

# BOLTON BEER BREAKS

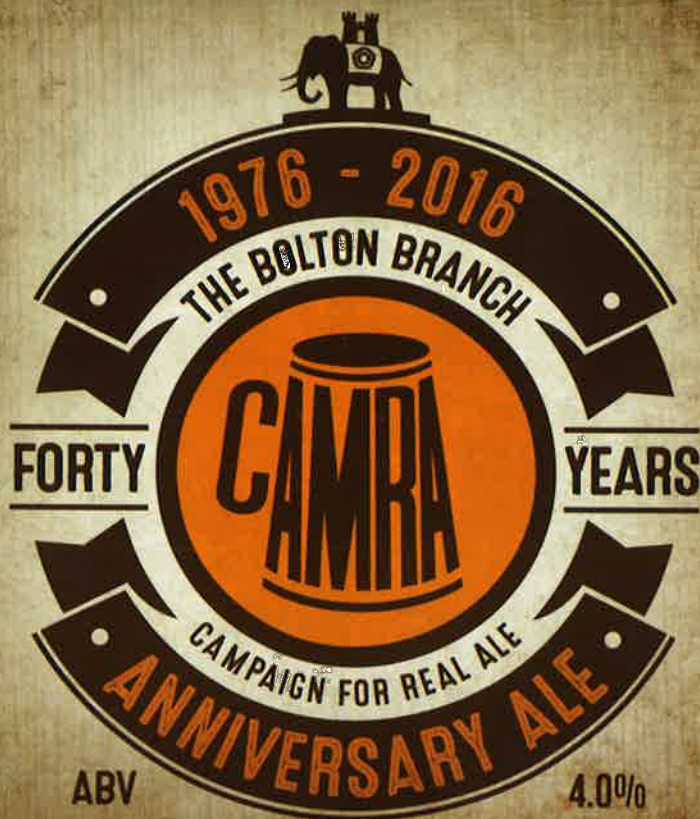
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THE MAGAZINE OF THE BOLTON BRANCH OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

Autumn 2016

Issue 15



## Also in this Issue

Welcome & Contacts, Pub & Cider News, 40th Anniversary, Presentation Awards,  
Cruel & Unusual Dispense, Bank Top, Guess The Pub & Membership Form

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# Welcome to Autumn 2016 - Issue 15

What a pleasure and honour it gives me to be Chairman of Bolton CAMRA on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Branch. I am far too young to remember its formation at the inaugural Branch Meeting in November 1976 in the Gypsy's Tent, a landmark pub now sadly long-closed. But I do know that, like all Branches, ours came about because people cared enough about saving real ale and pubs in their local area to campaign for their salvation. There are far too many to mention but I have great respect for the Chairs, officers and active members of the Branch who have played their part over the last 40 years. Thanks to all their efforts, the Branch now numbers around 800 members and has achieved many great successes.

Bolton Branch is probably more active than ever. Pub surveys are carried out across the town by members to help judging of annual and seasonal awards, updating of the fantastic WhatPub website and campaigning against damaging pub closures. Our Beer Festival, held in April at Bolton Ukrainian Club, takes months of careful planning. And not forgetting this publication, Beer Breaks, which is distributed by members to pubs across the town and beyond.

The last 40 years has seen massive changes in the beer industry, driven to a large extent by consumer pressure led by CAMRA and its passionate grassroots membership. In 1976, large brewers dominated, serving a limited choice of beer. Fast forward to today and Bolton reflects wider changes. It houses award-winning breweries such as Bank Top and Blackedge. There are even local cider producers. While numbers of pubs have dwindled, the proportion serving cask-conditioned beer and real cider has increased and the choice of styles is now better than ever.

The other day I wandered around the area where I grew up in Halliwell. The Gardeners Arms, lately Arkwrights, is now rubble, the Kings Arms now offices, the Sally Up Steps now a Thai Restaurant. But there is also Bunburys, one of the new era of microbars serving the very best of the wave of so-called craft beers. It is how CAMRA Branches respond to these changes in drinking culture which is likely to define the organisation's future and to some extent that of the industry. I am confident that real ale and real cider will continue to thrive because there are too many people in CAMRA, like those in Bolton over the last 40 years, who will demand it.

