

BEER BREAKS

Magazine of the Bolton Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale

Issue 5 | September - November 2013

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

HORWICH TRAIL
Four pubs, two presentations
& a Brewery visit

**REBIRTH OF A
LOCAL HERO**
Three Pigeons is saved
Plus Much More...



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From the Editor

Hello All!

Welcome to Beer Breaks. I am fortunate to have just returned from a break in Belgium, where the attitude to brewing and brewers is entirely different to the UK.

While there are still the major brewers including Stella Artois and Jupiler, there are myriad smaller breweries all dedicated to the art of brewing beers of many strengths and varieties. Allied to this is the fact that almost any small bar or café will serve a selection of local beers, available by bottle or tap. The drinking culture is somewhat different, but if UK pubs and cafes were able (willing?) to adopt a similar outlook to beers and ales, then it would be no bad thing at all.

That said, it would appear that the number of pubs and clubs selling real, and local ales is slowly increasing. Whether or not this is due to a backlash against some of the larger brewers or simply catering to the tastes of the public is difficult to say. Either way it augurs well for the future.

In this issue we look at one of the stalwarts of selling real ale, the Crown in Howich. It has been in the good beer guide every year for the last 15 years, which is quite some achievement. You can find out about plans to renew an old pub, to sell more real ales and find out about how the good beer guide is formulated.

Enjoy the read and spread the word.

Cheers,

Jez Wadd
Bolton Branch Editor



STOP PRESS

See the back cover for latest news of our 2014 beer festival

Four pubs, two presentations & a brewery visit

Gill Smart



Crown Hotel, Horwich

On a bright Saturday at the end of May about twenty of us from Bolton CAMRA met at the Crown Hotel in Horwich for a trail and brewery visit. We were there to acknowledge fifteen consecutive years in the Good Beer Guide, an amazing achievement. The Crown is a Holts pub with bitter and mild always available plus seasonal beers from the Holts range. The Two Hoots was on great form, as always, and a good way to start the day. We were also treated to a buffet lunch by the landlord Gary and Bev so thanks to them for their hospitality.

We then made the short walk to Blackedge Brewery where the brewers Wayne and Sean along with their wives Rowena and Kerry made us very welcome. The beers on offer were the superb BLACK, a rich velvety stout, a wheat beer, and BLONDe, a full flavoured blond beer. An informative tour of the brewery was given by Wayne along with the history of the brewery and their recent

move to the new larger premises. We were able to sit outside the brewery in the warm May sunshine swapping yarns and drinking the beer. Reluctantly we left Blackedge and made the short journey to the Original Bay Horse (known locally as the 'Long Pull'). A good selection of ale with a mild, maybe Moorhouses Black Cat and a bitter, from J W Lees along with a couple of changing guests a real cider. Moving on again for another short walk, you don't have to go very far at this end of Horwich to find a real ale pub, we arrived at the Bowling Green. A good selection of ever changing real ales is always on offer with the following selection found on the bar recently Privateer Vanilla, Hornbeam Galaxy Pale and Voyager, Marble Pint and Red Bank Cider.

Finally our last port of call was the Victoria and Albert for the presentation of Bolton CAMRA pub of the year 2013, a worthy winner for the second consecutive year. We were welcomed by Dave



Blackedge Brewery, Horwich



Bowling Green, Horwich

and his staff who not only served us with beers from the ever changing range but also plied us with food. Not only was this the presentation but it was also the announcement that the V&A had become the official brewery tap for Blackedge brewery. Since Wayne and Sean started brewing in early 2011 Dave has always been the first to try out new beers from the Blackedge stable, so it seemed logical that the two businesses formed this link. Drinkers will find beer from the Blackedge range, a Moorhouses beer and three ever changing guests plus a real cider. On the bar recently were Blackedge Summer, Moorhouses White Witch, Castle Rock Harvest Pale, Deeply Vale DV8 and Golden Vale, Orkney IPA and haymaker cider.

After having our fill at the V&A most of us were ready to go home. It had been a very pleasant day spent good company with great weather added in for good measure. So good was the day that we think this will become an annual Horwich ale trail and brewery visit.

