

JULY 2008



Opening

TIMES THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

COVERING THE CITIES OF MANCHESTER & SALFORD, STOCKPORT, TAMESIDE, TRAFFORD, N.E. CHESHIRE & MACCLESFIELD

ROCKY HORROR RECORD



Above (left-right): Staff in Rocky Horror costume; Paulette, Tim and Jean from the New Oxford; Jan, Rob, James, Shirley and Warren from the Marble Brewery; Bas & Hildegard van Ostaden from Urthel Brewery with Paul Scrimshaw (rear) and Wyn Reece (right) from Dranke Centrale.

Staff at this year's record breaking Stockport Beer & Cider Festival donned Rocky Horror costumes to raise additional funds for the Festival Charity on Saturday night, the climax of a frantic three days that saw a record breaking 5,500 crowd stream into Edgeley Park for the town's 22nd beer festival.

Cider sales hit a record with the entire 350 gallon order selling out by 10.20pm on Saturday. Beer sales almost hit an all-time high but luckily stocks lasted the course with a good range still available at closing time. Organiser Jim Flynn told *Opening Times* "We were stunned but also delighted by the huge increase in numbers this year. It just shows what a growing interest there is in real ale and cider today – and should give those local pubs that don't offer their customers a choice of a cask beer pause for thought. I would like to thank all of our sponsors for their support and our staff for their incredible hard work. Here's to next year!"

The Festival was attended by many brewers, publicans and others in the licensed trade. Some are pictured above – we will have more photos next month. For details of the winning beers see page 12. Details of the winning ciders will also appear next time.

Chorlton Beer Festival at St Clements Church

The fourth Chorlton Beer festival at St Clements Church, Edge Lane, Chorlton is about to happen on Friday 11th and Saturday 12th July. This year the festival is in association with the Campaign For Real Ale so please support this event both for CAMRA and for St Clements church. For those of you who get the South Manchester Reporter and thought you had missed it on the 13th and 14th June, **you haven't** - they got it wrong!!

This year we have 35 different beers on offer from around the local area including Dunham Massey Brewery. Some beers are also from Lancashire and Cumbria. The festival beer is being brewed for us by the Marble Brewing Company.

The festival opens at 5pm on Friday 11th July and there is a £3.50 admission cost. Close at 11pm. We open again on the Saturday at 1pm until 11pm and again, there is a £3.50 admission cost, sorry no discount for CAMRA members. Children are welcome in the afternoon, food is available to purchase at all times and live music will be in the car park.

There are also 20 different Ciders and Perries on offer with bottled Belgian beers and wines available. This really is a truly good all round event for all tastes.

For any CAMRA member who is willing to volunteer to work at the festival please contact Beverley Gobbett on 07730 550 428 or email bevalitabev@yahoo.co.uk



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CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2008 We're in it!



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for July 2008 has been won by the Florist on Shaw Heath.

While the Florist might be classed an almost stereotypical traditional Robinsons local, unlike many of that ilk which have fallen on hard times this pub is decidedly on the up and thriving. Unfortunately this was not always the case with the pub seemingly following a number of other pubs in the Edgeley area, down the plug hole!

In 2006 however in stepped Tom Barlow, the husband of Sheila the licensee of the already flourishing Armoury just down the road and perhaps unsurprisingly with that pedigree the rescue had commenced. Tom has returned the pub to its roots in the local community, with darts teams and pub quizzes. The archetypal decent hardworking and affable licensee, he looks after both his regulars and his beer in equal measure. He is also a friend of CAMRA, hosting meetings in the pub's upstairs function room and generously supporting the recent Stockport Beer & Cider Festival both as a sponsor of the Friday lunchtime session and a donor to the festival tombola.

The Florist itself is an imposing, three-storey early-Victorian pub which despite changes over the years has been left with a choice of five distinct drinking areas plus the bar area. All this has given the place definite character and appeal. Pubs however are more than bricks and mortar, they are really made by the people, and at the Florist the people on both sides of the bar are some of the friendliest you could meet. This is a pub where everybody is welcome, no one goes un-noticed, and you can have a good pint into the bargain. On that note as you would expect the Robinson's Hatters and Unicorn are kept in the very best condition by Tom.