**Last date for submission of articles or adverts for the next issue is ?**

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# Pub & Cider News

## Pub News

The 2016 Good Beer Guide listed **Hen & Chickens** on Deansgate was closed by Punch Taverns on August Bank Holiday Monday. There had been a succession of temporary managers at the pub since April and many of the regulars and the Quiz teams had moved on elsewhere. As the pub is adjacent to the soon to be closed Moor Lane Bus Station rumours were rife that a 'deal' had been done with the council over the closure, but the Bolton News reported it would soon reopen, but a month later it hasn't. Punch Taverns website normally lists their pubs that are available to let, but the Hen & Chickens is yet to appear. Like in many parts of the country Punch Taverns don't have a good track record with their pubs, since 2009 in Bolton Metro 16 out of their 36 pubs have been closed. However, the good news is that the pub has been listed as Asset of Community Value by Bolton Council which provides some level of protection regarding its future use.

Other pubs recently closed are **The Railway** at Bromley Cross, **Lever Bridge** at Darcy Lever who are looking for new tenants whilst in Brightmet the **Withins** is boarded up and fenced off, future unknown. The **Blue Boar** on Deansgate was also closed in early August, here Corporate Property at the town hall are showing as the business rates account holders.

The new micropub at 88, Market Street in Westhoughton, will be called **The Beer School** and is expecting to open in early October.

Elsewhere two Fayre & Square outlets, the **Red Lion** at Over Hulton and **Cotton Kier**, off Watersmeeting Road have been converted to Hungry Horse outlets, no doubt the **Beehive** near the Macron will soon follow. The **Three Pigeons** on Wigan Road has started selling cask beer again with Sharps Doom Bar and a guest beer being available. In Blackrod Hilltops Sports and Social on Hill Lane just off the

town centre has two handpumps which sell JW Lees beers, usually including the current seasonal one.

## Cider News



I recently called in at **Butford Organics** in Herefordshire to present Martin Harris with his second 'Cider and Perry of the Festival' certificate. I can report that the Brandy Perry has matured very nicely and is still a lovely drink.



Back in the Bolton CAMRA area, the **Bowling Green** in Horwich is no longer selling real cider or perry.

# 40th Anniversary

On Wednesday November 9<sup>th</sup> 1976 Wanderers beat Burnley 2-1 at Burnden Park in the 'old' Division 2. On the other side of town at the Gypsy's Tent on Deansgate the inaugural meeting of Camra Bolton Branch was held in the upstairs room. It is not possible to repeat the football match in 2016, nor can we hold our 40th anniversary meeting in the upstairs room at the Gypsy's Tent as it has been closed for nearly 10 years now, though recently it has been sold and a Planning Application is pending to convert it into apartments, just the same fate that has happened to many other Bolton Pubs open in 1976 but which have since closed.

A Guide to Good Beer in Bolton (100 Bolton Pubs) by John Stott in 1976 (cost 20p) makes reference to 'The only real voice of the beer drinker is the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) and it needs all the support it can get. Thanks to CAMRA the brewers are no longer having it their own way. All drinkers who are seriously concerned about having true and reasonable choice in British pubs, have a responsibility to join and to actively support CAMRA. A branch of CAMRA is being set up in Bolton at the present time.'

Originally Bolton Branch which covers the same area as the council's boundaries was part of the North Manchester Branch which covered most of the northern half of what was then the 2 year old but still new County of Greater Manchester. In 1975 the Metropolitan Boroughs of Rochdale, Oldham and Bury had been devolved into a separate Camra Branch and Bolton followed suit in 1976 after a meeting to test support held in the Sweet Green Tavern had overwhelmed the then much smaller pub.

The March 1977 edition of What's Doing (The Greater Manchester Beer Drinkers Monthly Magazine) contained the first article from the new Bolton Branch.

## BOLTON BRANCH

At last, after many months of planning and organising, Bolton's own branch of CAMRA has got off the ground.

Bolton is often regarded by some members of neighbouring branches as somewhat of a desert for real ale drinkers. Although there is a certain amount of truth in this idea when Bolton is compared to some other areas of Greater Manchester, it has, nevertheless, not only got a high proportion of pubs selling real ale but also has a large number of brews available in the town centre and surrounding areas.

