

CASK BEER WEEK



HYDES
THE MANCHESTER BREWERY
ESTD 1863

Major Event For
Local Family Brewers



Greater Manchester's four family brewers, Robinson's, Hydes', Lees and Holts are joining forces in two major promotions for cask beer.

The springboard for these major events is the Independent Family Brewers Of Britain (IFBB)-organised Cask Beer Week, running from 19-28 September, and will be followed by another promotion during the Manchester Food & Drink Festival the following week.

This is the third year that the 33 members of the IFBB have organised a nationwide promotion of real ale, a product whose health is essential to the survival of these firms, producing as they do 50% of the country's cask beer. Luckily, they are collectively bucking the long-term decline of cask ale in general, and have reported a 9.5% increase in their cask ale production over the last 12 months.

To publicise the event the four local brewers are teaming together to take part in a tour to the four breweries on the World's Largest Bike on September 16th. The bike, which is a 26-man contraption, will follow a route visiting the four breweries throughout the day, with the cyclists stopping for a 'pint' in each. The suggested route is Lees to Holts to



Local Head brewers gather in Manchester for last year's promotional week

Hydes to Robinson's, finishing up at the Gateway, Wilmslow Road in Didsbury at 1.30pm for the Press Launch. The total distance is around 21 miles. Each brewery is supplying 13 members of staff to 'man' the bike, with the first 26 going from Lees to Hydes and the second 26 going from Hydes to the Gateway.

Pubs Take Part

Many of the family brewers pubs will also be running events to support the initiative. Details haven't all been finalised yet, but Lees will be running in-house promotions and encouraging their pubs to give out samples of cask ales. There may also be a mystery customer scheme with the aim of getting bar staff to recommend cask ale as the drink of choice, effectively becoming cask ale champions. Hydes will be organising the "South Manchester Beer Festival", where five Hydes pubs will be serving 30 very special British cask Beers during the week. The main event will be taking place at the Horse & Farrier, Gatley, where 10 guest beers will be on show. Mini festivals will be taking place at the Gateway in Didsbury, Friendship in Fallowfield, Nursery, Heaton Norris and The Star, Cheadle, the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA pub of the month for October. Each will be serving six different beers over the week on rotation with no two pubs will be serving the same beer.

Food & Drink Week

These events will be supported by further activity on October 3rd and 4th when the Brewers will be attending the Manchester Food & Drink Festival, offering the public the opportunity to sample their beers. Between 11am and 3pm on both days, the four brewers will be manning a large stall in Albert Square, Manchester and offering free quarter-pint samples of their beers. The aim will be to introduce these excellent local beers to people who may not be familiar with them - and also meet the people who make them. The brewers have also commissioned a booklet from brewery historian Alan Gall. This will include a brief rundown of the history of local brewing, pen pictures of the local family brewers and vouchers for two free pints in local pubs. Each booklet will include eight vouchers, two of which will be redeemable in 10 pubs nominated by each of the brewers. The booklet will be available at both the Albert Square event and also during the Bike Ride publicity event. The full list of pubs hadn't been finalised as we went to press.

THANKS To HYDES



This year's Mild Challenge concluded in fine style with a visit to Hydes' Brewery in Moss Side. More than twenty people who had taken part in the Challenge were invited to the event on August 20th. An introduction was given by Hydes' Tony Phillips and Paul Jefferies before a very unusual and enjoyable half-hour tour hosted by an ebullient Tony. This was more of a one-man stand-up routine than a brewery tour - plenty of gags, wit and anecdotes made what can be a very dry subject more than interesting; well done Tony.

To round off the evening we were treated to the hospitality of a well-stocked bar and an excellent buffet of sandwiches and such. The entire Hydes range of cask ales was on offer including the three milds they produce - Dark, Mild and Light. Three milds being produced is, apparently, unique amongst British brewers, so well done Hydes. Other beers on the night were Bitter and Jekylls - all were in tip-top condition and enjoyed by everyone present. Mild Challenge organiser, Mark McConachie, gave a small speech thanking people for getting involved in the Challenge and thanking Hydes for their generous hospitality and what was truly an excellent evening that was enjoyed by all attendees. Thank you Hydes.

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NEW - THE TASTING PANEL - STARTS ON PAGE 11



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IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

The main event this month must be the Independent Family Brewers' Cask Beer Week. I hope every reader of Opening Times will support this important initiative and at the very least pay a visit to their local Family Brewer's pub during the week.

We are lucky in the Opening Times area that we have four family brewers dedicated to maintaining their independence and producing quality cask beers. We must never forget that as much as we may love our new micro-brewers and the astonishing range of beers they produce, it is the family brewers who remain the backbone of our real ale tradition. Without them and their steadfast commitment to real ale, it is doubtful if cask ale would have survived the dark days of the 1970s and it certainly wouldn't have survived the wholesale move to smooth beers by the national brewers over the past 10 years or so. They both need and deserve our continuing support - let's all make sure they get it.