So why not join the local CAMRA branch to celebrate the award which will be presented to Tom and his staff on Thursday 24th July when, I am sure, a great night will be had by all. With a bit of luck there will be an opportunity to enjoy the warmth of a summer's evening in the beer garden to the rear of the pub while toasting Tom's success.

The pub is only 5 minutes from the railway station and a couple of minutes from the main A6 in Stockport, tucked away behind Stockport College on Shaw Heath itself. JF

Join CAMRA - page 14

Vale Cottage Inn

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8th Nov. '07

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Australia.

To
The Manager & Staff
Marble Arch Pub
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Thanks for the memory.

Antipodean Piss Artists Association
(Tasmanian Branch)

Sincerely

Philip Lowe.



COMMENT, NOTES & CONTENTS

Opening Times – Comment

LAST month I was looking forward to Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. As it turns out so were another 5,500 of you. The record crowd took us all by surprise and it is a tribute to all of our hard working volunteer staff that we weren't swamped. As it turns out there was little waiting time at the bars, the quality of the beer and cider was as high as ever and everyone (apart from the odd disgruntled beer spotter) seemed to go away happy. Certainly, the feedback that I have received has been superb. Here's to next year when we will also be celebrating the 25th birthday of Opening Times – more on that in future months.

This month sees the first anniversary of the smoking ban. I plan to get out and about to see how this has affected our local pubs. Anecdotaly it seems to be a mixed picture. More next time.

Opening Times - Information

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Postal subscriptions are available at £6 for 12 issues (make cheques payable to *Opening Times*). Apply to John Tune, 4 Sandown Rd, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, SK3 0JF.

Trading Standards – problems in pubs should normally be resolved by a quiet word with the licensee. However sometimes it may be necessary to take it further. These are the local contacts:

Stockport	0845 644 4301	Trafford	0161 9122274
Manchester	0161 234 1555	Derbyshire	08456 058058
Salford	0161 925 1346	Cheshire	0845 1132500
Tameside	0161 342 8355		

Copy Date for the August issue is Friday 11th July.

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 Last Leaf, Massacre, Porter, Snowbound,
 Wobbly Bob, White Hurricane, Uncle Fester,
 Christmas Kiss, Humbug, Tyke, Thirsty Moon

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No Acceptance

THIS month sees the first anniversary of the total smoking ban in licensed premises in England. While some commentators have claimed that it has generally been accepted and things have moved on, on the ground I just don't see that acceptance at all. Apparently during the May local elections, canvassers found that in working-class areas the smoking ban was one of the major sources of complaint. It may well have contributed to Labour's record low share of the vote. Bolton Labour MP Brian Iddon has stated bluntly that it has left his party's traditional voters feeling "heavily bruised".

CAMRA used to raise alarm bells over six pubs closing a week, but the rate of closures has now quadrupled to four a day, and since the ban came in over fifteen hundred pubs across the country have shut their doors for ever. Obviously there are other factors at work, but there's a wealth of anecdotal evidence suggesting that the drop-off in custom following the smoking ban has been the key factor in pushing pubs over the edge, with falls in trade of up to 40% being reported. In Scotland, which introduced its ban a year earlier, the number of pubs closing has been even twice the rate predicted by the Scottish Licensed Trade Association, which had been decry'd by ban supporters as unduly pessimistic.

If government diktat insists that you are treated like a pariah when you go to the pub, and forced to stand outside in the cold and wind if you want a cigarette, it's hardly surprising that your enthusiasm for pubgoing is likely to wane. And, if the smokers stay away, so might the non-smoking friends they used to socialise with. I certainly notice that, apart from the traditional weekend busy times, the non-dining trade in pubs is markedly thinner than it was in the first half of 2007. The attractions of getting some cans in and sitting down in front of the TV with your mates at home, where you can still smoke, have never seemed greater.

Obviously it is sad when pubs close, but if government policy has made a pub unviable operators cannot be blamed for calling time on flogging a dead horse. Indeed it might impart a few home truths to some of the self-deluding supporters of the ban if a few of their favourite hostelrys were forced to shut down.