Bolton no longer has any of its own working breweries, the last ones to brew in the town being Mager Marshall and Company (whose Crown Brewery still stands) and Howcroft's Brewery, both of which closed in 1970. Many remnants of once popular Boltonian brews can still be seen in the form of monograms on buildings and frosted glass windows. These include such names as John Howcroft's Voluntary Brewery, Joseph Shawman's Marshall Brewery, William Tong and Sons Diamond Brewery and the Rose and Crown Brewery.

The fact that the town once had a number of its own breweries reflects in the choice the real ale drinker now has in Bolton. The brews available in or around the town centre include Boddingtons, Bass Charringtons, Wilsons, Greenall Whitbys, Tetleys, Burtonwoods and Thwaites. Farther out from the centre, Holts and Lion Ales (sadly now nearly all top pressure in the Bolton area) are available. Bolton comes close to also having a Hyde pub in its area. This arises from the fact that the border between Bolton and Bury at one point runs down the old Roman road of Matling Street. The Pack Horse Hotel (an excellent Hyde pub) stands on one side - the Bury side - while the 'unofficial' car park stands on the other, Bolton, side. Incidentally, the 'unofficial' car park is owned by a local farmer who, no matter what the weather, takes care of your car for a fee of 15p per evening. Inflation must strike all, as originally this fee was, I'm told, only 1p.

A meeting to test support for the formation of a Bolton branch of CAMRA was held in October in the Sweet Green Tavern. A room set aside for the meeting, capable of holding perhaps a dozen or so people, was seen to be completely insufficient when 30 or 40 people turned up.

A second meeting was quickly arranged for the following month at a larger venue in the Gypsy's Tent on Deansgate. On this occasion it coincided with a re-arranged midweek match at Burnden Park and consequently the meeting suffered quite heavily from this. It looked as if nothing could go wrong for the inaugural but three weeks before the meeting Tetley Walker (in one of whose houses the inaugural was to be held) went on strike! Fortunately, thanks to Harry, the landlord of the Gypsy's Tent, the meeting was blessed with Jennings beer from Cockermouth and everything went well. It could be pointed out that during the period of the strike the number of brews in Bolton could have put even the best areas of Greater Manchester to shame: such exotic brews as Jennings, Hartleys of Ulverston and Thwaites were available as well as Robinsons, Camerons and Scottish and Newcastle.

The branch has now been active for about four months and good relationships have been built up with a number of landlords in the area. The recent takeover by Burtonwoods of the Rawson Arms in Farmworth provided a good opportunity to meet officials from the brewery and to talk about Burtonwoods.

More detailed information about historical branch activities in the early days, Bolton's Pubs and their beers can be found on the branch website at <http://bolton.camra.org.uk/bolton-camra-quiz> and yes there is a quiz too.

Look out for future Beer Breaks articles in our anniversary year about Bolton Pubs, Breweries and their beers in Bolton and our Beer Festivals.





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# Presentation Awards

## Bolton Brewers Scoop Awards, Again!

Blackedge and Bank Top breweries have, once again, proved that they're amongst the very best in the North West, by winning Gold and Silver awards for their locally brewed beers!



As many of us know, the two dark beers in question (Blackedge, Black Port & Bank Top, Dark Mild) are exceptionally good, and well deserve the awards gained in: CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain, NW Regional competition. Black Port won Gold in the 'speciality' category; and Dark Mild took Silver in the 'Mild' category.



The presentations were made on our visits to Bank Top Brewery (for our August branch meeting); and Blackedge Brewery Bar, on a branch social, a week or so later.

### Photos:

Blackedge brewers, Shaun Reynolds & Wayne Roper receive their award from our Branch Chairman, Graham Walsh; and David Sweeney accepts the award for Bank Top Brewery.

## Summer Pub of the Season

Blackedge Brewery Bar won the branch vote, to become our Summer Pub of the Season, with Bar Manager Alex on hand to receive the award, when we visited in August.



