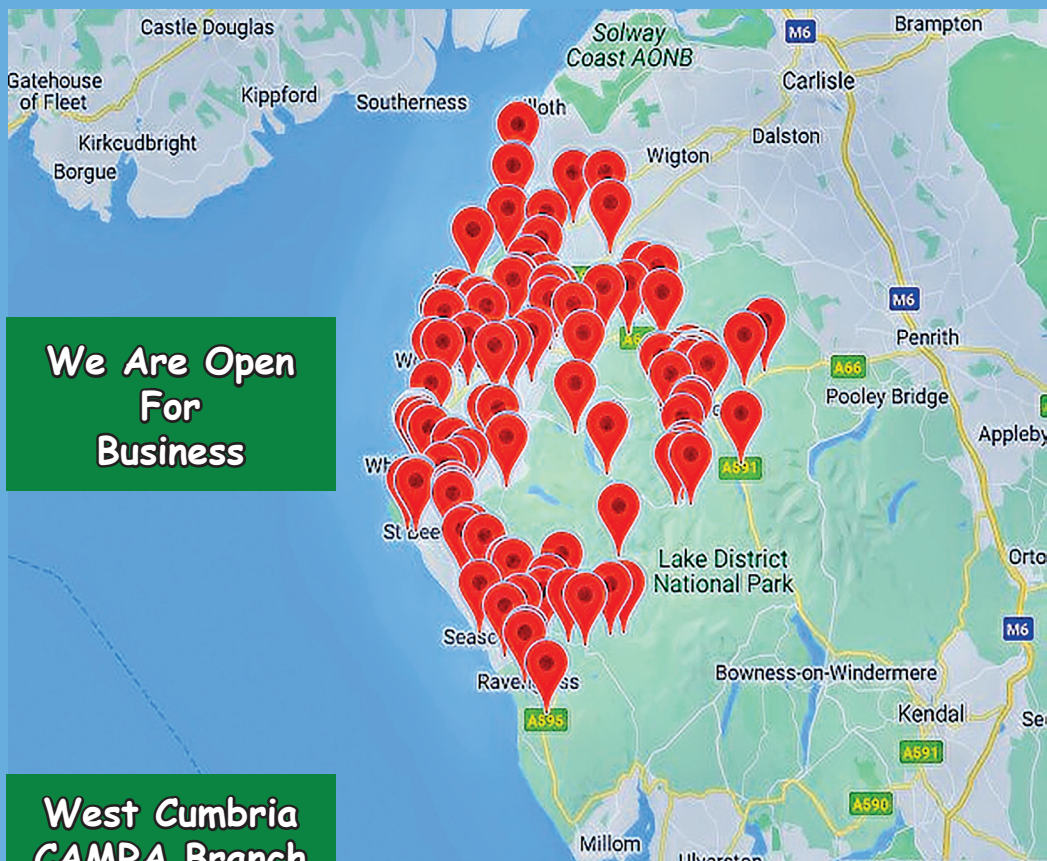


What Ales?



