

The FREE CAMRA Regional Magazine covering Central, East & South Manchester; Stockport; Tameside; Trafford; N.E. Cheshire & Macclesfield

THREE WAY ATTACK ON PUBCO TIES

NEW CALL FOR GUEST BEER RIGHTS

Political pressure is continuing to build for a complete review of the tied house system following ex-Inntrepreneur lessee Bernie Crehan's high-profile Court of Appeal victory over Japanese merchant bank Nomura last month.

Mr Crehan was awarded £250,000 damages after the court upheld a High Court ruling in his favour. He had claimed that the terms of his lease made it impossible for his two pubs to compete and had caused his business to fail. An estimated 600 ex-Inntrepreneur lessees are now queuing up to sue Nomura on the same grounds.

Pub operators argue that the case is specific to the Inntrepreneur lease of the early 1990s and does not create a precedent that will benefit their own lessees – indeed Greene King has even sent all its tenants a three-page letter spelling it out in detail. But the Crehan case is only one of three different attacks on the tie. Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott has now formally published consultation likely to lead to legislation abolishing upward-only rent reviews on commercial leases. The Government has tried for two years to get the industry to implement a voluntary code of practice on rent reviews, but has been almost completely ignored. The need to legislate is a cause of frustration it is not likely to forget.

Finally, the Department of Trade Select Committee's enquiry into the pubco tie has been inundated with submissions. It had received more than 100 written submissions and 200 emails by the 2 June deadline, and a spokeswoman admitted: "The high volume of submissions has surprised us."

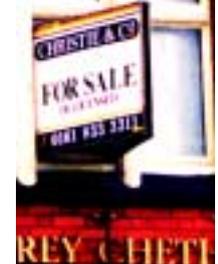
The Committee was starting to hear oral evidence as What's Brewing went to press, with CAMRA Chief Executive Mike Benner and Public Affairs Manager Jonathan Mail scheduled to testify immediately after the Federation of Small Businesses. The FSB, with 2,000 pub lessees among its members, has emerged as a strong champion of the licensed trade in the past two years. It was undeterred by its failure last year to get the Office of Fair Trading to refer the tie to the Competition Commission for a full-blown enquiry, and its continuous lobbying was a major factor in persuading the DTI Select Committee to launch its enquiry.

In its evidence to the Committee, the FSB claims that many pub landlords and landladies work a 90-hour week for a joint income of £200 a week or less. Policy chairman John Walker said: "Pubcos have their tenants over a barrel. Their licensees pay far more than the market price for their beer, give up most of their income from fruit machines, and are subject to surprise inspections."

CAMRA is arguing for a guest beer right for pubco tenants, the option of a free of tie lease, and an end to above-inflation beer price rises and upward-only rent reviews.

Mr Benner said: "We're not calling for the abolition of the tie, but we are calling for pubcos to loosen their ties in the interests of their tenants, consumer choice, and competition."

"This investigation is a wake-up call for the pubcos and an opportunity for them to put their house in order."



Failing pubs are increasingly up for sale as private dwellings.

CASK CHAMPION

Last month Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA presented its Cask Champion Award to at first sight an unlikely recipient – Interbrew UK.

The Cask Champion Award is designed to recognise particular efforts by an individual or organisation to advance the cause of cask ale in the Stockport & South Manchester Branch area and is not presented every year. Previous recipients have included Robinson's for their range of seasonal ales and Bar & Cellar Competition and Hydes' for their commitment to improving cask ale quality across their tied estate. Interbrew UK of course is a rather different animal, being the British presence of one of the biggest multi-national brewing corporations on the planet. Locally, however, it takes the form of Boddingtons Strangeways Brewery, an almost iconic name in Manchester brewing. The fortunes of Boddingtons and its beers have been well documented in these pages. Its journey from a local family-run brewer to an outpost of a global brewing giant is in many ways a Manchester parable for much of this country's brewing industry. So too, with Boddington's Bitter – once a famous beer that almost defined the word bitter and in recent years a shadow of its former self, gently sliding to oblivion, threatening to take the brewery with it. To their credit, Interbrew actually decided to try and do something about this. So, last year the beer was cleaned up and once again made an all-malt brew, its strength increased to 4.1% ABV and a real attempt made to market it.

It's still early days yet, but not only is the 'new' Boddingtons Cask a far superior beer to its predecessor but it is starting to appear in numerous keg-only pubs. And of course, those pubs which remained loyal to the cask version have a far better beer to sell. Too few of the multinational brewers who dominate this country's beer market display any sort of commitment to cask ale and so Interbrew UK's commitment to this classic beer is to be welcomed – it has made a difference and so they are this year's Cask Champions.

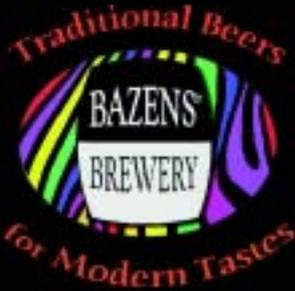


Branch Chairman John Clarke makes the presentation (above) and Branch Treasurer Jim Flynn toasts the award (left - not in the hat!)



In JULY'S OPENING TIMES ...

Pub of the Month	..... 2	Letters	..... 7	CAMRA Calling	..... 12
Editors View	..... 3	A Round in Town	..... 8	5 Years Ago	..... 13
Brewery News	..... 4	Stagger	..... 10	High Peak News	..... 14
Stockport Supping	..... 6	T&H Pub of the Season II	..... 16	Tasting Panel	..... 16
Peak Pub	..... 7	Macc Pub News	..... 11	Mcr. Matters	..... 18



Little Jimmy Ale 4.6% **20 Not Out** 4.1%
eXSb 5.5% **Blue Bullet** 4.5%
FlatbaC 4.2% (Beer of the Festival, Stockport, 2003 & Brewing Industry International Award winner 2004)
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PUB OF THE MONTH JULY 2004

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for July 2004 is the Legh Arms, Ashton New Road, Openshaw.

The Legh Arms is situated on Ashton Old Road 200 yards east of Alan Turing Way, opposite the Openshaw Campus of MANCAT (that's Openshaw Tech to older readers!). This area has seen wholesale destruction of both its manufacturing base and housing with a consequent loss of many of its pubs. Apart from the keg only Queen Anne, the next nearest pub is half a mile away in an area which would have previously boasted a pub on every other corner.

When David and Tracey Britnell took over three years ago there was a solitary hand pump selling Boddingtons Bitter. David has encouraged his regulars to try other real ales and now has three handpumps selling a variety of ales (he would like more pumps, but this would involve major alterations). One hand pump is semi-permanently dedicated to David's best seller, Black Cat, that excellent dark mild from Moorhouses. It is no surprise that it sells so well around these parts, being a close match to Chesters (fighting) Mild. The second pump usually dispenses Marston's Old Empire when David can secure some from his suppliers or Pedigree when it is unavailable. The last pump takes a variety of guest ales, Titanic White Star on my recent visit. A new innovation has been the introduction of real cider, served direct from the fridge. Cider is usually very easy drinking and stronger than beer, which has caught out some of the locals!

Real ale and amicable surroundings is not all that is on offer. The Legh Arms has teams in the local darts and cribbage league (matches Tuesday nights) and pool league. Of note is that the darts are played not on the standard London board, but on the rare (except for Gorton, Openshaw, Bradford and Clayton) Manchester log end. A large screen TV is available to show big sporting events (Euro 2004 at the time of writing).

Finally, a pub is not a pub without its regulars. Though only across the road from MANCAT the pub is not overrun with students. People of all ages and backgrounds are represented by the locals. I have had interesting conversations ranging from the location of Bradford Colliery shaft (somewhere under the City of Manchester stadium), through the manufacturing products of the local area (most famously steam trains from Bayer Peacock and armaments from Vickers) through to a potted history of the licensed trade locally! Whatever you are interested in you will get a warm welcome at the Legh Arms, especially on the night of Thursday 22 July when this well-deserved award will be presented.

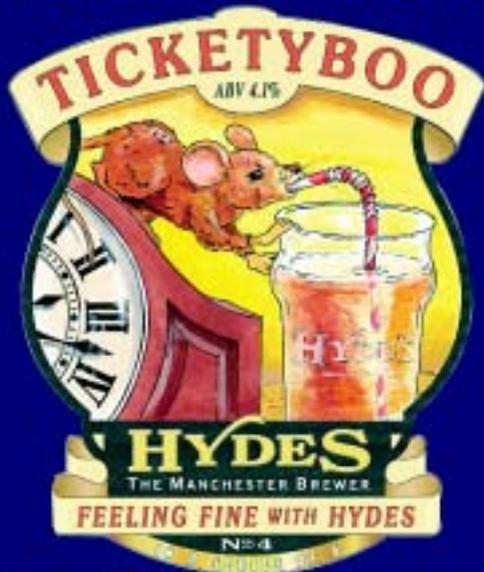
To get there from central Manchester, bus 219 (Stagecoach) at 28 and 58 past the hour or 220 (Dennis) at 43 past, both from the corner of Piccadilly/Portland Street (stand EW). Also the 53 connects Old Trafford, Moss Side and Longsight with the Ashton Old Road/Alan Turing Way junction.