★ ★ ★ ★

Signs of the cask ale revival are now all around us. We have already seen the Family Brewer's figures showing a 9.5% increase in volumes over the past year, and most recently Greene King released figures showing impressive growth in volumes of their cask Abbot Ale, Old Speckled Hen and even their lacklustre IPA. Micro brewers continue to open and many are brewing at full tilt to keep up with demand. A recent survey carried out by *The Publican* newspaper showed cask ale moving up as one of the 'must stock' products in the licensed trade. Now comes Interbrew and their re-launch of cask Boddingtons. They have seen cask Boddingtons decline at a rate faster than the national trend and have decided to try and reverse this. The decline is hardly surprising - many cask Boddies outlets have switched to smooth amid anecdotal reports that the Boddingtons cellar teams were actively encouraging pubs to switch from cask to keg. Let's hope they will get the message and be equally keen to encourage a switch the other way. But let's not be churlish - this move from Interbrew is good news for Boddingtons in particular and cask ale in general and must be heartily welcomed.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Next month is CAMRA's Cider & Perry Month. We'll be running a 'cider special' with several articles and features. Locally CAMRA is also hoping to organise some sort of cider event - more next month.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 233

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PUB OF THE MONTH SEPTEMBER 2003

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The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for September 2003 will be the Circus Tavern in Manchester city centre.

The Circus is Manchester's smallest public house by far – merely two small panelled rooms with a corridor bar with the tiniest counter you will ever see serving them. Following the retirement of well-respected and long serving licensee, Terry Corless, George Archondogeorge took on the tenure of this Grade II listed house in January of 2001.

George has been in the licensed trade for many years with stints in pubs around Victoria Station and what is now the Printworks area – some of the friends he made during that era can be seen in the many photos adorning the wall of the front lounge. George (universally known as 'Greek George') had a difficult act to follow when Terry and Kath Corless retired, but to his credit the pub is little different yet much improved. The sole cask beer in this Tetley Heritage inn has always been Tetley bitter, yet George has widened the appeal of pub to women and others by adding draught lager and stout; he now has Greek spirits such as Mataka and Ouzo and even ice is now available!

A totally new initiative is the addition of waitress service on the evenings of Thursdays to Sundays to improve the flow of customers in the often crowded lobby and corridor areas – OT can attest as to how well and efficiently this system and the two girls who staff it works when calling in at the end of recent Stagger. Opening hours have been lengthened too, they are now all permitted hours – 11 to 11 Monday to Saturday and 12 to 10.30 on Sundays so that even more people may enjoy this city centre gem.

A renaissance of this type is well worth celebrating - join us (early to reserve a seat) when we present this well deserved award on Thursday 25 September, from 8.00pm.

The Circus Tavern is at 86 Portland Street, very close to its junction with Princess Street in Manchester city centre, a five minute walk away from either of Piccadilly rail or bus stations. **MMc.**

The local branch of CAMRA decide on a Pub of the Month by a democratic vote at the monthly branch meeting.

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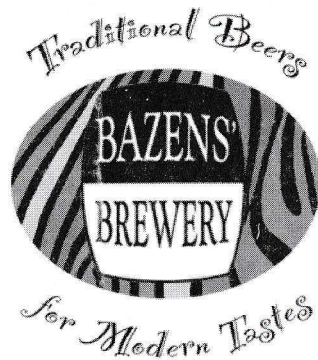
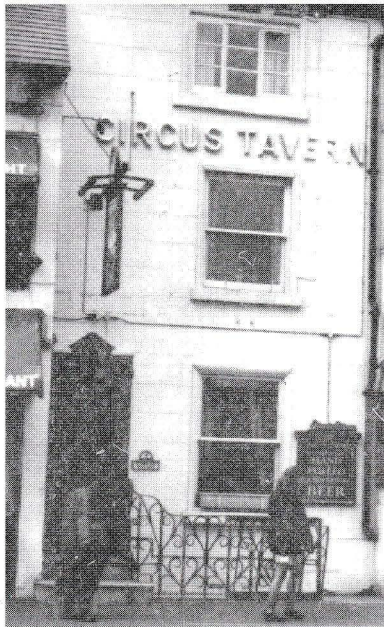
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FlatbaC 4.2% (Beer of the Festival, Stockport, 2003)

Blue Bullet 4.5% (August/September)

Black Pig Mild 3.6%

(Bronze Award for Mild, Champion Beer of Britain, 2003)

Pacific Bitter 3.8% Best/Flying Zebra 4.5%

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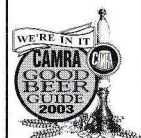
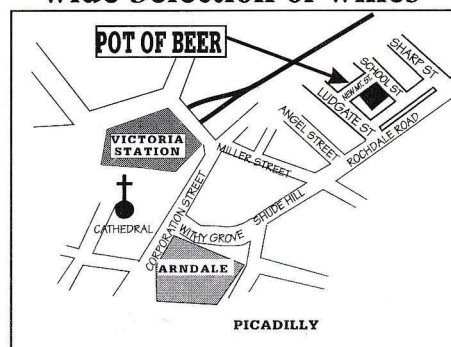
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New Look For Boddies

Interbrew has unveiled radical changes to Boddingtons in a determined attempt to halt and reverse the decline in sales of the cask version of "Manchester's finest".