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**



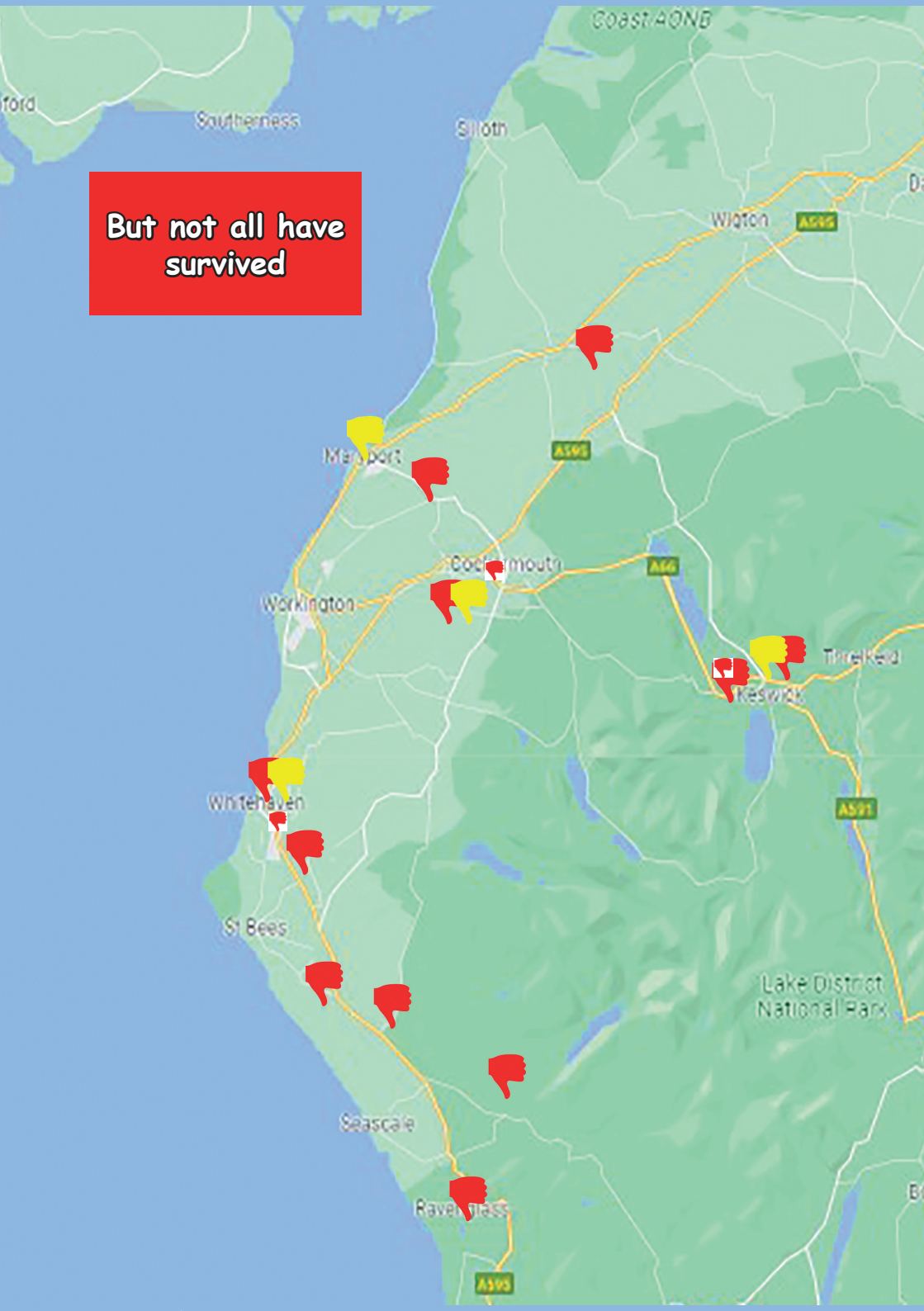
**We Are Open
For
Business**

**West Cumbria
CAMRA Branch**

**Winter
2021**

**Free Magazine
Please Take one**

But not all have survived



WhatAles?



Newsletter for the West Cumbria branch of CAMRA

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Branch website: www.westcumbria.camra.org.uk

Social Secretary & Transport: Garry Connor - bodthebiker@googlegmail.com

Welcome

Welcome

"May you live in interesting times" mmh! Yes here we are trying to get to grips with so many changes from what we were doing before the Covid virus. This is the only edition for this year and a slimmed down version at that. We've drawn from our archives with a couple of pieces that merit another airing. It's hard to get away from the virus and its effects, so it is mentioned in some of our articles, but these are still worth a read. We hope there is something here to entertain and enlighten, and maybe next year will be a lot brighter.

Our thanks go to those that contributed to this issue, Geoff Wilkinson, Stephen Walker, Malcolm Richardson, Hugh Price, Geoff Lithgow, Chris Hale and our Editorial Team (Garry Connor; Brian Maudling; Len Wainwright; Ian & Pat Williamson).

Future Meetings

Sat.15th Jan 2022 Lowther Club Whitehaven 2pm TBC,
keep in touch via the website



**West Cumbria Branch
Pub of the Year
2018**

The Punch Bowl Inn Great Broughton.



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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

IT SEEMS INCREDIBLE that this is the first What Ales that has been produced for nearly two years – but it is wonderful that we are back!

I hope that you are surviving the pandemic and feel able to return to the pubs and clubs, bringing much needed income for our publicans, as well as getting back to spending time with friends in the comfort of your local hostelry.

Thankfully the pandemic does not appear to have resulted in the closure of many pubs in our area and for that we are grateful. It was sad to hear of the death from Covid of one landlord in our area. The pub has now closed and will probably not reopen. There have been other casualties, but who is to say that the closure may have happened despite the pandemic.

Sadly, the pandemic affected some of our members and I am aware that we lost an active member very early on. Thankfully the others that I know of survived and have either made a full recovery or are well on the way back to full health.

Within CAMRA we are only now getting back to meeting face to face, following sixteen months when we were being told not to meet. Within the branch, we maintained contact with each other through social media and monthly on-line branch meetings, but by the time you read this, we will have started holding 'real' meetings.

As a sign that life is returning to some normality within CAMRA, we have been able to finally award our Pub of the Year award for 2020, which we also extended to include 2021 as we were not able to judge pubs during lockdown. Congratulations go to Sean and his team at Castle Bar, Cockermouth, the West Cumbria Pub of the Year for 2020/21.

The Good Beer Guide 2022 was due to be published in September, but this has now been delayed until November. We will soon be commencing our surveys to select our entries for the 2023 Guide!

A major change was the retirement of Jeremy Pettman, head brewer at Jennings. His position has been filled by Chris Chisholm, ex brewer at Eagle Brewery, Bedford. We wish Jeremy a long and happy retirement and extend a warm welcome to Chris.

Should you want to become involved in the activities we undertake, ie surveying pubs for GBG and selecting our Pub of the Year, why not join the campaign and come along to a branch meeting. Details of how to join can be found in this magazine and news and events are posted in our newly refurbished website –

westcumbria.camra.org.uk

Take care

Stephen Walker (Chair)



NEWS FROM THE WEBSITE

TWO BARS IN KESWICK STOP SELLING REAL ALE

Management of **BAR ES** (formerly a Mexican themed bar) in Keswick has removed the handpump which has been on the bar for several years. And **THE SQUARE ORANGE** has recently changed hands. This popular little bar sold hand pulled beer for several years but has now ditched them.



Bar ES

ing its chain of pubs. It is usual for the company to offload businesses after 5 years so no surprise if the Pheasant changes hands again in about 2026 !

