

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

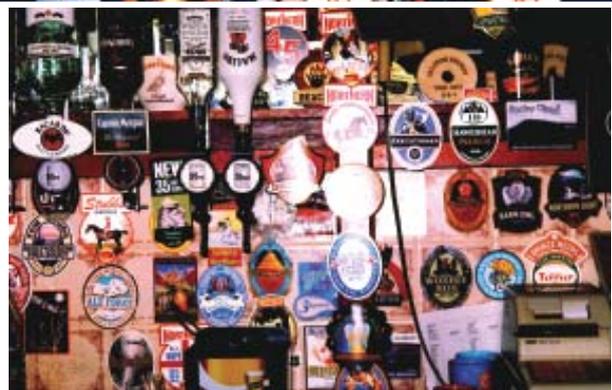
TOP DOGS

POYNTON R.B.L IS REGIONAL CLUB OF THE YEAR

The *Opening Times* area has a long track record for its pubs picking up Regional and National CAMRA Awards. This year, though, the spotlight turns to the local club scene with Poynton Royal British Legion picking up the Greater Manchester Club of the Year Award.

Tucked away off George Road West, a short walk from the A6 crossroads, Poynton RBL has become a real cask ale haven in the past couple of years thanks to a combination of the commitment of steward Nick Williams and the firm support of the committee headed up by Chairman Paul Hession and Vice-Chairman Roger Warrington.

From almost a standing start demand for cask ale is now firmly entrenched at the club with the regular Boddingtons Bitter supplemented by two ever-changing guest beers, usually from micro breweries both near and far. Some deliver direct and some are sourced from agencies such as Flying Firkin or Dave Ball's Really Nice Beer Co. Beers can come and go at bewildering speed – during August some 42 different nine-gallon casks of guest beers were polished off by the club's enthusiastic members and guests. A helpful notice board in the club gives details and tasting notes for the beers currently on and those coming next.



Top: Toasting Success at Poynton RBL, l-r committee member Martin Flanagan, chairman Paul Hession, Steward Nick Williams and vice-chairman Roger Warrington. Middle: pumpclip display at Poynton RBL. Bottom: Steward Nick Williams with his cask ales



CAMRA
CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE
STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER
BRANCH
7,000
CIRCULATED
THIS MONTH

CAMRA 2006 GOOD BEER GUIDE OUT NOW!
FULL DETAILS PAGES 10 - 11

YOUR CHANCE... TO WIN
A 2 GALLON CASK OF REAL CIDER OR PERRY...
BY JOINING OUR CIDER CIRCUIT
DETAILS ON PAGE 12



There are also occasional special real ale bars (most recently for the VJ Day commemoration) plus two beer festival a year, in the spring and autumn – the next will run from 14-16 October. Quality is paramount; at the festivals all the beers are handpumped from the cellar and a 'python' system ensures cool pints at all times.

Needless to say, news of the award was cause for celebration. As Nick Williams told *Opening Times*: "We're absolutely delighted, it's great to have our hard work recognised in this way." These sentiments were echoed by Paul Hession who told us "This really shows our commitment to quality – we have taken a struggling club and turned it into a success by concentrating on real beer, real music and real people."

The club now goes forward to the next round of judging to determine the four finalists for the National Club of the Year Award. The sole criterion for the judging is 'commitment to real ale' – given that Poynton RBL has this in spades it should go far.

And for the future? Well for the immediate future it's business of usual but in about a year's time, well there's talk of a brewery...

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- Winner of Hydes Brewery Best Kept Cellar of the Year Award 2004
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HYDES' OSCARS

VICTORIA WINS AWARD FOR BEST KEPT CELLAR

Staff at the Victoria in Withington are celebrating after scooping the award for Best Kept Cellar at the Hydes Brewery Oscar Ceremony – celebrating excellence within its pubs across the North West.

Licenseses Edgar Ambrose and Janice Oliver were awarded the Oscar due to the consistency of the standards they keep in their cellar ensuring they always serve the beer exactly as it should be. The criteria of the award include adherence to cask beer procedures, cleanliness of cellar, the temperature and appearance of the dispensed product and the cellar temperature – all key measures to ensure the quality of the drink served to the customer. Edgar and Janice were presented with their award at a gala ceremony at Manchester Town Hall. David Safiruddin,



Janice Oliver and Edgar Ambrose at the big night.

Marketing director for Hydes told *Opening Times*: "This year's Oscars were bigger and better than ever before. It is fantastic to take a real look at the examples of excellence that run throughout the whole of our business. The Victoria really is the 'Beer Barometer' in the estate, setting the standards to which all cellars should aspire."

Other winners of the 2005 Hydes Oscars were:

- Best Customer Service – Jan Aaby, the John Millington, Cheadle Hulme
 - Best Pub Employee – Gail Davies, The Albion, Burnage
 - Best Pub Management – Chris and Trisha Batty, The Friendship Inn, Fallowfield
 - Best Newcomer – Mark Tate, Hydes Trade Technical Services
 - Best Pub Marketeer – Keith Regan, the Quarry Bank, Timperley
 - Best Training Champion – Sue Lindsay, The Nursery, Heaton Norris
 - Best Caterer – Conrad and Jacqueline Thorpe, The Pack Horse, Bury
 - Best Brewery Employee – Sally Jarvis, Personnel Officer
 - Best Tenanted Pub – Mark Jones and Tracey Nash, The Stanton House, Chirk, Wrexham
- Hearty congratulations to one and all.

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 257

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CAMRA GOOD PUB FOOD GUIDE

THREE TIMES

LOCAL CAMRA BRANCH

PUB OF THE MONTH



ONE OF STOCKPORTS MOST POPULAR PUBS

Robinsons Unicorn, Hatters & Old Tom
together with Quality Food

IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

Two major events this month. Firstly the launch of CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide for 2006. Over the year's this has become an indispensable source of reference for anyone with an interest in good beer and good pubs. Check out our feature and also look out for those of our advertisers displaying the Good Beer Guide logo on their ad this month. The cover price is the same as last year, despite the increase in size, and there's a special reduced rate for members. Not a member? Then why not take this opportunity to join and get your discount.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Rhys Jones, Aberystwyth:

I was interested to read in Stockport Supping (OT, July/Aug) that John "Capper" Parkin has "made an impression at the Crown". He wouldn't be a dentist in his spare time, would he?

From Ron Elder, Edinburgh:

I am a bit concerned about an item contained in the Stockport Supping article by Clifton Bell on page 4 of the July/August issue of "Opening Times" (Number 255).

My concern is over the report by Clifton that the 'Crown' in Bredbury is selling keg Boddingtons through a handpump which clearly states that it is 'Cask'. I would contend that this is a false invitation to treat and, as such, is illegal. As the local branch has the first hand knowledge of the facts in this case, I would hope that they will refer the matter to the local Trading Standards office of the council. I feel that the Trading Standards people will be very interested to learn of this misrepresentation, and will take action to have the problem resolved.

Incidentally, is the reproduction of the "Ruddles" logo on page 6 the 'spot the deliberate mistake' in this issue?

From Peter Powell, Stockport:

I have to write to express my pleasure in the facilities of the Southwestern Arms at St Denys, Southampton.

So pleased to see a member of CAMRA from the North in his pub that the landlord kindly packaged up for the writer completely free of charge 3 bottles of Jamaican Stout (weighs in at a hefty 7% - yummy!) and 2 bottles of the excellent bottle fermented beer from Southampton's own "White Star" brewery. The latter being so lively that on consuming one of them the hotel carpet took a drink also!

But seriously folks, this hostelry is well worth a visit. Two trains an hour from Southampton Central virtually drop you at the door and I learn that it was Hampshire CAMRA's pub of the year in recent time. The pub is well laid out with all sorts of memorabilia and also boasts an upstairs mezzanine floor where pleasant live music was playing. There is also a beer garden for train spotters being at the junction of the Portsmouth and Waterloo lines! I enjoyed three pints of an excellently kept Deuchars IPA.

There wasn't any food but no matter, the kind host phoned down Adelaide road to the "Junction Inn", also a good, real ale house where we were provided with wonderfully cooked, local trout with peppers and salad.

There is also the "Dolphin" on the other side of the footbridge but it was unfortunately closed for the day on our visit.

Truly a wonderful CAMRA corner of Southampton and easy to access by train and well worth a detour from the city centre.

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

Advert Column Widths, sing 84mm, doub 172mm. Image height 26cm. NB Advertisers who supply camera ready artwork designed for another publication that cannot be resized to our standard sizes will be charged the equivalent column/centimetre rate plus a surcharge of at least 30%. Adverts that require unusually large amounts of design work will have the extra work carried out by a studio at full commercial rate.

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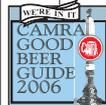
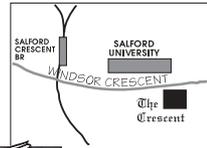
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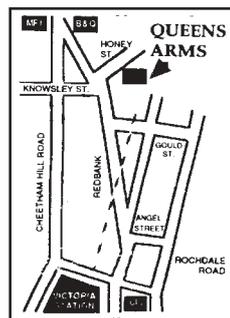
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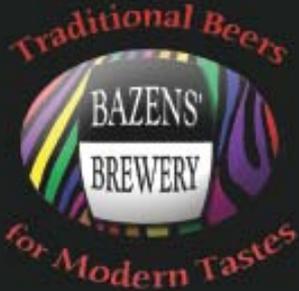
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 (Beer of the Festival, Great Harwood, 2005)
 Black Pig Mild 3.6% (Bronze Award for Mild,
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 Zebra Best Bitter 4.3%

Our permanent local outlets include:
 The Crescent, The King's Arms, The Grapes (Eccles), Salford
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 and a list of wholesalers who deliver our beers nationwide,
 please visit www.bazensbrewery.co.uk

For more info, please see www.bazensbrewery.co.uk, phone
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PUB OF THE MONTH OCTOBER 2005

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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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 and South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for October is The Crown Hotel, Buxton Road, Great Moor.

This impressive establishment is the nearest cask ale outlet to Stepping Hill Hospital and was a Bell & Co pub up until their takeover by Robinson's in 1949.

A few years ago the Crown was looking a little down at heel but since the arrival of Diane and Francis McDonald in December 2003 the pub has shown a vast improvement in beer choice and decor. The pub is tastefully decorated with impressive features being the collection of colour drawings of Stockport and also sayings by famous people above the picture rail. The wooden screen with wrought iron arches above, in front of the Gents is an unusual highlight.