The changes include a new name, higher alcohol strength and a smart new handpump to be supplied at all stockists. The new "Boddingtons Cask" will rise in strength from 3.8% to 4.1% with a slight recipe tweak to include extra malt in the brew. There won't be a price-rise, though, as the company is to absorb the extra duty costs the higher ABV will incur.

Interbrew's Graeme Mitchell explained the move thus: "This is a significant change for Boddingtons Cask and one that heralds an exciting new phase of development. Although the existing beer scored well in consumer research the clear message from cask ale drinkers was that it could be improved. After long consultation with our brewers at Strangeways we have come up with a better tasting, fuller-bodied ale that is very refreshing."

He went on to admit that Boddies had lost drinkers over the years and the relaunch was intended to retain existing Boddies drinkers, salvage lost drinkers and also gain new converts to the brand. The changes are only being made to the cask version of Boddingtons - all the other versions will remain unchanged.

The new-style Boddingtons is due to be launched into the trade this autumn. Opening Times will of course let you know when and where it becomes available.



Family Favourites



The local family brewers all have new seasonal beers out this month. Robinson's are reprising Cooper's Bell, the popular session beer from the past three years, while the other three have brand new beers on offer.

Lees new beer is Razzmatazz, a 4.4% beer described as a spicy, malty ale brewed with a combination of British and American hops. Look out for it the City Centre's Rain Bar and the Lloyds in Chorlton, both of which are regular outlets for Lees seasonals.



Hydes latest beer in their 'Fine Beers in the Making' range of craft ale, is Firkin Fruity, a 4.5% premium brew brewed with Fuggle hops to produce 'a classic berry red ale for autumn.'

Many Hydes pubs will be stocking this including the Nursery in Heaton Norris and the Victoria in Withington.

The next seasonal beer from Holt's Derby Brewery will be Patterson, the name reflecting the connection between the Holt family, the Christie Hospital and the Patterson Research Institute at Withington. For every pint of Patterson sold, 20p will go to the Christie Hospital charity. The new beer has been tested and the recipe finalised, but its launch has been delayed owing to problems with the design of the pump clips. The 4% beer will be reddish in colour, brewed with Challenger hops and a touch of honey.



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New Micro For Stockport

We hear that Stockport is in line for a new micro brewery. The Three Rivers Brewery is to be based in Offerton and hopes to have its beers available in the Crown, Heaton Lane by the second or third week in October barring unforeseen setbacks. They are still dotting the I's and crossing the T's on the contract for the premises but plant has been purchased so it should soon be all systems go. The initial plans are for two beers, both pale and hoppy, at session and premium strength, with a strong 'un for Christmas. Hopefully, more news next month.

More Micro News

As usual here is our monthly round-up from some of the local micros. The usual apologies to those we couldn't contact this time.



Phoenix - Major refurbishment work on the brewery is now two-thirds complete and should finally be finished this month. Opening Times hopes to run a major feature on the brewery in the next couple of months. Beers out this month include White Tornado, a 4.3% clear wheat beer and Struggling Monkey, a 4.7% premium brew.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

GBBF Joy for Local Micro

Salford-based micro Bazens' Brewery was the sole stand-bearer for the north west in the medal table in this year's Champion Beer of Britain Competition, held last month at CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival at Olympia. The brewery's Black Pig Mild picked up a bronze award in the mild category, much to the delight of Richard and Jude Bazen who run the brewery as one half of the Salford Brewery Syndicate. This was something of an early birthday present for Bazens', coming as it did just over a week before the brewery's first anniversary. There was another birthday present for Bazens' - Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA visited the brewery on 15 August, their first anniversary, and presented Richard and Jude with a certificate marking the Stockport Beer of the Festival win for Flatbac, the brewery's premium bitter - our photo shows Richard and Jude with their certificate. They told Opening Times:



"We are delighted to have received such a prestigious award in the first year of trading. This, together with the award for Flatbac at the Stockport Festival, has already boosted sales and helped to establish a good reputation for the quality of our beers."

The Winners

Here are the Champion Beer of Britain winners in full:

☆ **Mild** - Gold: Lidstones Rowley Mild (Suffolk); Silver: Brains dark (Cardiff); Bronze: Bazens' Black Pig.

☆ **Bitters** - Gold: Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted (Scotland); Silver: Daleside Bitter (North Yorks); Bronze: Triple fff Alton Pride (Hants) and Caledonian Deuchars IPA (Edinburgh).

☆ **Best Bitters** - Gold: Crouch Vale Brewers Gold (Essex); Silver: West Berkshire Full Circle (Berks); Bronze: Slaters Supreme (Staffs) and Roosters Hooligan (North Yorks).

☆ **Strong Bitters** - Gold: Adnams Broadside (Suffolk); Silver: RCH East Street Cream (Somerset); Bronze: Oakham Bishops Farewell (Peterborough).

☆ **Speciality Beers** - Gold: Cheriton Village Elder (Hants); Silver: Daleside Morocco (North Yorks); Bronze: Oakham White Dwarf (Peterborough).