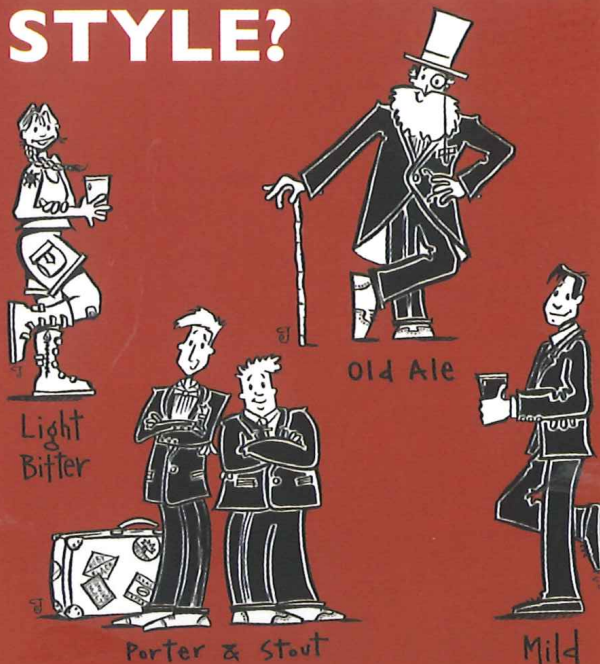


The Victoria & Albert



Gary & Bev are presented with a certificate to mark 15 years in the GBG

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The Wanderer

Egerton & Dunscar

The bus (No 1 {daytime} 538, or 539 {evening}) drops me off just beyond **The Cross Guns** where I begin my evening with a good pint of Morland "Speckled Hen", though Bank Top "Flat Cap" is also available. The pub has been refurbished recently and is now carpeted, but with a more modern feel, whilst generally maintaining its interior architecture. Live music is hosted most weekends in the "hidden" room beyond the lounge.

Within a couple of minutes I enter **The Thomas Egerton**, and have a choice of 3 Dunscar Bridge brewery beers: I plump for the pleasant "Bombay IPA". Again, refurbished not too long ago, there is a modern feel and the place is, perhaps, more geared toward serving food. However it's comfortable, and in nice weather there is a very ambient beer garden out the back.

It takes less than 5 minutes to stroll to the

Masons Arms, where upon entry I was faced with a choice of 4 beers (normally 2

Masons Arms



Thomas Egerton

nationally available and 2 from micros). I sampled a very tasty Old Mill "Blonde Bombshell". A smaller pub than the 2 previous, it has a more traditional feel and cosy ambience.

Longest walk of the night, but less than 10 minutes, was downhill to **The Dunscar Arms**. Offering a choice of 2 beers from local micros, the Copper Dragon "Sun Chaser" was on very good form. The pub has had a checkered history of recent times, but is hopefully on the up again. Open planned with a central bar, it boasts a real fire to the right side, which is very welcoming on colder nights than this.

Finally, just across the road and up the avenue, I quickly arrive at **The Flag**, which serves a range of several beers and a couple of real ciders. I sample the very refreshing Brains "Peleton". This is an altogether different pub, with many more traditional features maintained (including the flagged floor).

A swift walk back to the main road for the bus into town; but it's been another very pleasant little wander, down through the pubs and beer on offer, Egerton to Dunscar.

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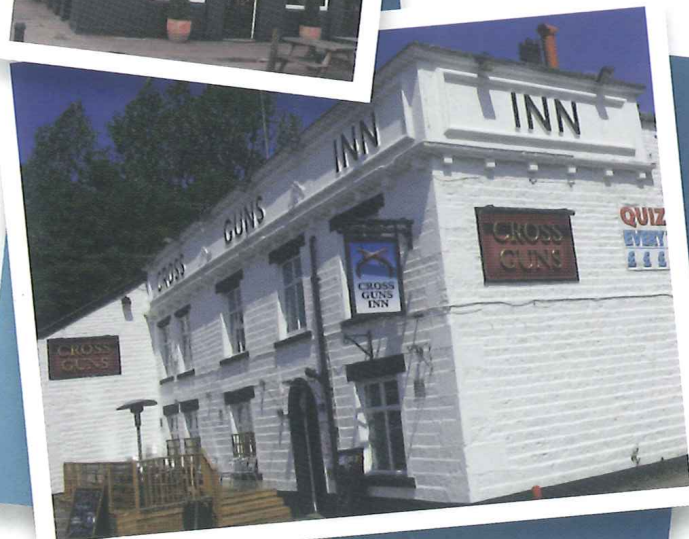
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Cross Guns

Campaign Corner

How pubs are scored

The Good Beer Guide is CAMRA's annual publication, listing pubs in each area serving real ale (and real cider if offered) to a consistently high quality.

It is not possible to list every pub in every area, so branches must decide which pubs they consider to be among the best in their area.

This is done using several criteria, and one of these is the CAMRA National Beer Scoring System (NBSS), in which members asked to give their opinions on pubs throughout the year.

It is now easier than ever to share your beer ratings in the NBSS – through using CAMRA's online pub guide, WhatPub (www.whatpub.com). You can log onto WhatPub using your CAMRA membership number and the same password you use for the CAMRA national website (if you have forgotten your password, a reminder can be requested at www.camra.org.uk).