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FEELING FINE WITH HYDES BEERS No 4 in the series July - August



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FOR AUGUST ISSUE OF OT - JULY 17**

IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

The beer tie is this month's hot topic with Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott's formal announcement of consultation over the abolition of upward-only rent reviews and a former leaseholder's legal victory over now-defunct pubco, Inntrepreneur.

Those who profit, or rather profiteer, from the tie – and we don't mean pub tenants! – have been badly shaken by the scrutiny their cosy little world has attracted recently. Hubert Read, chairman of Enterprise, expressed "surprise" at the DTI Select Committee's decision to investigate pubco rents, which he maintained were fair.

Surprise? Surprise! Clearly he hadn't been reading the trade press, especially The Publican's web site. The news, Mr Read, is that your lessees by and large loathe you because your leases force them to work like slaves for a return that in most cases falls comfortably below the minimum wage.

Look, there's no secret about this. In the good times, pub owners like to run managed houses because they can pay the licensees a wage and cream off the profit themselves. In leaner times, tenancies are the preferred option because tenants will absorb a huge amount of losses before they give up the struggle. If the pub is your home as well as your livelihood and all your savings are tied up in the business you'll do anything – lay off staff and work longer hours instead, pay yourself little or nothing, take an outside job – to keep paying the rent. That's how the industry has always worked; that's how it works today; that's how it will work forever unless somebody does something about it.

Opening Times supports the tie; always has, always will. But the tie has to be fair. And not just pubco ties – brewery ties can be equally onerous. And this is not just a trade issue that a consumer body need not involve itself in. Real ale sells better in tenancies than managed houses. The country pubs and back street boozers we favour are naturally tenanted (with the obvious exceptions such as Porter's Railway and Beartown's Navigation). We need to get behind pub tenants because by and large pub tenants are behind us. Drop a line to your MP to express support.

John Clarke

TONY MOLYNEUX

Just as this issue of Opening Times was being put to bed came the sad news that CAMRA stalwart Tony Molyneux had been found dead at his home. Tony was always a larger than life figure and was well-known to many CAMRA members, brewers and publicans throughout the north-west.

Recently a resident of Bury, he was a Liverpudlian at heart, indeed he declared as much at this year's CAMRA AGM in Southport. He was a man of many interests, singing sea shanty's professionally and a staunch supporter of Everton FC. But it was through his passion for good beer that many of us came to know and admire him. A long-time CAMRA activist he was a vocal supporter of Higson's Brewery when it was closed by Whitbread, and Tony stood by his pledge to never touch another drop of Whitbread beer to the very end. He was equally staunch in his support of Higson's successor, Cain's, working there for many years as a tour guide.

Always forthright in his views, even those who disagreed with him could not fail to admire his passion and principles. But while he could be outspoken, he was also a generous and kind man whose amiable presence will be missed at beer festivals and pubs both in the north west and across the country. Roger Protz, editor of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide summed up many people's feelings: "A great campaigner, great character, staunch socialist, great friend of Cain's, marvellous companion." A fitting epitaph for one of CAMRA's great characters. JC (Ed1)

I'm going to miss a good mate. PBH (Ed2).

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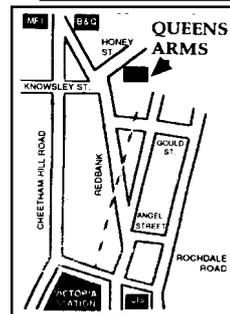
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DOUBLE GOLD FOR MOORHOUSES

Burnley brewer Moorhouses is celebrating after scoring a golden double at the Oscars of the international brewing industry. **Pride of Pendle**, first brewed only five years ago, walked away with the Cask Conditioned Ale category in the Brewing Industry International Awards 2002, having won gold in the 3.9-4.5% ABV cask ales class. And **Premium Bitter** made it a night to remember for the Lancashire company after winning gold for cask beers from 2.5-3.8%. The double coup was achieved in a field of 181 cask ales, a massive 23 per cent increase in entries over the 2002 competition. Brewery general manager David Grant said: "This fantastic success is the result of our driving passion to give the cask ale drinker the best quality beer imaginable."

TWO MORE FROM TESCO

Supermarket giant Tesco is to launch a new awards scheme to run alongside its Tesco Beer Challenge Competition. The Tesco Brewing Awards will consist of two categories.

Best New Imported Beer is aimed at bringing the most interesting and exciting overseas beer to the UK market. The brief for the judges of this competition is to look for a beer that is distinctive and unusual, and has the potential to "intrigue and educate" the British drinker while adding interest to the British beer culture.

Best Innovation in Brewing will reward the best new idea from brewers worldwide in the past year. The judges will be looking for an innovation that will have a "marked and measurable impact" on the UK beer scene, and entries are being invited under the headings new styles of beer, new packaging formats, new sales or promotion techniques, and new ways of improving customer education.

The winners will be announced at a lunch at The Brewery, Chiswell Street, London on 23 September.

FAMILY FAVOURITES

The local family brewers all have new seasonal beers out this month.

Robinson's seasonal for the summer months is **Sunny Jim** (3.8% ABV), described as "A light, thirst quenching summer ale specially designed to refresh and relax."

Brewed from a recipe incorporating an interesting blend of pale and light roasted malts, this perfectly round and smooth light golden beer has a subtle but distinctive tang of caramelised Demerara. Look for this in pubs like Stockport's Arden Arms and Swan With Two Necks.



Hydes' new craft ale this month is **Tickety Boo** at 4.1% ABV. They say that "ultimate refreshment and flavour are the key qualities emanating from this light, crisp summer beer benefiting from the subtle use of the Liberty hop". This is an American hop and does indeed impart a crisp tang when it is used - another one to look out for. Should be in many Hydes' pubs such as the Nursery, Heaton Norris and the Victoria, Withington.

Lees enter the fray with **Scorcher** (4.2% ABV), a return of a favourite from previous years. "A light golden beer with a tantalising, fruity aroma and a wonderfully refreshing hop finish" says the brewery, and indeed it is. Look out for this one in outlets such as the Rain Bar in the City Centre and the Lloyds Hotel in Chorlton.



Liverpool family brewer **Cains**, who locally have the Gothic in Gatley, also have a new seasonal out for July and August this is **Triple Hop** (4.5% ABV) described as "this aromatic ale is brewed using selected premium pale ale malts to produce body and flavour. The characteristic aroma is created by a blend of 3 hop varieties."

MICRO MAGIC

As ever the local micros have a whole range of new beers out. As ever apologies to those brewers who we didn't manage to contact this time around.

New Brewers - first, though, news of two new breweries. Saturday 29 May saw the relaunch of the **Mayflower Brewery** at the back of the Royal Oak, Standishgate, Wigan. The brewery was originally situated in a corner of a former bleachworks at Standish, but had to move because of the redevelopment of the site. New head brewer Stewart Thompson is back and

Wigan has its first brewery since 1970. Next month's *Opening Times* will carry a full report on this new venture.

Also brewing by now should be the **Owl Brewing Company**, set up in a previously abandoned Thwaites pub, the Hope Inn in Greenacres in Oldham. Three beers are planned and again, look for a full report next time.

Bazens' 20 Not Out, the *Opening Times* 20th birthday beer, has turned out to be a huge success! Not only did it fly out at Stockport Beer Festival but nearly every pub which has had it since wants more. The beer is therefore going to be brewed again - look out for it in the local free trade. The next special will be 'Icicle Jimmy Ale' (spelling to be confirmed) at 4.6% and will be pale and citrusy.



Beartown - this booming Congleton micro has bought two more pubs, taking the tied estate to nine pubs and a club. The latest acquisitions are the Globe Inn in Blackburn Road, Accrington, and the Bridge House Hotel in Hapton, near Burnley. Both pubs are offering three handpumped beers from the Beartown range including Kodiak Gold and Polar Eclipse.

Boggart Hole Clough - the 3.7% session ale, Potion has recently been out and this is to be followed by Tower, a 5% ABV light and very hoppy beer.



Facer's - As an experiment which, as far as David Facer knows hasn't been tried before, he has brewed 'Summer Recipe' versions of his two regulars **Landslide** and **Crabtree**. The strengths (4.9% and 4.3%) are the same, as are the hop grists, but he has altered the malt grist to make both beers lighter in colour



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and reduce the crystal malt palate. This allows the fruity hop notes of the beers to come through even more strongly than before and makes the whole presentation and palate more suitable to (hopefully outdoor) summer quaffing. The plan is to go back to the winter recipe in the autumn, giving the beers back their malty warming glow for those dark fire-side evenings. There will be a new 'Greats of English Literature' summer special (very light and with a floral hop character, if the hops used do what is expected!) available from July 5th. This will be the intriguingly named Loll's Summer Love.

Greenfield - two new beers out here. Evening Glory is a 4.2%ABV amber-coloured, traditional session bitter and Tanners Ale is a 4% and a light golden bitter with a hoppy aftertaste. Early August will see two further new beers. Viaduct Bitter will be 4.2% but was still being formulated when we spoke to the brewery and the other will be the return of the 4.5%ABV Longwood Thump, brewed for the Saddleworth Rushcart Festival.