☆ **Bottle-conditioned Beers** - Gold: O'Hanlons Port Stout (Devon); Silver: Fuller's 1845 (London); Bronze: RCH Old Slug Porter (Somerset).

★ **Overall Champions** - Supreme Champion: Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted; Silver: Crouch Vale Brewer's Gold; Bronze: Lidstones Rowley Mild.

Pictish - this month's special is Staddlestone, a 4.5% tawny ale with a strong hop aroma and a good bitter finish. The superb strong IPA, Blue Moon (6%) has also been brewed and some should still be available in the free trade. Brewers Gold has won Beer of the Festival at Kingston for the second year running.



Porters - last month saw a surprise welcome return of Triticum, the cask cloudy wheat beer. The refreshing beer belies its 5.4% strength and has only appeared once before. Dave Porters has also installed yet another micro and beer from the Edale Brewery has been on sale in Stockport's Railway. Look for a feature on this new venture in coming months.

Boggart Hole Clough - there is just one special from Boggart Hole Cough this month. Branch is a 5% rich brown beer with a smoky but citrus taste and will only be available at Bar Fringe on Swan Street in the City Centre. The usual Boggart summer beer makes a reappearance - Summer Sun (4.4%) is pale and fruity.



Bazens' - This month's astrological beer is based on an old Bridgewater Ales' recipe - Inglewood Ale and uses Green Bullet hops. It is 4.5% and is called Blue Bullet (blue being the colour most associated with Virgos - apparently). The Freshers' Special 5.5% will be coming back at the end of September/beginning of October.

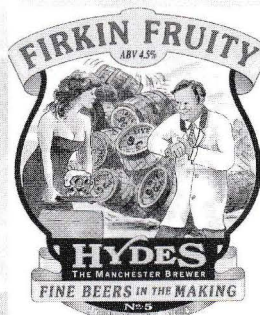
Facer's - Dave Facer will be bringing out a new beer every two months themed around seasonal references to the greats of English literature. The first one, celebrating autumn, will be called Keats and is inspired by his ode 'To Autumn' - Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness. Others envisaged in the series are, eg Dickens for Christmas, Shakespeare for winter, Wordsworth for spring etc.

Salford Brewery Syndicate - Also in the pipeline is another joint Facer's and Bazens' beer using green (unroasted) hops. This will be some time around the middle to end of September.

Beartown - The presentation of the Pub of the Year regional winner for Merseyside, Cheshire & North Wales to the Beartown Tap will be on the 25th October 2003. Combined with this, Beartown brewery, having recently moved to new premises within Congleton, will also officially open the new brewery on the same day.



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STAGGER

with Paul Moss

June's stagger took us to a number of pubs in Stockport town centre - home turf for your correspondent. As this was almost the longest day of the year, and a pleasant evening to boot, I resolved to be on the lookout for what our stops offered by way of outdoor drinking areas.

First call was Robinson's **Unity**, on the corner of Wellington Road South and Wellington Street opposite the station approach. This used to be a favourite Saturday lunchtime haunt of mine, for a couple of pints and a bite to eat before Stockport County's home games, in the days when it was run by June & Peter Bennett. My match-day routine has changed since then, but the pub looks essentially the same. It is still the small, one-roomed affair it always was, but the deep blue walls I remember are now painted cream, and the paintings of dark windblown seas I used to admire have been replaced by subtler prints. This all gives a lighter feel to the place, but I'm not sure what purpose is served by the twinkling fairy lights and glitter ball. You can still see where the dart board used to hang in the cosy front corner of the pub, but the fruit machine in front of it means there's no chance of a game. Never mind - you can instead admire the glossy photographs of attractive young ladies in revealing sporting-theme poses - all very tastefully done, of course. Enough of the reminiscing, though - what about the beer? I went for the Hatters and had to send it straight back. The barrel was changed immediately, but the unanimous verdict was that the beer was still a little average. The one person who tried the Best Bitter thought it to be about the same. As we left, I spotted one single upturned trestle table outside the back door - no al fresco drinking here tonight.

A few steps further down Wellington Road to **Cobden's**, also Robinson's, on the corner of St. Petersgate. Fondly remembered by many in its former incarnation as the Manchester Arms, this was gutted a few years back and refitted in a more modern style to

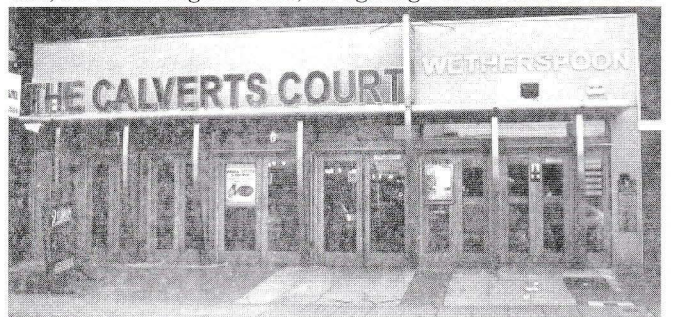
appeal to the younger crowd that the Grand Central development attracted. Nevertheless, it has continued to offer Best Bitter to the cask ale drinker. Cobden's is quite spacious and airy, and this was emphasised by the complete lack of people in the main bar area. There were a few customers, but these were all crowded into the small front room. We ordered our drinks at the long bar on the left and moved outside to the paved terrace to enjoy the evening air. In keeping with the modern theme, the tables were of stainless steel with machined tops. No problems with the beer here - we all found it to be pretty decent.

