

BOLTON BEER BREAKS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE BOLTON BRANCH OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

SPRING 2015

ISSUE No.11



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Awards for Great Ale, the V&A and Bank Top

An update on Blackedge brewery improvements

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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to another edition of Beer Breaks.

Since our last issue, as I am sure you all know, there has been a change in government. This will not effect the ways in which CAMRA nationally will campaign. The national AGM is where national issues are discussed, ruminated and formulated. More than 1,200 CAMRA members attended the conference this year in Nottingham between 18-19 April and debated and voted on 20 motions about issues affecting the beer and pub industry, as well as CAMRA's future campaigning. Decisions were taken to support the practice of serving real ale from 'key-kegs' and to recognise cider with whole fruit and spices as 'real' were passed, whereas motions that advocated CAMRA distancing itself from wider beer industry initiatives were rejected. Members clearly voted in support of an inclusive approach to the beer industry, reaffirming that the Campaign is about the promotion and championing of real ale, and providing a choice for drinkers, rather than outright opposition to other types of beer. The Conference expressed the strong opinion that denigrating other types of beer should not form part of the Campaign's active advocacy of real ale. CAMRA members also voted to campaign against the unfairness of the Late Night Levy, which sees well-run community pubs unfairly charged to pay for the extra policing required in town centres to cope with anti-social behaviour caused by late-night venues and night clubs. All this adds up to some important campaigns to come.

In this issue, news from our 3rd beer festival and an interesting account of what it means to volunteer and work at such an event. Awards abound for the **Victoria & Albert** (Bolton pub of the Year) **Great Ale ...at the Market** (Spring pub of the Season) and an international award for **Bank Top Brewery**. The Wanderer takes us to Horwich and we have news of success for the ever popular **Blackedge**.

Finally, I would like to congratulate our chair, Gill Smart, who, along with her day job at Bolton University, is to be ordained by the bishop of Manchester in the cathedral, on June 28th, from when she can officially be called the Reverend Doctor Gill Smart. Well done to her.

*Cheers,
Jez Wadd*

Last date for submission of articles or adverts for the next issue is 8th August

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All initial enquiries to Bolton Trading Standards are taken by the Citizens Advice consumer helpline - **08454 04 05 06**

<http://www.bolton.gov.uk/website/pages/Tradingstandardsadvice.aspx>

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230 Hatfield Road,
St. Albans,
AL1 4LW

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To advertise contact Cliff Burgess on 07717028677

BEER FESTIVAL VOLUNTEER - GO FOR IT!

Having attended Beer Festivals for many years as a punter I decided it was time to become gamekeeper and be a volunteer.

A huge amount of meticulous planning and organisation takes place ahead of the event including the drawing up of a rota by the staffing officer to ensure that all areas and sessions are manned adequately whilst providing an opportunity for volunteers to experience the various duties.

I arrived Thursday evening and was handed my credentials - a name badge and a Volunteer T Shirt. My first task was on the door - Meeting & Greeting customers offering general guidance whilst handing out wristlet bands which allows secondary access should they need to leave the venue temporarily. At this point you also record entry and egress on counting devices to control numbers in the hall at any given time. This is mandatory for Fire Regulation purposes. Doorman duties also includes handing out carrier bags for Festival glasses for customer convenience and to ensure departing patrons do not incur the wrath of the local constabulary.

Next up I worked on the Cider bar. I know next to nothing about cider aside from if you drink too much of it you tend to fall over. I was fortunate enough to be nursed through by local CAMRA branch Cider Officer who happily shared her great expertise as and when required.

On Friday I initially worked on the door before a spell returning the £2 deposit on Festival glasses which are then placed in the glass washer. Not a glamorous task but it provides an opening to chat to like-minded individuals, mostly about beer and wave off visitors who without exception when questioned confirmed they had enjoyed the occasion.

My next assignment provided a chance to rest my legs as I sold the £5 strips of Beer tokens whilst advising customers that unused tokens could be cashed in or preferably donated to the Festival charity Bolton Hospice.



I continued my learning curve on the Cider bar before eagerly accepting an invitation to serve Real Ale on the Beer bar. By now it was 19:30 and the hall was very busy. This was *hard core*. It was difficult locating all the beers at first but the merrymakers showed great patience and good humour without a hint of criticism. I was admittedly a tad relieved when my shift was complete but I absolutely loved the experience.

