn**.



## The Morpeth Wolf enjoys a 6 mile linear walk from Ovingham to Wylam

In the Spring 2026 issue of this magazine we featured the **Bridge End Inn**, a stone-built pub transformed by the new owners after storm damage and which re-opened in March 2025. It was at this comfortable venue that fifteen CAMRA members and “Ivan” gathered on a bright but cool day in early May for the latest Northumberland & Tyneside CAMRA Branch Ramble.

After I enjoyed a good quality pint of locally brewed **Allendale, Golden Plover (4.0% ABV)** we set off on the first part of today's six mile walk. Passing the church of St Mary The Virgin with its tower dating from Saxon times, our walk leader Mike Allaway took us out of the village in a north-westerly direction and upstream

of Whittle Burn. Now in the shadow of woodland, heavily scented with wild garlic, we followed the babbling brook through a large part of what is known as Whittle Dene. After one and a quarter miles we crossed a well-constructed footbridge and climbed steep steps out of the Dene and back into bright sunshine. Now adjacent to open fields we enjoyed pleasant views across the River Tyne valley of the town of Prudhoe. The eye-catching Prudhoe Badger, a 30m sculpture constructed in stone and marble was clearly visible on the valley side. Heading on an opposite bearing to previously we then turned back to Ovingham village. We passed the Pack Horse Bridge, a 17th century construction which enabled pedestrians and pack horses to cross Whittle Burn. The walls of the bridge were built low to allow easy crossing for the pack horses burdened with large

# ham to Wylam Linear

heavy low-slung baskets.

Passing the Bridge End Inn and the church once more we continued along Main Road to reach our lunch destination, the **White Swan**. The 1841 census records that the pub was originally called The Angel and feeling energised after our two and a half mile walk we settled under a large garden umbrella to peruse the food menu. As with most Saturday afternoons the pub was bustling

with diners and we were grateful that we had set enough time aside to patiently wait for our food orders to be served. From a welcome selection of four cask ales on offer I enjoyed Yorkshire-brewed **Timothy Taylor, Golden Best** (3.4%) a perfect accompaniment to my fish finger sandwich with hand-cut chips.

It was soon time to set off on the “second half” of today’s ramble and I took the lead this time to guide our well-fed troop out of the village across Ovingham Bridge to Prudhoe on the south bank of the River Tyne. Ovingham Bridge is a pair of side-by-side vehicle and pedestrian bridges. The single-track vehicle bridge has no footpath and so pedestrians use the separate footbridge that runs alongside it at the same level.

Turning sharp right and passing under the bridges we were now on The River Tyne Trail, a long-distance route approximately 135 miles long, tracing the River Tyne from its two remote sources to the North Sea. For about two and a half



*White Swan, Ovingham*

miles we followed the course of former Waggonways and railway lines to the village of Wylam. On route we crossed Hagg Bank Bridge which officially is called West Wylam Bridge but is also known locally as Points Bridge and Half-Moon Bridge. Opened to rail traffic in 1876 it connected the North Wylam Loop with the Newcastle to Carlisle line. Nowadays a handsome footbridge it has been suggested that this bridge might have been an inspiration for the designers of the much later Tyne Bridge in Newcastle upon Tyne. Now in North Wylam and on a popular route for pedestrians and cyclists we left this path from a former railway cutting to ascend to the **Ship Inn**, a popular local pub at the heart of the village. The bar area was crowded and we left via a rear entrance to find plenty of outdoor seating in a secluded courtyard. One of my favourite ales, Leeds-brewed **Kirkstall, Three Swords** (4.5%) was on offer as well as **Theakston, Best Bitter** (3.8%).



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# CAMRAmble



*The Ship Inn, Wylam*

To complete the day's walking we took a gentle fifteen minutes stroll down through the village, crossed the river Tyne for one last time using Wylam Road Bridge to reach our final call of the day at the CAMRA award winning **Boathouse** pub. The pub is opposite Wylam railway station which has an elevated signal box, once a popular design on this line but is now almost unique with the only other surviving signal box of this design being located at Hexham.