It was often claimed that hordes of committed non-smokers would flock to pubs in the wake of the ban, but in reality, as I predicted, this was never going to happen. People who were so fastidious that they actively avoided pubs because they were smoky are not the kind to want to spend much time drinking in pubs anyway. As one licensee said, "We've had a slide of about ten to twenty percent. I'd like to know where the nonsmokers that were supposed to be coming into pubs when the ban was introduced are. I haven't seen any..." All the ban has done is to make pubs more acceptable to non-pubgoers. So the folk who used to go in a pub once every three months and moan about it being smoky, will now still go in every three months and say how much better it is that there's no smoke and all those rough people are no longer there.

The blanket smoking ban was totally wrong a year ago, and the passage of time does not make it any less wrong. It is not something that people will simply accept and move on, and it has left an enduring legacy of bitterness amongst tolerant non-smokers just as much as smokers themselves. While it might be unrealistic to hold out too much hope, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that a future government may see sense and allow pubs and clubs to have separate indoor smoking rooms if they so wish. If this doesn't happen, then the pub trade will inevitably continue to decline at a rapid rate.

*Steve, Johanne & Molly
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Curmudgeon Online: www.curmudgeon.org.uk



Stockport North & Portwood with John Sutcliffe

ON a dull May evening we met at **The Park** (opened in 1834) at the corner of New Zealand Road and Newbridge Lane, across from Vernon Park. Entering from Newbridge Lane, the first impression is of an unspoilt, traditional town pub. One crosses a boarded floor to the facing bar, serving good Holt's Bitter. Disparate elements such as carpeted areas, cream upper walls with brown painted Anaglypta up to dado height,



plate racks, possibly fake beams and a variety of interesting pictures, combine to create a comfortable atmosphere. At 7.30 it was busy with regular customers in the main lounge. There was a television but it was not too intrusive and there is a quiet room at the

rear with pool table and dartboard if one wishes to avoid the Karaoke on alternate Fridays. There is a small car park at the side.

A few minutes walk brought us to the **Midway**. There is a lounge with a bar on one side. Stairs at the rear lead down to a three metre wide paved terrace that extends the full width of the pub and overlooks the River Goyt and gives a view of part of Stockport's industrial past. There is also, at the side, a pleasant fenced garden area with bench tables. This pub does food but offers a choice of quite drinkable Speckled Hen and Boddingtons bitters.

We looked in on the Old King but in contrast to the two previous busy houses, at 8.30 on a Friday night it was nearly empty, possibly because it no longer serves real ale. We



moved swiftly to the now famous **Railway**. Unexceptional externally and internally in appearance it has never-the-less won many awards and serves a range of English draught beers as well as a number of foreign beers. The single 'L' shaped room round a central bar was of course full of customers. We tried the Silver Beret, Rossendale bitter, Wainwright, Pictish Black Diamond and Pennine Sunshine. All scored well.

The next stop was the **Queens**; fortunately almost next door as by now it was raining heavily. Here, there is one large room, pleasantly decorated, with red ceilings and comfortable upholstered seating, and a long bar against the rear wall. Seven of us sat in an area that is screened off with light wood lattice to about shoulder height. Numerous photographs of old Stockport and framed Robinsons posters add character. This is a clean, traditional Robinsons house, with well kept Unicorn and Hatters served by measured dispense in oversize glasses assuring full measure, so don't ask the landlady to top up your pint. A yard at the rear provides a refuge for smokers and is provided with seats and umbrellas.

Round the corner and across the Mersey is the **Tiviot**; a pleasant, unspoilt pub on Tiviot Dale. The licensee has provided hospitality here for 30 years and was the first unmarried licensee to tenant a Robinsons pub, assisted at the time by his mother. He served as a barman for twelve years in the same pub before his

father retired. There is a vault to the left and a lounge on the right at the front, just like sitting in someone's front room. There is excellent Robinsons Unicorn and acceptable Hatters Mild. Good value food is provided at lunchtimes.