I finished off on the door waving off happy departing revellers with their obligatory carrier bags. I wasn't involved on Saturday but returned on Sunday for "Take Down" of the vast amount of kit required to run a beer festival. This is physical work but not too demanding and provided an opportunity for a de-brief and to bid farewell to other recruits.

I would heartily recommend the event to any CAMRA member who fancies helping out. You can commit to as many or few shifts as



you choose and stipulate which jobs appeal or you wish to avoid. Festival volunteers are afforded regular breaks, provided with a glass and encouraged to partake of a little light refreshment gratis as a thank you for their endeavours. All who attend are enthusiastic and allow newcomers to become competent at a suitable pace in a hassle-free environment. Will I back next year? - You bet - it certainly beats my daytime job!

Thanks to everyone who attended our 2015 Festival – it was a great success!

We managed to sell out completely, and if you were with us on Saturday evening, and felt disappointed, we can only apologise. There was a considerable range of ales to try along with, what proved to be very popular, a varied selection of ciders & perries. There were Ukrainian and continental bottled beers available, which also went well.

The festival was opened officially by ex Bolton Wanderers star and local licensee, John McGinlay (pictured right with Cliff Burgess). We are very grateful for the patronage of such a Bolton legend and wish him well.

There should be a special thank you to all our sponsors. These ranged from sponsoring a barrel, our staff t-shirts to the bar. Particular mention should go to Great Ale Year (now renamed), Blackedge, Irwell & Bank Top breweries and of course the Ukrainian Club. The unstinting help, endless good cheer and relentless enthusiasm from all at the club makes the business of running a beer festival, so much easier.



None of this could have happened without the staff. All of them were volunteers, who gave of their own time. There is always a small team of dedicated volunteers, who organise the entire festival. They all know who they are, so I will not name check all of them. However it should be acknowledged that all of this would not have happened without them. In fact they are already organising next years festival!

The charity of the festival, Bolton Hospice, has benefitted to the tune of over £300, thanks to your generosity, and the proceeds of the raffle.

BEST BEERS 2015

Dark Beer of the Festival :

Tainted Love – **Angel Ales**

Pale Beer of the Festival:

Bibble – **Wild Beer**

Overall Beer of the Festival :

Tainted Love – **Angel Ales**

Cider / Perry of the Festival:

Blakeney Red Perry – **Butford Organic**



2016 Bolton CAMRA Beer Festival – 14-16 April

See you there!

A Wetherspoons Marathon

Not many crackpots would visit six Wetherspoons in one day but recently I did precisely that. You may well ask, dear reader, why anyone should dream up such an idea. Well the answer is simple; my drinking partner in crime, Jack, and I have often chuntered about the predominance of higher strength beers in Bolton's Spinning Mule. Accordingly I decided to conduct a snap survey to see if this was the case in other Wetherspoons in our area.

Thus it was that, taking advantage of a pleasant autumn morning, I bounced into the Spinning Mule at 9:45am and discovered to my amazement that, most unusually, nine out of the twelve beers on tap were under 4.5%. I was tempted to sample Three B's "Santa's Skinful", but chickened out and opted for a mug of Lavazza coffee instead.

A train from Trinity Street station whisked me in no time to Westhoughton - a.k.a "Owfen" or "Keawyead Country" - and a leisurely 10 minute stroll took me to the Robert Shaw, which was pleasantly full of elderly "Owfeners" enjoying a good chinwag over their mid morning beers. Just two out of the six beers were under 4.5% so I plumped for Thwaites "Yule Love It". Well I didn't, but it was good beer in top condition and merited a score of 3.

The train journey from "Owfen" to Wigan Wallgate takes a little over ten minutes, so in no time I found myself in The Moon Under Water, which was also pleasantly full of drinkers and, by this time, diners. Only four of the ten beers on tap were under 4.5%. this time I did sample

Three B's "Santa's Skinful", which was drinkable but nothing to write home about so I gave it a score of 2.

The next port of call, thanks to the efficiency of Northern Rail, was the Bulls Head Hotel, a short stroll from Walkden Station. It was very busy with lunchtime drinkers and diners, but unfortunately there was only one person serving at the bar! A customer waiting very patiently next to me sympathised with the barmaid, whose reply was "a guys supposed to be helping me but I haven't seen him for half an hour". A truly shocking state of affairs at a peak period. Four out of the seven beers were under 4.5% and it was good to see no fewer than five Moorhouses beers were available. I opted

for Black Cat, but only gave it a score of 2. The tall chairs and tables made the place a bit cramped but, unlike Bolton's gloomy Spinning Mule, it was airy and well lit.