Moving down St. Petersgate, we paid a quick visit to the **Blarney Stone**, an Irish-style pub which sometimes sells real ale. Tonight, there was a handpump advertising Charles Wells Bombardier Bitter, but sadly there was no cask at the other end of the pipe.

A walk up Lord Street brought us back to Wellington Street, this time to visit **Little Jack Horner's**. As we approached, we noticed that the brickwork appeared to have been recently cleaned and repointed. Since the pub is long and narrow, the interior is much bigger than a first glance would suggest, and we found a cosy, bustling atmosphere. The jukebox was playing at the easy-listening end of the pop and rock spectrum, but this seemed to fit with the mellow ambience. From the small front room there are steps up to the bar area, and more to reach the comfortable lounge at the back. This has red bench seating on two sides matched by the upholstery on the stools and chairs. Between us, we tried all four of the cask ales - Marston's Pedigree, Tetley Bitter, Cameron's Strongarm and Worthington Bitter - and found them all well kept. The pints were all served in appropriately branded glasses - a nice touch.

Back to St. Petersgate for our next two pubs. First, the **Stockport Arms**. Smiling wryly at the John Smiths promotional posters on the door ("Beer tasters wanted"; "Buy it because it's lovely"), we went inside to find loud music being played by a sullen-looking young lady DJ at the far end of the L-shaped interior. On the real ale front, Greenall's Bitter is accompanied by a rotating "guest" from Tetley Bitter, Tetley Imperial, Marston's Pedigree, Cains Bitter and - tonight's offering - Old Speckled Hen. Both beers were tried, and both rated average.

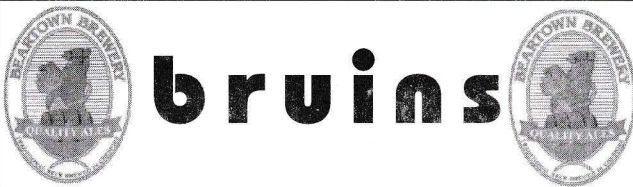
JD Wetherspoon's **Calvert's Court** next, a conversion from a bed shop to create a long, narrow pub fitted out in 1920's retro style. This being a Friday night, the place was extremely busy and noisy, and, the time being after 8.00, the lighting was subdued. No fewer



than eight cask-conditioned ales were offered. Of these, I believe the Theakston Best Bitter, Boddington's Bitter, Greene King Abbott Ale, Shepherd Neame Spitfire and Courage Directors are all regulars. One of our number was something of a Spitfire fan, and therefore chose this, to find it fell short of his expectations. The rest of us went for the guests and found them to be good - Butcombe Gold, Exmoor Gold and Brain's (formerly Crown Buckley) Reverend James. In the past, there have been tables available outside at the back of the pub, but as we left we noticed that for some reason this is no longer the case.

Emerging on to High Street, we came next to the **Royal Oak** (Robinson's), which I'm told was completely rebuilt in the mid-1980s. We sat in the small drinking area on the left in front of the bar, musing as to the significance of the row of flags above the servery. From here we could see a game of pool in progress in the other front room, behind which lies the lounge. The beers here used to be served from metered dispensers into oversize glasses, but this has now been replaced by freeflow dispense into brim-measures. Both beers were sampled: the Hatters was felt to be okay, and the Best Bitter pretty good.

Back up to St. Petersgate, next, and the **Egerton Arms**. This is one pub I'd passed many times (often noting a Karaoke in progress) but never been inside, and I found it surprisingly homely. We drank in the comfortable front lounge, which has a stone floor.



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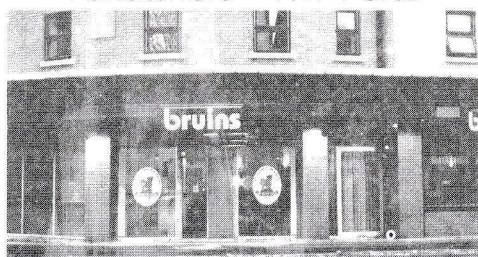
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Passing to the left of the horseshoe bar brings you to the wooden-floored back room containing a pool table and a well-stocked trophy cabinet. Most of us supped a decent drop of Tetley Bitter whilst we enjoying (well, I did) the sound of Coldplay on the jukebox. Those who tried the other cask ale, Boddington's Bitter, thought it rather ordinary.

We now dropped down onto Chestergate and across Mersey Square, passing the keg-only **Chestergate** and **George**, to reach Heaton Lane and our last two watering-holes. First up was the **Pineapple**, an excellent, cosy, and too often overlooked Robinson's house with impressive etched windows. You can generally expect a warm welcome and good beer here, and tonight was no exception. Both the Best Mild (sorry, Hatters) and the Best Bitter were on excellent form, with the mild taking the title of best beer of the evening. We found good company, too, not least in the form of Mich and Lorraine taking time out from running the Church in Edgeley.