The Boathouse boasts an impressive array of 15 handpulls. I was delighted that one of those on offer was **Baffled** (6.2%) a hazy New England IPA brewed by Blaydon based **Firebrick Brewery**. In April of this year Northumberland & Tyneside CAMRA Branch held a "Battle of the

Beers" blind judging competition at their Newcastle Beer & Cider Festival and this beer was a worthy winner in the New World IPA category. Our group sat on the outside benches and I sipped away at this gorgeous tasting ale reflecting on

yet another successful branch event.

Our plan is to hold the next CAMRAmble west of Newcastle city centre in August when we will again be enjoying good walking, cosy pubs and lovely ales and ciders. Please look out for it on our branch website and social media.

Tara-a-bit!  
@MorpethWolf



*The Boathouse, Wylam*

# Newcastle Beer and Cider Festival

## The 48th Newcastle Beer and Cider Festival - a great success for brewers and drinkers - Martin Ellis reports

This year's Newcastle Beer and Cider festival was a great success. It was necessary to restock beers after Friday night was almost a complete sell-out. Festival organiser Anthony McMullen said, "*From traditional bitters to modern hop-forward IPAs, this year's festival demonstrated just how vibrant and innovative the independent beer scene is.*" The festival showcased a wide range of styles, from traditional cask ales through to contemporary craft beers and ciders. There was positive feedback from festival goers about the atmosphere, beer quality and venue organisation. The festival continued its emphasis on showcasing North East brewing talent alongside breweries from further afield.

Prior to the festival opening to the public, a 'trade session' is held where brewery and pub trade staff are invited.

***"it's a really important event in our calendar, a great opportunity for us to have an evening as a team, chat with other breweries in the area and with some of our trade customers."***

Sam - First and Last Brewery

## Battle of the Beer Competition

Every year the festival holds a Battle of the Beer competition. Breweries within the Tyneside and Northumberland branch area are invited to submit a beer, this year there was a choice of two categories, Best of British or New World IPA. The competition takes place on Wednesday afternoon before the festival opens to the public. The competition requires the judges to blind taste and score each beer on a range of set criteria. This year's results were:-

### Best of British

- 1st – **Cullercoats Brewery** – *Rocket Brigade*
- 2nd – **Hexhamshire Brewery** – *Mile Castle*
- 3rd – **Thirsty Moose** – *Once Upon a Tyne*

### New World IPA

- 1st – **Firebrick Brewery** – *Baffled*
- 2nd – **St Dominics** – *Tyneside IPA*
- 3rd – **Twice Brewed Brewing Co.**  
– *Follow the Critical Path*



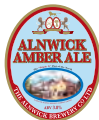
Alistair Lawrence, Firebrick Brewery

Looking ahead to 2027, the organising team hopes to build on this year's success, improve the festival even further and, perhaps most importantly, buy more beer! It will most probably follow the same schedule with Hat Day taking place on Thursday. The venue will once again be Northumbria University Students Union and the dates are pencilled in for Wednesday 7th to Saturday 10th April. Hope to see you there.



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# Summer Ale Trail



## Fancy a few beers at the coast?

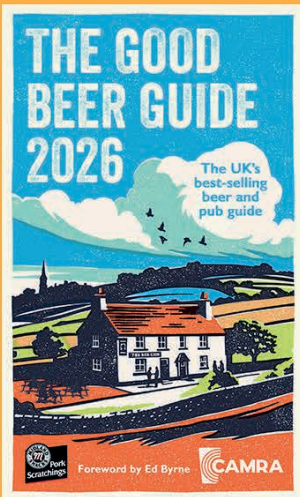
We are organising a **SUMMER ALE TRAIL** based around pubs in the Whitley Bay, Monkseaton and Tynemouth Areas. It offers an opportunity to visit pubs and try beers you might not have had before. As it's being run by your local CAMRA branch the main focus is on real ales, but we will be including some outlets that offer interesting keg beer. We are also about protecting pubs. We have successfully run this event twice previously in Gateshead, and summer seems the right time to expand it and support pubs at the coast.