The **Swan With Two Necks**, a multi room Robinsons pub on Princes Street with an impressive interior dating from 1920 was unfortunately closed at the time of our visit so the group moved on to the **Three Shires** in Great Underbank. One of the oldest, half timbered buildings in Stockport it has had many uses in the past and has for some years now been a wine bar. Although not a traditional pub, it does serve real cask conditioned ale. There was fairly good Moorhouses Pride of Pendle and very impressive Copper Dragon IPA that received equally good scores to the best beers that we had tasted all night.

Overall this was a superb stagger, combining a variety of excellent public houses and a very high standard of beer.

QUIET WOMAN AWARD

THE QUIET WOMAN in the Peak district village of Earl Sterndale is a delightful little pub, a real oasis in this beautiful Derbyshire village. The pub is opposite the village church and green, and the unusual sign is of a headless woman. This is a traditional pub which has resisted the trend of country pubs in the Peak and elsewhere to concentrate on food. The pub does not provide meals but local fresh eggs and traditional pork pies can be purchased from the bar.



Pub games are played with domino tables in the main bar and a separate games room. On one of the beams you will find a collection of original Marston's pump clips from long lost beers. Jennings' Dark Mild is served, along with Marston's Pedigree and Bitter. The pub has its own selection of bottle conditioned beer from the Leek brewery.

The pub has been in the Good Beer Guide for 31 years, and to celebrate this, the High Peak branch of CAMRA presented the pub with a certificate on Saturday 24th May. The picture shows Jen and Ken Mellor who have run this pub for 18 years, receiving the certificate from Geoff Williamson, High Peak branch Chairman.

MANCHESTER MATTERS IN BRIEF

WE MADE mention of new people at the **Seven Stars**, Beswick in last month's OT. They are relief managers Cath and Sam (who have come from the Church in Newton Heath), and they arrived in late April. Opening hours are now 12-2; 5-11 Mo-Th, and all day at weekends. The beers are Holt Mild and Bitter. They would welcome customers, both old and new.

A darts team has been formed, but if you'd like to join their pool team, get along there to help out. The city council are liaising with Holts (the owners of the pub) to consider alterations to the building to change the focus and entrance to that at the rear of the building. The thinking behind this is that with the hundreds of new dwellings to the rear of the house, and the opening of a new service road for those dwellings, the pub should be 'facing' those houses, rather than Ashton Old Road as it currently does.

"Greek" George at the **Circus** in the city centre is seeking a manager, we understand. This would be to run the pub on his behalf, as he eases himself into retirement. There would be no perceptible changes.



AS reported last month the Little Mill in Rowarth is back on form after its spring closure, although I have since seen the freehold advertised for sale at £850,000.

I walked there from Broadbottom station and found that the **Harewood Arms** in Broadbottom had Deuchars IPA and Marston's Pedigree on sale. For a break, I called into the **Moorfield Arms** also in the Rowarth area, on my way and was pleased that the commitment to real ale was still strong, in what is primarily a food pub, with Marston's Merrie Monk and Pedigree plus Jennings Cumberland Ale on sale on my visit. The Merrie Monk was very nice, but then I had walked for nearly two hours!

Stalybridge Ups and Downs

On my visit to Stalybridge this month, I found the **Organ** on Acres Lane to have no real ale. The **Old Hunters**, almost next door, had well kept Robinsons Unicorn and Hatters, while the nearby **Labour Club** had beers from Millstone and Moorhouses on the bar (they have an ongoing commitment to real ale) and the **Lounge Bar** had Thwaites Lancaster Bomber as its regular real ale. Across the road, **Wetherspoons** had as good a range of ales as ever, but the **Stop & Rest** was keg only.

Then I went to the **Pineapple**. I have been used to going in here over the years and having some decent Robinsons, but on this occasion I walked in, looked at the bar and set off to walk out again as strangely there was no real ale on show. The landlord shouted me back and asked if I needed any help. I said back to him, that I was wanting a pint of real ale from Robinsons but was puzzled that there was none in a Robinsons pub, something of a rarity. He said that it did not sell, the customers preferring keg beers. I did try to tell him that I used to get a perfectly good pint of the real stuff in there a year or two back and witnessed lots of activity on the real ale pumps and that perhaps he was not pushing it, but realised that he had no interest himself in real ale, so I left. A great shame I concluded. Was I wrong in thinking that Robinsons pubs exclusively all sold real ale?