Finally, we crossed the road to catch last orders in the **Crown**. This will need no introduction to many readers, as the range of well-kept cask ales - normally ten at a time - is second to none in the area (except when the beer festival is on, of course). Indeed, by the time you read this, the Crown will have been presented with July's Pub of the Month award. As well as the five rooms inside - lounge, vault, smoking and non-smoking snugs and the bar area - there is a large yard-cum-beer-garden at the back which often hosts live music. I went for an Ossett beer, which just managed to deliver a pint before running out. Unfortunately, this also meant that absolutely all the sparkle had gone from the beer - a rather odd experience, but I'm told this can often be the case with the last one out. Not a problem, as the pint was willingly exchanged for something else. I shan't list all the beers - suffice to say that all those we drank were in excellent condition.

Thus ended an pleasant evening enjoying a variety of pubs and beers. Don't forget that the foregoing represents the impressions of a small group on one night - why not try for yourself those you don't already know, and see what you think.

STH. CHESHIRE FESTS

Records were broken at Wrenbury during the Paradise and Bhurtapore beer festivals. A total of 704 passengers arrived at Wrenbury station during the festivals.

Special stops on the 11.33 Piccadilly-Cardiff express saw 35 arriving on 5 July and 75 the following week. A total surprise were stops on the 10.33 which saw a further 10 arrivals on 5 July with another 20 on 12th. It total, Saturday 12 July saw 289 arrivals by train and the local Crewe & Shrewsbury Passenger Association would like to thank all visitors as it does wonders for the loading figures at this obscure rural station.

New Era At Paradise

Brewing has recommenced at Paradise Brewery where John Wood has planned a new range of beers plus the ever-popular Marbury Mild. The new range of beers will be launched during the Nantwich Beer Festival on 26 and 27 September. They will only be available at Paradise Brewery, just a 7-minute trip by train and one way of passing the time during the 4-6pm closed session. Trains leave Nantwich at 14.54 and 16.54, returning at 16.24 and 18.40. The new beers sound very interesting.

Nantwich Food & Drink Festival

This interesting event will be held on Friday and Saturday, 26 and 27 September. There will be a Regional Food Fare on Mill Island, opening at 10am on each day of the Festival and entry will be free. On Friday 26 September, a Made In Cheshire Produce Fair will be held in the Town Square.

Alongside will be the 2nd CAMRA Nantwich Beer Festival featuring 60 locally produced beers and a range of local ciders. A feature of the Festival will be "Ales of the Lake District". Opening hours are 6-11pm on the Friday (admission £3) while Saturday hours are 11-4 (£2) and 6-11 (£3). Admission prices include a glass. For more details there is a Festival Hotline on 01270 610983.

On Saturday 27, a special stop at Nantwich has been arranged on the 10.33 Manchester Piccadilly-Cardiff train. A return service will leave Nantwich at 17.13 for Crewe, Wilmslow, Stockport and Mcr.

VIADUCTS AND VAULTS 3

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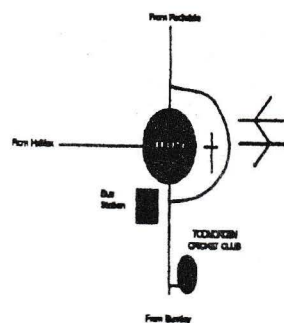
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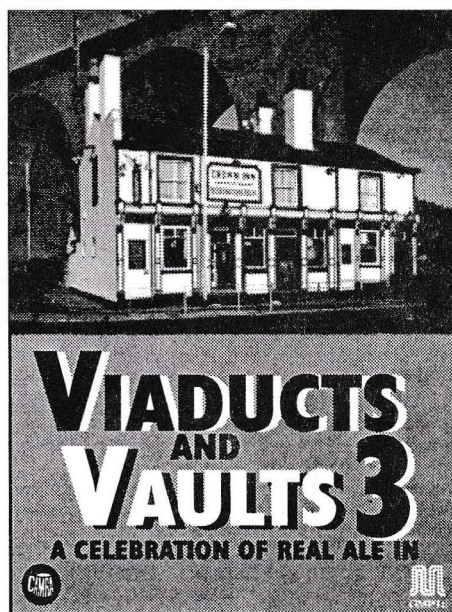


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VIADUCTS AND VAULTS 3

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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Smokin' Joe (name and address supplied)

With reference to the current debate on smoking in pubs, here are a couple of suggestions that your readers might not have previously considered.

If you are a disgruntled non-smoker who is fed up with your favourite pub atmosphere being polluted by intransigent smokers, here is a wizard wheeze that might help you to get your own back. Simply idle up surreptitiously to the offending party and fart in their beer and food. This is unlikely to produce a "Roy Castle" effect on them but might at least make you feel a bit better. Alternatively, perhaps the government should pass legislation to protect the rights of smokers to wreck their lungs in public buildings as long as they zip themselves into a hermetically sealed bubble suit whilst doing so. This would have the double advantage of keeping the non-smokers off their back whilst also protecting them from any vigilante farters! Just a suggestion.