Situated above the brewery, the bar serves an extensive range of Blackedge beers on cask, with the occasional guest appearing, alongside a good selection of real ciders and keg beers. A relaxed atmosphere encourages much lively conversation and the service is great.



## Beer Festival Presentations

Since the last issue, there have been two presentations to brewers, for the popularity of the beers supplied.

In early July, a small number of Bolton branch members joined our Wigan branch friends on a trip to Peakender and Thornbridge Brewery, itself. After a detailed tour of the brewery, led by head brewer Dom Driscoll, BCBF organiser, Pete Kobryn, presented Dom with the Gold Award for "Light Beer of the Festival", won by the wonderfully complex beer, Ruin.



All attendees at BCBF have an opportunity to vote for their favourite beer and cider from what's on offer; the votes are then counted and we announce the people's choice and make presentations. Branch members should look out for a couple of future presentations we have yet to make.


**BlackBeered**



Early August, a branch social trip was organised to visit Deeply Vale Brewery and Bury pubs. Brewer, James Stewart, had produced a special beer for BCBF this year, Drink Diep, a Belgian style cask ale. Whilst the branch members enjoyed drinking the two beers put on for them, by James (for free) our Chairman, Graham Walsh, presented him with the Silver Award for "Light Beer of the Festival".

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# Cruel & Unusual Dispense

Sat in a remote pub on Ireland's Dingle Peninsula in 1971 four Englishmen sat bemoaning the diminution of beer quality in their native land. The number of British breweries had been contracting for some time; the beer market and ownership of pubs had significantly gone over to the Big Six – mega brewing and pub owning corporations. These were seen as less responsive to drinkers needs and more driven by achieving huge profits – Big Brewer knew best. For the four the symbolic enemy was keg beer, usually bulked out by adjuncts and cheaper ingredients, stripped of taste this was dispensed cold and fizzy.

We spin back 10,000 years; could be China, the Middle East or our own little islands. The first cultivated grains were becoming available – usually eaten as porridge from a basket, wooden or fired clay vessel. If this porridge was left with enough water content it would spontaneously ferment producing a kind of ale or gruit – better still if the grains had malted. Brewing developments were slow and malting techniques, cask and bottle use and laboratory yeasts were millennia apart.

Forward to the 1972 and the four friends had launched the **Campaign for the Revitalisation of Ale – CAMRA** at **The Rose Inn, Nuneaton**; thousands of people quite quickly joined the movement. "Real" soon replaced "REVITALISATION" but, though catchy, could be seen as an exercise in Newspeak. Was all other beer somehow "unreal" and had we found the true creed? Well activists desperately needed to protect cherished favourites. A nuanced approach around quality and choice was hardly possible when the corporate machine seemed so determined to erase British drinking culture.

Is all of today's keg beer on par with the abominations that were **Double diamond**, **Red Barrel** and **Skol Lager**? Are those little cans of **Beavertown** or **Fourpure** the equivalent of **Longlife**? Increasing numbers of new wave brewers are turning to keg

for some of their beers, often brewing with quality ingredients and neither pasteurising or filtering the contents. Much of this beer is unfiltered (suitable for Vegans) and is served less chilled and carbonated than trad keg; furthermore the keg containing this living beer is likely to be key keg.



Bright beer is occasionally put into keykegs, but this is not the norm. Ben – the brewer at **Rivington** uses a lot of casks, but likes to "use key kegs for certain beer styles; others are better suited to casks. Key kegs are really good as there is no cleaning or collecting and we still have a 'live beer'." Ben doesn't plan on "filtering or even fining. May only filter if yeast attenuation or suspension becomes an issue in beers where we don't want the yeast flavour".

A keykeg contains a bag within a more rigid frame and the gas pressure (can be compressed air) squeezes the bag externally to deliver the beer to the tap. If the beer is "living" it will have been primed to self-carbonate, the same as a bottle conditioned beer. In choosing a real ale to go into a keykeg, the brewer may have decided, as Ben stated to me, the particular style works well with this dispense – examples would be citrusy beers, sours, high hop and high strength beers, traditional bitters and milds usually working best with cask. Commercial imperatives include the keykeg being able to be squeezed to the last drop, and, because they do not have to be returned to the brewery, left in a corner to mature.

