

Playing their cards right

It is with an immense sense of pride that I write this article about one of my local Eskdale pubs, and is a tribute to what landlord Sean King and his partner Caroline Friel have achieved in the four years they have been running The Boot Inn.

They have been awarded Pub of the Season (POTS) for Winter 2010-11 for our CAMRA branch, this while being surrounded by a number of other CAMRA prize-winning pubs, including the Summer POTS 2010 winner – the Woolpack Inn, and, on their very own doorstep, the branch's 2010 Pub of the Year – the Brook House. Both of these are free houses while The Boot Inn is tied to Robinsons of Stockport, which I think puts this award into a much truer and clearer perspective.

Sean and Carolines' attitude has always been to not only be willing to help make your time in their company a pleasure, but to go out of their way to ensure that it is. This approach is much appreciated by the strong local following who consider themselves as personal friends of the couple first and customers second, which in itself generates a feeling of cosy *bonhomie* and top

notch *craic*. Since taking over from his mother in early 2008, Sean has beavered away to elevate the beers to a standard that, as a Boltonian, he would be happy to drink himself and be proud to offer to his friends, locals and tourists alike. I am pleased to report that his cellar diligence (ably assisted by Amanda) has been rewarded as winner of the Eric

Branch chair Kathryn Flagner presented Sean and Caroline with their award in February.



Picture: Andy Smith

Picture: Mike Carr

The Boot Inn, Boot

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more novel ideas, which was initially to keep us locals amused in winter but now runs all year round, was the introduction on Sunday afternoons of “Open the Box” followed by “Play Your Cards Right”. These are based indirectly upon the eponymous TV shows and ensure that The Boot Inn is packed to the rafters. “Open the Box” in particular has a strong following and recent cash prizes have included one of over £1,300, a couple more in excess of £1,000, and many in the hundreds – not bad for a remote pub with more sheep than local residents in the immediate catchment area !

In the difficult financial climate that we all find ourselves in – with 29 pubs closing down every day never to return, we should be grateful that people of the calibre of the staff at The Boot Inn turn up every day with a welcoming smile.

So, in conclusion, well done to all at the Boot Inn on achieving POTS for the winter, and to the rest of you dear readers, get on the Ratty (five departures a day as you read this) and come up and meet Blue, For Ls, Andrew, Gordy, Sir Malcolm, Tex and the rest for a memorable day in the Eskdale sunshine (*sic*).

● **Mike Carr** (Boot Inn regular and Eskdale local)