

# BEER BREAKS

Magazine of the Bolton Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale

Issue 4 | June - August 2013

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

UKRAINIAN CLUB  
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YEAR 2013

Bolton Beer Festival 2013

Good Day Out  
Darwen to Tockholes

Plus Much More...



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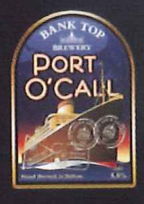


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# From the Editor

## Hello All!

Welcome back to Beer Breaks. We have all been very surprised and delighted with the way our last edition was received. The feedback was nothing but good, and I hope we can continue to keep you informed and entertained for some time to come.



Since the last issue much has changed. Nationally the Chancellor, George Osborne, announced the scrapping of the beer duty escalator. This is in no small part due to the campaigning by CAMRA members all over the UK, which involved lobbying parliament and an online petition. The number of signatures on this petition meant that parliament was obliged to debate the subject, which ultimately resulted in scrapping the initiative, along with a reduction of beer tax in the budget.

Locally, at the beginning of April, we had the first CAMRA beer festival for over 15 years. After much hard work, it turned out to be an overwhelming success. For this we can only be thankful to the many of you who turned up to support us. You can see our report in this magazine.

If you are reading this, then it is likely you are in the pub, or have been very recently. Visit Campaign Corner and see what you can do to help your local pub. If you would like to join CAMRA and become an active member, then please visit our website, or complete the application form at the back of this magazine.

Cheers,

Jez Wadd

Bolton Branch Editor



# A Good Day Out

## Richard Blagg takes us from Darwen to Tockholes

If or when we do eventually get some nice weather, I would like to suggest a short trip out of Bolton which involves public transport, a fair bit of legwork and, needless to say, ends up at a good pub.

A trip I do frequently – to the Royal Arms at Tockholes – means catching the Lancashire United bus No.1 (every 20 minutes; hourly on Sundays) to Darwen town Centre. From there work your way up to the right of the post office and up Borough Road, until you reach the entrance to Bold Venture park. Here the first thing you see is a most imposing war memorial, in front of a nice ornamental pond. From here it doesn't matter which path you take through the park – just keep going steadily and gently uphill. The paths do criss-cross here and there and if you have time it's worth lingering a while in the park to inspect the various monuments erected over a century ago by our philanthropic forebears. It makes you wonder what legacy we will leave behind for future generations; boarded up pubs maybe?

When you eventually emerge from the shady woodland paths in the upper park, a well used path will take you up to Darwen Tower. It's not a vicious climb, more of a steady uphill trudge. From the town centre it will take a comfortable 50 minutes or longer if you linger.

The tower was built to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and, with binoculars you can read the weatherworn inscription carved into the stonework. On a clear day the climb it can be rewarding to climb the 82 steps to the top of the tower to admire the views; down over Darwen, across to Holcombe Tower, then the Thwaites brewery tower in Blackburn, with Pendle Hill and Ingleborough in the background and finally to Deepdale, home of Preston North End, across Morecambe Bay, Blackpool Tower and the Lakeland fells beyond. However be warned, there is



*The Royal Arms, Tockholes*

the constant hum of traffic from the M65 below.

With binoculars you can see the Royal Arms at Tockholes if you know where to look. From the tower it is another easy 40 minutes walk. The pub opens at noon and they usually have Three B's and Hopstar beers on tap, plus one or two others. The last time I was there, I enjoyed Hopstar's wonderful Smokey Joe's Black Beer. They do serve food but, for just a snack I would recommend their homemade soups.

If you are lucky enough to visit on a weekday, at 12:58, there is a little bus, on which you can float back to Darwen. Otherwise there are paths through the fields behind the pub which lead you back to Darwen via the Sunnyhurst (a Thwaites house) and Tockholes Road.

Whichever way back to Darwen you choose, you can round off proceedings nicely at the Hopstar Brewery Tap, "No.39", between the bus station and Sainsbury's. After further refreshment there you can return to Bolton on the No.1 bus or by train if preferred.

If you do this trip, the Blackburn & Darwen A-Z and OS Map explorer 287 would be useful.