CUMBRIAN BOTTLE CONDITIONED ALES

Tuesday 5 October 2021

There are now 8 Cumbrian 'bottle conditioned' ales listed in a separate section on this website.

Am waiting for several other Cumbrian breweries to reply to my request for info regarding any bottle conditioned ales they may brew.

Many micro brewers do not produce this genre of beer, which is genuine real ale in a bottle with live yeast.

Such beers are the closest thing to hand pulled cask ale.

Most of the vast array of Cumbrian bottled ales in Booths supermarkets in Cumbria are just filtered, carbonated beers. Many now masquerade as 'craft',

PHEASANT HOTEL BASSENTHWAITE UPDATE

Sunday 24 October 2021

Following temporary closure of the bar owing to a problem with the ceiling, this has now been rectified.

Building work continues at the hotel as they are increasing the number of bedrooms.

Owner, The Inn Collection Group is rapidly expanding and upgrad-



Square Orange

a term which doesn't mean a lot but sounds trendy. It is the bottle conditioned ales that are more worthy of being described as having been crafted.

PUB OF THE YEAR PRESENTATION

Saturday 2 October 2021

The **CASTLE BAR** in Cockermouth won the 2020-2021 PUB OF THE YEAR AWARD, WEST CUMBRIA CAMRA

Our Chairman, Stephen Walker, can be seen sporting a fine pair of legs, along with owner Sean and staff Jayne, Shane and Amy



Pub of the Year



Joe Fagan & Jim Chapple

AWARD FOR JOE FAGAN AT THE SWAN

Thursday 7 October 2021

Joe Fagan, the outstanding landlord of **THE SWAN** in Kirkgate, Cockermouth seen here with Jim Chapple of the West Cumbria branch of CAMRA, who presented him with runner up award in the area Pub of the Year contest.

MAGNOLIA BAR, LAKE ROAD, KESWICK

Friday 24 September 2021

Former owner Phil Harrison has sold the business to a member of staff and it is still trading. Phil intends to relocate his Twisted Magnolia Brewery to Penrith in the near future, when a suitable premises is acquired.

UPDATE ON BREWERIES IN CAMRA W. PENNINES REGION

Thursday 23 September 2021

NEW BREWERIES: Ben's Folly; Ingol Village; Keneens; Lakes; Radical; Unbound; West Coast

CLOSED BREWERIES: New Union; Old Laxey (now brewed at Bushys); Providence;



Magnolia Bar

West Coast (maybe this new brewery is closed already?)

MOVED BREWERIES: Gan Yam (moved from London); Three Peaks (moved from Yorkshire)

RENAMED BREWERIES: Stringers is now call Lakeland Brewhouse



Swan Inn

SWAN INN, COCKERMOUTH

Sunday 25 July 2021

The historic **SWAN INN** public house in Kirkgate has had its Asset of Community Value (ACV) listing renewed for a further 5 years after it expired in May of this year. This protects the building from any possible change of use.

Allerdale Borough Council

Listing Panel decided that the pub contributes to the social wellbeing, recreational and cultural interests of the local community. The business is owned by Joe Fagan, who ran the Bush for many years and Joe has received several awards from CAMRA for the consistent high quality of his real ales.

THE SWAN is one of the oldest pubs in the town, dating back to at least 1743. Jennings bought **THE SWAN** in 1889 and ownership transferred to Marstons in 2007. As Marstons have sold controlling interest in brewing to Carlsberg, for the first time in over 130 years the bricks and mortar are no longer owned by a brewery, but by a so-called Pubco, The Marstons Pub Company, for better or for worse. Time will tell.

Courtesy of westcumbria.camra.org.uk

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THE STORY SO FAR (as far as we can tell)

DEARHAM – OLD MILL – temporarily closed, not known for how long.

COMMERCIAL - closed, licensee died, not thought to be going to re-open

MARYPORT - GOLDEN LION & CAPTAIN NELSONS – no longer have real ale

GILGRUX – BARN BISTRO – Closed – up for sale

HENSINGHAM – KINGS ARMS & LOWTHER ARMS closed – no signs of opening again

WHITEHAVEN – THE THREE TUNS – closed,
SHAKERS - no longer sells real ale

COCKERMOUTH – CONSERVATIVE CLUB, BROWN COW &, GLOBE HOTEL – closed

BECKERMET – WHITE MARE & BLACKBECK HOTEL – closed

NETHERWASDALE – LOW WOODS HOTEL – closed

RAVENGLASS – INN @ RAVENGLASS – closed

KESWICK – LAKES BAR – temp closed, not known for how long. **PARK HOTEL, SQUARE ORANGE & BAR ES** – no longer sell real ale

BRAITHWAITE – MIDDLE RUDDINGS – closed for refurb until 2022

ROWRAH - STORK HOTEL - “Change of Use to Residential only” planning permission applied

NEW PLACES – KESWICK – THE CRAFTY BAR

If you know anything different or extra please let us know.



West Cumbria
Pub of the Year
Runner Up 2016



The Wainwright

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WILL THE THREE TUNS OF WHITEHAVEN EVER RE-OPEN

THREE REMINICIES

WILL THE THREE TUNS of Whitehaven ever reopen after the dreaded virus forced its closure? I have many happy memories of times spent on those premises; you could say I learned to drink there as it was a regular haunt of lab staff from Marchon.

