

# Thirsty work for Edinburgh volunteer at British Beer Festival

Colin Valentine (pictured) was pulling pints – hundreds of them – at the Great British Beer Festival this week at London's Olympia and it was thirsty work.

Tens of thousands of real ale devotees poured in from all parts to savour a mind-boggling array of beer plus street food from around the globe.

Nigel Duncan met Edinburgh-based Colin, a former chairman of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA), there.

And they discussed the advances the festival has made down the decades to where it is now, one of Britain's leading real ale festivals.

He said: "This is the best place to come to sample the best of British beer. There are 300 breweries and in the region of 700 beers to sample from around the UK.

"Belhaven, Broughton, Loch Lomond and Orkney Berwery are just some of the Scottish beers being showcased.

"There is a good geographical selection and we also have Top Out from Loanhead which is only four or five miles from my front door.

"The festival is much, much bigger than it was and anybody who knows Olympia knows how big this place is. We can get 11,000 people in a day without too much difficulty.

“There are a lot of new breweries and the choice here is tremendous. Whatever you want is here and we have an entertainment package.

“We also cater for vegetarians and vegans and we also have all the allergen information and gluten-free beers.”

Colin added: “Real ale drinking has increased dramatically and it gives a lot of pubs a lot of choice and people are willing to try all sorts of weird and wonderful brews.

“For example, I saw a milk chocolate fudge stout somewhere in the festival. I have no idea what that tastes like.”

By then, there was a queue of thirsty festivalgoers queuing with their special glasses for a pint of foaming ale and Colin had to disappear. Thirsts had to be quenched.