Marble - as trailed in the Stockport Beer Festival programme, look out for the imminent arrival of Marble Bitter. This 3.9% ABV brew will use some of the first organic Cascade hops to be used in the UK, so expect a refreshing, citrusy beer.

Millstone - the Mossley micro continues to do well. Summer Daze at 4.1%ABV is a pale and hoppy beer brewed using Golden Promise malt and is selling well - it will appear two or three times over the summer months. The 3.8% ABV Windy Miller has been a huge success and will be brewed again. Millstone beers regularly guest at Stockport's Olde Vic. The brewery is also looking to get beers bottled and so increase possible outlets.

Phoenix - no new beers out at the moment but at the end of August look out for White Tornado a 4.3% ABV wheat beer) and Struggling Monkey at 4.7%.



Pictish - Siren is still available and next month look for the return of Corn

Dolly. There's nothing else in the pipeline at the moment but brewer Richard Sutton tells us he still has some honey in stock, so look for the return of the excellent Honey Beer.

Three Rivers - business is going well and a new copper is to be installed to increase capacity. Summer Rays, using Challenger and Cascade hops is out now and is proving popular. At the end of August a 5%ABV wheat beer will be launched. The name has yet to be decided. Three Rivers have also been swapping beer with other micros so they will be supplying a range of beers. Look out for Three Rivers beers in Stockport's Olde Vic, which acts as a brewery tap.



OUT IN CHESHIRE

Following the Paradise Beer Festival on 1-3 July there's a second beer festival in Wrenbury this month. The Bhurtpore Inn Beer Festival is from 13-18 July. Around 100 real ales, plus 150 bottled beers will be available. Opening times are 6.30-11.00pm on 13th; 12 noon-2.30pm and 6.30pm-11.00pm Wednesday to Friday and 12 noon to 11.00pm on Saturday and Sunday.

The Crewe & Shrewsbury Passenger Association has arranged with Arriva Trains Wales for the 11.33am Piccadilly-Cardiff express to stop at Wrenbury on both Saturday 3 and 17 July. On the same days a through train will leave Wrenbury for Manchester at 5.05pm. Other local connections are available via Crewe.



I was very surprised to see Warsteiner on the bar in Wetherspoon's Calverts Court in Stockport last week. Whilst the micro (cask) guest range seems to go from strength to strength in most of the local 'spoons, getting anything remotely decent in the imported line has been a bit of a struggle.

Its not Paulaner, but its a good summer drink - if like most north German beers a tad gassy. Speaking of the Munich brew, its now available in the ever excellent Sand Bar on Grosvenor St. Manchester, as well as Centro (and often in the Queens Arms, Honey St). I am also told of a newish Latvian Porter brew-pub in Munich, so I will seek it out in August and report back. I have to say I think Stockport Festival's move to the football/rugby ground went very well. There seemed to be a decent range of beer, and for once the rationing policy probably saved the day on Saturday. The weather was kind so beer quality held up well on my final visit on Saturday lunchtime. Space in OT is at an absolute premium so I will only mention Idy's May Festival at the Crescent (excellent choice/quality of cask beers as ever, but perhaps we can hope for a few foreign guest beers one day?) and point you in the direction of the festival coming up at the Lowes Arms (Denton) and Cheshire Ring (a few hundred yards away in Hyde) and very probably around the same time at the superb Smithfield Hotel in Swan Street, Manchester (22 - 24 July). I was hoping to cover the recent Boundary (nr. Guide Bridge BR) Fest this month, but a broken face (mine!) intervened, so I never made it.



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International Brewing Awards



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2002
Navy
Gold



2002
Wobbly Bob
Gold



2004
Wobbly Bob
Bronze



I've not been out and about that much in the past few weeks, so apologies for the dearth of news this month. However, I see that the **Nicholsons Arms** on Lancashire Hill is now showing signs of life again, and appeared to be open for business when I passed recently. There also appear to be signs of activity at the **Bridge Street Wine Bar**, although since this takes the form of a skip outside and a new sign advertising the place for sale for other uses, none of this augurs well for the future.

UP IN WOODLEY

All good things come to those who wait according to Dave and Kath Evans, who have taken over as tenants of the **Railway**, Woodley, three years after they decided to start out in new careers as the tenants of a public house. The couple, from Great Moor, have made a clean break from their established careers to take on the Robinson's house, with Dave leaving behind a lifetime spent in the textile industry and Kath giving up her work in accountancy after 22 years.

"I needed to make a clean break to get out of the textile business because more and more work is going overseas," explained Dave. "As Kath has a strong background in finance we were well placed to start our own business and soon settled on the idea of keeping a pub," he tells me. By chance, it was during Christmas week that the couple learnt that a vacancy was becoming available at the Railway, and following their close scrutiny, they immediately settled on the Hyde Road pub for its perfect combination of location and atmosphere that exactly matched their specification.

Luck then shone on the couple for a second time, as Kath was given the chance to work at the Grove, Hazel Grove, where her daughter, Janet, was then working as a relief manager. "It couldn't have worked out better because Kath had the opportunity to learn a lot about the job before we took over here at the Railway," added Dave.

Now settled in the lively local, the couple are enjoying the independence of working for themselves and take great pleasure in the hospitality that they offer.

ON TRACK AT THE RAILWAY

Having worked at The Railway, Rose Hill for just a year, the talents of Marple man Martin Burke, have been spotted by the licensee of the Robinson's house, who has invested in his future and provided him with

a five day licensee training course that will further his career. "Since beginning the job I've already taken on the role of bar manager, which involves everything from cellar management to stock control, and of course there is always time to be spent behind the bar and looking after the customers," says Martin. With a taste for the licensed trade, his long-term ambition is to run a pub of his own, but for now the nineteen-year-old is concentrating on building on his experience.

As a past winner of Robinson's annual Best Kept Bar and Cellar Competition, The Railway is the perfect training ground for the budding licensee who is fully involved in ensuring that every pint of cask conditioned beer is served in perfect condition. "It's my belief that a pub can be judged on the quality of its beer, which no doubt has played a vital role in building the reputation of The Railway. It is now my intention to ensure that it stays that way," added Martin.

BACK ON EDGELEY

I'm pleased to say that Lorraine and Mitch are still at the **Church**. Since Robinson's have been unable to find replacement tenants, the couple have stayed on as managers. They tell me that business is slowly building again and with luck another beer will be able to join the handpumped Unicorn at some stage.

Across the road, there are now new people at the **Greyhound**, although I've not been able to pop in and have a word yet. I did play a fleeting visit shortly after the changeover and enjoyed the handpumped Boddingtons.

The **Jolly Crofter** has also reopened under a temporary licensee and the pub is still advertised as 'to let'. Nearby, the 'for sale' signs have gone up on the fire damaged **Swan** on Shaw Heath, and I think we can now write it off as a pub. Also closed as this was written was the **Prince Albert** on Castle Street - no signs of life at all, with the upstairs living accommodation looking deserted, too. If it is going to change hands, let's hope the new people reinstate cask beer.

The good news, though, is that the **Royal Oak** still seems to go from strength to strength. I always enjoy the Holt's Bitter here and it has been joined by the new Boddingtons Cask. I should also mention the ever-excellent **Woolpack** on Brinskway. This free house seems to have slightly dropped off the radar among some local beer buffs (and I must admit my visits have been less frequent of late) but I really don't know why. There are usually three or four interesting guest beer on sale, often from micro brewers (including the hoppy Acorn Summer Pale Ale when I last called), there's a good food offering and it is generally a credit to the professionalism of long-serving landlord, Bob Dickinson. If you've not been for a while, get down there - I shall certainly be visiting more often.



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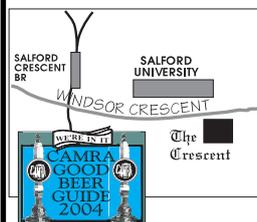
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FEATURED PUB
THE SPORTSMANS ARMS,
105 STRINES ROAD,
STRINES

The Sportsmans Arms, originally called Sport House, dates back to 1796 and has held a licence since 1805, when it opened as an ale house.

In those days it served the then busy Strines Road traffic and the horse-drawn boats on the nearby Peak Forest Canal.



Originally a Wilson's house, it was subsequently sold as a free house. The late Ken Moon ran it for years before moving lower down Strines Road to the Royal Oak. Joe and Sue Stockton took over last November with the previous landlord moving to warmer climes. Sue worked in the hotel trade for years and while Joe was not in the trade he has taken to his new role with obvious enthusiasm.

As well as the ever-present Cain's Bitter and Boddington's Cask Bitter, Joe and Sue have introduced at least three interesting guest beers changing regularly – on my last visit these were Archers, Phoenix and Boggart Hole Clough.

