

RECORDS TUMBLE AGAIN!



It doesn't seem long since I last wrote these words, but it's time to write them again – "Another record breaker!" Our third outdoor **York Beer & Cider Festival** was held on York Knavesmire in September. If you didn't make it, then hopefully this review will encourage you to come along next year. If you did, then I'm sure you'll enjoy reminiscing!

We were aiming for a modest improvement on last year's successful festival – a bit more capacity, a few more beers and a few tweaks here and there. Whilst we do not chase records, and we fully appreciate that bigger isn't necessarily better, we are delighted to say that feedback so far suggests that it was mission accomplished!

For the third consecutive year, all records were broken. The key stats are as follows:

- Over 7,000 attendees (1,000 more than last year!)
- Peak attendance of over 1,500 on Friday evening
- 312 casks of real ale drunk dry
- Over 21,000 pints of real ale sipped
- Over 3,800 pints of cider and perry drunk
- Over 2,300 pints of foreign draught beer sunk
- Over 600 bottles of foreign beer helped on their way to recycling
- Over 240 bottles of wine emptied



- 47 new CAMRA members signed up
- 187 volunteer staff on the team
- The last pint of real ale was sold at 21.45 on Saturday, followed by cider and perry soon after, with the foreign beer bar and wine bar running through until closing.



The festival was kick-started with a two hour trade session on Thursday afternoon, which aimed to give local brewers and licensees the chance to chat and to try the beers, as well as allowing our volunteer staff to have a gentle introduction to work before we opened to the public. We also used this quieter time to conduct some beer tastings. We once again hosted a regional heat of the CAMRA Champion Beer of Britain competition – the Strong Mild/Old Ale category – and held our very own LocAle competition. This year's winner was **Brass Castle Bad Kitty**, brewed by Phil Saltonstall at his nanobrewery in Pocklington. No small feat when you consider that he had been brewing for only three weeks before the festival! The 5.5% beer is described as "a chewy chocolate vanilla dream of a porter" and, needless to say, it disappeared very quickly once it was announced as the winner.

Once again, the weather was relatively kind to us, except for a couple of notable events. The strong wind in the lead up caused a few problems with erecting the smaller marquee and the quite spectacular (unless you were out in it!) lightning during a thunderstorm on Friday had a bit of a disagreement with our power generator. Other than that, it was pleasant throughout, which meant that the full festival atmosphere could be enjoyed in York's biggest (albeit temporary) beer garden.

We were very privileged to have this year's festival opened by Greg Mulholland, Liberal Democrat MP for Leeds North West and Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Save The Pubs Group. His speech to declare the festival open



came on the day that Yorkshire was announced as the brewing capital of Britain, with more different beers and breweries than any other country. Rather fitting then, that Yorkshire's biggest beer festival should take place on that day in the capital of Yorkshire.

Friday saw our first live act, Two Bob, take to the stage. Rob and Bob, very popular regulars on the pub circuit, will be known to many pub-goers. Their mix of crowd pleasing covers really helped to get the festival into full swing. The atmosphere in the evening was fantastic, with droves of people coming along after work to start the weekend in style. Even the golf ball-sized hailstones pounding on the tent canvas were unable to drown out the lively hubbub of chattering and people having fun. Los Yobos followed on where Two Bob left off, with their western swing proving popular in the second tent.

Saturday was busy for most of the day, despite the beers running out at some pace (the idea is to sell it all, to be fair!). The sun shone and many families came down for one of the last pleasant afternoons of the year, taking advantage of the bouncy castle. Our four-legged friends were there in abundance enjoying the beer garden. Bejazzled and the Basement Band were our guest artists and both were well received, before our Festival Organiser made the inevitable announcement at 21.45 that all the real ale was all gone. Given the large increase in customers on last year, we couldn't complain about the timing really, although we would have obviously preferred to go the distance until 23.00.

With all the public votes counted, we are very pleased to announce the winner of our prestigious (well, we think so!) **Beer of the Festival** award, which was none other than the ever-popular **Captain Oates Dark Mild** from **Brown Cow of Barlow**. Well done again to wife and husband team Sue and Keith Simpson. You may remember that their **Thriller In Va-**

nilla was last year's winner. The runner-up was **Brass Castle** with the aforementioned **Bad Kitty**, showing that a lot of our voters agreed with the tasting panel. **Ampleforth Abbey Cider** from **Ampleforth** was our **Cider of the Festival**. It is so pleasing to see that these three are all from our York branch area.



Some people forget that the first word of the CAMRA acronym is Campaign. As a not-for-profit organisation, campaigning is the *raison d'être* for the festival: hopefully, we have introduced many more people to the joy that is real ale, such that they will now want to continue to enjoy it responsibly in that most British institution – the pub! Remember, the pub (or club) is the only place you can get proper cask-conditioned real ale outside of beer festivals. It is perhaps now more important than ever to use them, or risk losing them!

Finally, on behalf of the Festival Organising Committee, I hope you will join me in raising your glass to toast the 187 unpaid volunteers who staffed the festival. They built it, ran it and then took it down – some having nine days holiday from work and spending 13 days solid on site! There literally would not be a festival without them. Thanks must also go to all our generous sponsors, suppliers and stall holders and to



our fantastic customers who once again came in their thousands to support the event. It doesn't seem long since I last wrote these words either, but it's time to write them again: **"SEE YOU ALL NEXT YEAR – CHEERS!"** (MG)