There are two comfortable rooms at the front of the pub with the large bar located in the middle with plenty of space for the vertical drinker! Behind the bar is a larger room that is used for live music on Saturdays with a games room decorated in a contrasting minimalist style off to one side. There are a number of large TV screens which are used for showing live sport. Food is available 12 to 2pm daily

This is a great pub for summer with an attractive outdoor drinking area overlooking the bowling-green.

The beers are from Robinson's with Unicorn and Hatters always available, in common with many pubs nearby, but here we also have the additional choice of Robinson's premium bitter namely Double Hop and the Seasonal Beer when available.

This award recognises the considerable efforts of Diane and Francis and will be presented on Thursday 27 October from 8:00pm. The pub is easily reached by public transport with core bus services 191, 192 & 199 stopping opposite. PF

Pub of the Month certificates are framed for us by Picture This who offer the most competitively priced bespoke picture framing service in Greater Manchester. They specialise in framed breweriana and also offer a 10% discount for CAMRA members. Phone 0161 477 0009



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Northern County (3.8%) - Pale Session Ale

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DHB (Dave's Hoppy Beer) 4.3%

- Dry-Hopped Mid Range Beer

Landslide 1927 (4.9%) - Premium Strength

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STAGGER

with Jim Flynn

REDDISH AND HEATON CHAPEL

It was a bad start to the evening we all agreed as we sat, thirst unquenched, outside the **Fir Tree** waiting to see if any more of our colleagues got off the next 203 at the bus stop by the pub. The last pub to serve cask beer in North Reddish had gone keg. The Tetley hand pumps were still to be seen in the vault but had already been removed from lounge.

Having found that the 203 was barren we walked into the centre of Reddish past the **Houldsworth** which was still up for sale and still with no decent beer. Our next stop was the **Thatched Tavern** hidden away behind Houldsworth Square. This pub is everything the Houldsworth could be: a marvellous, well run, cosy, comfortable, multi-roomed street corner local (I think you can tell that I like the place). Ignoring the delights of the vault and lounge we sat outside in the small pleasant garden at the back of the pub in the fading summer sun. We tried all three of the beers between us; Boddingtons Cask, Tetley Bitter and Tetley Dark Mild. The Tetley beers were in good form, although on previous visits I have found the Mild even better, and the Boddingtons was excellent. Worth a visit.

Our next stop down towards Heaton Chapel, opposite Houldsworth Mill was the **Union** where we were joined by more CAMRA members. The Union is a pub that was given the opening out treatment by the late unlamented Robinson's pub design team in the eighties and took some time to recover. Recover it did, though, and it is now a thriving local especially when there is sport on the television. But with darts and pool table also very popular in the pub the place always has a good atmosphere. We all tried the one cask beer, Robinson's Unicorn (Best Bitter to you and me) and found it on good form.

Next door to the Union is the **Grey Horse** which for much of the early part of the year led a chequered life with periods of closure interrupted with brief periods of trading. The pub is now reopened but with the vault boarded up pending the building of a restaurant area early next year. This is surely a sign of the gentrification of Reddish with many of the local mills that used to provide the customers for the pubs being turn into smart apart-

ments. The up and downs of the last 12 months have obviously had an effect on the **Grey Horse** because there were only a few customers in the pub on the night we visited. The pub goes of Reddish need to give it another chance however because the licensee is clearly making a real effort. He has guest beers running along aside the staple Boddingtons Cask. On our visit they had been let down with a delivery and only the guest was on, **Courage Directors**, not one of my favourite beers. We sat in the well appointed lounge and considered the beer to be in reasonable form.

We then walked the half mile down to Heaton Chapel and the ever popular **George & Dragon**, which as usual was very busy. This pub, like the **Grey Horse**, has a striking stone and brick exterior in common with many of the other notable buildings of the same vintage in the area. Inside the pub the pub there is still a feeling of separate areas even though it has been opened out considerably. It is probably this feeling of intimacy in some parts of the place together with a real sense of liveliness in others that has made it so popular for so long. We sat in the no smoking area, which doubles as part of the dining area during the day, and tried both the Boddingtons Cask and Marston's Pedigree which we found to both be in good order.

On then to the A6 and the **Heaton Chapel**, formerly the **Rudyard**, only to find that the real ale had been taken out. This was turning into a bit of a jinx! Back through to the **Hind's Head** on Manchester Road, probably the most upmarket pub on the stagger. No darts and television here just the hum of conversation from the relatively well-heeled clientele. What am I talking about, I sometimes frequent this pub! Oh, well I suppose there are exceptions. There is a restaurant on the side of the pub and a very well frequented garden to the front where we sat drinking our beer. Although there was Boddingtons Cask and John Smiths Cask available we all tried the ever-wonderful Taylor's Landlord and thought it to be very good.

Walking down Manchester Road passed the now keg **Ash** (a sad loss to the real ale scene) and **Three Crowns** (perhaps not such a loss) we finished at the multi-award winning **Navigation** at the top of Lancashire Hill. This small pub in a difficult area for trade has, as been said many times in this magazine, been transformed by Beartown Brewery. The beer range on that night was Bearskinful and Wheatbear which were tasted and found to be very good and Kodiak Gold, Bruins Ruin, Polar Eclipse and Black Bear which were not tried. There was a guest beer, Wye Valley Brew 69 which was found to be excellent.

A fine end to an excellent evening after an uncertain start.



Poynton's Oktoberfest

14th 15th 16th October

20+ Ales from the countries top independent brewers

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CLUB OF THE YEAR

WINTER WARMERS, MILDS, AUTUMN SPECIALS

AND BOTTLES

'THE LEGION'

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There's some good news this month with two real ale gains in prospect...

In many ways it's a tantalising case of 'almost there'. First off is the **Gardeners Arms** (Northgate Rd, Edgeley). As you may recall I reported that the owner/licensee planned to knock the pub down and redevelop the site. This prompted a pained phone call to the effect that since planning permission had been turned down the pub would continue with business as usual. Well, in a way - the pub has recently been closed pending its sale to Manchester family brewers JW Lees. This, though, is very good news as it means the Gardeners will almost certainly be returning to the real ale fold. As this was penned the Lees' signs were going up and the pub should be trading in its new guise by the time you read this.



Also in the pipeline is the former **Dillon's Whistling Jig** (Wellington Rd North, Stockport) which has been repainted, re-signed back to its old name of the Midland and, if those signs are to be believed, will be selling cask ales when it reopens. No sign of that in mid-September but there may have been developments by the time this issue of OT comes out.

OUT IN THE SUBURBS

Tuesday 23 August was the final night for the licensees at the **Old Star** (High St, Cheadle) because they couldn't afford to take on

the tenancy and Hydes' had no other position for them as managers. They've moving to Surrey to take up a position with Greene King so our loss is Surrey's gain - lets hope the southern softies can appreciate such fine licensees from such great northern stock (sorry, my prejudices are showing).

The **Hesketh Tavern** (Hulme Hall Rd, Cheadle Hulme) has now reopened after its recent refurbishment. The interior has been considerably improved and there are now separate (non)smoking areas. It looked like the food operation had not yet started when I called and the cask ales available at that time were John Smiths Bitter and Marston's Pedigree.

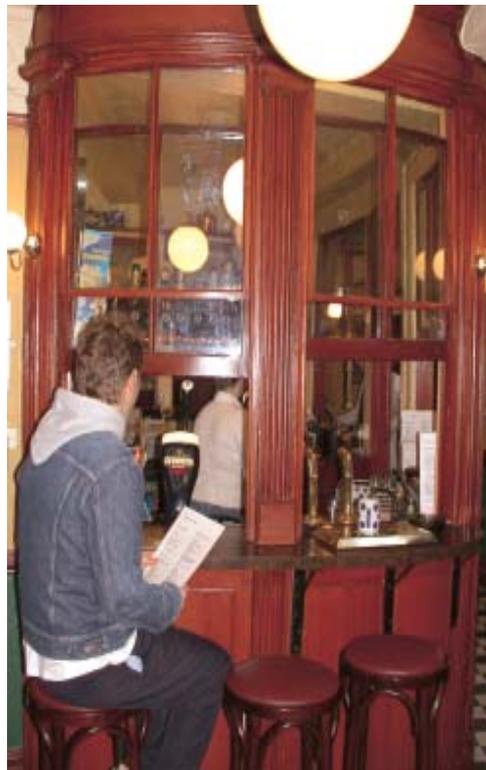
Also open again is the **Dog & Partridge** (Didsbury Rd, Heaton Mersey). I popped in here for a quick one following its refurbishment: it's a typical modern "light and airy" design with bare boards flooring, a lot of high-level seating and a distinct lack of comfortable benches. Real ales were Banks's Original, Boddingtons Bitter and Old Speckled Hen, but the pumps are tucked away around the corner and not immediately obvious when you walk in. I had a reasonable pint of Boddies (£1.80) but I don't think in the long run that it will tempt me away from the **Griffin**.

This year's Cask Beer Week, an initiative of the Family Brewers, was rather low key but I do hear that the **Crown**, (High St, Cheadle) had an extra beer. I called in on 10 September and found Light on sale alongside the Mild and Bitter - there are four handpumps with Bitter on two of them as usual. It was a bit surprising to see the old Light pumpclip rather than 1863.

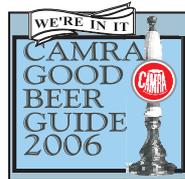
Staying in Cheadle, at last the extensive refurbishment of the **Queens Arms** (Stockport Rd) looks imminent with plans of the refurbishment readily available for viewing at most local libraries in the Stockport area. Part of the plans show that the internal size of the drinking area will be increased from 20 to 31 tables, so its looking like a major job of work. The promised start date for the refurbishment has been quoted as September by the brewery but two weeks in and nothing had happened.



Real Fires - Real Food - Real People - Real Beer



**CAMRA NATIONAL
PUB OF THE YEAR 2004
RUNNER UP**



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(0161) 480 2185

*Robinson's
UNICORN, HATTERS
& Seasonal Ales*

Excellent Food Served 12 - 2.30

There's been a change at the **Cheshire Line** (Manchester Rd, Cheadle) where Joanne Mills (pictured, right) returned and took on the pub as lessee at the end of August. Aided by manager Wyn Turnbull and a very keen cellarman, she's put the pub's fortunes on the up and up. The pub is essentially food-led (the trade split is 70% food and 30% drink) but nevertheless there is still plenty to interest the real ale drinker. Four cask beers are sold with regulars Banks's Bitter and Marston's Old Empire joined by two guests – when I called these were Adnam's Broadside and Marston's Double Drop. A 'python' system ensures cool pints and Jo was keen to tell me that there is no pouring back of any sort allowed. Good news indeed but I was equally impressed by her neighbour and cellarman who told me that he matures the beers for sometimes five weeks or so before they go on sale, thus ensuring the beer is properly matured.