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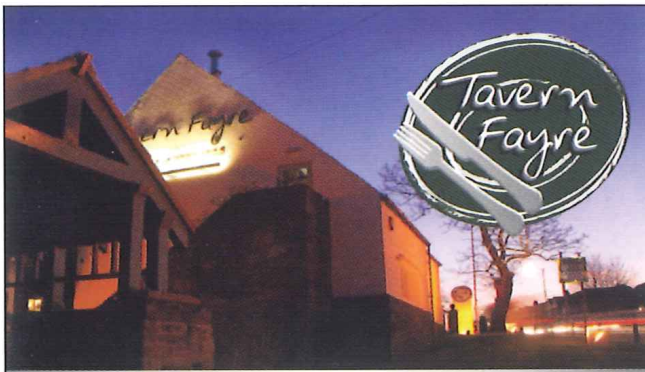




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# The Wanderer

## Stoneclough

Having caught the last bus of the day down to Stoneclough (512 at 17:35) I start my drinking in The **Hare & Hounds** with a decent pint of Joseph Holt's "Bitter" and a friendly welcome. The pub is quite large and has a long central bar dividing the space into two separate, roomy areas. The pub often has karaoke, or live music, at weekends, but I'll be off to the The Grapes before then.

The **Grapes**, another largish pub, has a central bar around which are four distinct areas. It was already quite lively with locals, when I ordered a fine Moorland "Old Speckled Hen". A strong community feel gives the pub a welcoming atmosphere.

Next up is the **Market Street Tavern**, where the, nationally available, Theakston "Best Bitter" is perfectly pleasant. A smaller pub, with two, almost completely, separate sides and the bar open to each, has a more, cosy ambience.

Finally, after a little stroll to the far end of Stoneclough, I reach the **The Horseshoe**, which serves a good range of Thwaites beers and usually a guest ale. "Lancaster Bomber" is found to be on very good form, and though the pub is very much geared toward being a food outlet (*there is a restaurant area at the back*) the casual drinker is still warmly welcomed. The bar area, on entering, has a few bar-stools, but there are two smallish rooms to either side where one might sit with a drink and chat.



On the walk back up to the main road, for a bus, I pass by an Italian Restaurant that was, until recently, The Nelson, another lost pub; but I've enjoyed my little wander and the pubs and beer here.

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# Campaign Corner

## Time to save your Local

Welcome to Bolton Beer Breaks and to one of the most exciting times in over a century - for beer drinkers at any rate. The CAMRA Good Beer Guide reports that Britain now has over 1000 breweries for the first time in over 60 years. They are producing a massive and innovative range of beers and experimenting with new ingredients and recipes. You can buy anything from dark sweet stouts to fragrant fruity pale ales fashioned from trendy American hops. Bolton itself has 3 award-winning and thriving breweries in Bank Top, Dunscair Bridge and Blackedge and there are many talented and creative brewers across the North West.

Last year, though, 15 of Bolton's pubs closed, 9 being delicensed, never to serve another pint. There are vast swathes of the town without a pub. The famous Halliwell Mile Crawl is now only a couple of hundred yards. The pubs where you could have pre-match pint on the way to Burnden Park are now no more. Indeed you can walk out of town along most of the main roads and get pretty thirsty before you reach your first watering point. This is a continuing and seemingly unstoppable trend.

*So why are so many pubs closing when they should be thriving?*

Probably the single biggest reason is that publicans are simply not given the respect and support they deserve. Running a pub is a difficult, tiring and skilled job. Publicans work not only for their businesses but also for the community. But the Pub Companies who now manage the majority of our pubs are nothing more than property companies. They are not giving their tenants the skills and freedom they need to take advantage of these exciting times. They extract high rents from landlords on short-term leases and force them to buy overpriced beer from a limited list. As a result, too many pubs have their hands tied and are forced to offer an unadventurous range of beers at high prices for little profit. Combined with ever increasing taxes imposed by the beer duty escalator and higher VAT, it's no wonder many publicans give up or end up losing their business and livelihood.

It's not all bad. Pubs that are given more of a free rein, have tenants with long term security or are run by experienced long standing publicans can exploit the best of what the brewing industry can now offer. And the beer drinker benefits as a result. Look at the Branch's recent Pubs of the Year, the Bank Top Brewery Tap and the V&A in Horwich. Or the Winter Pub of the Season, The House Without a Name in Harwood. Or the Crown in Horwich, which has been in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide for an unbroken 15 years. There are more, and your local may be somewhere you cherish.