I passed on to the **Britannia** up the road and sampled the Banks's Bitter which was perfectly acceptable, Banks's Dark Mild being the other beer on sale. The landlord apologised - he had sold out of the guests the previous night and one would be back on the next day.

Buxton Round-Up

My spin around Buxton and surrounding areas on our trip to present the **Quiet Woman** with a plaque for being in the Good Beer guide for 31 years, found that the **Spa Bar** on the market place had three beers on sale, all at a reasonable price (Hartington IPA & Storm Typhoon at £2.00 a pint and Kelham Island Pale Rider at £2.20). A regular outlet for Storm beers, the one I tried was in decent form.

At the **Sun**, across the road, the Jennings Yan T'yan Tethera was a little overpriced at £2.70 pint, with Burton Bitter, Banks's Mild, Jennings Cumberland Ale and Marston's Pedigree completing the line up. At the **Swan**, Storm beers are again very much in evidence, with Silk of Amnesia on alongside Tetley Bitter, Wells Bombardier and Greene King Old Speckled Hen. There is always a Storm beer on the bar here. Finally at the **White Lion** down on Spring Gardens, Taylor Landlord and Brysons 1606 were the guest beers with Greene King IPA also on sale.

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CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2008 We're in it!



THERE is generally an impression in the Marston's estate in the Peak District that there is a commitment by Marston's management to the products of the Jennings Brewery at Cockermonth. This is borne out by the availability of Jennings beers locally, not only at the **Shady Oak**, Fernilee where at least one Jennings beer is usually available and which is still badged as a Jennings house, but elsewhere in the estate.

As previously reported Jennings Dark Mild and Sneck Lifter are permanent beers on the bar at the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge, where other Jennings seasonal and special beers also feature, Yan T'yan Tehera being available in early June. This general view is supported by an article in *What Ales?* Spring 2008, the quarterly magazine of the West Cumbria Branch of CAMRA. This cites considerable investment, and an increase in brewing capacity over the last three years at Jennings. With this background hopefully the long term future really is secure for the Jennings Brewery and for Jennings beers in the Peak District.

June's *What's Brewing*, CAMRA's national monthly journal for its members, has an article on Enterprise Inns' intentions to become an REIT, Real Estate Investment Trust. Enterprise apparently qualifies because it has a tenanted estate. A REIT is a tax device to save paying Corporation Tax, though investors pay tax on dividend income. It would be nice to think that Enterprise could pass on some of these benefits to the pub trade, by eliminating punitive rent increases to tenants, and by charging licensees sensible prices for beer, so that customers could also see some financial benefit from the change in status. This is only a dream really, isn't it?

Wild for Mild, the Mild Challenge produced some good drinking in the High Peak CAMRA Branch area. I found consistently good mild in the pubs in the Whaley Bridge area. Whilst I did not manage to get to some of the other remoter pubs, I was impressed by the Robinson's Hatters at the **Andrew Arms** at Compstall. I also enjoyed the Marston's 'Classic Beer Styles' Dark Mild available at the **Royal Oak** in High Lane when I called. This was a much more convincing beer than the Porter which Marston's brewed earlier in the year in this series.

Delivering May's OT to the **Navigation** in Buxworth, I found Hornbeam California Dream, 4.4% available. This is a superb pale hoppy brew. The pump clip showed a San Francisco tram. You cannot settle for a quick half with this one, as a more prolonged tasting is recommended. An early May visit to the **White Horse** in Whaley Bridge found Young's Bitter in good form, as the guest beer alongside Greene King IPA and Chas. Wells Bombardier.

In Disley I understand that Robinson's **White Horse** changed hands at the end of May. Good Robinson's Hatters was available here during *Wild for Mild*. Hopefully any changes will maintain the beer quality.