The other attractions of "Wogdin" didn't particularly appeal to me - not even the hallowed Oval cricket ground out of season - so I boarded a train to Salford Crescent.

On the way there I wondered whether to do Chorley & Leyland Wetherspoons or those at



Blackburn & Darwen. At Salford Crescent I only had a few minutes wait before a Clitheroe train rolled, so on I jumped and after a smooth ride got off at Blackburn and quickly reached The Postal Order. Here only three of the eight beers were under 4.5%, but in this pub I drank the best beer of all six Wetherspoons visited; Coachhouse Gunpowder Mild at a truly wonderful £1.79 per pint and well worth a score of 4.

Finally to The Old Chapel at Darwen, a superb Victorian building beautifully converted, but where much of the seating is uncomfortable. Three of the six beers were under 4.5%; Three B's Bee Blonde, Northern Sky from Dunscar Bridge and Ruddles Best Bitter. I fancied none of these so I cleared off quickly, knowing that the Hopstar brewery tap was just nearby. In Bar 39 to round off my day I enjoyed Smokey Joe's Black Beer, Lancashire Gold and J.C., all in tip-top fettle, after which I floated contentedly back to Bolton on the No.1 bus.

To conclude, a few final points.

I once took French friends into a Wetherspoons in Aberdeen and their comment was "c'est le supermarché des pubs" and this seems a pretty fair judgement; you have to accept a certain uniform blandness. Service at nearly all the pubs was very good, the exception being at Walkden, where the service was, alas, all too typically poor. Nowadays Wetherspoons are cramming more and more of the dreaded tall tables and chairs into their pubs but most punters don't seem to mind.

Finally, in some Wetherspoons they place a little jar of beer in front of every hand pump so that we can see the colour of the beer – an excellent idea – but in many pubs "bar flies" will insist on standing right in front of the hand pumps so that others can't have a proper look at the pump clips.

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Pub News

The Branch recently voted the Victoria and Albert (V&A) on Lee Lane in Horwich as Pub of the Year for 2015. The award was based on consistent quality and range of real ale and cider



served throughout the year as well as good service and value for money. Many congratulations to Dave and his team. Second place went to last year's winner Bank Top Brewery Tap and third to the Hen & Chickens.

Branch Cider Pub of the Year went once again to Bank Top Brewery Tap in Astley Bridge. 6 real ciders are usually available.

Branch Pub of the Season for Spring 2015 went to Great Ale Year Round in Bolton Markets. The bar is now run by Steve and Anne Simms and who have recently expanded the size of the bar, begun to serve food and extended hours until 7:00pm on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. They have also renamed the bar Great Ale at the Market. It has an ever changing range of beers on two handpumps, mostly from local breweries.

The Brewery Bar, owned by and attached to Blackedge Brewery in Hampson St Horwich, is now open. It is a handsome refurbishment of a previously unused building and serves 6 real ales, usually showcasing wonderful Blackedge beers straight from the brewery. Guest beers are occasionally available and there are a number of real ciders. Opening times are limited to Friday 4-10pm and Saturday 2-10pm, although this may need to be extended if the bar's early success continues.

Elsewhere in Horwich former Branch Pub of the Season, the Bowling Green has closed. Whether it will open again as a pub is uncertain. Licensees Jason and Nicola Monks have moved to take over the Jolly Nailor in Atherton. The Branch wish them good luck with their new venture.

The York on Newport St serves one cask ale during the week and two at weekends, mostly from the Marstons range, but there are often guests from other breweries. A recent mini-festival had ales from Okells, Harviestoun and Leeds Breweries.

The new licensee at the Blue Boar is occasionally serving real ale from the two handpumps. The Pineapple at Astley

Bridge has been closing and reopening at frequent intervals. It has now been sold by Heineken UK to Admiral Taverns with a suggestion that cask beer may become available in the near future.



To advertise contact Cliff Burgess on 07717028677

In Farnworth, the Kings Arms Hotel is up for sale. It is meanwhile remaining open with the current owners and has up to 6 cask ales on the bar and remains a place well worth visiting. The Bradford Arms has unfortunately removed its single handpump.