The Sportsmans Arms is a welcoming pub with a vault and a large lounge-cum-dining room, with huge picture windows overlooking the valley to Mellor. Home-cooked food is served

O **LETTERS**
OPENING TIMES

From David White, Mossley:

I read with interest your short article in the High Peak & North East Cheshire pub news, regarding the Tollemache Arms in Mossley. Firstly, let me correct your geography – the Tolly is on Manchester Road and not Huddersfield Road! The pub is NOT shut, but has recently had a change of tenancy. It is now in the capable hands of Paul and Clare (from Stockport) and is open normal pub hours from 12 noon daily. The couple are a vast improvement on the previous tenant who succeeded in driving long standing locals away, and barring two 70+ year olds for nothing more than speaking loudly! (One of them being profoundly deaf). Happily, all the nomadic regulars have returned, and all is well with the world.

As for the sign, this was taken down some time ago by the brewery when they replaced the façade sign with wall mounted lettering. The hanging sign was taken to Stockport to be renovated, but has not been seen since. This has nothing to do with the pub being closed or open, just Robinson's taking their time as usual. I would appreciate you putting the records straight in the next edition of Opening Times.

(Good news indeed – always happy to put the record straight. Ed(1))

From: M Mackanocky, Edgeley:

Now that the refurbishment of Holt's Cheadle Hulme has bedded-in and a number of your readers have probably visited it, I would like to make a couple of observations. First, I believe a very competent job has been done to create a most pleasant pub. Second, have readers noticed that all of the artworks on display, however obscure some of them may look, have the theme of railways within them? A genuine nod to this history of the place when it was the plain old Junction. Well done Joseph Holt.



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A ROUND IN THE TOWN - 20 YEARS AGO

Continuing our celebration of 20 years of Opening Times, this is the second of three 'A Round In The Town' features we will be reprinting. This one, covering Clayton, comes from the July 1984 issue and was written by John Clarke (your very own Ed(1)). As last month, the article is followed by a 2004 update.

The Clayton area tends to be one of the neglected parts of our branch area but this year a determined effort is being made to put things right. With this in mind a crawl of the area was arranged in late April and what follows are the exploits of the intrepid five who took part. As usual notes were taken of prices and drinkability on a range of 0 (undrinkable) to 4 (excellent). The starting point was the **Duke of Edinburgh** on Mill Street. This pub is a recent conversion to real ale with a keen landlord, and it shows in the quality of the Tetley beer. The Mild (59p) scored 4 and the Bitter (60p) 3.3; a promising start to an evening's boozing!

The second port of call was the **Why Not?** on Ashton New Road. The pub itself, adorned with window boxes, flags and canopies, looks totally out of place sandwiched as it is between two factories. Inside, it's rather like drinking in someone's front room with bookcases, sofas, etc. The beers available were Boddingtons Bitter, Chesters Bitter and Matthew Brown John Peel Special all at 62p. The John Peel was off and I was given an alternative of Fosters or Heineken! I settled for the Boddingtons - which was about as good as you can expect these days and scored 2½.

Next was the **Grove Inn**, also on the New Road. A typical Holt's pub - virtually no sign, peeling green paintwork outside and an almost bare vault. Unusually for a Holt's house no mild was available. The Bitter,

though, was in fine form scoring an average of just over 3 and at 55p was the cheapest of the night.

On to the **Church** on Clayton Lane, a small sparsely furnished Bass pub with a good atmosphere. The only real ale was 4X Mild, although the casual caller would have no way of knowing this since all the beers were dispensed through the same plastic box type bar mounting. One of CAMRA's aims is to have cask beers distinctly identified where they are also produced in processed form. However, plastic box or no, the beer was in superb condition scoring just under 3½ and at 54p was one of the cheapest of the night, remarkable for a product of one of the Big Six breweries. Next was the **Victoria** on Croft Street, serving handpumped Wilsons Mild and Bitter. An excellent community pub, the busiest so far, although to be fair you're not going to find a packed pub at 7pm! The Bitter, 58p, scored 3½ and the Mild, 55p, reached top marks with 4.

Dragging ourselves away we rejoined Ashton New Road near two Chesters pubs,

the **Sir Humphrey Chetham** and the **Derby**. The trouble with many Chesters pubs is that even if they had a handpump (the cask is only on handpump) the last time you went in, the next time it's gone and the bar's full of fizz, and the Humphrey Chetham has lost its cask beer. The handpump popped up over the road however in the Derby Arms. The Bitter though was decidedly average and scored just over 1½. To be fair the turnover doesn't seem too high, we arrived at 9.30pm and the first pint tasted as if it had been in the pipes for some time.

Next the **Metropole**, Rylance Street. A busy new pub, none the worse for that, with a live DJ. Only the Bitter was real and scored well at over 3.

The final stop was the **Seven Stars** on Ashton Old Road. A superb unspoilt Holt's pub. Holt's seem to be getting it right when improving pubs, the mahogany shone, the glasswork sparkled, the pub was packed and the beer fine. Mild, 54p, scored 3 and Bitter, 56p, 3½. The night had ended as well as it had begun.

OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING

ADVERTISING RATES FROM JANUARY 2004: 1/8 page (60mm x 85mm): £30 (£60 colour); 1/4 page (120mm x 85mm): £55 (£90 colour); 1/2 page (horiz: 174mm x 120mm; vert: 250mm x 85mm): £90 (£150 colour); Full page (175mm x 240mm) £150 (£250 colour). Surcharges may apply for back page. Generous discounts available on adverts of 1/4 page or above for runs of insertions. Advert design origination usually free of charge unless large costs involved. Ring 0161 477 1973 for details. Artwork should be submitted as hard copy (positive bromide) or PC COMPATIBLE (NOT MAC) *.jpg, *.eps, or *.tiff AND you MUST include hard copy back-up). For colour adverts please ring for details first.



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A ROUND IN THE TOWN - TODAY

The pub scene in East Manchester has changed considerably over the past 20 years – and generally for the worse, although many of the pubs featured in the article do still survive.

The monolithic Duke of Edinburgh, along with most of Mill Street, has been swept away, to be replaced by Alan Turing Way. The Why Not? has also gone. Latterly renamed the Little Bradford it fell victim to Manchester's Olympic dreams and, despite a spirited campaign to save it, the pub was compulsorily purchased and demolished. A landscaped area has replaced both the pub and the neighbouring factories.



The Grove Inn still survives and these days has both more prominent outside signing and a more comfortable vault following a refurbishment a couple of years ago. Handpumped Mild had joined the Holt's Bitter and the pub should be appearing in the 2005 Good Beer Guide.

The Church Inn is still there, too, although it is now called

Blue Moon and sells no real ale. You'll find no real ale in the Victoria either, which, with its grilled ground floor windows, doesn't present a very welcoming appearance from the outside.

Back on Ashton New Road, the Sir Humphrey Chatham is closed and boarded, and for sale delicensed. Across the road, the Derby is still going strong but sells no real ale (although a hand-



pump remains with a Boddingtons Bitter pumpclip reversed when we called). Chesters Bitter has long since vanished in both cask or keg form.

The Metropole has also been demolished but the Seven Stars survives. It has been radically changed, though – despite the positive comments about Holt's refurbishment policy, they managed to destroy much of the pub's traditional interior when an ill-thought out extension was built. Holt's run it on some sort of arms length basis today and while it is rather shabby inside, there is a good welcoming feel to the place. Mild and Bitter remain on handpump.

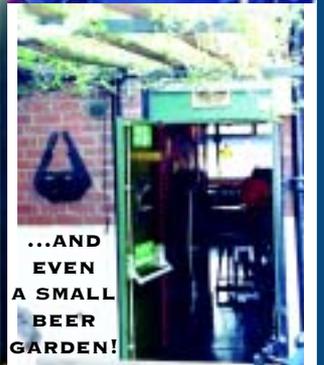
Other Clayton pubs still trading at the time included the Greens Arms (Wilsons, Ashton New Road), Clayton Arms (Tetley, North Road) and the Folkestone (Boddingtons, Folkestone Road). All have long since closed. Another pub was Wilsons' Crabtree on Crabtree lane. This now thrives as the independently run Strawberry Duck with Holt's Bitter on handpump. This issue of Opening Times also included a report of a refurbishment at the Prince of Wales on Ashton Old Road, Openshaw, which was then serving three cask beers. You can find out what happened to this pub, and many neighbouring ones, in our third and final 'A Round On the Town' next month, which features a valiant one man tour of Openshaw and environs.

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STAGGER

with Dave Hallows

RUSHOLME & FALLOWFIELD IN MAY

IN FACT, we started in Ladybarn village: I say 'village' in a local history sense of the word, as both nearby Didsbury and Withington shopping areas are still known as villages and were, in their own right, up to the early 20th Century.

Thankfully, we found Ladybarn graced by three real ale pubs close together. First was the **White Swan** (Robbies) on Green Street. Originally, a Kay's Atlas Ales house, it's something of a time capsule inside with four separate rooms including both a large bar and a pool room. Notable is the small vault with an original attractive mosaic stone floor. Sadly, it is somewhat careworn outside, though still retains its outdoor sales entrance, long blocked off. Out door sales were very much part of the drinking scene especially in South Manchester years ago, when one could pay for beer in small change. Happy days, now long gone. The Swan had just the Best Bitter and quality was from good to very good. Though nobody seemed to mention it, the second handpump had nothing on it, with the mild long gone. Most of the regulars were around the bar and it's still lively, but not as packed out as I remember it of yesteryear.