From David Newton, Clifton:

It's nice to see that some of the old traditions die hard. But at times one wonders whether some are just trying too hard. I am, of course, referring to Mark McConachie's long running campaign in aid of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Words (SPAW). Why only in last month's edition we were treated to the delights of "mammoth pantechnicons" (big lorries to most people) alongside pubs "packed to the gun-wales" with "sundry merry looking individuals" staring at "drinking ephemera" (perhaps trying to work out what they were staring at?) whilst making a "nice nod to the history of the local" (presumably in genuflection) in the "verdant scene of Ardwick Green" (where were the Editors, for God's sake?).

Perhaps some of us are just a "tad young" to appreciate all this olde worlde verbiage and I should "scamper" off to the bar fronted by the "lovely Laura", a "bubbly blonde", a "luscious lovely" and try to remember which of my grandparents last spoke in such a modern manner. (Yea, verily - Ed(1))

DAVID HALL

David Hall died on Saturday 23 August 2003 aged 58. He suffered a first stroke in July 2001, made a 90% recovery but was stricken with a second one in December 2003 which left him able to move only his eyes and right foot.

Dave was the ideas man and founder chairman of the South Manchester branch of CAMRA (now Stockport & South Manchester) in November 1973. The idea followed a meeting with co-founder Graham Lees on the Save Joule's Brewery March in Stone a few weeks earlier. Dave was also very much influenced by the "Boston on Beer" articles in the Saturday editions of the Guardian.

The branch was formally inaugurated in January 1974 at a celebrated meeting in the garden of the Printers Arms, Cheadle, Cheshire when over 70 members attended and drank the pub dry! Dave produced what was probably CAMRA's first newsletter for branch members, 70 to 100 of whom used to attend the monthly meetings.

Dave organised a coach for 40 branch members to attend the 1974 CAMRA AGM in York - the first AGM where the numbers were in the 100's. He persuaded all the Manchester independent brewers to deliver their beer on a Robinson's dray for the AGM beerex - quite a feat at the time! In 1976 Dave became a member of CAMRA's National Executive and was one of the signatories of the Articles of Association when CAMRA became a Company limited by guarantee later that year.

He continued to follow his passion for real ale right up to the time of his second stroke and also, until that occurred, he continued to follow his other dream, Manchester City. With a great deal of co-operation from Macclesfield General Hospital, his family and Manchester City FC he was able to attend the last match ever at Maine Road.

Dave is survived by his wife Sandra and his three sons Dan, Jim and Matt. It is purely an apocryphal tale that his three sons were names after Daniel Thwaites, James Shipstone's and Matthew Brown - or..... perhaps it isn't.....!

Neil Kellett

Founder Treasurer of the CAMRA South Manchester branch.

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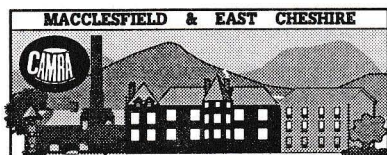
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PUB NEWS with Steve Bray

In Macclesfield, the Oxford has been purchased by Jennings which will bring beers we don't normally see into the town. Also in Macclesfield it is all change: the Britannia, the Durham Ox, the Plough (Prestbury Rd), the Albion all changing hands. The Navigation is shut after the licensee filed for bankruptcy following a rent increase to the ridiculous sum of £400 per week - how on Earth can a backstreet pub make a living with that kind of rent?

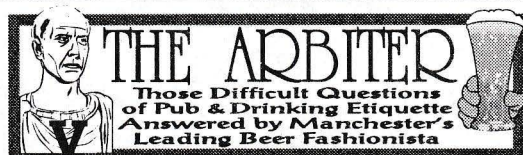
Elsewhere, in Rainow the Rising Sun is now closed following a dispute between the owners and the licensee but as OT went to press we heard that the pub is to be taken over by a new couple of licensees and may in fact be open by the time you read this. In Bollington the Spinners lease is still for sale, the Meridian pub is for sale and the Dog and Partridge tenants are leaving before the end of the year.

Another piece of Pubco lunacy has occurred at the Crown in Bollington where Avebury Taverns have demanded the licensees sign a new 3 year contract (and part with substantial sums of money) while Avebury still have not completed work to the pub that was promised last year. In Kerridge there is still no further news on the future of the Redway Tavern which remains closed. Robinson's are currently refurbishing the Bull in Macclesfield and we hear that it will re-open with a new name - the Merchant's House. More news as we get it.

Terry and Carol Costello were licensees of the Brewers Arms, Bridge Street, Macclesfield, 10 years ago, before leaving to start a new life in Tenerife. Three years ago they paid what they thought would be a nostalgic visit to their former pun - and were so shocked by its run down condition that they decided to take it back. Their efforts have paid off as owners Enterprise Inns have named the Brewers as their best pub in the north west for 2002-03. The couple have no regrets about giving up their life in the sun as they say both the pub and Macclesfield itself have always been with them.

