



The young Ben Caunt.



St Mary Magdalene
BEN CAUNT

Ben Caunt (1815-1861)

A souvenir guide to the bare-knuckle heavyweight
Champion of England



St Mary Magdalene
CHURCH, HUCKNALL



LOTTERY FUNDED



'Big' Ben Caunt was 6 feet 2½ inches tall and 14st 7lbs of muscle and bone; a giant in his day. Simple brute force was his key to becoming heavyweight champion of England.

Born at Newstead the son of a worker on Lord Byron's estate, Ben spent his youth in Hucknall beating all the local lads at wrestling and boxing.

Talent spotted aged about 20; his first major prize-fight was against another soon-to-be local legend from down the road in Nottingham, William 'Bendigo' Thompson in 1835. They would fight three times in ten years, a rivalry which saw both rising to become Champions of England. 'Big' Ben won the championship from Nick Ward in 1841, losing to Bendigo in 1844. In between time he toured the USA giving exhibition demonstrations.

Ben retired for the first time in 1845 to become the landlord of a London pub. But in 1857 he was persuaded to enter the ring one more time. It was a grudge match against his wife's brother-in-law, Nat Langham in a bid to settle a family feud; it didn't! The fight ended in the only draw of Ben's career.

Ben fought nine prize-fights in all (five wins, three losses and one draw). His career total prize money was £870; that would be worth about £90,000 in 2015.



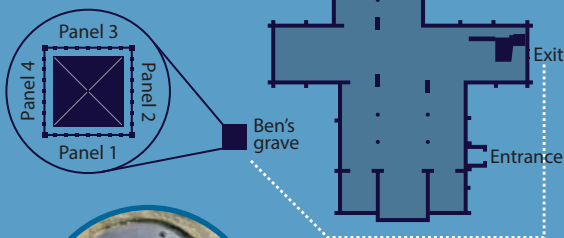
Ben v. Bill Brassey, 1840: Ben secured victory in 101 rounds!
From a cover of 'Famous Fights'.



Big Ben Strikes! - Ben Caunt's pub was only a mile from Westminster. One theory holds he gave his name to the chimes of the clock; both 'Big Bens' having a powerful strike that was difficult to ignore.

Visit Ben's last resting place.

Follow the rough path around the church to Ben's grave, in the shade of the north transept.

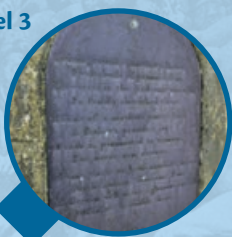


Panel 1



Champion of England

Panel 3



A poem by Margaret in memory of her parents.

Panel 4. The Last Round: This records Ben's death and that of his wife Martha who died before him in 1859. Her death was a severe blow and the Coach and Horses lost its licence. In 1860, Ben, whose sporting reputation extended to racing pigeons, caught a severe cold attending a match 'at the doves' from which he never properly recovered and died in 1861.

Scan this QR code to view a souvenir of your visit to St Mary Magdalene Church.

There is more to discover about St Mary Magdalene Church and its people.



Special thanks for help in the preparation of this material to: Mr David Fells.



St Mary Magdalene Church, Hucknall

For up to date information on our church's activities, please visit www.hucknallparishchurch.org.uk
Ask a steward for a large print version of this guide.