To be continued in the next edition.

Keith Sowerby

## Finishers call to Arms Complete!



After a long-running planning battle, the Finishers Arms (Church Road, Heaton) has recently undergone a significant refurbishment, leading to it reopening late last year.

The bar has been relocated to the far end of the initial room, on entrance, and the two separate rooms to the right have been opened up somewhat, to permit easy access between them and the bar. Whilst an old curmudgeon, such as I, might lament the passing of the quaint front lounge, the overall effect of the modernisation is actually quite splendid!



The pub maintains its vibrant community feel and the local clientele on a Saturday night seemed appreciative of the alterations. Landlord, Dennis Holmes said, "We had to open up the layout of the pub so that customers can make full use of the rooms, yet still feel part of the overall atmosphere and what's going on. This refurbishment should help the pub to continue to serve the community for another 20 years."

The bar serves 4 real ales and a real cider on hand-pull; and with well-kept Bank Top and Blackedge beers available, I certainly enjoyed my pint, or 3.

<http://whatpub.com/pubs/BOL/035/finishers-arms-bolton>

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# Bank Top

Spread the word...there's a new brew in town! Dave Sweeney and the team at Bank Top Brewery are delighted to be working in conjunction with Bolton CAMRA to celebrate their 40th birthday.



As part of the anniversary celebrations Bank Top Brewery have brewed a one off ale to mark the occasion. The brief set by the Bolton CAMRA anniversary committee was to brew a traditional English bitter, this has been achieved by using a blend of English malts, a classic English hop – Challenger alongside a newer variety – Crusader producing an easy drinking bronze bitter.

The beer is available in cask and bottles, a donation of £5 for every cask sold by Bank Top Brewery will be made to Bolton CAMRA. In addition to the beer, limited edition t-shirts with the celebratory beer logo are available from size small through to 4XL at a cost of £7.50 each.

David firmly believes that CAMRA are one of the driving forces that have promoted small breweries like Bank Top to get to where they are today.

Similarly, since the inception of Bank Top Brewery Estates with their ethos of a local pub, for local people with affordable quality, a view encouraged by Bolton CAMRA, the two Bank Top Brewery Estates pubs – The Tap and the Ale House have been very well supported by Bolton CAMRA and their members, both achieving numerous CAMRA accolades since they opened in 2010 and 2013 respectively.

Bolton CAMRA continually strive to promote and elevate the reputation of traditional ales, ciders and perries, and support the national heritage and culture of our local, community public houses and clubs. Bank Top Brewery are proud to be associated with them and honored to brew their Anniversary Ale in our 21st year, so, Happy 40th Birthday Bolton CAMRA, and here's to the next forty years!

## STOP PRESS FROM EDITOR

If you haven't yet, you must track down the anniversary ale.

As Bank Top have said, it is a throwback to an original English bitter, is excellent, and a taste that would be difficult to find in many other contemporary ales.

Try it.

You will not be disappointed.

# Guess The Pub

Here are two more for you to try, one in the town centre, and one on a bus route out.

The answers from the last edition were the Lord Clyde and the Albion opposite the bus station.



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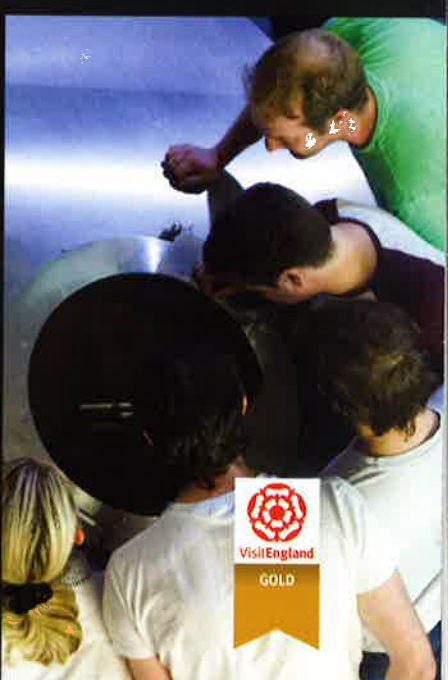
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