## How does it work?

There will be maps and stickers available at all participating pubs. Simply call at one of the pubs collect a map then visit, probably over a few trips out, the other pubs collecting stickers along the way. Once you have 75% of the stickers, photograph and send the map to CAMRA and you will be entered into a prize draw.

The event will run from Friday 26th June until Sunday 2nd August.

A full list of participating venues will be on our web site at [tynland.camra.org.uk](http://tynland.camra.org.uk) and also on our social media platforms.



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**The Last Landlady: An English Memoir**  
Laura Thompson  
Paperback  
£9.99

Originally published in 2018, it's about the past - so hasn't aged and is now easily available again. Laura Thompson's grandmother Violet was one of the great landladies. Born in a London pub, she became one of the first women to be given a publican's licence in her own name.

The book is about pubs and its place in British culture, it's about people and Violet in particular. The book was written when the author observed a time when pubs were under an increasing threat, strangled by business rates, with pub chains collecting the embattled casualties. It hasn't got any better in the last ten years since Laura Thompson had the idea for the book.

Some people might find that there is more detail on the author's grandmother than they are interested in. However, the book is a memoir centred around the core character, which makes it a good read.

I would recommend this nostalgic book as a good holiday read (or to read in a pub) for someone interested in pubs and an interest in pub culture.



**Good Beer Guide Belgium**  
Tim Skelton  
Paperback  
£17.99

The beer landscape in Belgium has changed a lot over the last

eight years, since the last edition of this guide published by CAMRA (this is the 9th edition). The number of breweries has surged from 250 to 400 and the diversity of beer has never been greater. This authoritative and independent guide casts an enthusiastic yet critical eye over the country's beers, breweries and cafes to give the reader a rich understanding of Belgium's beer scene and shows why it remains one of the world's leading brewing powerhouses.

As expected it covers the major cities; Brussels, Bruges, Antwerp, Ghent etc. It also includes towns that are noted for their beer and character.

There are two main reasons for buying this book, to find out more about Belgium beer or to use as a travel guide. It includes travel tips, accommodation advice and food ideas that complement the beers that are showcased in the book. The text covers the full range of fermentation techniques and beer styles. Brewers source ale and 'wild' yeasts as well as using top fermentation and spontaneous fermentation, the latter yielding the famous Lambic beers. The book looks at Trappist brewing, pale & amber ales, IPAs, Saisons, brown, black and white beers and more!

Essential reading for anyone with an interest in Belgium beer or visiting Belgium.

# Quiz!

- Answers:**
1. The Mosaic Tap
  2. Almosty
  3. Morpeth
  4. Star Inn, Harbottle
  5. Thirsty Moose
  6. Bodega, Newcastle
  7. Firebrick and Cullercoats
  8. Whiteley Bay, Monkseaton and Tyemouth
  9. Two (it was one a day in 2025)
  10. 10 August

## Canny Bevvvy Quiz

by Martin Ellis

- 1** Which Newcastle pub has moved from railway arches to the former Prohibition bar on Pink Lane?
- 2** Which Walkergate, Newcastle brewery opens its taproom on Friday and Saturdays throughout the summer?
- 3** The Oldgate Tavern is opening in which Northumberland town?
- 4** Which north Northumberland pub used to be a brewery, a post office and a newsagent?
- 5** Which Newburn, Newcastle brewery has Canadian connections?
- 6** Which pub has been awarded the North East Cider Pub of the Year award?
- 7** Which breweries won their Battle of the Beers categories at the recent Newcastle Beer and Cider Festival?
- 8** Where is this year's Summer Ale Trail taking place?
- 9** Approximately, how many pubs have closed every day in the UK in the first quarter of 2026?
- 10** The Durham Beer Festival is planned to take place at the end of which month?

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