Also in Disley, the **Ploughboy**, Punch, has changed hands and in early June was closed for refurbishment. The **Goyt Inn** in Whaley Bridge is not now expected to re-open until later in June, whilst the **Soldier Dick** at Furness Vale was due to reopen in mid-June. More on all of these as news becomes available.

And finally an early notice about the annual Beer Festival at the **Dog & Partridge** at Bridgemont. The usual good little festival will happen over the bank holiday week end at the end of August, from teatime on Friday 22 August until the beer sells out on Monday, 25 August. More than a dozen beers are expected outside in the marquee; with of course the usual range of beers in the main bar.



RESULTS & ROUND-UP

This year's "Wild for Mild" campaign was another great success, writes retiring Mild Campaign Coordinator, Mark McConachie. For those not in the know, this is a 'passport scheme' whereby participating pubs stamp a drinker's mild card when they have a

pint or half-pint of mild in that pub. Obtaining twelve or more different stamps gets that drinker a variety of prizes - free entry to Stockport festival, free pints of mild at this festival, a commemorative t-shirt, a special-edition polo shirt or a combination of the aforesaid prizes.

This year's campaign ran for four weeks from April 26th to May 23rd with a mammoth 84 pubs taking part from as far afield as Salford and the city centre in the north, to Glossop in the east and Whaley Bridge in the south. Final results show that just under ninety people returned their cards (many more will have started, but not completed a card for whatever reason). This is a slight rise on last year, with more entrants having visited more pubs and sampled more mild by dint of entering the "Wild for Mild" Super - 24 pub visits needed - nearly half of entrants took this option.

Five hardy souls managed to complete the challenge in its entirety by collecting stickers from all 84 pubs. These included local CAMRA member and mild stalwart Dave Meynell who decided to celebrate his 60th birthday (and getting his bus pass) by completing his 11th full mild challenge. He is pictured here enjoying his final pint of the Challenge in one of his favourite pubs, the **Cheadle Hulme** (Holts).



This is great news for mild sales and great news for the publicans who supported CAMRA in this important campaigning issue. On my travels I encountered many licensees who told me that interest in the campaign and mild were both up, additionally many people had travelled to pubs they had never visited before. Licensee Tim Flynn of the New Oxford said that the milds he'd put on during the event had once more sold very well, and that interest in mild at that time of year was high. All round a great effort and a huge success.

The winners of the favourite mild pub of the event (as voted for by the entrants) were, the **Crown, Heaton Lane** (for Stockport), and the **Cheshire Ring, Hyde** (for outwith Stockport). The presentation to the Cheshire Ring will be on Sunday, August 3rd. A good spread of votes was achieved by people casting votes for almost 40 different pubs. That says a lot about the overall high quality of both pubs and the well-kept beer. Mention should go to joint runners-up - **New Oxford, Salford; Shepherds Arms, Whaley Bridge; and Dog & Partridge, Bridgemont**. Interestingly, all of them outside Stockport. Well done all.

I would like to pass on my grateful thanks to all of the publicans who took part, all of the people who entered the 'challenge', and to all those in CAMRA who assisted in distributing / collecting the "Wild for Mild" material over the last six years I have managed the event. I wish every success to my successors, Chris and Karen Wainwright who are taking control for next year.



Jackson's Boat, Sale Water Park

Following a long cycle ride, what was needed was a pint, and **Jackson's Boat** was at the end of the route. Unusually a special event was underway - in association with Solid Earth, live music was presented in their plentiful grounds. Aided by good weather, the event was labelled a success, with at around 900, considerably more people than expected attending and imbibing some excellent ale and food. Around £3,000 was raised for the charity, so landlord Paul Riley has promised that we can expect a repeat some time in September.

Although trade is extremely weather dependant due to the river-side location, he hopes to provide a guest ale, alongside the regular Old Speckled Hen and Taylor's Landlord, for special events and is even considering bringing in real cider. Last year's poor weather had a particularly bad effect on his custom, as most are either walkers or cyclists, so special events are likely to continue to attract a wider range of clientele. The smoking ban and the wet didn't help, but Paul has plans to install more heaters and some permanent shelters for the winter.