Astone's throw away is the **Brewers Arms** on Ladybarn Lane. Very much a CAMRA success story for Opening Times running a campaign which showed to the pub that you can't really call yourself a 'A Cask House' and then have none of the proper stuff inside when Joe Public walks in. Those in residence saw the light some years ago and put cask Tetley Bitter on, which was decreed to be average to good standard. The decor, done in the early 90's, gives a rustic nature to the place with bare brick walls, bare floorboards and tiled floors that does make for a good atmosphere to have a drink. Quite well populated too, with groups of males having a couple before hitting the town.

Onward to the **Derby Arms**, which is just down the road between Ladybarn Lane and Exbury Street, and it's a real ale gain! On asking, the word was from behind the bar that Boddies Bitter was

selling well. It was generally considered in very good nick. The pub is nicely appointed both inside and out, cosy with one long room and lively with custom.

A short gander down Egerton Rd brought us to Wimslow Road and 'Studentville'. The contrast between Labybarn pubs and those in Fallowfield is startling! And, of course, it's because all are geared to, at present, class of 2003/4! We took in Hydes' Good Beer Guide listed **Friendship** first off and found it busy and cosmopolitan. Bitter, Light and Jekyll's Gold were on. There were some of us, who voiced that they were surprised the present seasonal, Cloud Nine, wasn't on especially as it was weekend. The Bitter was found to be of average quality, but seemed to improve as more was drawn. The same happened to the Light, which got better and better, though - maybe - needed more conditioning. The Jekyll's Gold, however, proved to be the best beer of the night.

Next was fun time. The Wetherspoon-with-music, **Lloyd's No. 1** and, interestingly named the Central Bar, after the Central Line, which ran underneath the railway bridge, where the pub now stands. Opened some months ago it was formerly part of the athletes' village during the Commonwealth Games and now has student accommodation above. To be sure, it was one massive, dimly lit room, loud and packed out with the young. No doubt celebrating the end of their exam season. Despite displaying three real ales (Courage Directors, Greene King Abbot Ale and Shepherd Neame Spitfire) there was only one on, the Spitfire, with the place packed out! To my understanding, Wetherspoon have an odd policy of not turning around beer badges, but to put on a yellow sign stating, 'Sorry, beer not' or something like that. The yellow signs weren't on and they frequently aren't as Lloyds No.1, to my mind have a slap-dash policy towards real ale. That is a bad advertisement to young drinkers! Abbot Ale is very much a student favourite and not on when we called. Any way, the Spitfire was thought of as average and too cold.

Over the road, is the Beartown Brewery emporium **Bruins**. The fairly large cafe-bar-styled one-roomed pub has a vast array of the Congleton Brewer's range. Bearskinful (the bitter), Black Bear, Kodiak Gold and Polar Eclipse all sported new beer badges, or rather beer badges, as a picture of a grizzly sat on each! Also, available is Bruins Ruin, Ambeardextrous (the mild), Wheat Bear and Bear Ass. Krombacher, Pilsner Urquell (a rare outlet for the Czech lager) and Erdinger Wheat Beer are on draught with a good selection of bottles. Kodiak Gold seemed to improve as more was drawn and got from just below average to excellent. Bearskinful was deemed good to excellent. Wheat Bear was tarty, but Black Bear was found to be very good. The pub is brave to try so many real ales on but the bar was busy and the prices are keen here.

After a short hop on a bus, we went into **Hardy's Well** (ex-Birch Villa) in Rusholme at start of the curry mile. After dalliances with real ale and reverting to keg, it now has the new Boddies Bitter and reportedly sells 50 gallons a week. To add further proof of this, it scored well, rated very good to excellent. It was dry with a mellow bittery and hoppy taste. The pub is well decked out with comfy sofas; notable also is a gargantuan table in pride of place that seats 12.

A short jaunt around the corner and set back off Dickinson Rd, we visited the **Welcome**. A former Greenalls emporium that still sells Greenalls Bitter and Tetley Bitter. Newly decorated in red and cream inside and quite good it is too. It is sad though that the old photos of the stars of the small screen in the 60's have now gone. The BBC had a studio in an old and long since demolished church just paces away, back then. There's a vault and long lounge with an unusual original tiled bar standing area. Both bitters featured well from above average to very good.

Next just off Platt Lane was an old watering hole of mine, when visiting Maine Road on match days - **Osborne House** (Hydes') on Victory Street. Still a shrine to the Blues with five drinking areas, serving Bitter and Mild. The Mild was highly thought of but no-one tried the bitter. Still, a nice little lively pub.

Final call was to something of an institution in Rusholme, the **Albert** (Hydes') on Walmer Street. There is quite a debate between this pub and the much-loved Jolly Angler in Ducie Street, of just who has the best draught Guinness in Manchester! (**I can think of another couple that would join this argument - Ed(2)**). This deceptively large multi-roomed pub had for some reason no bitter, but a cracking example of Jekyll's Gold, making it the second best beer of the night. So, there we are. It was a lean night for me as CAMRA Under-26 social group were invited to join us. As it was, a couple came to the last pub, making it a small, but select group. One of the nicest things about this said Stagger was that your scribe was helped with information and the like from my cohorts. This is just a snap shot of some very different pubs. When you get a spare moment why not try some of them and let Opening Times know what you think? Let's have a debate!



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Trafford and Hulme Branch's Summer Pub of the Season award is going to the Moss Trooper at Timperley.

This is a Spirit Group owned pub that re-opened after extensive refurbishment just one year ago. The landlord, Vince, has been in the trade for many years, moving to this area from Rochdale. Besides his standard three cask ales of Greene King IPA, Charles Wells' Bombardier and Boddington's Bitter he also has three guest ales and usually sells at least 6 different ones each week. This was a standard estate pub serving Websters and Boddingtons and was in great need of refurbishment. After being 'guttled' it is now a large and airy pub, offering standard seating areas intermingled with sofas around open gas fires.



The award has been given in recognition of Vince's hard work to make this suburban pub one that everyone wants to visit. Every time I visit I have to pull him away from chatting to customers and staff, keeping everyone happy and relaxed. He is always more than willing to see anyone from CAMRA.

This pub seems to cater for all needs with all day food and six cask ales. For those cask drinkers whose partners do not want to go to 'yet another pub with nothing for them to drink', he has a selection of 18 wines on offer at all times. He currently is on a 6-month trial for a late licence to midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

The date of the presentation is Wednesday 28th July (8pm onwards) when everyone will be given a warm welcome. To find the Moss Trooper turn onto Moss Lane off Park Road. From Timperley Metro station, turn left out of the station and walk down the road for quarter of a mile then turn right onto Moss Lane. The Moss Trooper is a five minute walk down the road. BR



PUB NEWS

A little more information on a recent report, the landlord of the Evening Star on James Street, in Macclesfield has moved just one street to the Peels Arms in Peel Street, this is a Thwaites house. Meanwhile the Evening Star still has a pub to let sign on it, and has a note in the window saying Tiger Bitter is now on sale, I will let you know if I get any more on this

Pubs changing in hands in Macclesfield soon include The Brewers, the Travellers Rest and the Barnfield. Also in Macclesfield Yates is now closed and is in the process of being converted into some kind of food & drink establishment.

In Bollington, the Crown is now selling Fuller's London Pride alongside Black Sheep and the Red Lion has been selling Bateman's Dark Mild as well as two other real ales.

In Kerridge, the Bull's Head has re-opened after its extensive refurbishment. While there is still work to be done the pub is looking very smart. Eventually (once the kitchen has been refitted) there will be food available and the opening hours will change accordingly. There is also now an outside drinking area that should appeal to walkers, however no dirty boots or dogs are allowed inside.

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CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries
Here are the monthly branch event diaries, starting with Stockport and South Manchester, followed by High Peak, Macclesfield and Trafford & Hulme

Diary

JULY 2004

Saturday 10th – Stockport Beer Festival Staff Party: Ye Olde Vic, Chatham St, Edgeley. From early evening.

Friday 16th – Offerton Stagger: meet 7.30pm Wrights Arms Offerton Road; 8.30 Fingerpost, Hempshaw Lane.

Wednesday 21st – Joint Social with Trafford & Hulme Branch at The Old Hall, Altrincham. Diners meet at 7.00pm & drinkers at 8.00pm

Thursday 22nd – Pub of the Month Presentation to the Legh Arms, Ashton Old Road, Openshaw. Minibus leaves the Crown, Heaton lane at 8.00pm.

Thursday August 12th – Branch Meeting: Nursery, Green lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.00pm.

The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:

Saturday 10th – Regional Branches Meeting: Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar. Starts 12 noon.

Monday 19th – Branch Meeting: Sportsmans, Mottram Road, Hyde. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 2nd August – Committee Meeting: Sportsmans Arms, Strines. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 16th – Branch Meeting: White Hart, Mottram. Starts 8.30pm.

REGIONAL MEETING

Saturday 10th – Regional Branches Meeting hosted by High Peak: Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar. Starts 12 noon.

JULY 2004

Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton. They have notified us of the following events:

Friday 16th – Khean Brewery Visit & Hotpot Supper (10 places only, £3.50 per head). Meet at the brewery in Congleton'

Monday 19th – Campaigning Meeting: Royal Oak, Heyes Ln, Alderley Edge (pub under threat). Starts 8.00pm.