At the beginning of October the pub is due for a quick refurbishment which will see new carpets and curtains, reupholstered seats, a smartened up bar and a general overhaul of the gents toilet. The food menu will be getting a revamp, too with a smaller set menu but bigger specials boards – food is currently serve every day from 12-9, except Sundays when it finishes at 8.30. It's already a smart and comfortable place to eat and drink and under the management of Jo and her team looks set to become something of a destination for both real ale and real food lovers. I for one will be back.

The **Greyhound** (Ladybridge Rd, Cheadle Hulme): previously sold cask Boddingtons and/or Lees Bitter from its two handpumps, one of them sometimes offering John Smith's Cask. I don't know the exact history as I rarely visit. However on 8 September John Smith's Cask was still available, but bar staff confirmed the Greyhound has now dropped both Lees and Boddingtons. The Lees logo handpump is no longer in use – this is a shame as I find John Smith's Cask a very "ordinary" beer, and it's hard to imagine anyone seeking it out.

TOWN CENTRE NEWS

The **Stockport Arms** (St Petersgate) has reopened after what turns out to be a very successful refurbishment. The pub combines modern décor with traditional fittings, with an up-to-date colour scheme of bold but muted colours. The back of the pub concentrates on food during the day and when I called this was being very well patronised. Cask beer remains on sale in the form of Theakstons Bitter and this proved to be a very tasty pint on my visit.

Sam of the **Bakers Vaults** has also taken on the tenancy of the nearby **Bulls Head**, which became vacant following the departure of Phil Burke. The pub was closed for a few weeks after this but Sam, and manager Martin Joddrell are keen to let people know that it is once again up and running (it's still shut on Monday's though, and Sunday opening is a bit experimental at the moment). Entertainment will return and Sam wants it to complement the Bakers Vaults – he was still formulating his ideas when I popped in but given that the Bulls is something of a blank canvass he may be a little experimental to find out what works and brings the people in. One thing's for sure, there's no problem with the beer. The Bakers is a new entry in the 2006 Good Beer Guide and the ale at the Bulls (Robinson's Hatters and Best on electric pumps) was on equally good form when I called. Well worth a visit to support this new venture.

Stop Press (sort of...) just as I was finishing this I checked out the **Gardeners Arms** again – it's now open and Lees Bitter should be on sale via a solitary handpump in the vault. It wasn't on when I called as the barrel hadn't settled.



INTERNATIONAL BREWING AWARDS

After my comments about unconscious bias in judging Beer competitions I was struck very firmly this month by the Brewing Industry International Awards for 2005. (Yes, aficionados WILL wonder what I'm on about as they're biennial and the last one was 2004, but that's International Brewers for you, eh!)

It came to my attention because Old Tom won a gong. Gold. For the Dark & Strong category, but lost the overall Strong section to Stockholm Fine Festival (7.2%) from Kronleins of, yes, Stockholm. Now I don't suppose too many of you know this beer (!) but imho it is yeasty, sweet and malty. Better than Crucial Brew, but not much. No balance, no complexity. This also beat Banks Barley Gold and Brakspears Triple, which are both OK but underwhelming, Baltika 6 Porter - which is very good, and Morimoto Pilsner from Rogue which is VERY good and Liefmans Lucifer which is, well, poor. Now obviously you can only judge from what's there, and it costs to get these things over to Munich where it was held, but, really. And it gets worse.

Schneider Weisse won the Weird section (Speciality Beers, if you must) beating another German Wheat - Ottenbrau Hefe Weizen which is fairly good but again one of the less flavourful wheats. (And beating Hoegaarden, which InBev couldn't identify to an individual Belgian brewery, since its brewed in so many places.) It also beat two of Mort Subite's Xtreme fruit beers (yeuuuuk!) and the decent but ordinary Liefmans Kriek and a couple of Rogue's flavoured offerings (Newport, USA).

And it gets still worse (at least Schneider is an OK beer).

In the Stouts and Porters Brains Dark got a Gold.... A Stout?, A Porter? I think not. Gold went to Samuel Adams Cream Stout which is.... sweet, malty and a tad over-yeasty. Their worst beer, probably. Beating along the way, Snecklifter (Jennings... er hang on, isn't this Stouts and Porters) Hook Norton Double Stout and Lewes Castle Ale (er, look chaps, the clue is in the name.... 'Ale', nor 'porter', not 'stout') and Archers Dark Mild!!!!

The Ales were won by Badger First Gold (Hall and Woodhouse), a pale light, slightly malty, inoffensive golden beer - shades of GBBF here, beating, wait for it, two beers from Joey Holts (Gold and Silver in their sub-category 4.4 - 5.1%). Well done Holts. And the beers - 1849 and Maple Moon. I do remember seeing 1849 once, but Maple Moon? Still hopefully it will make an appearance sometime. Onto the serious stuff - the Cask Ale section. The winner? Deuchars IPA. Now don't get me wrong, its a pleasant, inoffensive Golden beer with more flavour than you'd expect at 3.8 (though not, truth be told, a surfeit), and don't get me on my hobby horse, 'coz its NOT an IPA. Its a Pale Ale and should be called that, send it to India and it would be vinegar before getting through the Chops of the Channel. It beat Rudgate Viking, Roosters Leghorn, Nelsons Revenge, Bishops Farewell and a hatful of others - including I believe a couple from Robinsons. The difference? Each and every one has more overall flavour and a discernible amount of hop. Yes, brewing judges, HOP. Clearly a concept you are unfamiliar with or utterly detest. I know Mike Hitchen at 3 Rivers is trying some olde-worlde hop-free brews as a sideline. Submit 'em in 2007 Mike, they are BOUND to win.

But this is cask ale, lesser stuff, clearly. Amongst keg and Nitrokeg which is obviously the 'class' drink amongst brewing judges - the bulk of whom are supposedly head brewers of big breweries - which when you think about it explains nearly everything here - Golds went to Sierra Nevada Draught (OK but more bland than most of their stuff) and, wait for it.... Tetleys Smooth. Gobsmacked? Well I was until I turned to the lagers.

Castlemaine XXXX got a bronze. A BRONZE. Its foul-tasting, thin, dishwater. Kaltenberg Hell got a Silver (but the Thwaites stuff, not the original - that would have had too much flavour I suppose). A Silver also went to Manchester-brewed (another local win) Kronenbourg 1664. I kid you not. A lousy, harsh, ersatz Brit-fizz based on an execrable French beer. A FRENCH beer? But wait for the overall winner, its a doozy. Kronenbourg 1664. Gold. But..., no, this one was brewed at Reading! Two ersatz, harsh etc, etc, and these taste-challenged idiots say its the world's best lager. It proves that brewing under licence never tastes the same at least.

I've only one thing to say. Please, PLEASE, DO give up the day jobs, lads. No recommendations this month, I'm feeling very depressed.





THREE RIVERS ON THE MOVE



As we reported last time, Stockport's Three Rivers Brewery has now moved down the road in Reddish to considerably larger premises. *Opening Times* called as the mover was almost complete. The new industrial unit is larger than the old place and will allow the installation of two additional 15-barrel fermenters, thus enabling Three Rivers to expand production to 85 barrels a week. To cope with the additional demand for their beers, an additional 600 9-barrel casks have been purchased, mainly from the now defunct Smiles Brewery of Bristol

There will be room at the new premises to install a brewers' office and also allow a small lab to be set up. To help with the lab, Three Rivers will have help from Liverpool University micro-biology student Chris Fox, who is currently working at the brewery. Upstairs there are plans for a visitor centre/hospitality suite and Mike Hitchen tells us that he would ultimately like to have this licensed as a members club.

As usual there is news from our local family brewers:

Cains - The English swept the boards in Scotland with Cain's Cask Lager taking First Prize in the best 'English Beer of the Festival' category in CAMRA's Scottish Beer Festival. The event held in Paisley was the largest gathering of the brewing clans north of the border.

And, it's not only the Scottish who acknowledge the finer taste of Cains lager, the delicious brew has also recently been hailed and praised to the rooftops at the Liverpool Beer Festival and London's Great British Beer Festival.

The acclaim has led to the prestige of a National Listing with distributors WAVERLY TBS, the United Kingdom's largest cask beer wholesaler. And, from 1st September 2005, Cains Finest Lager will be available across the country.

'To have been chosen from among such stiff competition, with many brews decades more established than ours, is a great thrill' said Cain's joint Managing Director Ajmail Dusanj. 'We are amazed and very happy that we seem to have found a taste and style of lager British beer enthusiasts have taken such a shine to'

Holts - have launched a new range of premium bottled beers in their pubs. These comprise the already established Humdinger (4.1% ABV), 1849 (4.5%) and Thunderhold (5%) along with three newcomers - Touchwood (4.5%), with a malty aroma and oak undertones; Maplemoon (4.8%), brewed with amber malt, Cascade hops and a hint of maple; and Fifth Sense (5.5%), a tawny ale with an intense hoppy flavour. Casks of Humdinger are also available in the trade (recently seen as a guest beer in Stockport's Olde Woolpack) and Touchwood will follow around December.

Hydes - the current craft ale is Inspiration (4.5% ABV), a mellow, full-flavoured autumnal ale and this will be followed next month by the November/December brew, Insulation (5% ABV) described as 'dark delicious and winter warming with just a hint of fruit and spice', it will be a robust ale brewed from rich malts and Fuggle hops. There have also been problems with the Hydes-brewed Boddingtons Bitter - this was down to some fermentation issues which, the brewery assure us, have now been resolved. No news yet as to whether we will be seeing the return of the potent 4X this year.

Lees - while we are still enjoying Brooklyn



3 Rivers mighty cask mountain!

Bitter, next month Lees fans are in for a treat with a return of the popular November/December seasonal Plum Pudding (5% ABV), a rich fruity but very quaffable ale, perfect for the winter and festive months.

Robinson's - the current seasonal is Light-house, a very drinkable and refreshing 4% copper-coloured ale. This is a replacement for last year's Kick Off, and was highly enjoyable when sampled in Stockport's Arden Arms. Next month sees the return of the ever-popular Robin Bitter (4.5% ABV) for the festive season.

MICRO MAGIC

We didn't manage to contact as many of our local brewers this month - apologies to those we missed - we'll have a full round-up next time.