I started at Marchon in August 1969 and although I was only at there for 12 months the Three Tuns was a regular for long after. With Matty's Light at 1/7d a pint and the Bitter at 1/9d (that's less than 7½p and around 8½p), the radiogram that sat to

area altogether. It wasn't until around 8 years ago that we became re-acquainted and I was much surprised by the tiny stage and the roster of live bands, if you would have suggested that back in 1970 I wouldn't have believed it, but more power to their elbow. And this time selling 'real-ale', even offering Ennerdale Darkest on draught for a while. It was even a very deserving winner of our "Pub of the Season" not long before everything shut down.



Similar Radiogram

the right of the bar with the auto-changer record deck and the pile of 45s, the latest singles on top, was a free-for- all 'jukebox' .

The dart board In the bar was a source of entertainment when we thought Harp Lager was the drink to have. There was no such thing as 'real-ale' then, CAMRA was just an idea forming down in St Albans, and although most the ale was real we had our doubts about some (what prize Watney's Red barrel).

The Tuns and I parted company a few years later when my drinking was mostly restricted to Workington and the Matador Hotel, and then moving away from the

In the mid to late 70's to the mid 1980's it became a "biker" pub, known throughout most of the northwest due to the large number of riders who frequented the establishment, the area that is now a stage of sorts was in fact known as the "garage" and only bikers were allowed to sit in there, it was a very, very popular public house so much so that on a week-end, if you were not in by 11.30 am you could not get in (a sort of one out, one in type of thing), the same thing applied to evenings as well but the time was 7.30pm.

The then landlady was Mildred who along with her husband Harry ran a friendly but



An Autochanger

no bull pub, I worked behind the bar on weekends serving the dreaded Matty's light (often with lime to temper the taste), it was always busy and had free music all the time, Mildred would ask someone to nip to the record shop every week and get any top ten singles that she did not already have. Although we were in the decimal era, the cash register behind the bar was an old mechanical type and still had pounds, shillings and pence flags and keys, so you had to know the prices of the drinks.

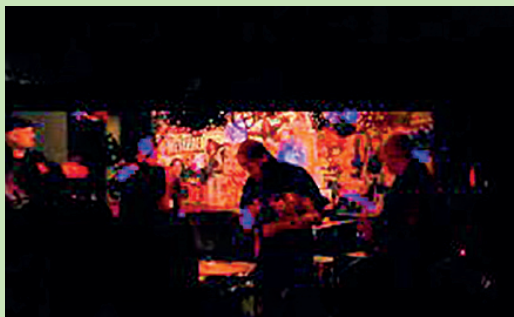
Every year Mildred and staff would stay up all night and "dress" the whole pub up for Xmas with no space untouched with the xmas spirit, in fact it looked like the tide had swept in and left the decorations behind when it receded.

I met my wife in the Three Tuns (still married to this day), we parted company with the pub in 1983, but still tried to go in once a month, but this ceased when the kids came along

When Mildred decided to "call it a day" the brewery decided to close the pub and, in their words, give it some tlc and updating, in other words ruin it, the pub was closed for about twelve months in which time the clientele found other watering holes and despite what people now say, it never returned to its popularity and former glory.

It was taken over by Jack Car when it re-opened, Jack had previously been the landlord of the Derby Arms pub in Cleator moor and although he tried to recreate the golden days of the Three Tuns it lacked the atmosphere and the installation of a pool table and Juke box made it even worse, "old" regulars decried the additions and most went back to the outlets they had found whilst it was closed

If you can stand from a sitting position with only one groan, and begin a conversation without announcing your age, chances are you are still in your seventies; i.e. middle aged. If this is the case, you may remember frequenting the Three Tuns in Whitehaven in the early sixties. Run by Mildred and Harry Fletcher, the 'Tuns' was an oasis in the middle of what was then still a tribal town. Starting in the north, there was the Bransty tribe, then the Townies, 06 and 09 side of Mirehouse, Kells Woodhouse and Greenbank; although there was a degree of cross pollination between the



Muffwigs Play Live in 2012

latter two. Tribe members would generally frequent their own parochial pubs and rarely cross borders. However, the Three Tuns transcended all boundaries, and in a limited way, was positively cosmopolitan. Natural light was a stranger to the bar, kept at bay by bullet proof curtains held together with nicotine. Every shelf and wall was adorned with something brass, miners lamps, horse brasses etc. Everyone smoked, boy did we smoke. This contributed to the atmosphere, in fact it was the atmosphere. The significance of the Tuns was that anyone could go in and leave relatively intact. In my early drinking days I went in every night, and don't remember any trouble. I think everyone was scared



Pub of the Season in 2019

of Mildred, a formidable lady with a head of black hair, black eyes and a scarlet slash of a mouth. Everyone who really knew her recognised a warm and generous lady, who would regularly buy her punters a pint. At a time when every drinking male

over thirty elsewhere in town wore a dark suit with a white silk scarf, and supped mild, the Tuns was blaring out hits by the Stones et al and welcoming everyone. On Friday and Saturday nights, it was literally impossible to get in the bar until someone came out and left a person sized hole. Having said that, it wasn't particularly easy to get out, owing to the adhesive nature of the carpet. Perhaps that was why opening the curtains even a chink was taboo. Two strikes and you were out, slowly.