Chorlton Round up

Amazingly, Chorlton-cum-Hardy now has an incredible 16 pubs and bars selling real ale, the latest edition being **The Nook**, nestled between The Bar and Abode. A slightly Moroccan theme presented a reasonable pint of Black Sheep Bitter. The **Trevor Arms** has just been involved with Ken Loach in his latest venture, with filming taking place in the lounge. The **Horse and Jockey** reports good ale sales and is considering expanding the range. **Argyle's** has had a really tasty fruity beer from Caledonian, and continues to show a good interest in real ale.

Timperley Tour & Cask in Stretford

A cycle round Timperley gave us a tasty pint of Tetley in the **Stonemasons**, decent Hydres but a very strange tasting seasonal offering from Wigan's Allgates at the **Quarrybank**, and top of the lot, the **Moss Trooper** with Double Swan from Elgood.

Further along the Bridgewater Canal towards Dunham Massey a fine selection presents itself. Coming off at the **Barn Owl**, a very refreshing pint of White Swan barely touched the sides. **Old No 3** was next and a pleasing Landlord, swiftly followed by one at the **Swan with Two Nicks**, T&H summer Pub of the Season. A short ride took us to the **Axe and Cleaver** and the added joy of seeing a wedding party using an old bus to take them round on a pub crawl! Great idea! Bit more of a ride and the **Old Market Tavern** appeared as if by magic and a fine pint of Mild.....

Despite the recent unfortunate closure of the **Old Cock**, cask ale is back in Stretford, and in a most unexpected location: Stretford Mall. Or to be more precise, one of the exterior units of the erstwhile Stretford Arndale, facing out onto Chester Road. Older readers (much older!) may just remember it as the Moulin Rouge. Now it's re-opened as the **Green Windmill**, with an accent on live music in the upstairs function room.

Downstairs is a small bar that's intended to have the feel of a traditional pub vault. And it currently offers Taylor's Landlord and Black Sheep Bitter on handpump. Such were the numbers Asking for Cask on the opening weekend that the owner, John Leape, is already thinking of replacing a keg lager font with a third handpump. They're not tied to any particular brewery so anything from Abbeydale's Absolution to York's Yorkshire Terrier could turn up.

Alongside the cask ales is a decent range of Belgian bottled beers. The pub is open from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m., Monday to Friday, and 11 to 11 at weekends. The upstairs bar stays open later when there's a band on.



The Cheshire Ring, Manchester Road, Hyde

BEARTOWN Brewery of Congleton is one of the new wave of micros who are slowly transforming themselves into fully fledged regional brewers by the purchase of a small tied estate. Three of their five pubs are in what might be loosely called the "Opening Times" area – the Beartown Tap in Congleton, the Navigation in Stockport and the Cheshire Ring in Hyde. The first two are currently in a state of flux, both being up for lease. However the Cheshire Ring, run by Wayne Taylor and Sarah Maguire sails on, offering good cheer to a growing crowd of appreciative regulars.



Externally this is no architectural gem but inside there are some reminders of the pub's 19th Century origins (when it went by the name of the Navigation) with several rooms and some fine corridor tiling. It's had an interesting history in recent years,

too. About 20 years ago it was one of the first multi-beer free houses, at one time having no less than 22 handpumps on the bar. Unfortunately this was a classic example of a pub offering too many beers with not enough customers to drink them. Quality took a dive and so did the pub. Years in the wilderness followed until its rescue by Beartown and since then it has hardly looked back.

At its heart this is a beer pub through and through. The Beartown range is always accompanied by guest beers sourced from breweries around the country that swap their beers with Beartown. Beers from Bushys (Isle of Man), Sharps (Cornwall) and Otley (Pontypridd) are among those that have appeared recently. There's also real cider from Westons and a small but interesting bottled range completes the picture.



So what about the food you ask, this is "Pub Grub" after all. Well, there's always something going on here. There are pub quizzes, music nights and even a monthly meeting of the "Sons of the Desert", the Laurel & Hardy appreciation society. One of the weekly events is curry day. This is on Thursdays from 2pm, when you can get a curry and a pint for a give away fiveer.