Bank Top - continuing to run at full steam. The Knights of the Round Table series continues to be popular with October's offering Sir Pelinore at 4.5% ABV. The Crown, Heaton lane, stocks all Bank Top beers in turn so watch out for it there.

Howard Town - the region's latest brewery is going very well so far. They are currently brewing three times a fortnight, which makes about 45 9-gallon casks available each week. Repeat orders are coming in and new outlets found (see also this month's *High Peak Pub News*). There was a new addition to the range last month when Snake Ale (4% ABV) was brewed for the Glossop Beer Festival. Although intended as a one-off demand has been such that it may be brewed again.



The first full brew at the new premises took place on 1 September, when a batch of Manchester IPA was put through. They needed this as stocks were running low as a result of the disruption caused by the move (although the full-bodied and dry Julie's Pride, 5 per cent ABV, went down a treat at the recent Pub of the Month bash at the King's Head).

There's a new partner in the business, too. This is Brian Corrin, who owns the popular Liverpool free house the Ship & Mitre. Three Rivers have already produced some specially commissioned beers for the pub. There is also a small pilot plant, which will enable Three Rivers to try short-run experimental beers - Mike is very keen to try some old-fashioned unhopped beers with ingredients such as rowan berries. Also out by the time you read this should be a short run of 'green hopped' beer - name undecided as we went to press. It is good to see our local micro brewer thriving and expanding in this way, which is a testimony to the popularity of their beers.

FAMILY FAVOURITES



Chris, Julie and Mike at 3 Rivers



Next up will be Dinting Arches (4.5% ABV) a pale copper coloured hoppy bitter. The brewery's aim is to settle on a staple range of about five beers and supplement these with seasonal brews four or five times a year.

Phoenix - still producing the goods up at Heywood, Phoenix have several new beers in the pipeline. Look out for Last Leaf (4.5% ABV), Firecracker (4.7% ABV), Spooky Brew (4.7% ABV), Uncle Fester (4.5% ABV) and the wonderfully hoppy Rip Rap (4.1% ABV), and *Opening Times* favourite.

Marble - the new GSB continues to fly out, and so it should, being a superbly floral hoppy quenching session beer. There will be a new beer for this year's Manchester Food & Drink Festival - the appropriately named 'Festival' will be a 4.4% pale and hoppy beer. "Idiomatically Mancunian" according to brewer James Campbell. This will be available in the usual Marble outlets and other Northern Quarter pubs.

Shaws - the Dukinfield brewery is also very busy these days. Regular beers Shaws Best Bitter and Golden Globe continue to sell well and the Golden Globe (4.3% ABV) is now

permanent at the Rising Sun in Top Mossley, having replaced Taylor's Landlord on the bar. The next seasonal, due out late September was Autumn Daze (4% ABV), a golden ale late hopped with the Willamette variety. Next up will be stronger beer (4.4% ABV) for early autumn.

Facer's - On the brewery moving front, Dave expected to sign the lease for the new premises in mid-September and with the new hot liquor tank and copper under construction all is on track for moving in early October.

The Facer Salford hop yard is about ready for harvesting and Beerjolais Nouveau 2005 will therefore be available from the usual outlets during the first week of October. As last year, this will be 4.1% ABV. Whilst hopelessly lost in the labyrinthine country lanes of north Wales on a search for the latest Facer's outlet in that neck of the woods (The Golden Lion, Llangynhafel - it's a lovely pub if only you can find it!) Dave stumbled across a hedgerow with a whole load of wild hops growing through it. He planned to return in the vague hope of finding it again and picking them, so assuming he manages this Beerjolais Nouveau this year will contain a mix of Salford and Denbighshire green hops, which seems rather appropriate to his

current circumstances! Meanwhile, the 'one-off' brew Faram's Styrian Gold, brewed using only Styrian Goldings hops has, by popular demand, become a two-off brew, with the second brew mashing mid-September.

Millstone - things are very busy which is just how they like it. Regarding the beers, Square Peg went down well and they are now brewing the first batch of Autumn Leaves (4.3% ABV) - last year they brewed three batches and will probably be doing the same again this year. They are using Hilary and Cascade hops, "and plenty of them" in Autumn Leaves. That's just how we like it!

Bazens' - the news at the moment is that they are going to be brewing a special beer for the Salford Food and Drink Festival which starts on October 6th. (Name to be confirmed.) It will be available at the Crescent for the duration of the festival and some will be bottled. It will be very light in colour, 'American' in style and 4.0% ABV. Also, expansion plans are still in progress so that they can increase production over the next few months. More on this when we know details.



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MORE CHOICE BETTER BEER

International Brewing Awards

			
1998 Wobbly Bob	2002 Navy	2002 Wobbly Bob	2004 Wobbly Bob

Good Beer Guide 2006

NEW, IMPROVED, AND A MUST FOR EVERY REAL ALE FAN

Forget Harry Potter – this year's most important book launch was on 14 September when the Good Beer Guide 2006 hit the bookshelves and editor Roger Protz is urging beer lovers to buy the latest edition of the country's only comprehensive guide to real ale pubs and breweries.



"If you are a beer lover you should buy the guide every year and not every three years as many people do," said Protz who is editing the Good Beer Guide for the 12th time.

Good Beer Guide 2006 reflects the huge expansion of micro-breweries in the country with nearly twice as many listed as in previous editions. This explosion of micros means that the size of the guide has had to be increased although the price remains the same as the 2005 edition (£13.99).

"We now have more micros per head of population than any other country in the world. People are interested in beers from small breweries, and with the 2006 Good Beer Guide they can seek them out. The small brewers are finding chinks in the market place. They touch a cord with many people who care about localism and care about the raw materials that are used to make the beers that they drink," said Protz.

The real strength of the Guide is its comprehensive listing for 4,500 of the very best real ale pubs. Unlike the Good Pub Guide and other competitors every entry in the Good Beer Guide is checked every year by local CAMRA members., thus ensuring that only the very best pubs are included.

And unlike other guides, the Good Beer Guide lists pubs in cities, town and rural areas; meaning that wherever someone is in the country they can find a real ale pub to enjoy.

"The Guide has two legs – the breweries and the pubs," said Roger, "this makes it different from all the others and is the reason that even though the competition has got stiffer, its sales continue to break all records."



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5 Alternating Cask Beers

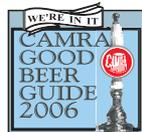
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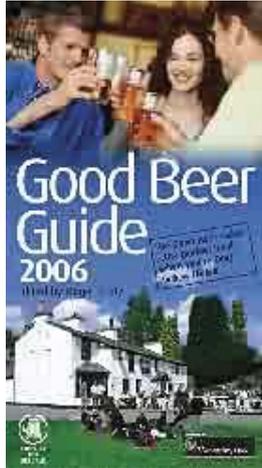
NEW THIS YEAR

As ever this year's Good Beer Guide has a host of new features alongside the pub and brewery listings:

- ★ Beer writer Barrie Pepper describes a pub trail through the streets of Leeds.
- ☆ Geoff Brandwood emphasises the importance of the National Inventory to save historic pubs.
- ★ Roger Protz visits the Bat & Ball, Hambledon, Hampshire, renowned around the world as the cradle for the game of cricket. It was tuned into a themed pub by its then owner Allied, but is now lovingly restored by family brewer Gales.

There is also a feature on the 15th Century, **Swan, Kettlehulme**, which has been saved by its locals following plans to turn it into luxury houses (*Opening Times* readers will be familiar with this story).

The book trade is putting its weight behind the publication of the Good Beer Guide this year. Waterstones featured the Guide in a special display by its tills last month as part of a three for two promotion. Local CAMRA members can get the guide at a specially reduced price (so if you are not a member why not sign up and get a discount on your Good Beer Guide at the same time?) of just £9 for initial copies and £10 for further copies. This price applies if it is collected from branch events or direct from Jim at 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel (phone ahead on 0161 432 1816 to check for availability). Postal copies from Jim will cost £10.50 – make sure all cheques are made payable to: CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester.



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CIDER CIRCUIT



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- RAILWAY**, Avenue St, Portwood, Stockport
Date.....
Signed.....
- NAVIGATION**, Lancashire Hill, Stockport
Date.....
Signed.....
- THATCHED HOUSE**, Churchgate, Stockport
Date.....
Signed.....
- YE OLDE VIC**, Chatham St, Edgeley
Date.....
Signed.....
- MARBLE BEER HOUSE**, Manchester Rd, Chorlton
Date.....
Signed.....
- STALYBRIDGE STATION BUFFET BAR**
Date.....
Signed.....
- WATERS GREEN TAVERN**, Waters Green, Macclesfield
Date.....
Signed.....
- CHESHIRE RING**, Manchester Rd, Hyde
Date.....
Signed.....
- LEGH ARMS**, Ashton Old Road, Openshaw
Date.....
Signed.....
- BAR FRINGE**, Swan St, Manchester
Date.....
Signed.....
- MARBLE ARCH**, Rochdale Rd, Manchester
Date.....
Signed.....
- THE BEER HOUSE** Angel St (off Rochdale Rd), Mcr.
Date.....
Signed.....
- BAR CENTRO**, Tib St, Manchester
Date.....
Signed.....
- KNOTT**, Deansgate (opp. Station), Manchester
Date.....
Signed.....
- OLD MARKET TAVERN**, Old Market Place, Altrincham
Date.....
Signed.....
- CRESCENT**, The Crescent, Salford
Date.....
Signed.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Phone No.....

Sweet, Medium or Dry Cider?.....

Note – most of our participating pubs are open all day, certainly from midday. However the Olde Vic doesn't open until 5pm (Monday-Friday) and 7pm at weekends; The Waters Green is closed between 3 and 5.30 (7 on Saturdays) and doesn't open until 7pm Sundays; The Thatched House is closed Mondays, and opens at 8pm Tuesday-Thursday.



THE CIDER CIRCUIT



This month we are offering you the chance to win a 2-gallon cask of real cider, kindly donated by John Reek of Merrylegs Cider, who supplies many of the local real cider and perry outlets, and for the runner-up a 9-pint cask of cider (using one of the new metal mini-casks, kindly donated by Three Rivers Brewery). All you have to do is visit each pub on our circuit, buy a half or a pint of real cider or perry and then get a member of the barstaff to sign and date the pub's entry below. The circuit runs until the end of October and completed forms should be sent to; "Cider Circuit, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD" to arrive no later than Monday 7 November. All completed entries will be put into a draw for the casks of real cider – specify your preference for dry, medium or sweet. Note if you can't do them all, please still submit the form as if no-one does the lot, the prize will go to those covering most pubs.