Saturday 31- Sunday 1 August – Beer Festival (CAMRA presence – volunteers wanted), Dog Inn, Peover Heath.

Monday 9th – Campaigning Meeting: George & Dragon, Middlewich Rd, Holmes Chapel. Starts 8.00pm

The Trafford & Hulme Branch covers the Borough of Trafford, Manchester west of the M56/Princess Parkway and a large part of the City Centre. They have advised us of the following events:

Thursday 15th – Stretford Visit – Melville (Holts) at 7.30pm then Trafford Social Club at 9.00pm

Wednesday 21st – Joint Social with Stockport Branch at The Old Hall, Altrincham. Diners meet at 7.00pm & drinkers at 8.00pm

Thursday 12th August - Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm.

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KEEP YOUR COOL

A colleague I drink with from time to time has a habit of going in virtually every pub and saying that the beer's too cold. In most cases the temperature seems fine to me, but short of attracting funny looks by getting a thermometer and dipping it in my pint there's no way of proving the point.

Real ale is not meant to be served at room temperature or anything like it. Ideally, it should be kept at a natural cellar temperature of around 12-13 °C (54-56 °F). This means it will be pleasantly cool and refreshing without being tooth-numbingly chilly. And I'm sure that most of the pubs my friend is grumbling about achieve precisely that.

Some concerns have been expressed that the Cask Marque beer quality accreditation scheme has been far keener to mark pubs down for warm than ice-cold beer, and I have been in the occasional pub where real ale was spoilt by being dispensed at lager temperatures. But I must say that in my experience it is still much more common to find beer that is too warm than too cold. All too often you go in a pub with an array of handpumps at a quietish time and just know that you're going to get a pint of tepid glop.

Once you've found some means of reliably serving your beer below room temperature, then you can start to think about how to fine-tune it. And a cold pint will warm up after a while, but one that is too warm to start with will just get worse, so erring a bit on the cool side is not the end of the world. There are far more important things in the beer world to get worked up about.

HAPPY CUSTOMERS

The recent Stockport Beer Festival was a resounding success, with the extra space at Edgeley Park accommodating more customers than ever on the Friday night, and the whole place being drunk dry by around 10pm on Saturday. You might imagine that such an event would be a recipe for trouble, with upwards of a thousand people crowded into a venue, many of them standing up, and confronted by a tempting array of often very strong beers and ciders. It was also by no means something that appealed only to old fogeys, with a substantial proportion of the customers being under 30. Yet, although inevitably there was the odd bit of boisterous behaviour, like virtually all beer festivals it passed off without serious disturbance. This was in glaring contrast to most town centres on a Friday and Saturday night, which become a sea of puking, brawling youngsters fuelled by alcopops and designer lagers.

The key factor in this must be that people are actually appreciating the taste and character of alcoholic drinks rather than just pouring them down their necks with the aim of getting drunk as quickly as possible. It was interesting that the strongest beers were the last to sell out. I'm sure that a close correlation could be drawn between the level of trouble and the proportion of real ale sold in pubs, and perhaps this is something that the authorities need to take into account when reviewing applications to open new bars and renew the licenses of existing ones.

Curmudgeon Online: <http://members.lycos.co.uk/curmudgeon>

5 Years Ago
by Phil Levison **JULY '99**

The main front page story dealt with the upheavals in the brewing industry, under the headline 'Feeding Frenzy!' Vaux in Sunderland and Wards in Sheffield had both closed, with the loss of 700 jobs, whilst Greene King announced a takeover bid for the company that brewed Old Speckled Hen, Morland's of Abingdon. This would be followed by the closure of Morland's, with the loss of their bitters, and conceivably Ruddles beers also. Mitchells of Lancaster were to quit brewing, due to the decline in real ale sales - but in the midst of this doom and gloom there were stories of micro brewers bursting at the seams, and independent brewers that were doing just fine. In fact, Fullers of London had announced that their profits were up by 21%, and Gales of Hampshire were up by 13%.

★★★★★

After a long period of closure, Robinson's had reopened Stockport's Manchester Arm, which had emerged as Cobdens, and it was not just the name that had changed. The pub had been extended backwards into a completely glazed area, overlooking the new park on the former cinema site next door. This extensive use of glazing gave the whole place a light and airy feeling. The bar counter itself was dominated by chrome pillar taps dispensing various keg products, and there were two handpumps for Robinson's Best Bitter. Very little seems to have changed in the five years since Cobdens reopened, but now, one handpump serves Best Bitter, whilst the other is reserved for Robinson's seasonal offerings, or possibly XB.

★★★★★

Another pub that had reopened after closure for a complete makeover was the Gothic Bar & Grill, formerly Gatley Wine Bar, which was to be Cain's first pub away from the Liverpool area. The plan had been to turn it into a 'Dispensary' on the Liverpool style, but it was decided to play on the building's origins as a chapel. There had been extensive use of wood panelling, new stained glass windows at the side, and acid etched windows at the front, all of which had contributed to give the place an ecclesiastical feel. Three handpumps on the bar serving Cain's Mild, Bitter and FA, were complemented by two more pumps at the side serving guest beers. Now five years later, all the stained and etched glass has been replaced by clear glass - none of the drinkers knew why this has happened, nor did they appear to care.

☆☆☆☆☆

The Greyhound in Edgeley had a new licensee, but whilst real ales and guest beers were to remain, there had been one change - the beer had come down in price! Boddington's Bitter was down by 4p, Greenall's Mild down 13p, and the guest beers were down by 30p. Now, by 2004, there have been several changes in licensee, and on a recent visit only Boddington's was available on two of the six handpumps - but another change of licensee was imminent, so maybe other beers will reappear.



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On June 21, John & Sharon McCall, took over the Dorbiere Pub Co's Manor Inn on High Street East (also in Glossop). They have a good pedigree, as they were formerly licensees at the Friendship, a regular Good Beer Guide entry across town. The pub is obviously going to get a huge lift here as the last landlord had a drugs bust within two weeks of him moving in and several changes in licensees have taken place within quite a short time. **A former popular pub that hopefully will make a recovery.** There's a huge difference in a pint of Wells Bombardier in Hyde. At the Bike & Hounds it is £1.30 while at the Godley Hall, it is 90p dearer at £2.20. The Bike has had a change of beer recently with Marstons Pedigree replacing the Everards Tiger. Also in Hyde, the Beehive at the bottom of Commercial Brow, shut for 3 years, was demolished in June.

In Mossley, Thwaites have given up the Best O' Brass and it has been taken over by Burtonwood. Thwaites have however moved to take over the Church Inn at Mossley. Alan & Christine Frost have given the popular free house up, a blow here, for the Church was a regular outlet for local beers such as Shaws, Millstone and Greenfield breweries.

Reports that the Wheatsheaf in Old Glossop was shutting was confirmed by bar staff. It is to re-open as a Greek restaurant.

Finally, another Shaws outlet, the Partington Club in Glossop is changing stewards. David & Christine are moving across the road to Glossop Conservative Club where they will try and see if the regulars will take to a handpump with a Shaws beer on (it has been all keg for as long as I can remember).

BUFFET BAR MILESTONE

The unique buffet bar on Stalybridge railway station opened in 1855 and has passed another milestone in its history. Saved after closure and dereliction some seven and a half years ago by John Hesketh and Sylvia Wood who have a policy of offering, along with regular national beers, a range of guest ales from the smaller and micro-breweries. There's an ever-changing selection, usually five or six at any one time and up to 20 every week.

The beers are carefully logged by John. They have arrived from nearly 400 breweries throughout the UK, from the Orkneys to the south coast and the Isle of Man. The 5000th different guest ale has made its appearance, specially brewed for the Buffet Bar by Millstone Brewery on Mossley. The beer is 5000BC (Buffet Count), a light, straw-coloured, very astringent beer which was enthusiastically welcomed by the regulars, some of whom quipped that they cannot wait to try the 10,000th!

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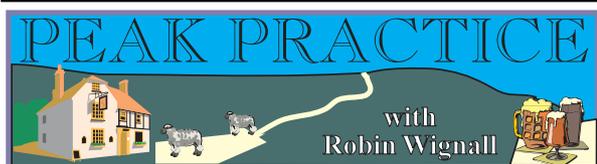
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First of all apologies for a mistake that slipped into last month's column. Staff and customers at the Bull's Head in Kettleshulme will be searching for table football, when all the time they are staring at the table skittles, which was intended and is a traditional pub game. The now demolished Bridge on Georges Road in Stockport used to have a set.

This month a return to Chapel-en-le-Frith to visit the pubs in the town centre which are not part of the Robinson's estate. I chose the evening of England-v-Croatia for my walk round which probably presented the pubs in a less than usual situation.