So please support your local pub. Pop in for a pint. Tell them if their beer is good and if it's not so good. Ask them if they can stock your favourite beer. Help make them great. And make your publican's job easier by joining CAMRA and campaigning to reform Pub Company-Tenant relationships and provide fairer taxes. Pubs are

more than just transitory enterprises. They are landmarks, focal points, community centres and they can instil an area with pride and make it somewhere desirable to live. They are something an identikit mini-supermarket can never be.

Graham Walsh  
Branch Secretary



*Volunteer Inn and the Three Pigeons - now derelict*



# Bolton CAMRA Beer Festival 2013

## Jez Wadd reports on a successful festival

At the beginning of April the branch held the first CAMRA beer festival for 15 years at the Ukrainian Social Club. The decision was made at a branch meeting some 6 months earlier and a small but committed band of volunteers had the task of organising. The festival was reinstated because the branch had started to be more active with membership growing monthly, and it would give us the chance to highlight local beers and some from further afield.

The Ukrainian club was chosen for its close proximity to the town centre and the committee thought that the room would be ideal. As it turned out the room was excellent, with enough space for beers and clientele alike. During the festival, the branch was able to present the Club of the Year award to the Ukrainian Club. We were also able to provide food from Belladonna Catering thanks to the close proximity of the kitchen and eating area. In addition we were pleased to be able to invite Bolton Hospice as our supported charity.



Much discussion arose as to what beers would be on offer. Festival Bar Manager Graham Walsh explains how we ended up with the final beer list.



*"There were 44 different beers and 8 ciders/perries. The ethos was to have a range from local producers to showcase these microbreweries both to visitors from other parts of the country and to publicans who can look to stock them in their pubs. These beers included ones from Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Wigan, St Helens and Manchester, most ordered direct from the breweries. Bank Top and Blackedge produced ones especially for the Festival. A selection of beers from well respected breweries from other parts of the UK was brought in using local wholesalers Boggart and Flying Firkin. These included Fyne brewery in the Scottish Highlands, Purple Moose from North Wales, Bushys from the Isle of Man and Trawlerboys from Suffolk. An excellent range of ciders and perries,*

*from dry through to sweet, and including one from Dove Syke Cider in the nearby Ribble Valley was chosen by the Branch cider officer."*

In order to purchase the beers, a certain amount of sponsorship was required to back up the funding from CAMRA HQ. For this we must be thankful to all the local hostelries, breweries





and businesses that helped towards not just the beer but also printing of tickets and provision of staff t-shirts.

A festival like ours always requires a decent number of staff to serve beer, man the doors and myriad other tasks. Getting enough staff can be a problem, so we advertised by various means and were frankly overwhelmed by the response. Staffing Officer Gill Smart takes up the story: *"We had forty one volunteers from ten different CAMRA branches helping to staff the beer festival. Volunteers came from as far away as Formby in the west and York in the east. Many were old hands at beer festivals, including the bigger festivals like NWAFF and GBBF. We also had staff who had never worked a festival in the past. Our staff were brilliant, all did everything asked of them, including working on the door in freezing temperatures without complaint. All who worked said they enjoyed working at our friendly Bolton CAMRA beer festival with many saying they will be happy to work again next time."*

After months of organising, buying the beer, publicising the event and all the hard work setting up the room all we needed was the customers to arrive. We had targets for each of the sessions and I am glad to say we exceeded all of these. It was the first time I had been involved with any beer festival and I was constantly amazed by who came through the door. There were the usual people you would expect, archetypal ale drinkers. But in addition there were pensioners out to enjoy the beer, young professional couples, students and some who stopped in after work. We even had celebrity on the Saturday night as the actress Maxine Peake sat quietly in the corner. The overwhelming response of most of those who attended was positive. The few moans were about the temperature of the room, but that was possibly down the outside temperature being very low indeed. People commented that it made the beer taste better as the room appeared to be at "cellar temperature".

Some of the beers proved to be more popular than others, with a surprising proportion of customers going for the darker drinks, with overall beer of the festival being DV8 Stout, from the Bury based Deeply Vale Brewery. Described as *"Stout wi' clout! A moreishly delicious breakfast stout"*, it proved to be as tasty as the notes predicted. Many of the lighter beers were enjoyed by those not inconsiderable numbers who were new to real ales. The overall pale beer of the festival was Fyne Avalanche, although a personal favourite of mine was the Saltaire Elderflower Blonde - fruity and

refreshing. The real ciders were more popular than expected, with them being all but sold out. Overall cider of the festival was Gwatkins Foxwhelp.