If you run a pub selling real cider but would like to try something new, or you run a pub and would like to sell it, then why not contact John Reek on 01626 770845 to sort out your supplies.

WASSAIL!

Gillian Williams describes a cider orchard ceremony whose roots are lost in the mists of time...

Wassailing is so ancient that putting an actual date on when it began has been marred by time. Royal records show that it took place in the royal household in Twelfth Night during the reign of Henry VII. Wassailing has given birth to customs as varied as first footing, carol singings and wishing others good health when supping. The word wassail is derived from wes hal, which is an Anglo-Saxon phrase meaning "be whole" or "be of good health". By the 18th Century the word conjured up images of drinking lots of ale and having a riotous time in the company of others.

The main purpose of wassailing is to perform a ceremony to protect the trees from evil and to make them bear a plentiful crop in the coming season. Wassailing may have possible links with tree worship. The ceremony, however, is undoubtedly fun involving cider, songs, the firing of guns or thrashing of trees, horn blowing, and a community coming together on a cold Twelfth Night.

The ceremony took place in the orchard where the wassailers had previously chosen one tree to represent the whole orchard. As it grew dark the wassailers would gather around the chosen tree, carrying a pail of cider which would be used to toast the tree. A piece of toast, or a cake, soaked in cider would be laid in the tree fork or hung from the branches. In some orchards the wassailers mimed the tree bearing a good harvest by bowing down to the ground before it three times and rising slowly as though they were carrying a heavy sack of apples. Then a traditional song was sung to the tree. When the formal toast and singing was over shotguns were (in modern times) fired through the top-most boughs while everyone shouted and blew horns. The overall aim was to drive away evil spirits and awaken the sleeping trees.

Wassailing has declined over the centuries but over the last 40 years is now being actively revived again. It is well documented that by the 19th Century the custom was already in a fairly steady decline. This was mainly due to the draw of towns and employment removing people from the country and the subsequent engulfing of the country by the ever-growing towns.

The whole act of wassailing has changed with the decline in the number of orchards and our farming industry. Rather than carry out a ceremony in an orchard, wassailers sing around houses and pubs carrying a "wassail bowl" and a good time is had by all. But, like the revival of interest in real cider and perry, wassailing is a tradition that has revived and is here to stay.



CIDER AND PERRY

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

Cider is made by fermenting the juice of apples. In principle any apple could be used but different areas have different traditions. In the West Country, and the 'Three Counties' of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, special cider apples are used. These have higher levels of tannin than eaters or cookers. The tannin helps to lengthen the taste, without making the cider too bitter. In East Anglia and the South-East a blend of cooking and eating apples is used. For many cider drinkers the Eastern ciders have something missing, whilst for others the tannin in West Country ciders is an unpleasant taste which they are quite happy to be without.

Cider apple varieties are divided up into four categories: the Sweets are high in fermentable sugar, whereas in Bitter-Sweets the sugar is complemented by high tannin levels. Sharps are acidic varieties and Bitter-Sharps contain high levels of both acid and tannin. Most West Country and Three Counties ciders are made by blending these four different types. Of some of the better-known varieties, Kingston Black and Stoke Red are Bitter-Sharps, Foxwhelp is a Sharp variety while Yarlinton Mill and Michelin are Bitter-Sweets. Each cider maker has his or her own blend, often a closely guarded secret.

There are a few single variety ciders available. They are not just curiosities because each variety has its own character. In the 17th and 18th Centuries ciders based on Foxwhelp were held in the greatest esteem, but these are far too acidic for the modern palate. Nowadays Kingston Black seems to be the favourite for single variety cider. The wonderfully named Slack my Girdle seems rather rare, sadly.

Traditional ciders are served still (although some may have some natural 'life'), and are often cloudy. Apples contain pectin, which is better known to jam makers as a setting agent. It also contributes to the cloudiness in ciders and perrys. Cider which has been left to mature in the tank or cask will, in time, throw a deposit of pectin, leaving the cider clear.

WHAT ABOUT PERRY?

Perry can be made from any pear but the best drinks are made from perry pears. They are usually small, hard and tannic, and are of no use for anything else. They grow on large trees that do not reliably take to grafting onto dwarf root stocks, and which can take many years to produce large crops. They are becoming rare even in their heartland of the Three Counties.

Perry pear varieties revel in names such as Merrylegs, Painted Lady and Stinking Bishop. In a good year the variety Thorn can make perry of over 11 per cent ABV, well over the Customs & Excise limit of 8.5 per cent. Some makers try and track down surviving examples of old perry pear varieties, sometimes with mixed results. Producer Kevin Minchew has discovered a single tree of what he thought was Late Treacle - it turns out that it's not but no-one knows what the variety is! Peter Mitchell has tried to track down Tettenhall Dick but this turns out to be, fortunately, not a medical condition, but the Black Country name for any perry pear, or sometimes even a crab apple.

Perry is like cider's more sophisticated cousin and a well-made perry is a wonderful drink. It can be a drink of real quality. Please check it out. Bottle-fermented perry is amazing but can be rare and expensive. One leading Worcestershire hotel used to give a complimentary bottle of champagne to its VIP guests, but people they really liked were given perry.

Perry is more difficult to make than ciders. The tannins are more complex, and the juice if often left exposed to the air to reduce the level of tannin. However, the juice is more prone to oxidation, and the acids in the fruit are more difficult to balance. The rarity of the fruit, and the difficulties in balancing fruit flavour, sweetness, tannin and alcohol mean that most perrys are a blend of several varieties but some superb single varietal examples are available, notably from Minchew (Gloucestershire) and Gwatkin (Herefordshire).

This article is adapted from a feature by Geoff Morris in CAMRA's last Good Cider Guide. If you want to know more, there is an excellent website at <http://homepage.nflworld.com/scrumpy/cider/homepage.htm> which tells you everything you could wish to know and more besides.



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Osborne House, 32 Victory Street, Rusholme
Great Central, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield
Friendship Inn, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield
The Hillary Step, 199 U. Chorlton Rd, Whalley Rge
Pineapple, Garrett Way, Gorton
Albion, Burnage Lane, Burnage
Sam's Chop House, Black Pool Fold, Manchester
City Arms, 48 Kennedy Street, Manchester
The Waterhouse, 67 Princess Street, Manchester
All Bar One, 73 King Street, Manchester
Rising Sun, 22 Queen Street, Manchester
Fletcher Moss, 1 Williams Street, Didsbury
Victoria Hotel, 438 Wilmslow Road, Withington
Dog & Partridge, 665-7 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury
Gateway, 882 Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury
Sedge Lynn, 21a Manchester Road, Chorlton
Old Wellington, 4 Cathedral Gates, Manchester
Moon Under Water, 68 Deansgate, Manchester
The Bishop Blaze, 708 Chester Road, Stretford
King's Ransom, Britannia Road, Sale
J.P. Joule, Northenden Road, Sale
Old Plough Hotel, 56 Green Lane, Sale
Bank at Sale, 70 School Road, Sale
Loves Arms, 301 Hyde Road, Denton
Red Lion, Crown Point, Denton
English Lounge, 64-66 High Street, Manchester
Lloyds No 1, The Printworks, Manchester
Tim Bobbin, 41 Flixton Road, Urmston
Ash Tree, 9 Wellington Road, Ashton U Lyne
Calvert's Court, St. Petersgate, Stockport
Poachers Inn, 95 Ingersley Road, Bollington
Hanging Gate, Higher Sutton, Macclesfield

Porters Ale House, Roe Street, Macclesfield
Jar Bar, SilkHouse, Macclesfield
Society Rooms, Park Lane, Macclesfield
Cotton Bale, 21 Market Street, Hyde
Society Rooms, Grosvenor Street, Stalybridge
Stalybridge Buffet Bar, Stalybridge
White House, 1 Water Lane, Stalybridge
Q Bar, 3-5 Market Street, Stalybridge
Angel Inn, 197 King Street, Dukinfield
Wye Bridge Inn, Fairfield Road, Buxton
Bamford Arms, Buxton Road, Stockport
Pack Horse, 3-5 Market Street, Hayfield
Farmers Arms, 209 Stockport Road, Stockport
Four Heaton's, 63 Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris
Nursery Inn, Green Lane, Heaton Norris
Duke of York, Stockport Road, Romiley,
Hare & Hounds, Dooley Lane, Marple
Bulls Head Hotel, 28 Buxton Road, High Lane
Crown, 81 High Street, Cheadle
Old Star Inn, 13 High Street, Cheadle
Prince of Wales, Gatley Green, Gatley
High Grove, Silverdale Road, Gatley
Kings Hall, 13 Station Road, Cheadle Hulme
Cross Keys, Adswold Road, Cheadle Hulme
Ryecroft, Turves Road, Cheadle Hulme
John Millington, 67 Station Road, Cheadle Hulme
Horse & Farrier, Gatley Road, Gatley
Governor's House, 43 Ravenoak Rd, Cheadle H'lme
Bollin Fee, 6 Swan Street, Wilmslow
Coach and Four, 69-71 Alderley Road, Wilmslow
Quarry Bank, Bloomsbury Lane, Timperley
King George, Moss Lane, Hale
Colbens, Hale Road, Hale Barns
Bear's Paw, Warrington Road, Knutsford
Cross Keys Hotel, 52 King Street, Knutsford



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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

October 2005

Friday 7th – Evening visit to Hayfield (Royal Hotel Beer Festival should be on). Catch bus 358 from Stockport Bus Station at 7.05pm. Itinerary: 8.00pm Kinder Lodge; 8.45 George, Church St (village centre, then Royal, Pack Horse and possibly Sportsman. Arrive back in Stockport at 11.20 or 11.45pm.

Thursday 13th – Branch Meeting: The Didsbury, Wilmslow Rd, Didsbury. Starts 8.00pm.

Weeekend 14th-16th – Trip to present cider and perry of the festival awards.

Friday 21st – Cheadle Hulme Stagger: starts 7.30 Kenilworth, Cheadle Road; 8.845 Church, Ravenoak Rd.

Thursday 27th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Crown, Great Moor. From 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 8th – Social at the Royal Beer Festival, Hayfield. From 8.00pm

Saturday 15th – Social at Poynton Royal British Legion Beer Festival. From 8.30pm.

Monday 17th – Branch Meeting: Globe Inn, High St West, Glossop. Starts 8.30pm

Monday 31st – Committee Meeting: Sportsman, Strines Rd, Strines. Starts 8.30pm

Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and

October 2005

down to Congleton. They have notified us of the following events:

Monday 3rd - Campaigning meeting at Queens Head, Congleton. Starts 8pm

Monday 17th - Pub crawl of Macclesfield starts 8pm - Crown Bond St - Brewers arms Crossall St - Prince of Wales Roe St - Waters Green Tavern.