The room on the left as you enter the pub acted as a kind of overspill at weekends: through the week I remember a card game seemed to be continuously playing. Not sure what it was, as you needed at least a GBH conviction on your CV to get a seat at the table.

So a wonderful iconic colourful Matties pub, back when the world was still black and white. At least that's how I remember it.

Ian Williamson, Garry Connor & Geoff Lithgow

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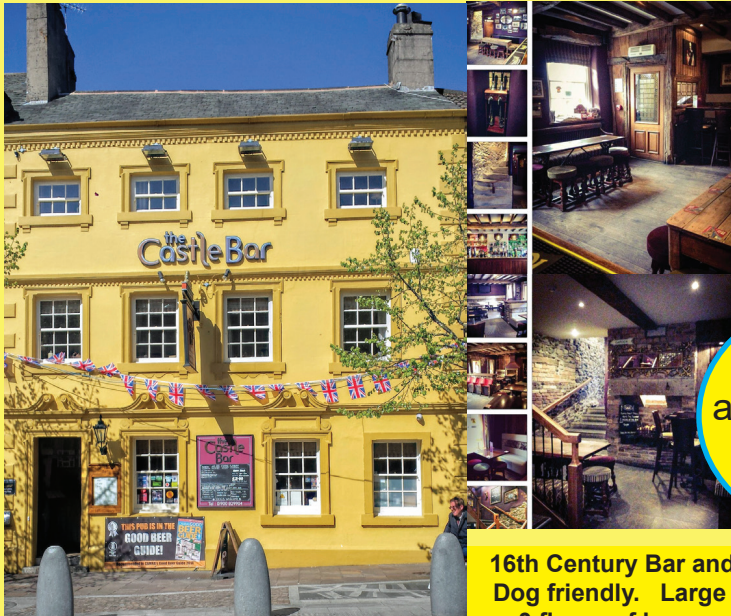
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Normal Opening Times

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Thursday 4pm-10pm
Friday 4pm - 11pm
Saturday 12pm-11pm
Sunday 12pm-9pm

FOOD SERVED

Monday 5.30pm-8pm
Tuesday & Wednesday CLOSED
Thursday 5.30pm-8pm
Friday 5pm-8.30pm
Saturday 5pm-8.30pm
Saturday lunch 12.30pm-2.30pm
Sunday lunchtime only 12pm-3.30pm

ROYAL OAK BECKERMET UP AND RUNNING!



THIS WELL KNOWN and justifiably popular inn was closed for almost 18 months after the previous tenants left but reopened in May this year under new ownership, and is proving more popular than ever.

New owners Joe and Rebecca, and son William (pictured below) told CAMRA members Ron Thompson, Mary Cox and myself that they bought the pub back in 2020 and they used the Covid lockdown to revamp the entire pub from top to bottom, both inside and out, doing most of the work themselves.

For Joe, it was a career change and he admits to having no previous pub running experience. Rebecca had some experience, having worked in a busy roadside hotel in the north east but, for the most part, it's been learning from scratch for both of them. But what they may lack in experience is more than compensated for by their enthusiasm and desire to make the enterprise a success.

So, what can customers expect?

On the beer side: they try to have two, preferably local ales always available; usually something from Ennerdale

Brewery and perhaps something slightly different to attract the younger drinker. On the day we called it was Ennerdale Blonde, and 'Plan B' a pale ale style gluten-free beer from the Lakeland Brewhouse in Ulverston.

Very few pubs can survive on beer sales alone these days so an attractive, reasonably priced menu is essential. Having sampled this a few times recently, including their takeaways back in the Spring when inside dining was arguably somewhat risky, I can vouch for their quality and the variety of dishes available. And, dare I say it in a CAMRA magazine, there's a good wine list as well.

And, as a final gesture to Beckermets village folk, Becky has already incorporated a village shop into a former pool table room in the premises. So, all enterprising stuff!

West Cumbria CAMRA branch wish Joe and Rebecca every success in their new venture.

Malcolm Richardson



COVID - SOME THOUGHTS ON THE LAST 20 MONTHS

Welcome back readers after the pandemic, well that was some ride wasn't it! And as winter approaches and cases rise worst things may be in the pipeline, Carlsberg's takeover of Marston's for one. Will we soon be seeing ads for "Jennings, probably the best bitter in the world", brewed in Copenhagen of course!) Anyway I hope that by now most of you have finally ventured into those dangerous unknown places called pubs!...so I thought I would reflect on what publicans have been through since we last shared a pint.

Let's start with 16th March 2020, when Boris Johnson said that people should avoid all "unnecessary contact with others" and "avoid pubs, clubs and other venues" to prevent the spread of corona virus. Well I don't know about you but I'm married and share a house with my dear wife and it was necessary for us to pass each other in the hallway from time to time,

However on a more serious note, what the hell did he mean by avoiding pubs! It was bad enough for us punters trying to work that one out but imagine being a publican. At least on the 23rd he told them all to shut, for how long nobody knew. If you were like me you would have thought it was just for a few weeks. The publicans I spoke to about that time describe chaos as they sought guidance from the Government and their landlords/brewers, whilst at the same time having to furlough staff.