In Kearsley, the White Horse is a recent convert to real ale and is serving Black Sheep Bitter as a permanent fixture alongside a rotating guest which was Robinsons Dizzy Blonde on a recent visit. Up the road, the Moss Rose closed in early January, seemingly forever, but has since reopened. Cask beer is not available though. Further along, the Spread Eagle is currently closed.

In Brightmet, Withins has returned to its original name after a spell as Pizza Me, although cask ale remains absent. Tansy Green on Brodick Drive does continue to serve real ale, usually Theakstons Black Bull or Lightfoot. The Crofters Arms in Harwood has three handpumps, most recently serving Thwaites Original, Bank Top Flat Cap and Phoenix Arizona. Prices have been some of the cheapest around.



Branch Pubs Officer, Don Chattwood has been through the planning applications associated with 59 pubs that have closed in the branch area since 2009. Two pubs had no traceable planning application, both since demolished, one of these is now land for sale by Trust Inns, the other is a hole in the ground. Four Pubs are closed and boarded up and have yet to have any Planning Applications. Five pubs have been converted to full or partial reuse as A3 Cafe/ Restaurants, this does not require planning applications in itself but all have had other Planning Applications related to the change of use, one currently has a refused Planning Application. Fifteen have been converted to A1 shop or other retail units, again this does not require planning applications in itself, but all have had other Planning Applications related to the change of use. The remaining 33 pubs have all had Planning Applications related to their change of use to residential, education centres etc. Most tellingly perhaps, of the 59 pubs, only 5 sold Real ale when they closed, 45 did not (On 9 pubs there was a lack of information at the time of closure).

The Red Lion in Blackrod had a Planning Application submitted to demolish the pub and replace with housing, as had already happened on its car park, but this was subsequently withdrawn.

The Branch tries its hardest to keep up with the ever-changing pub scene. If you visit a pub, check it out on CAMRA's comprehensive pub database at whatpub.com and let us know if there are any changes required, by using the submit changes option.



Camra Members can also score the quality of the beer which will help us to decide on Branch pub awards. Alternatively email us at pubs@boltoncamra.org.uk.

BLACKEDGE BREWERY UPDATE

It has been an exciting few months at Blackedge Brewery. Firstly back in November 2014 we won a Gold award at the SIBA North Competition for our IPA in the bottled bitters category, swiftly following it up with a Bronze in the overall bottled beers category. At around the same time we were having our new 10bbl brewery plant installed at our new site on Hampson Street whilst also starting a conversion to include a new brewery tap bar venture. We had a great Christmas period with sales hugely increasing like for like from the previous year sending out 220 firkins in just over 4 days. We also had a good last night at the Tottering Temple over Christmas to thank all the customers of the bar and bottle shop. It was good whilst it lasted and we had great times at the old brewery and shop but things move on.

And so the new year started in earnest with the continuation of refurbishment works on our new brewery building. Lots of hard graft, blood, sweat & tears have been spent refurbishing the building to accommodate not only our expanded brewery but give us enough scope for expansion for the next 10 years and giving us the opportunity to showcase our beers in a new brewery tap. We decided to call the bar 'The Brewery Bar' so that people can easily identify what we are. We have 6 hand pulled beers, 5 of which will be our very own rotational beers and 1 guest beer all of which are £2.40 a pint. We stock 4 real Ciders including 2 from the local red bank Cider Company and 2 rotating guests. We also felt there was room to incorporate some craft beers as these are not readily available in Horwich so we opted in the first instance to have an imported American craft lager plus an IPA and a fruit beer. We will have Kona Longboard Island lager, Floris Framboise and Red hook Longhammer IPA on the bar for the foreseeable. Unlike our previous brewery bar we also stock a full range of spirits and fine wines and have extended our opening hours to include Friday evenings 4-10pm and Saturdays 2-10pm. We will be reviewing opening times in the near future pending the success of the bar and demand for the product and fully intend to trade Sundays and maybe Thursday evenings further along the line.

We were flattered by the support of customers both old and new on the opening weekend of the bar and everyone was very complimentary on what we had done to the place. To coincide with the opening we have also been working behind the scenes on rebranding not only our website but also our artwork for pump clips and merchandise. The new branding is in place in our bar and will be rolled out to all our customers in the near future.





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Cider and Perry News

The cider and perry bar at this year's Bolton CAMRA Beer and Cider Festival proved so popular that everything was sold out by 8:45 pm on Saturday evening. Butford Organics Blakeney Red Perry was voted cider/perry of the Festival.