Monday November 7th - Campaigning meeting: Admiral Rodney, Prestbury. Starts 8pm

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 6th - Branch AGM at the Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm – **will all members please attend this important meeting.**

Thursday 20th - Chorlton social: meet 8pm Hillary Step and onto the Marble Beer House by 9.30pm.

Wednesday 26th - 8pm onwards, a special award presentation to the City Arms, Kennedy Street, Manchester in recognition of being in the Good Beer Guide for over 10 years.

Thursday 3rd November – Branch Meeting: Orange Tee, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm.

REGIONAL UNDER-30 EVENTS

Saturday 1st – Bury Pub Crawl – details TBA

Friday 14th – Social @ Sand Bar, Grosvenor St, All Saints. From 8pm.

Saturday 29th – Beer Miles 205 – details TBA

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

OCTOBER '00

The front page was headed "Good Beer Guide 2001", followed by several items from the recently published CAMRA guide. The main theme was the globalisation of the British beer market, the editor Roger Protz had slated Bass and Whitbread for turning their backs on beer – cask ales in particular – but he still argued that it was no reason for welcoming their takeover by Belgian giant Interbrew. They might pump new life into the few brands bequeathed to them by Bass and Whitbread, but the main thrust of Interbrew's activities would surely be to maximise the sales of its lager brands – Stella Artois, Grolsch and Carling. Protz also attacked the media for reporting only "doom and gloom" stories about the brewing industry. Fullers and Youngs in London had both had record years, with increased sales and profits. Jennings in Cumbria had increased profits by a staggering 73 per cent, and Timothy Taylors brewed more beer than at any other time in their history. His final comment seemed to sum up the position – "There's life in the old cask yet."

Another feature in the Guide was a special "Green Beer Report" that criticised brewers for failing to respond to the demand for organic products. The report said that organic beer would prosper with the news that Horticultural Research International at Wye College in Kent was developing a new hop variety that was resistant to disease and pest attack, and needed no chemical sprays. If the variety was dubbed an organic hop by the Soil Association, it could open the floodgates for organic beer in Britain, giving brewers a bigger home-grown source of organic hops. At that time most organic malt and hops had to be imported, often from as far away as New Zealand.

★★★★★

It was reported that the Government was ready to start the consultation exercise that would lead to a new Weights & Measures White Paper, with any luck before the end of the year was out. CAMRA's case, for a pint to mean a pint – 20 fluid ounces of liquid – had been boosted by its latest survey of pubs in four regions: the North-east, South-west, West Midlands and Wales. CAMRA's survey findings were in sharp contrast to those carried out by local trading standards departments, which found that the recommended "at least 95 per cent liquid" was being adhered to. But CAMRA had found many pints which were well outside those guidelines. The average was about 93 per cent, but the worst offender was a Cardiff pub serving 85 per cent pints.

★★★★★

Finally, several snippets from Brewery News: Marble brewer Mark Dade had decided that his beers would be vegan/vegetarian as well as organic. The Porter Brewing Co was to produce house beers for the Old Garratt and the Salisbury. Cheshire's new Paradise Brewery, sited next to Wrenbury Station, was planning a Christmas Beer Festival, from 28 to 30 December. Some of Holt's pubs were serving "smooth" when faced with a request for mild, rather than offering a choice.



CHIMNEYPOTS

Recently there were reports that a local pub was to close and the site be sold off for housing. Someone expressed surprise that it hadn't been more successful given all the people living close by. But the pub trade doesn't necessarily work like that, and the idea that people come home from work, have their tea and then go out to the local is less and less representative of real-world patterns of pubgoing.

There are plenty of local examples of pubs that have closed despite being in the middle of densely populated areas with few other pubs nearby, such as the Wembley in Adswold and the Fallowfield in the Manchester suburb of the same name. Obviously in some locations the pubs concerned have had problems of disorder, but that can't apply to places like the Bleeding Wolf in leafy Hale where the site proved just too attractive for a development of flats, while the former Blue Bell in Wilmslow is now a Majestic Wine Warehouse.

There is a story behind every pub closure, but it is clear that plonking a pub down in the middle of a housing estate is no guarantee of success, despite the large potential market. The locations where pubs are thriving tend to be in town and city centres, and in suburban hubs like Cheadle and Didsbury, where they are more visible, there is more passing trade, and they feed on others' success. In contrast, the estate pub in the midst of its sea of under-used car park often looks more like a beached whale.

THE WELL-PRESENTED PINT

Early editions of the "Good Beer Guide" contained various stock phrases such as "keen licensee" that in reality meant little or nothing to the prospective visitor to a pub. But one that has far more present-day relevance is "a well-presented pint".

On the face of it, this may seem to be a meaningless platitude, but how often do you go in a pub and find that your pint has been pulled in a totally incompetent manner? Either the sparkler has been loosened or removed, so you end up with a pint of flat glop, or there is an airlock in the line, and the bar staff are sawing away at the pump and producing a glass full of froth. I have even seen some bar staff deliberately leaving the head a quarter of an inch below the brim in a brim measure glass.

In contrast, when you see a pint being drawn with care and attention to detail, you notice it. The way to do it is to pull at the pump slowly and steadily, and then to ensure the final drop is squeezed out just as the head is on the point of overflowing the glass. That way, you will truly get a "well-presented pint". And having bar staff who actually drink real ale and know what the discerning customer expects must be a step in the right direction.

Curmudgeon Online: www.pubcurmudgeon.org.uk



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Fate has played its part in the future career of Susan Courtenay from New Mills, who has taken over as licensee of the *Vine Tavern* in Birch Vale. "It's the best decision I've ever made", she says.

"I grew up in New Mills and ever since leaving school I've worked in the catering industry, and quite often as a pub chef," says Susan. "It was just by luck that in my last job I was asked to help out behind the bar one day, and I haven't looked back since."



Susan says that the big difference between working behind the scenes running the kitchen, and working 'front of house' is having the opportunity to meet her customers and getting to know them individually. "It was a real eye opener for me, and in my last job I quickly worked my way up to become manager of the pub. After that I soon took the decision that if I'm going to do all the work, I may as well be my own boss, and so set about looking for a pub of my own," she said. Now settled in the *Vine Tavern*, Susan has already started to take control of her future at the *Robinson's* house. As an experienced cook she has introduced a menu of 'tasty' pub grub, which she prepares herself and serves throughout the new lunchtime opening hours and again in the evening. "I've also got the support of my husband Derek, who has kept on his full-time job but is also working behind the scenes here to open up the beer garden - it's a great facility that I would like our customers to enjoy."

Susan's sister-in-law, Catherine Derbyshire, from Disley who studies hospitality at Huddersfield, is also giving her time, voluntarily, to gain practical hands-on experience in the business, and give Susan the best possible start in her new venture.

A 36 firkin sell out at the Glossop Beer Festival at Glossop Labour Club at the start of September is the Branch's best news of the month. With lots of new beers from local breweries, it ensured that the beer 'tickers' turned out in force, with the most popular beers of the weekend being from two breweries in the Branch area, namely Shaws and Howard Town. Whilst a beer of the festival was not chosen, the punters favourites were (in no particular order) : Thornbridge Halls Jaipur IPA, Shaws Woodys Ale, Howard Town Snake Ale, Eastwood & Sanders 1872 Porter.

The sun shone through all weekend and no doubt helped us to sell out by 4pm on the Sunday, with customers requesting we open the Labour Club. The club sells Moorhouses Premium and many punters stayed on to enjoy the sun until about 6pm.

Thanks to all the staff who helped make the event run smoothly and the most successful yet. We hope to be back next year on the same weekend, not sure if at the same venue as the land may then be sold. Thanks also to the local English country band members who entertained on the Friday evening and the male voice choir who took the tent over on the Saturday and of course Monologue John for his renditions. Whilst mentioning Glossop Labour Club, the popular Folk Train continues to run on the fourth Thursday in every month. A band plays on the 18.47pm train from Piccadilly to Glossop, when they embark and walk down to the Labour Club, where two hours of excellent music can be heard in what is always a friendly compact atmosphere. The band pack up and head for the train at 21.38pm where they play for another half-hour back to Manchester. Recommended, even if, like me living locally and only do the Labour club part of the evening.

Howard Town beers are now available in several local Glossop pubs, the newest venue being the Grapes on High Street West which has had a handpump installed for the first time in a good few years, and which is a new real ale gain for the area. The Grapes is heading out of Glossop, towards Dinting on the A57.



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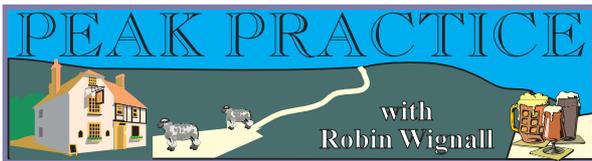
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With Wolverhampton & Dudley out of the stock market headlines for a week or two, their place has been taken by Greene King. Having recently bought Ridley's Brewery of Essex, with intention to close, their latest acquisition towards the end of August was the Belhaven Brewery at Dunbar in eastern Scotland. Greene King intend to keep the Belhaven Brewery open, they say. The record at Morland (Oxford) and now Ridley's, amongst others, suggests otherwise. Whilst this news does not have an immediate impact in the Peak District, it could in the end be part of the erosion of customer choice. Belhaven beers do get into the free trade, and find their way to beer festivals, and they are certainly worth sampling. Drinkers could feel more confident if the choice of beers available in Greene King's Hungry Horse pubs, the GK occasional presence on Stockport and the Peak District, was more interesting, assuming there is any real ale available.

Punch has also recently gone back onto the Pub Monopoly Board, buying Avebury Taverns. Punch does make a choice of beers available to their licensees, but anything beyond the run of the mill is expensive for customers. Punch is also an offender with its upward-only rent review, which hammer their licensees.

Another valid customer complaint about Punch is the failure to badge its pubs. Is the company afraid that customers will realise just how many pubs it owns (four out of eight in Whaley Bridge, I understand)? Perhaps Punch can't keep the badging process up to date as parcels of pubs are bought and sold on the aforementioned Pub Monopoly Board. At least there are some interesting features left from previous ownership like the Pubmaster lanterns at the **White Horse** in Whaley Bridge and the **Ploughboy** in Disley.

★★★★★

Day Two of writing this article and Wolves are back in the news, having bought 14 pubs from English Country Inns, to add to their quoted figure of 2,276. Not many extra but there is the general issue of customer choice.