The saddest thing from my perspective

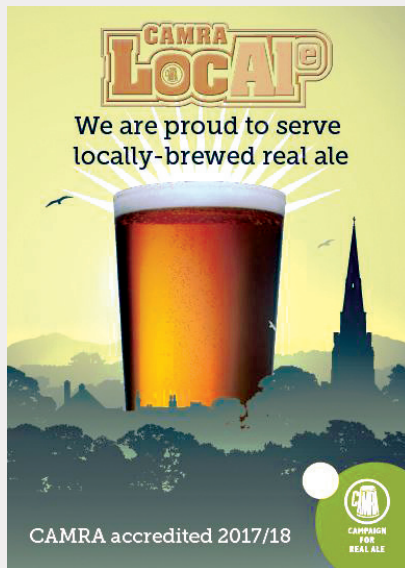
was the millions of gallons of beer they had to pour down the drain. They had to get permission from United Utilities to do this, and could only do it at certain times of the day to avoid blockages and flooding. Thankfully the streets were not awash with IPA. Support from Brewers varied, most offered to replace like for like when business restarted. Not surprisingly the smaller independent Brewers were more accommodating and communicative.

As the Spring progressed into Summer there came a gradual reopening, again the publicans I spoke to told me of the difficulties that presented as they tried to make sense, like the rest of us, of the Governments confusing and constantly changing guidelines, e.g. no more than four people to a table or 3 people and a dog. Provided the dog bought its own drinks! "Oh and what level are we in this week? Do we have to throw the customers out at 8pm or 9pm? And what happens if they've got no home

to go to!" As one landlord said when trying to explain the rules, "ask me about Quantum Physics it's simpler."

Then came Winter and as 2020 became 2021 we once again entered the lockdown without end and the beer once again was poured down the drains and chronic alcoholism rose amongst sewer rats.

Matt Hancock's tears were the first indication of hope to come, a vaccine to allow us once again to share a pint with



friends. So the vaccines were duly rolled out (I preferred the Pfizer it had a more hoppy taste!) And come the summer once again pubs reopened for good according to Boris who never tells lies. Or did they?

Initially we had the “don’t approach the bar, don’t smile, and don’t ask the landlord if he’s had a good day”. Just partial restrictions! Thus we all fumblingly attempted to get used to the new way of doing things like newly marrieds on their wedding night.

Joe at the **SWAN COCKERMOUTH** commented how everybody relaxed and enjoyed themselves more once all restrictions were lifted, just like your wedding night!!

Staff shortages became the first big issues facing Landlords, Shaun at the **CASTLE BAR COCKERMOUTH** had to severely restrict

opening hours due to a lack of staff, as did Mark at the **BITTER END**, and Furloughed staff had either decided they liked doing nothing or had found other jobs. One publican reported to me that one of his staff asked if he could stay on furlough after the scheme ended. The response from the landlord in question is unprintable.

Nathan at the **ROYAL OAK IN SEATON** re-opened in June, he was still paying rent during lockdown and was several thousand pounds in debt, He has always run a thriving community pub and since reopening his regulars have come back and supported him, however he did say that older ‘real ale drinkers’ were slower in coming back compared to younger lager drinkers.

Many publicans cite supply problems both drink and food since re-opening, I think we are all familiar with post Brexit shortages of everything. However the strangest shortage which caused some schadenfreude amongst us real ale drinkers was CO2. I thought we had too much of the stuff causing global warming, but apparently not enough to ensure a regular supply of gassy tasteless lager.

John at the **WAINWRIGHT** commented “Our main drinks supplier, outside of the real ales, has skipped deliveries a couple of times and is still not able to fulfil orders because of delivery problems. Likewise, food orders are being delivered sporadically, often with expensive substitutions, when they can’t get deliveries from their suppliers. He also states that “the generosity of all the brewers, but particularly the smaller, Cumbrian outfits was amazing. A good number replaced like for like when we reopened, essentially taking the economic hit on their own shoulders.”

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The **WAINWRIGHT** in Keswick, which as part of the Lake District, saw astronomically high levels of tourists this summer resulting in a large number of customers and hence high demand. Like all the publicans I spoke to John was full of praise for his staff “I can’t stress enough how much we appreciate the patience and resilience of the team, having to change shifts and working long hours to allow breaks for others etc.”

So there we have it. Real Ale Pubs were struggling before the pandemic, the fact that they have survived is nothing short of a miracle, and that is down to the hard work and dedication of publicans, brewers, and staff.

I hope that you dear reader have done your bit by popping down to your local for a pint!

Len Wainwright
October 2021



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**FOX
TAP**

RAMBLE

I WAS AT KESWICK JAZZ FESTIVAL several years ago when it was in its pomp, and took over the whole town. One of the biggest and best artists was a guy called Jeff Barnhart; brilliant pianist, wit and general raconteur who held his audience in thrall. An American who was lured back every year by the promise of Jennings bitter, his favourite tippie, and one he shamelessly promoted. Guess, as they sponsored the festival, he probably didn't have to pay for it.

I was conducting my own love affair with a cask of one of the first Keswick beers at the time, located in the hotel where I was staying, which also housed the gig. Don't know who had the best night, but we were on a par.

Woke up at stupid o'clock next morning and decided to have a walk round Derwentwater to clear my head. Lakes, in my experience, are generally and generously built on the level, so conducive to the amble as opposed to the slog. Don't do 'up', I leave that to those with a surfeit of breath and organs who sustain the 5000 outdoor pursuits outlets in said town.