The Greater Manchester Real Cider Pub Guide 2015 leaflet was issued recently. However, the list of pubs used to compile it was somewhat out of date (Ye Olde Man and Scythe being the only entry for Bolton) so an update is already being planned. Branch Cider Officers have been asked to provide an updated list of pubs in their area selling real cider and perry as soon as possible. The 5th Greater Manchester Cider and Perry Festival will take place on Friday 26 and Saturday 27 June 2015 in the Copper Face Jacks bar at the Palace Hotel, Oxford Street, Manchester. The Festival will again host the CAMRA North UK Cider and Perry Competition. There will be approximately 45 real ciders and perries on offer. Further details can be found at www.manchesterciderfestival.org.uk. If you are interested in working at the Festival, please contact Margaret Corlett at staffing@manchesterciderfestival.org.uk.



The Wanderer – O'er t' moors

On a warm sunny evening, the 125 bus drops me across the road from the Bob's Smithy (Tip: buy a very reasonably priced Horwich return ticket.) This spacious old pub, nowadays has a distinctly modern feel replete with marble bar top, which boasts 6 hand-pull real ales. I opt for a pint of one of the regular beers, Timothy Taylor Boltmaker, and a very fine drink it is too. On such a fine evening I take advantage of the more recently created beer garden, out the back of the pub.



Now a 10-15 minutes stroll toward Horwich brings me to the Blundell Arms, a gastropub, which although more popular with diners, also welcomes drinkers too. There are 3, or 4 levels, on entering from the roadside, but keep going up and bearing left until you reach the bar,



on the top level, and the reward is a choice of up to 4 beers. Having purchased a very tasty Adnams Broadside, I make my way to the grassed beer garden, which offers a fantastic view over West Bolton and beyond down to the Cheshire Gap.

A leisurely amble and I'm in the Jolly Crofters and enjoying a pint of the marvellous Moorhouse's



Black Cat. Again, the pub relies heavily on serving food, but the bar area has a homely feel for the casual drinker. And for my final pub tonight, I meander down the hill toward Horwich to arrive at the Bank Top Alehouse and a wide selection of their beers. However, I try the guest beer, a very good Peerless Triple Blonde. The pub, of course, has that distinct Bank Top House quality interior, both modern and cosy, which is nice as there's now a nip

in the air. And so, with great timing, I cross the road for the 125 bus back to town. With all that fresh air and sunshine, t'was a crackin' wander o'er t' moors, sampling good real ale, in and outside lovely pubs.

Want more information about Bolton's real ale pubs? Visit: www.whatpub.com



Guess the pub.

Two more for you to have a go at.

One is in the town centre with the other a little further out, and probably one that not many people visit, but almost certainly should (**particularly cricket lovers**)

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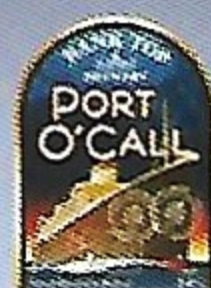
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What does a brewer do on his day off?

.....a jolly jaunt to London to the Guildhall to receive his most acclaimed and prestigious award perhaps!

On Wednesday 29 April, brewers and cider makers from all over the world gathered at London's Guildhall for the prestigious 'International Brewing Awards - since 1886' Ceremony, which marked the end of the 2015 competition and was attended by more than 400 people.

Close to 1,000 beers and ciders from a wide variety of producers from regional microbrewers to multi-national companies entered the competition which were judged back in February at Burton-upon-Trent by a panel of 43 judges who currently work as brewers or cider makers.

Ten Championship titles were awarded during the ceremony, along with further presentations of the Bronze, Silver and Gold medals being made to over 100 brewers and cider makers from 23 countries.

Dave Sweeney of Bank Top Brewery, along with his wife Angela, attended the ceremony and he was highly delighted to collect a Silver medal, Class 2 awarded to Bank Top Dark Mild in the International Cask Conditioned Ale Competition.

Dave said of the award "I am truly honoured to have this award bestowed on Bank top Brewery for its Dark Mild, the 'Copper Kettle' is an award we have strived to achieve and have done so at our 2nd attempt, it would be nice to win a Gold and a Bronze in the future to complete the set"

Dave also went on to congratulate all the winners, including Deschutes from Oregon USA who claimed a Championship hat trick, along with Marstons who picked up two Championships and Oakham Ales based in Peterborough who won Champion Cask Conditioned Ale for the second time.



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If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit by The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.
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You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

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