In late August wells dressing week in Taddington was accompanied by a local road-cum-hill race, with locals and runners gathering in the **Queen's Arms** afterwards. This is a fine 18th Century pub, opened out but multi-roomed, with the rooms around a central bar. Food is a feature and is recommended in Andrew McCloy's Peak District Pub Guide. The pub was once the Miners' Arms and at one time served as a morgue, as did the Miners' Arms at Adlington, east Cheshire. Beers available were an interesting trio from micro-breweries: Skipton Copper Dragon IPA, Oakwell Barnsley Bitter, and new one on me, Lancaster JSB. The last was more than acceptable choice.

Taddington lies just off the A6 between Buxton and Bakewell. The village is served by the limited stop Trans Peak (TP) bus, every two hours during the day from Manchester and Stockport via Buxton. This service will get you there for the lunchtime 12-3 session, and back afterwards. As with many village pubs, the Queen's Arms is well worth trying. Get there if you can, you will be made very welcome.



PUB NEWS

I recently called in the **King William** at Wilmslow. What a transformation has taken place here. There has been a change of licensee recently, the inside is slightly better, and on a Spanish theme, but the main change is the food, there is a full menu including Spanish tapas etc. Although I have not sampled the meals, I have seen them being served and they look fantastic. The opening hours have changed and the pub is now open all day, with food served all day as well. The beer range is the same, and so is the high quality. In one other change, this King William is no longer a "no smoking" pub, although smoking is contained in a far room, with no smoking elsewhere. I'm not sure if this is good or bad - perhaps it has been done to attract people who would otherwise go to other pubs in the area

Back in Macclesfield, there will be change in the guest beer arrangements at the Brewers Arms. Enterprise Inns has abandoned its specialist cask ale scheme and replaced it with the 'Society of Independent Brewers Direct Delivery Scheme'. This basically means the pub will be able to get its local beers from SIBA member breweries who can deliver within their postcode area -so watch out for Storm, Beartown and more. The Brewers has just completed a £30,000 refurbishment and the real ale is also now sold in oversized lined glasses.

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A TALE OF TWO (OR IS IT THREE?) CITIES

PHIL BOOTON VISITS CENTRAL EUROPE

A brief report on a recent visit to both the capital of Hungary and the capital of Slovakia. Budapest is a large, busy city (or more precisely two cities divided by the River Danube) with a serious traffic problem. Reminded me a lot of London before the blessed Ken. Beer is less popular than wine but there are still plenty of reasonable bars. Places I visited in Budapest:

Paulaner Brauhaus (Alkotas Utca 53, Mom Park): Incongruously located brewpub on the top floor of a shopping centre. German-style beer - Pils, Lager, Weiss, Salvator - all at HF620 (£2) for a half-litre. On two visits the service varied from good to very poor. Beer (and food) however was pretty good.

Gerbeaud (Vorosmarty Ter 7, pub entrance round the corner on Dorottya Utca):

Touristy place. The main bit is a cafe - the so-called brewpub is downstairs. One beer - Gerbeaud Superior - was a rather undistinguished Pils. Cost was the highest I found in Budapest (HF890 or about £2.70). Food looked OK but wasn't tried and service was very good. I have since discovered that the beer is not brewed on the premises after all. Best avoided unless you want to behave like a "normal" tourist.

Paul's Pub (Vaci Utca 49):

Basic locals' bar at the southern end of this main shopping street. Good service and cheap beer - Soproni at HF330 (£1) a half-litre. No food. Beer was a bit gassy but this bar is well worth a visit for the prices and its central position.

Kaltenberg Sorozo (Kinizsi Utca 30-36):

This is supposed to be a brewpub but I didn't see a brewplant. One beer available at HF390 a half-litre. Not bad at all and a decent Pils. Food was excellent and reasonably priced. This pub is in a student area near Calvin Ter which may explain the prices. Apparently there is definitely a brewplant and they also produce a dark lager.

Berliner (Raday Utca 5):

In the same area as the above. Despite its name has no German beers! I had an excellent Borostyan (HF380), which was the best Hungarian beer I had in the city. Excellent service in a small bar with a large terrace and a restaurant downstairs. Quite a few Belgian beers including Leffe on draught for HF400 (33cl).

Cafe Vian (Ferenc Liszt Ter):

Famous cafe which serves Dreher beers. Tried the Bak, which is

described as a stout but which I thought was more of a brown ale. This was HF570 but the area is very touristy. Food here was quite good also.

Mosselen Beer Cafe (Pannonia Utca 14):

Possibly the best Belgian bar in Budapest. Reasonable selection including some Trappists. I had La Chouffe (75cl bottle for less than £4). The bar was very hot and quite busy. Food looked good. Be warned about public transport! I left here rather late and found both metro and trams had stopped running (by about 1130 or so).

Henri Belga Sorozo (I Bem Rakpart 12):

Another Belgian bar with a larger selection than the above. Kwak on draught (HF750). I also had Delirium Tremens in bottle for the same price but it was a bit warm. Service was good and there is Belgian food - Pork Medallions in a cream sauce Aalst style was pretty good for HF1790. Overlooks the Danube.

Old Amsterdam (Kiraly Pal Utca):

Another Benelux bar near Calvin Ter. Best selection of the three but mostly in bottle. Quite traditional in style. Amstel was actually the only Dutch beer available.

Mister Sorozo (Regifoti Utca 31):

I've saved the highlight till last. This brewpub is out in the northern suburbs. Get the M3 metro to Ujpest-Kozpont and then tram 12 to its terminus. Ten minutes walk from there in a rather rundown area. But persevere and you will be rewarded with a really nice pub. Very good service, first class food and top beer at cheap suburban prices. They do only one beer at HF200 a half-litre (60p). This was sweeter than the average Pils. Traditional Hungarian food - many dishes under HF1000 (£3).

Overall not a major destination for the beer tourist. But a few nice pubs. Mister is the must visit. Don't expect to get a seat on public transport and watch out for mad drivers when crossing the road! (I said it was like London!)

BRATISLAVA

In contrast Bratislava is more like a friendly small provincial city. But in common with its Hungarian neighbour it is not particularly interesting beer-wise. Most bars are dominated by products from InBev and its subsidiaries. Far and away the best bar in my opinion is:

Slovak Pub (Obchodna 62):

This is a labyrinthine old pub with many interconnecting rooms serving exclusively Slovak beer and food (i.e. no Czech!) Good service and cheap prices. Beer varied from 28-34 SK a half-litre (50-60p). Saris dark was excellent as were traditional Slovak dumplings.

Obchodna, a shopping street, has some other bars worth a look - **KGB** at 52, **Eden** at 48 and **Castrum** at 37. There is a so-called Belgian cafe called **De Zwaan** at Panska 7 near the British Embassy.

The only Belgian beers appeared to be Leffe and Hoegaarden but the former was only 60 SK for 33cl. There is the inevitable Oirish pub, **Dubliner** at Sedlarska 6 just off the main square, which serves expensive Zlaty Bazant (55 SK) as well as Guinness. For a basic local's pub, try **Ponorka** (Tobrucka 7), with locally-brewed Stein at 20 SK a half-litre (30p!) Who said Holt's and Sam Smith's were cheap? But make the most of these ridiculously cheap prices as no doubt Slovakia's accession to EU membership will soon put a stop to them! For comprehensive information on pubs, bars and restaurants in Bratislava have a look at <http://www.kamnapivo.sk/>



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Once upon a time there was a Mr Jackson, and he had a farm by the River Mersey. He also had a boat, which was just as well as the river frequently flooded. For a penny he would ferry people across the river between Chorlton and Sale Moor.

Subsequently he or his descendants built a bridge, with a penny toll, that became Jackson's Bridge, and turned the farmhouse into a pub, which should probably have been Jackson's Pub really. But the sign-writer thought he knew better, and it is to this day Jackson's Boat.

Since last March the pub has been under new management, and mine hosts are now David Hall and Paul Riley. They are very keen on cask ale and recently held a mini beer festival, with beers from Marble (Ginger Marble and Lagonda IPA), Boggart (Dark Side Porter and Goblin Gold) and Moorhouses (Pendle Witches Brew), on gravity in a temporary outside bar. Inside were the three regular beers, Marston's Pedigree, Morland Old Speckled Hen and Taylor's Landlord, plus an uncommon beer for these parts, Highgate Dark Mild. Two more beers completed the line-up: Fuller's London Pride and Wadworth 6X. The landlords are making a real effort to attract more visitors to this out-of-the-way spot. Apart from as fine a pint of Landlord as you'll find that side of the Mersey, there is a full range of food. The kitchen is now open every day of the week (till 7 on Sundays and 9 every other day). The interior has been spruced up, and Sky Sports and the TV have been ditched to give a more family-friendly atmosphere.



The pub is set in woodland at the end of Rifle Road, reached from Junction 6 of the M60, and there is a substantial beer garden and children's play area. If Phase 3 of Metrolink ever gets funding, then the line to the Airport will pass very close to the pub and have a stop nearby (provisionally named "Sale Water Park").

A long time resident of Sale, Mr Wilkinson, has written to the landlords with his memories of the pub from before the Second World War. His father would take him there as a child and deposit him in the landlord's kitchen where there was "a roaring fire, and a grey parrot in a cage". He says the pub had no gas or electricity before the war and all cooking and lighting was by paraffin. Piped water arrived only arrived in the 1920s, when Tetley's bought the pub: before that it was drawn from a well. Sometimes of course there was too much running water. When the river flooded the pub's inhabitants had to take refuge on the first floor, without even a jug of ale to sustain them as the cellar too would be inundated. Truly a case of watering the workers' beer!

Over the years the Mersey has shifted its course and the pub has consequently moved from Lancashire to Cheshire. Nowadays there is a steep embankment to contain flood-water, and the administrative boundary seems to be fixed, but the surrounding meadows can still be flooded from time to time.



OUT WITH THE LUMPHAMMER

ROBIN PENDRAGON ON PUB REFURBISHMENTS

Anyone ever heard of John Barrass? Neither had I but I now keep hearing the same chap's name being muttered darkly in connection with doubtful pub refurbishments. Cringing gestures and breath suckings are therefore in order if ever your local is threatened with this man who is big on baggage hall floor plans, standing room only and pool tables. The word, which may or may not be true, is that lots of blood, violence and hepatic disfunction follow his refurbishments as surely as vomiting after kebabs. But let's face it, he is not alone. There have been few successful pub refurbishments in recent years. Whosoever is to blame for them, the news of a coming refurb is generally bad news. The past really good ones I know of were the conversion of Sid Otty's gambling den into The Waterhouse and the unexpectedly tasteful work some years ago on the Lamb in Eccles. Just recently there has been another in what is now The Brunswick on London Road in Manchester.