We were concerned whether we would have the right amount of beer. Too much and there would be unnecessary wastage, not enough and the customers would be empty handed. This turned out to be unfounded as we were able to serve customers until final closing on Saturday evening, although with very limited choice, and approximately 5% of the ale remained unsold.

The final word goes to the organiser of the festival, Pete Kobryn

"Well, that was a Beer Festival! The overwhelming response was positive: great range of beers and ciders; great quality of beers and ciders; and a great atmosphere!

Of course, there were one, or two, niggles, but we've taken them on board and will look to address these. However, the fact that over 70% of our beers received at least one vote for 'Beer of the Festival' suggests that, whatever your personal taste, your beer was of good quality. And our caterers did us proud with some quality food."

Congratulations to our overall winner 'Beer of the Festival': Deeply Vale, DV8

Once again, we should all be grateful to the small dedicated team of volunteers who gave so much of their own time and energy to bring the festival to fruition; as well as all those volunteers who staffed the festival throughout. Thanks, too, to all our sponsors and backers.

So, here's to Bolton CAMRA Beer Festival 2014! See you there.

**Twitter: BoltonCAMRAbeerfest - @BoltonCAMRAbeer 9 Apr**

@YorkshireAles: @BoltonCAMRAbeer some of our friends came they had a great time! Maybe we may make it next year! Cheers good to hear! :)

HouseWithoutAName - @HouseWithNoName 7 Apr  
@BoltonCAMRA @boltoncamrabeer went on Thursday. Had a great time. Roll on next years! #realale

Rebecca Nicholl - @rebeccanicholl 6 Apr  
So, @BoltonCAMRAbeer was a success. Went for a couple, came home nine hours later

Deeekos - @Deeekos 6 Apr  
Thanks to all staff @BoltonCAMRAbeer on the bar, the stalls, the door and the food. A good time was had by all.

flatcapsandmild - @flatcapsandmild 5 Apr  
First outing for a while to @BoltonCAMRAbeer where I am drinking a particularly fine @DeeplyVBrewery DV8 stout. #darkside Windsor&Eton Brewery Treetops Africa Stout must be the most imperialistically colonial beer ever. Bloody good tho #darkside @BoltonCAMRAbeer



# Real Cider & Perry in Bolton

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Since taking over as Branch Cider Officer, I have been compiling a list of pubs in Bolton which regularly serve real cider or perry. I am hoping that readers will be able to help by providing details of pubs in their area so that the list can be kept up to date.

Last March, when we voted for Branch Cider Pub of the Year 2012, we had the following list to choose from:

<b>Bolton Town Centre:</b>	<b>Ye Old Man &amp; Scythe; The Spinning Mule; The Alma; The Sweet Green Tavern</b>
<b>Horwich:</b>	<b>The Original Bay Horse</b>
<b>Westhoughton:</b>	<b>The Robert Shaw</b>

By the time this year's vote took place, we were able to add **The Bank Top Brewery Tap**, which had introduced a hand pump dedicated to cider/perry. Although only one real cider or perry is available at any one time, drinkers have been able to sample an impressive range from producers such as Gwynt y Ddraig, Burrow Hill, Chant Cider, Broad Oak, Dove Syke and Ledbury Cider. Branch members were sufficiently impressed to elect The Bank Top Brewery Tap as **Branch Cider Pub of the Year 2013**. The pub received its award on Tuesday 16 April.

Two more recent additions to the list are **The Bowling Green** and **The Victoria and Albert** in Horwich.

Cider and perry proved popular at the Bolton CAMRA Beer Festival in April, where the best part of 160 litres was sold. The range of styles available went from very sweet through to very dry and sales were spread fairly evenly across the styles.



*Bank Top Brewery wins the Bolton Branch Cider Pub of the Year 2013 Award*

Gwatkin's Foxwhelp was voted Cider/Perry of the Festival. This is a very dry cider made only from Foxwhelp apples, an old cider apple probably native to Hereford/Gloucestershire border.

In case anyone is not sure what qualifies as a real cider and perry, here is a summary of the current CAMRA definitions.