A quick look at the Robinson's web site reveals that the tenancy of the Dog & Partridge, Bollington, was up for grabs.

And finally I would just like to wish a happy retirement to Eric and Ann from the Boarhound in Macclesfield. They have been running a superb pub for many years. A very hard act to follow.



Dear Arbiter,

Recently we have read in beer circles that cask ale, although a niche product in the market place, exercises power beyond its market share. This is because, so we are told, if a group of friends want to go to a pub and even if only one of their number drinks real ale, the rest will meekly follow his preference in order to 'humour' him. Not having any friends who don't like decent beer (must make me a statistical freak) I'd like to know how this works in practice.

Well of course it doesn't. I only know of one major real ale pub where they don't serve anything for morons - the splendid Navigation in Heaton Norris, currently CAMRA Regional Pub of the Year, where only draught Belgian & German and Belgian & Czech bottles are served to complement the mighty range of ciders and Beartown brewery beers offered. Porters Railway in Stockport comes close - offering Sam Smith's brewed Ayingerbrau Lager & Wheat (which though British brewed is nearly indistinguishable from the original) alongside David Porter's splendid brews. No, pubs everywhere sell c*** Brit-fizz lagers, gassy apple chemical drinks, and often 'smooth', proper beer that is killed, gassed up and so cold all the flavour is removed. The lemming-like moronic mass taste is supported everywhere. If they're too afraid and guilty to order what they prefer, when faced with a discerning and tasty option selected by one of their number, so be it. Real ale is a drink for real people. You'll be telling me next that if this 'peer group leader' also orders prawntikka flavoured crisps, they will all follow suit as well. I believe it not.



A few improvements are planned at the Crown, Heaton Lane. Licensee Graham Mascord tells us that he is planning to install two further handpumps bringing the total to 12. This will enable further guest beers to feature at what is already the town's top pub for variety - the cider will be dispensed from the cellar, too, ensuring a cool pint at all times. Graham is also hoping to stock a small range of bottled German and Czech beers, too which will only add to the pub's appeal.

Despite our report to the contrary a couple of months back, it looks as though the Bowling Green, Charles Street, off Hillgate, is still keg with no sign of the promised handpumped Boddingtons Bitter.

In the same area, the Crown, Hillgate looks as though it is about to reopen. Just as we went to press the decorators were in amid much activity. Despite its keg-only status in recent years (coinciding with the downturn in the pub's fortunes, as it happens), the Crown was for many years known for a good pint of cask beer - let's hope the new licensees have the foresight to reinstate it. Close by the Big Lamp looks closed, again.

Staying on Hillgate, the Bishop Blaize has reopened after a refurbishment. The uninviting entrance passage has been transformed by a coat of bright paint and the whole pub looks to have been spruced up. Some of the fixed seating in the main lounge has been taken out and a stage installed. Sadly this means that while the pub perhaps looks more welcoming now than it has done for a long time, its position on CAMRA's National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors may now be in some doubt. Burtonwood Bitter is on handpump and was in good condition when OT called.

Stockport's newest bar, the Abbey Bar on St Petersgate was 'opening soon' as we went to press. It will be interesting to see what is on offer here - as an independent operation, let's hope they don't pass up the chance to offer some decent, interesting beer, if not in cask, at least in bottle. There's another new bar in prospect, too. Zaheer Shafi had applied for a license to turn the empty shop at 36 Castle Street, Edgeley, into a bar to be known as 'The Edge'. You have to ask whether Edgeley really needs another pub.

The Robinson's website was showing the tenancies of one or two local pubs up for grabs as we went to press. Those available include Cobdens, Stockport; Crown, Great Moor; Waterloo, Stockport and the Royal Mortar, Hillgate.

The Conway in Cheadle Hulme closes for eight weeks this month as it undergoes a £400,000-plus refurbishment by Hydes. The public areas are to be extended and substantially upgraded - the plans on display at the pub indicate a very impressive end result. Work is also underway at Millington Hall in Cheadle Hulme. While we understand that Hydes have had to alter their initial plans, it is good news that they have seen off the 'nimby's' who ridiculously suggested that the opening of this Heritage Inn would result in Cheadle Hulme becoming a sort of home grown Faliraki. If recent performance is anything to go by, and Stockport man Ryan Nelson achieves his ambition, he looks set to be among the country's youngest pub managers. Nineteen year-old Ryan is currently assisting his father Paul, who has been manager of the Dog & Partridge, Great Moor, for the past two years. But Ryan holds the long-standing ambition of running his own pub so has set about gaining the necessary experience and qualifications to realise his dream.

Ryan already works very closely with his father in running the Robinson's house and has provided relief management on several occasions. "I'm fully involved in all aspects of the business from cellar management to book keeping, but before I take on my own house I would like to build on the experience," he said. Having recently passed an intensive five-day licensee training course at Robinson's has certainly strengthened his position and now, back at the Dog & Partridge, Ryan is passing on his new-found skills to other members of staff.

VIADUCTS AND VAULTS 3 - OUT NOW!