Following many years of blameless existence it became an Oirish pub called Finnegan's Wake, actually the title of an unreadable Irish book. The food and drink was entirely English, there was no real ale after the first few months and there were even the fake Irish wall poster decorations. But it did work a bit as a theme pub. The operators were clearly taking the kidney product whilst there were a couple of real Irish pubs around throughout which had mercifully been free of deranged refurbishers. The best known is Mother Mac's on Back Piccadilly. It is usually full, smoky and cheerful though the last time I called the usual one-and-only real ale (Tetley Bitter) was unavailable due to an unsettled cask, it was said.

The Brunswick will surely come on a ton now that it has been de-themed. They had Theakston's Bitter and OP on handpump when I called, both on top form, and not a felt leprechaun or plastic cauldron in sight. They have not restored the original multi-room layout but it is at least looking a lot better than under its previous incarnation. The point seems to be that pubs become what they are by evolution than due to arrogant meddling by designers. Conversely I cannot think of a single themed pub in Greater Manchester that has stood the test of time.

Some observers think that pub theming is a Salford phenomenon. The first theme pub many can recall was the long gone Manchester Liners opposite the docks. Since then there have been dozens of saw mills, Victorian shopping streets, pirate galleons and tropical islands all of which have croaked in short order. The only pubs which are still in business now and which were around twenty years ago are those which were never "themed" or eccentrically refurbished in the meantime. Someone should tour John Barrass round a few of them. Please?



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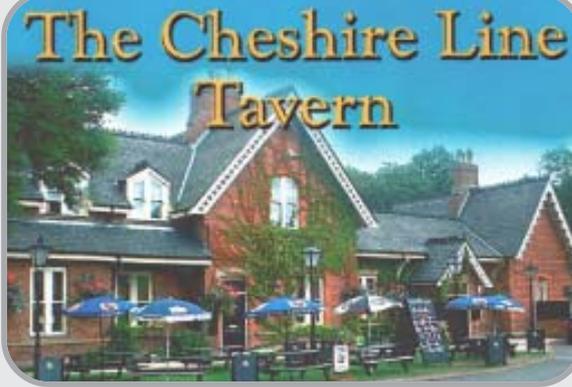
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Local CAMRA Awards



Above: Debbie Marshall, Licensee of the Kings Head, Tiviot Dale, pictured with partner Anthony Catling, with their Stockport & South Manchester August 2005 Pub of the Month award, presented last month. Below, Stockport & South Manchester Branch Chairman (and Stockport and Manchester Mild Challenge organiser) Mark McConachie (left) with Martin Wood, licensee of Porter's Railway in Portwood, Stockport with the Champion Mild Pub award for the Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge, voted by participants their favourite mild (Porters Mild), and the pub in which it was found.



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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

Just for once there's actually some good news from East Manchester, although some of it is a bit of a mixed bag.

Quite to my surprise, and may I say, delight, the **Seven Stars** (Holts) on Ashton Old Road, Beswick reopened on August 26 following a £70k refurbishment; anyone familiar with the Seven Stars prior to it shutting, will know it was very shabby indeed. The interior layout has been maintained, but everything is far, far cleaner, brighter and most welcoming. New upholstery and carpets, new handpulls for Holt Mild and Bitter, improved music system, and large-screen TV should all prove to be a draw for customers, old and new. Light snacks may be offered in the future. New managers have been installed - Andrea "Ang" England and Paul King who hail from the Warrington area where they ran Chevies Music Bar for seven years. Although newcomers to the area, they hope to culture many new friends. They said the brewery had been very supportive too. With the first people moving into their nearby new homes in October, it is hoped the pub can capitalise on their custom.

Also reopened is the former Coach & Horses on the corner of Belle Vue Street and Hyde Road. This former Robinson's house has been sold into the free trade and is now **Brodies**. The aim is to run it as a pub for the whole community and while I wish it well, I do wonder if it's been pitched just right. The last time I called a karaoke was belting out to an almost empty pub but it is early days yet so perhaps things will pick up. It certainly needs to on the beer front. Three cask beers were on handpump when I called - Highgate Dark Mild, Thwaites Lancaster Bomber and Fuller's Discovery and, it pains me to say this, quality ranged from poor to undrinkable. Having said that, of the only few customers in, we were the only ones trying the cask.

Perhaps a lesson can be learned from the **Lord Nelson** on Hyde Road, also back in the real ale fold. Tetley Bitter is the sole handpumped beer and, due to poor demand in the week, it is only available at the weekends.

Staying in Gorton, I also managed to pop into the **Vale Cottage** on Kirk Street. New licensees John and Maureen Smith took over on 14 February at this beautifully kept little pub, parts of which date back to the 17th Century. The atmosphere is very relaxed with only quiet background music and no pool tables, and John and Maureen are committed to both the pub and cask ale. Currently Taylor's Landlord and Well's Bombardier are on handpump although it is planned to increase the range in the future. A range of activities take place and of particular note are the acoustic nights on the last Wednesday of each month and which are attracting a wide range of musicians. The food is worth a mention, too. It's all properly home made and Maureen tells me that she is keen to always offer two or three veggie dishes on the menu - if the weather's fine you can enjoy this in the wonderful beer garden to the rear of the pub.

FURTHER EAST

On my recent trawl round East Manchester I also picked up the following snippets. The **Strawberry Duck** (Crabtree Lane, Clayton) has new licensees in the shape of Sue and Pete Thomas. This couple is no stranger to Manchester having had a successful business for some years on Longsight Market. Nor are they strangers to the pub trade having had a spell running the **High Bank** on Ogden Lane some years ago. I wish them well at the Duck - their official opening was scheduled for 10 September.

Down at the **Grove** (Ashton New Road, Clayton) Pat and her staff are getting ready for the forthcoming footie season which if City manage to do well could see the pub even busier, thus making Holt's refurbishment a worthwhile investment all round. Further down Ashton New Road at the now delicensed **Humphrey Cheetham** apparently there has been a planning application submitted to turn the building into flats! Over on Clayton Lane the **Blue Moon** was closed when I passed - no news about its future and likewise the **Pack Horse** on Ashton Old Road which of course leads me to the **Legh Arms**.

It apparently came as a bit of a surprise to Punch Taverns



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middle management that the Legh was our Pub of the Year for this year. So I repeat my previous heartfelt plea to Punch Taverns, *don't try to mend what isn't broken*. Dave and Tracy are doing a great job. On a lighter note the Legh's darts team has been promoted to Division one after a good season last year, the new ladies darts team played its first match on 5 September and the pub also now has two pool teams up and running.

HEADING SOUTH

Delving back into South Manchester I finally got round to the **Farmers Arms** (Longley Lane, Northenden) where I found to my shame that Janette Marsh has been licensee since last November having moved with her partner Andy from the Springfield Hotel in Wigan. During our chat Andy told me how four masked assailants raided the pub and how one of the gang held an axe to Andy's throat while they stole the money and even his watch. They are both slowly coming to terms with what happened and hope the gang will soon be caught. On the beer front the pub regularly has two beers on handpump, Tetleys and a very enjoyable Green King IPA when I visited.

The **Royal Oak** (Wilmslow Rd, Didsbury) is scheduled for an internal redecoration which it was hoped would start on Monday 12 September. I say hoped because other recent start dates have also been missed. Failing the 12th then work would definitely start on the 17th. The **Didsbury** in Didsbury is to run its autumn beer festival from Friday 21st October until Sunday 30th October. Over the ten days some 25 different cask ales will be available.

Finally, popping down to Chorlton, Warren McCoubrey, formerly of the **Knott** has now taken over as manager at the **Marble Beer House**. Warren told me that he's really happy with the new job and aims to convert his bar staff to confirmed cask ale drinkers over the next six months! On the beer front look out for an enhanced range of Belgian beers, sourced from the nearby Belgian Belly. Speaking of which...

BELGIAN BELLY NEWS

The team at the **Belgian Belly** in Chorlton are gearing up for this year's Manchester Food & Drink Festival with several events planned as part of the Chorlton 'fringe'.

On the first Friday (7 October) there will be a Halloween Beer tasting at the Belgian Belly, featuring pumpkin beers from the Regenboog Brewery in Flanders plus a Wallonian pumpkin ale, too.

On the first Saturday (8 October) there will be another tasting at the Belly, this time matching beer and chocolate (orange truffles).

The final Sunday of the event (16 October) will be a tutored tasting of Wallonian beers conducted by the Belly's Jason Barker. There will be a buffet too – full details and tickets from the Belly (phone on 0161 860 6766)

In addition to the above, Jason will also be giving a talk at **Sand Bar** (Grosvenor Street, All Saints) to mark the launch of sand Bar's wider range of Belgian beers, supplied by the Belly. Another outlet taking a wider range of beers from the Belly is **Le Trappiste** (Greenwood St, Altrincham), which plans to take 20 guest beers a week. Also taking guest Belgian beers for the duration of the festival is **Bar 480** on Wilbraham Road, Chorlton.

CROWN & KETTLE RETURNS TO LIFE



This month we report on the reopening or likely reopening of several pubs. One of the most unexpected though is that of the Crown & Kettle, on the corner of Oldham Road and Great Ancoats Street in Manchester City Centre's 'Northern Quarter'.

The listed building is now owned by Atisna Regenartion, the company behind a number of projects in East Manchester, along with Peter Dalton and Carol Ainscow, well-know local developers behind projects such as Manto on Canal Street and the Paradise factory nightclub.

However the listed Crown & Kettle, closed since the 1980s, will have a much more traditional feel than those cutting edge establishments. Restoration work of the partially fire damaged interior was well underway in mid-September and the layout is to consist of a vault and lounge in the main body of the pub, along with a small snug at the back, all served from a newly installed central bar.

Those with long memories will recall the ornate plaster ceiling with its hanging ventilation pendants – the good news is that these remain, albeit slightly blackened from the fire. They are being cleaned up (and part of the ceiling, over the planned vault, remains pristine) but for the time being at least will remain in this 'unfinished' state although that's not to say that they are in any way less impressive for this. This ceiling will dominate the lounge while the rear snug, which is largely new and more intimate, will be fitted out in traditional style with a 'living flame' gas fire to focus the room.

Up to eight real ales are promised and as such the reborn Crown & Kettle should be a very promising addition to the Northern Quarter. The planned reopening date is 29 September – more next time. JC.



The Crown & Kettle ceiling, fire-damaged but still impressive.

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