- Cider and Perry should be fermented from non-pasteurised apple or pear juice (not concentrate) using the sugar naturally occurring in the fruit.
- The process should not involve pasteurisation or microfiltration.
- No added flavourings or colourings should be used (including other fruit).
- The product should not be artificially carbonated or served under gas pressure.

*If you have any information on the availability of real cider and in Bolton, please contact Alison on [cider@boltoncamra.org.uk](mailto:cider@boltoncamra.org.uk)*

**Alison Whitaker**  
Cider Officer



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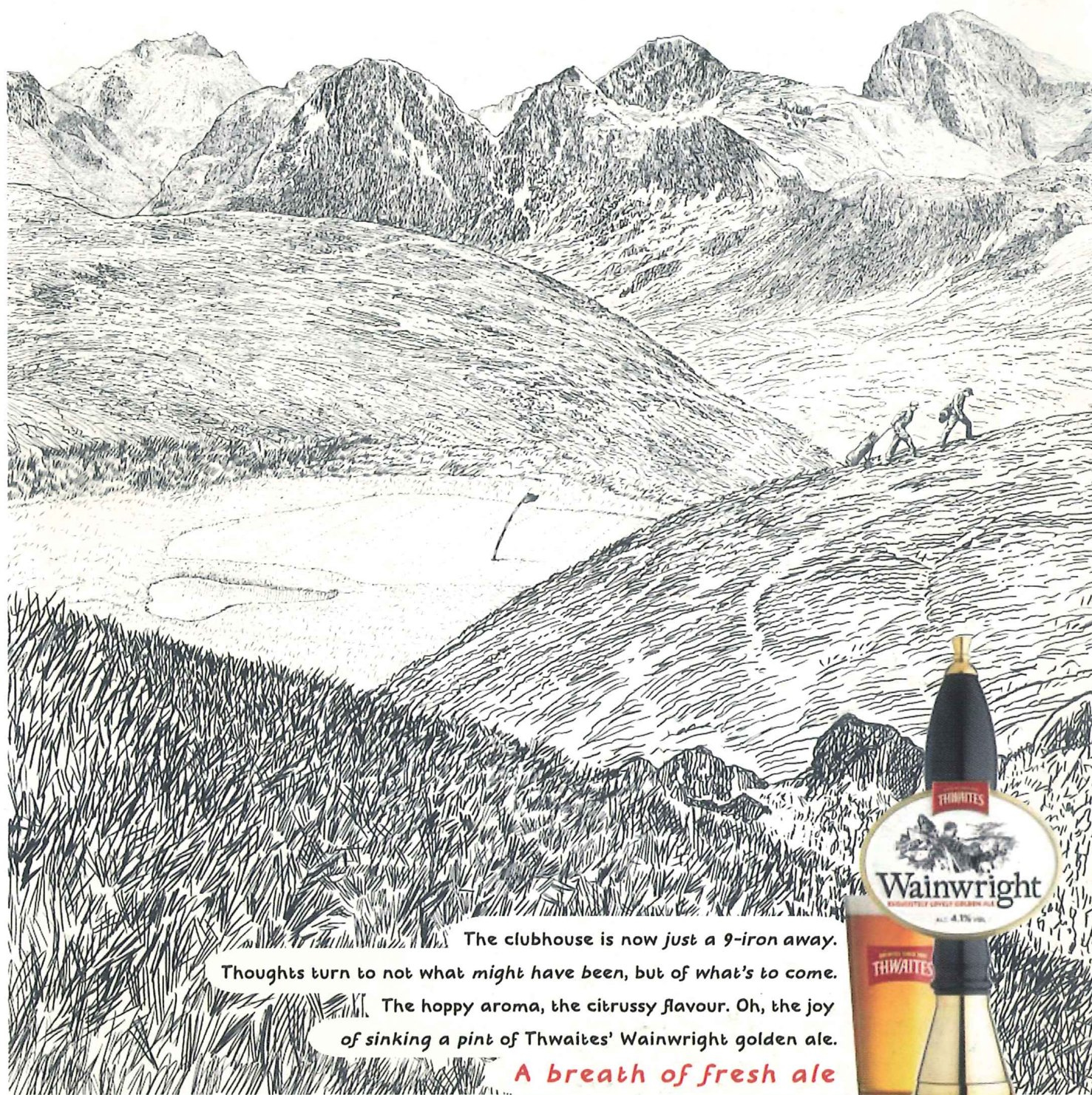
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*A breath of fresh ale*