The Royal Oak on Market Street is a Burtonwood house, very busy with locals, football supporters all, on the night. This must be a relatively recent Burtonwood acquisition, as the brewery's Pub Lovers' Pocket Guide of 1986 does not include it. The interior has been opened out, but a multi-roomed feel is retained. There is a distinct dining room, food being recommended in Andrew McCloy's Peak District Pub Guide. Burtonwood Best Bitter was a decent pint, at £1.80, whilst current guest beer Wadworth's 6X, which was even better on the night, was £1.90 - a bargain for guest beers in this area. At the top of the Market Place is the King's Arms, badged as a Porter's Ale House, but of course having nothing to do with the Haslingden brewer. This is a big residential hotel with a large bar area and lots of wooden panelling. As on a previous visit the Boddington's pumpclip was turned round, and although the match was on TV, Marston's Pedigree at £2.30 did not detain me.

Also on the Market Place is the Roebuck, a fine multi-roomed pub, even after some opening out. There are two vault areas, one with darts, and a wonderful bar faced with timbers reminiscent of those of a wooden ship. The Roebuck is well furnished with settles, benches and genuine antique tables. Historic photographs show local events, and are good on railway history. The Roebuck had the biggest choice of real ale, though the smallest number of football supporters on the night. Tetley's Mild at £1.70 was a pleasant find, and was accompanied by Tetley's Bitter, Draught Bass and Courage Directors.

Back on Market Street is the Dog, badged as being owned by Centric Inns, a pubco swallowed by another in recent years. The place was heaving but there was no real ale on sale. There's no accounting for taste! I did not linger.

HIGH PEAK WALK

A much smaller party than last year, but some really good beer along the way and a really good comradeship between the 16 walkers who competed. Walking the early part of the day between showers, there was a reluctance to leave the Kinder Lodge, where the McMullens Country Bitter, Northern Brewing's Hope & Glory, Draught Bass and (for the one brave soul) Marstons Old Empire, weighing in at 5.7% - not a popular choice at 10.30am, were all reported as being in good form.

On then in the rain, down the Sett Valley Trail and paths up to the Pack Horse on the New Mills to Mellor road, where the Mordue Summer Tyne, Salopian Trailblazer, Moles Molekeeper & Archers Blonde Biker were arguably the best beers of the day. Paths on upwards and then down to the Oddfellows at Mellor, where the weather improved enough for us to sit outside and drink mainly Phoenix Arizona, though Taylor Landlord and Adnams Bitter were reported as being good. No-one tried the Boddingtons due to the other choices.

A long way to the next pub, maybe a good thing because we finished the walk a lot earlier than normally, all the other pubs being a short distance from each other in Glossop. Firstly at the Beehive, where Northern Brewing Hope & Glory made another appearance alongside the St Austell Tribute. A pleasant atmosphere here, a pub a little out in the sticks, untapped by CAMRA members - I could have ended the day here with no problem (the landlady threw in a £10 note to my sponsor money as well).

Down to the Queens in Old Glossop, where the Black Sheep Best Bitter was as good as ever, many trying the Hobgoblin, with Bass, Marston's Pedigree and Worthington completing the range here. A quick pint of Old Stockport in the Bulls Head up the road was obligatory as we were in good time. This was super as was the Unicorn as ever in a pub that has gone back to its former glories (the curries have always been the best in town). Down to the Star and a nice range here. Hop Back Summer Lightning. Phoenix Summer Madness, Everard's Sunmaster, Black Sheep Best Bitter, Deuchars IPA and Highgate England's Glory. The food was welcomed and another High Peak Walk was successfully completed by all (though two did turn up at the Star by taxi for the last two miles).

In Glossop, the former Trap Inn, shut for some twelve months, has gone through a huge gutting and refurbishment and opened up in mid June as the Last Orders. Reports are that I need not bother going in as there is no real ale, just keg fonts.

During the evening I saw most of the match and enjoyed some decent beer. The Royal Oak and Roebuck are recommended and are ear-marked for a revisit.



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AMERICAN BEER

"American beers?" I hear you say. "Bud, Coors and Miller Lite?" Well, no. Tarring all American breweries with that brush would be the same as dismissing all English cask ale after a pint or two of some of the blander stuff that the nationals put out.

The revival in micro-brewing (craft or boutique brewers is the American term) may have started later in the States than over here, but there's some wonderful stuff out there. As usual, the beers were tasted blind, except for the person who did the buying and serving (and writing up the article). At this tasting, there was the extra challenge of trying to identify the "style" of beer.

★★★★★

Beer 1 had distinct carbonation. The colour was mid-brown (horrible phrase) with a slight orange tint. The nose was a little reminiscent of something Belgian, burnt candy, biscuity, toffee, a slightly sourish fruitiness (not a criticism). The distinctive flavour was quite heavy and malty, with orange peel, again with Belgian overtones. There was reasonable bitterness and a dry aftertaste. A decent beer, we thought, though one of us didn't care for the burnt biscuit aftertaste. A consensus on style and gravity resulted in an "ale" at 5.5% to 6% ABV. This beer was **Goose Island Honker's Ale**, from Chicago, 5%, **bottle-conditioned (which had not been obvious in the tasting)**, £1.29 for a 355ml bottle.

★★★★★

Beer 2 was slightly darker in colour. It had a much richer and more malty aroma, with some fruit. "Chewy," said one. The flavour on the palate was much smoother than the previous beer: less bitterness, more rounded and gentle. It was felt to be more English in style (see Samuel Smiths Organic Ale from a previous tasting). It was fruity and not over-carbonated. It was definitely sweeter than the first beer, though dryness in the aftertaste

prevented its becoming cloying. Overall it was too malty for most of the tasters, with very little hop character or bitterness (on reflection, more Scottish in style?) The gravity was felt to be similar to the previous beer. It turned out to be **Anchor Brewing Co. Steam Ale**, from San Francisco, "virtually handmade" with a great amount of verbiage on its brewing in too-small print on the neck label. 4.7%, £1.39 for a 355ml bottle. (We had tried Anchor's porter in the porter & stout tasting and for most of us this Steam Ale was rather less impressive.)

★★★★★

Beer 3 was a different kettle of fish entirely. Obviously bottle conditioned, it was darker still, with redness when held up to the light. It was malty and fruity with berries on the nose. The flavour was not as malty as the previous beer, but fruitier with an earthy aftertaste ("from the yeast?" suggested one of us). As we drank more the fruitiness grew (fruit more than sweetness), so much so that it was felt that there might be fruit in the mash. Perhaps too much fruit: cherries, raspberries or strawberries, said one, while another said, vine fruits. The fruit did have a touch of sourness, which certainly helped it not become too cloying. No hops or bitterness, though. Our guess at strength was 5%. This was **Dogfish Head Raison d'Etre**, from Milton in Delaware, £1.75 for 355ml. Its label proudly proclaimed it to be "American Beer Of The Year" (Malt Advocate magazine), and also had a complimentary soundbite from Michael Jackson (that one, not that one.) No mention was made of its obvious bottle conditioning. It was brewed with Belgian sugars and green raisins (one up for the vine fruits man). Its ABV of 8% came as something of a surprise, though with hindsight this strength was quite obvious. While it hadn't been to our collective taste, perhaps we had been judging it more as a "drinking beer" rather than a sipping, just-the-one-at-the-end-of-the-evening one: knowing that the strength compared to Robinson's Old Tom rather changed our attitude to it and make us see it in a better light.

★★★★★

Beer 4 and things started to improve. This was completely opaque. The aroma was very roasted with an remarkable amount of woodsmoke, perhaps a grown-up version of the hickory-smoked barbecue sauces you can buy. Someone made mention



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of carbohic soap, to bewildered looks from everyone else. While the smoke in the aroma had been sweeter and more aromatic, in the flavour it was much drier. Obviously a stout or porter, the consensus was on the former due to its dryness and roastedness. There was some hoppiness present as well. Somewhere between 5% and 6% was our estimate at strength. It turned out to be Alaskan Brewing Co's Smoked Porter, from Juneau, the state capital, and its strength was indeed 6%; £2.65 for 473ml (one American pint). It was bottle conditioned, the label stating that "natural sedimentation may occur." The smoke in nose and taste might be a little overpowering for some, but this was a beer much appreciated by the majority of the tasters. Anyone who's enjoyed a German rauchbier would be well advised to seek this out.

★★★★★

Beer 5 was very different again. It was by a considerable margin the palest beer of the evening, a pale amber. It was visibly bottle conditioned, with some natural carbonation. The aroma had the grapefruit hints that you often get from American Cascade hops (a guess). And it was very hoppy, with hints of orange, but not aggressively or harshly so. The flavour was very rich, with hops, malt and alcohol in a very good balance - we felt that it might be as strong as 6% or more, and its style was that of an IPA (and a better IPA than offerings masquerading under that title from most major British breweries). A very good beer indeed, this was **Sierra Nevada Pale Ale**, from the Sierra Nevada Brewing Company in Chico, California, actually only 5.6% in strength, £1.39 for 355ml. Those of you with a longer memory might remember the West Coast brewery, its owner Brendan Dobbin and its superlative flagship beer, originally christened Sierra Nevada Pale Ale (there's a coincidence) but re-named Yakima Grande Pale Ale under the threat of legal action. If you liked that, you'll like this.

