



This photo, taken in 2012 at one of Blakeman's bottle show/auctions, reveals at least a half-dozen Yanks, including one who wears a silly T-shirt showing target balls.

# The Multifaceted Alan Blakeman

## *(And his incredible 50 years of collecting)*

By Ralph Finch

**H**ow about a story on Alan Blakeman? ONE story? I can't! Alan is not one person, but many people. A multifaceted person who has done more in the hobby than any ten normal people. In fact, if there is one word you can't use to describe him, that word is "normal."

First, why am I writing this? A major auction is coming. Let's deal with that first, and our talk about Alan the man will follow.

**The collection:** If we are lucky, we may live 80 years, and if we are really lucky, we can amass a world-class collection —

and the world of living that goes with it. But life and luck have limitations, and most serious collectors eventually must answer this question: Now what? We are only caretakers of this stuff, and at some point must pass it on. Some people avoid the problem by simply dumping it all on grown children who don't want it, but ...

Alan Blakeman, considered the No. 1 man behind collectibles in England, has decided to pass on his lifelong accumulation of great glass and museum-quality ceramic treasures to old friends and new collectors.

At an internet and an admission-only live sale on Sept. 12, Alan's family jewels (if you pardon the expression) will be revealed. The catalog and detailed information can be found on Alan's website: [www.onlinebbr.com](http://www.onlinebbr.com).

But don't worry that this is the end of Alan, the man who was inducted into the FOHBC Hall of Fame in 2013. The same man who has produced years of winter and summer UK national shows that attracted collectors from around the world, who publishes the *British Bottle Review* magazine, has authored at least eleven books on hobby-related topics (and published other books), has produced more bottle shows than he can count, deserves your attention. Alan also attended shows in the U.S.

Alan's auction, like his life, will be unique.

**And the man:** Alan says he is Europe's leading specialist provider of antique bottles, pot lids, ginger beers, enamel signs, breweriana, salt glaze pottery, cream pots, quack cures, clay pipes, old advertising, early glass (sealed and unsealed), baby feeders, Doulton Lambeth, Guinness, inks, pharmacy, poisons, eye baths, mineral waters, and so much more.

As an enthusiastic fledgling collector, Alan started a small newsletter in 1979, and his magazine has since built a unique niche in the collecting world. The long-running, full-color magazine offers forty years of in-depth coverage.

Alan also produces the UK's four quarterly and biggest specialist shows. And of his many interests, he remains "small enough to care, big enough to cope."

BBR opened at the Elsecar Heritage Centre in South Yorkshire, in 1991. Just

off the M1, he has attracted thousands of visitors into the idyllic village and the Heritage Centre, housing a major antiques centre, craft shops and cafes, a full-size steam railway, the only Newcomen beam engine in the world still in its original housing (restored).

Ask me what I have liked about the hobby over the last fifty years, and Alan is part of all of it. (Thirty(?) years ago, at a bottle show out east, we shared a hotel room, and at a couple of shows in England I was a guest at his historic home.)

The history. The traveling. The camaraderie. And of course, the glass. But No. 1 is meeting all the interesting people around the world, and Alan is a big part of all the above reasons that are important to me.

One of the nice things about my having reached 81 is having so much to remember. The problem is to put dates, or even correct decades, on these memories. How many years ago has it been since I first met Alan? In what country was it? Likely, in England. And when? Where? C'mon, he seems to have always been there, and always with the great smile, the great non-stop enthusiasm, the great personality that makes you want to be known by him.

I would expect that if I ever climbed to the top of a mountain, and at the top I met a wizened wise man, he'd likely ask me: Do you know Alan Blakeman?

But, at age 72 (in November), he really doesn't climb mountains, just rocks. GIANT rocks, like "El Cap" in Yosemite, where he has visited five times (plus several trips to Utah and Colorado). So, the question: Does he have rocks in his head? No, just under his feet.

And talking about feet, Alan is five feet, seven and a half inches tall, but he is a giant in the hobby. And the shadow he casts can be seen from the UK and across the U.S.

For more on AlanBlakeman check out: [alan@onlinebbr.com](mailto:alan@onlinebbr.com)

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