When I arrived back in Keswick, a market had sprung up. Had a bit of a browse and found a stall selling spices. I love spices which I always buy whole and grind myself. However I was drawn to a pre-blended packet called 'Satan's Ashes' for use in an Indian style curry. Bought it for when I had limited time to cook.

Couple of weeks later I was at a leaving do at a local hostelry which has become synonymous with that kind of event. Four real ales well selected and kept. Went up and down the bar, as you do. Couldn't have had a better time if I'd known the bloke.

Ran into wife in the garden on my sway home: 'I've been slaving away all day and only had an apple, what's for tea I'm starving'.

'Leave it to me my sweet' (that's how we talk to each other). Quickly defrosted some chicken thighs to make an Indian style curry, 'hurry up:' from the garden. Decided to break out the Satan's ashes to save time. Two packets of spices, one the aromatics and the other the chillis. Second packet had a warning saying 'use sparingly' Thought 'yeah right', one sideways glance from wife could reduce Beelzebub to a wining, whimpering timorous beastie, he's the one who needs to be cautious. Threw the whole packet in.

'Come and get it': 'about time, I'll have it outside so I don't need to get changed': 'Ok my sweet' (told you).

Tackled mine in the kitchen. One mouthful and my lungs and stomach went into spasm trying to exchange places. I thought 'this won't end well'.

Half an hour later wife comes back an interesting shade of puce. 'That nearly killed me, been sick all over the neighbour's cat.' 'My goodness we can't have that' I replied.

In Keswick a couple of weeks later, market on again, went up to Satan's ashes stall. 'Can I have a word? That Satan's Ashes you sold me nearly killed the wife, HAVE YOU GOT ANYTHING HOTTER?'

That should have been the punch line, but this is a true story so it wasn't. Stallholder said 'you can p++s off, you didn't get that here'. She was right, got the wrong stall.

If you spot a wraith forlornly wandering around your local market in a vain quest for the outlet that slipped through a wormhole, spare a thought.

"DIPSO."

PUB COMPANIES - WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY DO

THE CURRENT PUB COMPANY SCENE

A pub company is simply a company that owns pubs and there are literally hundreds of them, many with only a handful or even just one pub. We'll concentrate here, though, on the bigger companies who, between them, own over half the country's pubs.

STONEGATE

Founded in 2010 with the purchase of 333 pubs from Mitchells & Butlers, Stonegate grew quite slowly over the next ten years, making a series of acquisitions including brands like Slug & Lettuce, Walkabout and Be At One, until its pub numbers totalled 765. All the pubs were managed houses. A seismic change came in 2020 when Ei Group was bought for £1.27bn, making Stonegate the largest pub company in the UK with 1,270 managed pubs and, as a result of the Ei purchase, 3,200 leased and tenanted businesses.

Ei itself had been founded, as Enterprise Inns, in 1991, initially with 333 pubs from Bass. The company built up its estate, gaining 2,200 pubs in batches by buying them from other companies or taking them over. In 2002, 1,864 pubs were bought from Whitbread and in 2004, 4,054 from Unique. By this time, it owned nearly 10,000 pubs and was in the FTSE 100 list of top companies. However, it was loaded with debt and the 2008 financial crash required a good deal of retrenchment. Ei also started building up its managed estate, including pubs on retail agreements under the Craft Union brand (we'll look at this operating model in the next article). By the time of the sale, it was down to fewer than 4,000 pubs.

PUNCH TAVERNS

The first article included a brief history of Punch to illustrate the volatility around pubco development. In summary, it grew quickly to around 8,000 pubs, suffered under the crash, sold a lot of pubs including its managed division and was taken over in 2016. 1,900 pubs went to Heineken and 1,300 to Patron Capital, who retain the Punch brand. At takeover time, all pubs were leased or tenanted but it's also now pushing retail agreements (which it calls Management Partnerships). Some pubs were sold but in June 2021 it announced the purchase of Youngs' tenanted division, bringing the current total to 1,282.

ADMIRAL TAVERNS

Admiral was founded in 2003 by two families and grew quickly to 2,300 pubs by 2007. Many of these were 'bottom end' houses disposed of by other pub companies. The financial crash had the usual consequences for over-extended businesses and numbers were down to 1,700 by 2011 and continued to fall. By 2017 it was in the hands of Cerberus Capital Management who sold up to a joint venture by Magners cider-makers C&C Group and estate investor Proprium Capital Partners, by which time there were 845 pubs. The acquisition trail was hit in 2019 with 137 pubs coming from Marstons and 150 from Heineken. The big one arrived in July 2021 when Admiral bought 674 Hawthorn pubs from property firm New River taking the estate to over 1,500.

Admiral's pubs are all tenanted or leased and tend to be wet-led community operations. It has a relatively good reputation in the trade though there's certainly no aversion to flagging off pubs as 'development opportunities'.

STAR PUBS & BARS

In 1995, Scottish & Newcastle, one of the original 'Big Six' breweries, bought another of them, Courage, making the combined group Britain's biggest brewer. By 2011, the pub arm, then known as S&N Pub Co, had 1,500 tenanted pubs and 600 in management. Come 2008, Scottish Courage was gobbled up by international brewer Heineken and the pub business rebranded as Star Pubs & Bars. Many pubs were sold but then, in 2017, as previously mentioned, 1,900 were snapped up from Punch. Again there were disposals and the estate currently stands at 2,500.