Once you are logged on, search for the pub you want to add a score for, and enter a score for each beer that you drank in the Submit Beer Scores panel on the right of the screen. There is plenty of help and information about NBSS on the Beer Scoring tab.

A mobile version of Whatpub will be launched in August so you will be able to enter scores on your smartphone or tablet and a downloadable app will be available at a later date so you can score your beer in the pub while you drink it! If you don't have online access at all, then ask at a branch meeting for paper forms and we will enter your scores for you.

Each January a report is generated using the scores entered into WhatPub, giving the average, best and worst scores for each pub and a confidence factor based on the number of scores received. This report is one of the tools the Branch

Committee uses to draw up a list of eligible pubs for Good Beer Guide selection – the final decision is made at the February branch meeting, at which all members have a vote.

For the NBSS to work, we need as many scores as possible. We value all members' opinions, and the more scores we have the more accurate the statistics will be. Members can score pubs every time they make a visit – it is not a one-off opinion. The system operates across the country, and not just in Bolton and really is a valuable tool in building up a picture of where we can get a good pint!

If you are not a member but would like your opinions of beer quality in pubs to count, then join CAMRA – a membership form is available in this magazine.

Aidan Corcoran

CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2014

Release date 12th Sept 2013

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WHAT?PUB

The rebirth of a local hero

The Three Pigeons is saved

Back in issue No 4 - June- August 2013 we had an article in our magazine called "Campaign Corner" which was all about saving our local pubs. We are pleased to announce that one of the closed pubs featured in the article is due to be re-opened after undergoing a £250,000.00 extensive refurbishment of the property.

The Three Pigeons on Blackburn Road, Astley Bridge fell on hard times some years ago and eventually closed its doors for good in September 2011. In the good old days this popular community pub was a thriving successful establishment but coupled with the smoking ban, beer escalator (government yearly Tax on Beer as it was) and lack of sufficient maintenance trade declined and the building became dilapidated, closed down and de-licensed. The Pub then

made its sorry way to the auction house (as many do) and then probably onto a complete change of use. Well that's what was supposed to happen until a local property developer drove past and saw the auction sign and also the buildings potential. The large and imposing building was bought prior to auction by Nick Howcroft and planning consultation was then carefully carried out in conjunction with Bolton Council Planning Department and local councilors to decide the future of the property. After much discussion it was agreed that part of this large building could be converted into "The Island Apartments" (7 separate modern apartments) and the oldest part of the property dating back to 1804 would become a new public house as the planners wanted to keep some form of retail use from the building and also valued its key Landmark location within Astley Bridge.

The new proprietor then set to work at the task in hand. The whole building is currently undergoing refurbishment and the new carefully



Lawsons Arms, pic from 1900s



Three Pigeons

refurbished historic public house will be due to re-open during 2014. Mr Howcroft himself is from a family of brewers his Grandfather & Great Grandfather owned Howcrofts Brewery on Spa Road, Bolton and exported ale as far as South Africa during the mid part of the 20th Century. Mr Howcroft currently operates the successful Henighans Chain of pubs in Bolton and once the refurbishment has been completed this Sensational New Henighans Venue will create 15 new jobs for the area, boast a great range of 6 locally brewed Traditional Ales along with a large selection of competitively priced Wines, Spirits and Lagers, the pub will even feature a themed restaurant on the first floor of the building along with regular live music events at the weekends. A new name for the Pub has not yet been decided, although many years ago the pubs original name was The Lawsons Arms named after local landowners the Lawson Family from Astley Bridge. Locals believe a former Landlord of the pub decided to change the name of the public house and mistakenly identifying the three swallows adorning the Lawson coat of arms as pigeons, hence the name The Three Pigeons. The rebirth of this local

Hero deserves a fitting name so should anyone have a name in mind please contact Henighans Freehouses through there website.

It's refreshing to know that some of Bolton's oldest pubs are getting a new lease of life and that the Bolton Community will still have places to socialize, laugh and cry in this great town of ours.

For further updates and information on developments at the former Three Pigeons please check out www.henighans.com or their facebook page.



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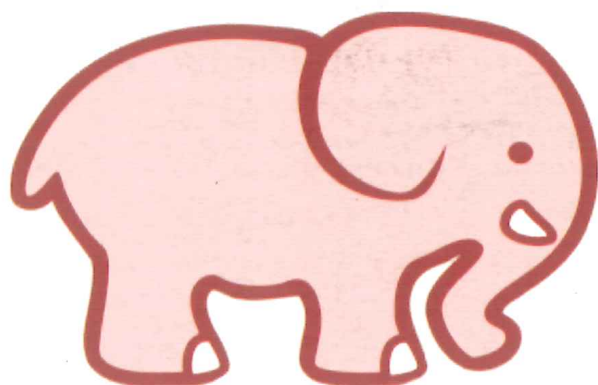
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