★★★★★

Beer 6 was even darker than the Alaskan Smoked Porter, indeed quite as black as the simile of your choice. The aroma was of chocolate, fruit (prunes?), roast malt and alcohol. The flavour showed less alcohol and more bitter chocolate. It was very dry and full-bodied, not with a great deal of hoppiness, but some bitterness: liquid chocolate malt, said one. A real smorgasbord of flavours. In style, it was as stout as stout could be, and we guessed at 6%. This was **Rogue Shakespeare Stout**, from Newport in Oregon, and we were correct with the 6%. £4.29 for a 650ml bottle. Very good indeed: so good that we even splashed out on a second bottle to round off the evening. If you're internet connected, it's worth having a look at Rogue's web site (Rogue.com) to marvel at the weird and wonderful array of beers they produce.

★★★★★

So, where to get these delights? All but the latter were purchased from (of all places) Safeway. The Bredbury branch was best, with a range of around a dozen, including other beers from Anchor and Alaskan, and a different Rogue beer from that tasted here. (Chorlton had a slightly smaller range, Reddish was a waste of time.) How splendid to see such obscure stuff as the Alaskan Smoked Porter at a British supermarket. Nowhere else really offered much at all, whether other supermarkets or specialist off licences. The Rogue beer was purchased from Golden Days garden centre off Manchester Road in Cheadle. It offered four Rogue beers, all at £4.29 for 650ml, and a range of other good non-American stuff. But it is very, very expensive, when you consider that the Rogue beer at Safeway was £2.99; but Golden Days does at least offer the CAMRA 10% for 5 or more bottles. Beer of the night? This tasting had possibly seen the best overall standard of any so far, with three great beers in the Alaskan, Sierra Nevada and Rogue. But a difficult choice? No. The Rogue Shakespeare Stout was quite superb and an obvious winner: for this taster, and probably others, the best beer we've had so far in this series. The only problem might be that Rogue's importer was reported as ceasing to bring the stuff into this country: so if you can afford the prices, go to Golden Days and buy!

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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

A pub that doesn't often get a mention is the **Jolly Angler**, Ducie Street in the city centre. This is a small Hydes' house run by long-term tenants Sheila and Michael Reynolds and their son Raymond. It usually sells Hydes bitter and the seasonal of the moment (all have been on apparently) which invariably prove to be very popular with the customers; some of whom travel some distance to soak up the ales and the ambience. Dark mild made a brief return and went down well. The Angler only has two small rooms, but these are often very busy with Irish musicians on one evening a week and when Man. City are playing at home. A warm welcome is guaranteed.

Not much else to report this month. It does look as though one old City Centre pub will be coming back to life, though. The **Bay Horse** on Thomas Street in the Northern Quarter, closed years ago and was converted into shops. Now the owner has applied for a license to reopen it as a pub. It's early days yet, of course, but this will be a welcome development if it comes off.

IN THE SUBURBS

Out in Northenden, I hear plans are in place to demolish the **Jolly Carter** (ex Boddies) on Royle Green Road and to redevelop the site for housing. All of this was due in June. Staying in Northenden, I also hear of a cask ale gain. The **Tatton Arms** has apparently reintroduced cask beer in the shape of Courage Directors.

On the closed and boarded front, both the **Concert** in Openshaw and the **Haxby** at Ryder Brow, both previously keg only, are now shut. Also closed, and looking very sorry for itself is the **Ducie Arms** in Longsight and I suspect that we have now seen the last of it as a pub. I was in the area as I had heard reports of activity at the **Cleveland**, the sole remaining building on Wilson Street. Well, there does seem to be activity but it all looks to have been directed in converting the pub to some other use, I think. Again, I will be very surprised if this place ever trades again.

That's not to say that there aren't any decent pubs in this area. I paid a long overdue visit to the **Apsley Cottage**, at the back of the Apollo. I had forgotten what a good little pub this is. There's a great local feel to the place and the vault in particular is a little gem.

There's cask beer, too, with John Smith's on handpump. Well worth dropping in. Also worth a visit is the **New Victoria** just down the road (forget the **Spinning Wheel** which hasn't sold cask beer in its entire existence and the **Gold Cup**, which remains keg only). The Vic is obviously well-run and has two cask beers from the Oakwell Brewery near Barnsley. Old Tom is a dark mild (very enjoyable when I called) and the Oakwell Bitter is a good easy-drinking session beer.

THIRD KRO BAR OPENS

The latest addition to the **Kro Bar** stable has opened. Sited in the former **Vaux Old Abbey Inn** on Pencroft Way in the midst of the Manchester Science Park (MSP). As it is now quite secluded, I did not know it had been in operation for more than three months! The exterior is a mix of white and cream, and is architecturally distinct from the modern surroundings of the other buildings on MSP. Inside, sees old blend with new in a pleasing fashion, a two-room layout has been maintained with the dark-wood period bar linking the two. A couple of period fireplaces with overmantles add interest as does a large gilded wall plaque of Buddha. Colours are mainly off-white with a cherry-red contrast in one room. Fixtures consist of fixed seating and a hotch-potch of 40's / 50's dining furniture. The three cask beers on the bar comprise a mix of London Pride, Taylor Landlord, Jekyll's Gold, Hanby, Ale Force and such. The foreign draught beers and bottles are much as the ranges of Kros One and Two, albeit far more limited as the place is far smaller than those two. The food offering is akin to the other Kro outlets, but here the place can be hired for functions (something of a speciality for it). The building also acts as the headquarters for the Kro operation, giving it extra importance. If you intend visiting, the hours are worthy of note: 11-10 Mo-Th; 11-11 Fr; 5-11 Sa; closed

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Sundays. Food hours are 11-8.30 daily. To get there, and as there are only a few direct buses an hour to Lloyd Street North (99, 101, 104, 108/9), you might as well get any Oxford Road bus to the original Kro Bar; walk south-westerly through the University grounds to the Ducie Arms on Devas Street (Burtonwood beers, plus guest). From here, walk south to Enterprise House and pass through the ginnel to a car park; you will see the Old Abbey on your left.

DIDSBURY NEWS

The **Didsbury** in er.. Didsbury has recently has a change of licensee. From mid May the new licensees are Paul and Paula Johnson who previously worked for Yates. Paul is local to this area having managed Squires (but before it was called Squires). Now at first sight this might appear not to be the most suitable background to come from to run a pub like the Didsbury. Paul however was keen to reassure me. He wants to move the pub on from being considered just as a dining pub to a quality restaurant selling high quality wines and a range of quality cask conditioned beers.

When I called in the pub, the cask beers on sale included Courage Directors, Theakstons Bitter, Charles Wells Bombardier, Greene King Old Speckled Hen and Marston's Pedigree with two guest beers, Greene King Triumph and Charles Wells Summer Solstice. If sales volumes are good enough these beers could be joined by a further two guest beers. Paul told me that he is also looking into the possibility of hosting a mini beer festival in the autumn and he would welcome any ideas in this respect. When you consider that not that long ago the Didsbury was a volume John Smith's smooth outlet and that the smooth is now down to one eighteen gallon keg a week; this represents a major change in direction for the pub. Beers are provided by Scottish Courage and Beer Seller.

Two new chefs have been appointed and the pub sells food ranging from sandwiches to full three course meals. One specialism is their fish dishes (there were five to choose from when I visited) with vegetarian options always available. Worth a visit, I think. And finally...last month I posed a question. Which pub in the *Opening Times* area still bears a reference to the old Stopford's Imperial Brewery of West Gorton? OT contributor Robin Wignall knew - it's Stockport's **Chestergate Tavern**. Look up and at the top of the pub there's a shield with the letters 'SBC'.

FESTIVAL WINNERS



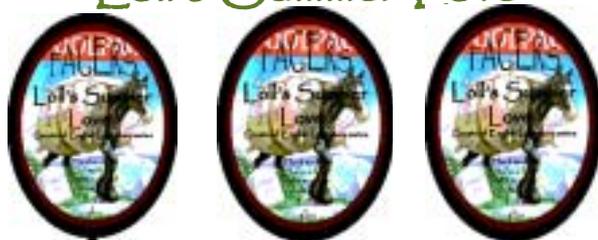
The results of two competitions held in conjunction with last month's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival have been announced.

The first contest was to find a name for the new 6 per cent ABV beer produced by Hydes' for the festival. The runner-up was Sue Barker of Little Lever who suggested 'Calabrian Conquest'. This plays on the beers presumed gravity of 1060 and notes that in the year 1060 the Normans completed their conquest of Calabria.

The winner though was Alan Gardner of Leyland with 'Greatorex the Great', a name which harks back to Greatorex Brothers, the company occupying the Anvil Brewery before Hydes took over. Well done to both of them, and to all the others who took time to enter the contest.

The other competition was run at the festival and took the form of a questionnaire about the festival's music and what people thought about it. 193 entries were received and Angella Lindsay at the Navigation drew out the winner who was Graham Stern of Wythenshaw. Angela and festival music manager Stuart Ballantyne presented Graham (above - centre, left and right, respectively) with tokens to the value of eight pints of traditional cider, perry or cask conditioned beer. He will be able to redeem them in the Navigation over the next month. Graham told Stuart that he is a keen perry drinker and will be calling in the Navigation as soon as practically possible to claim his winnings.

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19

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