Star vigorously promote their retail agreement scheme, Just Add Talent. In 2020, it was fined £2m for breaches of the Pubs Code (which we'll cover in a later article)

GREENE KING

In 1995, Greene King was a long-established family brewer with 900 pubs, nearly all in East Anglia and the South-East. It then embarked on a ferocious acquisition trail, swallowing up many breweries (the likes of Morlands, Belhaven, Morrells and Hardy & Hanson) and other pub companies. GK itself is now owned by a billionaire Hong Kong property developer. It has some 3,100 pubs, restaurants and hotels, of which 1,200 are tenanted or leased. Its strategy seems to be to move in the managed direction and the 'Pub Ready' retail agreements are pushed hard. GK was once renowned for not letting other people's beers in its pubs but now have a more enlightened attitude.

MARSTON'S

The company was known as Wolverhampton & Dudley until 2007 when it rebranded as Marston's, one of the many breweries it had taken over in recent years. At that time, 2,500 pubs were owned but the total is now down to 1,400. The tenanted estate, in particular, has been reduced through sales such as 200 to New River in 2013 and 137 to Admiral in 2019. In late 2020, the company took on the running of 156 Brains pubs in Wales. Also that year, Marston's merged its brewing operations with Carlsberg but this does not directly affect the pub business.

MITCHELLS AND BUTLERS

Formed originally out of the old Bass estate, M&B have 1,650 pubs and restaurants. The multitudinous brands include Ember Inns, Toby Carveries, Nicholsons and All Bar One – as can be seen, the emphasis is on food. Pubs are mostly managed though around 50 are on a lease arrangement.

J D WETHERSPOON

Since opening its first pub in 1979, 'Spoons has expanded to 925 pubs and 50 hotels, all managed. Plans for 18 new pubs are in the pipeline.

WELLINGTON

Owned by the billionaire Reuben Brothers, the company leases all its 850 pubs on a free of tie basis

CAMRA HQ

SOME HISTORIC PUBS AND INNS OF CUMBRIA

HOSTELRIES WITH LINKS to the past are readily appreciated by Cumbrians and visitors alike. Here are some you may not know about:

THE WHEEL at **GREAT FLOSBY** commemorates the legend that it was a local neolithic farmer, Mr Ig, who first invented the wheel (actually it was his wife). Unfortunately, he then bankrupted himself when he became addicted to roulette. The local Rotary Club meets here.

BOWHAVEN was a flourishing seventeenth century port. **THE RALEIGH** commemorates the landing of Walter Raleigh back from his first trip to the New World when he boastfully displayed the materials he had brought back to the regulars in the inn. One of them, he said, tasted really good when baked, roasted, or turned into chips. The fumes from the other one could be pleasantly inhaled through a smoking device. He was slung out when it was discovered that fish and tobacco chips were not very nice and that mashed potato clogged up the pipe.

THE HIGHWAYMAN in **COCKERWICK** commemorates a stopping off point for Dick Turpin on his epic ride from London to York, soon after he had miserably failed his GCSE in Geography.

THE SHEEPISH VICAR in **CROSBY RAVENSWORTH** alludes to the Rev Sidney Swann, a local incumbent and aviator, who crash-landed and killed a sheep nearby in 1910.

Particularly in the summer, aficionados of nineteenth century cultural history flock to **THE DANDELIONS** at **GRIZEMERE** famous as a drinking spot for writers like Lord Biro and his friends. A few yards up the road is the parish church and visitors usually like to pay respect to the remains of the well known poet William Wordsworth which lie under a large stone cross. (He was killed in 1841 when a large stone cross fell off the church roof on top of him.)

THE GOAT AND DONKEY in **FLIMBOROUGH** is near the place where these two animals were the last to be found guilty of witchcraft in the North of England. That happened in 1986....

Few would disagree with the notion that the personality and enthusiasm of the licensee can have a major effect upon the tone and reputation of a pub. If you visit **THE STAR CHAMBER TAVERN** at **ENNERHASSET** you will very soon realise that the landlord is completely obsessed with every detail of the reigns of Henry VII from 1485 through to the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603. Indeed, he was so determined that his son would do well in his paper on Sixteenth Century English History that he paid for him to have his own individual Tudor.

Historical memorabilia are a powerful attraction for several Cumbria pubs. For instance, **THE LONG NOSE** at **FIBSTY** possesses the very jockstrap worn by Boudicea at Jutland.

A recently renamed pub, **THE BREXIT** (previously The Smugglers) is in the rapidly expanding hamlet of **NETHER WHITECLIFF**, and has just been chosen as the UKIP Pub Of The Year. There is an old legend of a secret passage from the beach to the cellars, but none of the twenty-seven Slovenians whom I met when I tried to explore knew anything about it. The landlord, Kaspar Janovic, said his pub was extremely successful and he betted me that the area would have its own MP by 2030...

Chris Hale

LANDLORDS PUT your PUB on the MAP

Did you know that” WhatAles”

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- All local Tourist Information offices
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contact the contact.whatales@gmail.com

Your Pub Name

your pub address tel no.

www.yourpub.co.uk



Your opening times

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Home cooked food served:

Monday - Friday:

12.00pm - 2.30pm &

5.30pm - 8.30pm

Saturday & Sunday lunch :

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