Now, Wayne's curries are pretty legendary but this was the first time I had given them some serious attention. There are always two available and this week's main attraction was the Caribbean goat curry with rice and peas. Cooking the goat on the bone added to the depth of flavour in this exceptional dish – potato and apricot along with Wayne's own blend of herbs and spices ("If I tell you what they are I'll have to kill you") made for a knock-out combination. The accompanying rice and peas (black eyed beans for the initiated) were also rich and tasty from the addition of coconut milk.

Also available was an Indian style chicken curry, served with nan and boiled rice, and I also managed a small taster of this. The rich spicy sauce, including whole garlic cloves, perfectly set off the chicken. Another winner. I accompanied these with two of the guest beers – the refreshing Bushys Castletown Bitter (3.5%) and the darker Piston Brew (4.5%). Definitely worth a trip – bus 201 & 205 from Manchester and 330 from Stockport will get you there, as will the Piccadilly-Rose Hill trains to Hyde Central.



As we reported last month, the Trafford & Hulme CAMRA Pub of the Season for Summer is the Swan With Two Nicks at Little Bollington. David Scott tells you why it won...

In case you've ever wondered, no, the name of this pub in Little Bollington, Cheshire, doesn't derive from some anatomical abnormality, but from the ancient practice of putting a nick in each side of the beak of the new seasons' cygnets to identify them as *not* being the exclusive property of the Crown. The marked birds belonged to the Vintners Company by Royal Gift in the 15th century. The Vintners were the oldest Trade Guild in London and their symbol is the Swan with Two Nicks.

Much of Little Bollington was destroyed by enemy action in December 1940, including some cotton weavers' cottages,, which were directly opposite the pub. Fortunately, the Swan survived.

The present licensee, since 2005, is Ann Amphlett, whose philosophy is to keep the Swan as a traditional old country inn (no loud music or fruit machines) serving a range of interesting cask ales. Apart from customers who are using the large restaurant at the rear of the pub, added on about 20 years ago, about 70% are walkers or cyclists popping in for a drink whilst visiting the nearby Dunham Massey Hall and Deer Park owned by the National Trust. Ann has a family tradition as a publican and over the last 15 years has been licensee of several other pubs in the area, including the Church Inn (Mobberley) and the Egerton Arms (Astbury).

The Pub of the Season award by the Trafford & Hulme Branch is in recognition of the range and quality of the beers, for which the Swan was voted into the current Good Beer Guide for the first time. In particular, the Branch wishes to recognise Ann's support for the nearby, newly-established Dunham Massey Brewery and its brewer John Costello. John's Dunham Dark Mild has become a real favourite at the Swan and is now a permanent feature along with usually two of his other brews (Big Tree Bitter, Stamford Bitter, Dunham Deer Beer, Dunham Light Mild) on a rotational basis. Also permanently available is the old favourite Swan with Two Nicks house beer (brewed by Coach House in Warrington) together with Timothy Taylor's Landlord and a stronger beer, typically Abbot Ale.

The Award will take place at the Swan on Wednesday 16th July at around 8-30 pm. All are welcome.

NEW FESTIVAL CHARITY

Stockport Beer and Cider Festival is looking for a new Festival Charity for the 2009-2011 Festivals. Through the sale of beer and other products and donations from our generous customers it is estimated that the chosen charity should expect an income of around £3K or more per festival.

Applicant charities must be registered with the Charities Commission, local to the area, provide a service to the people of Stockport and/or South Manchester and willing to have their name/logo used in festival publicity. Interested charities should write to Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Rd, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 5EG setting out the following:

- How you will be able to guarantee to fully staff your stall at the Festival for all open sessions of the Festival
- How you will be able to guarantee to be able to obtain 3 kilns of cask beer free of charge for you to sell on each of the three Festivals days
- What you can do to assist the Festival e.g. with publicity, first aiders etc
- Any new ideas or initiatives you may have
- Why the Festival Organising Committee should choose your charity

Stockport Supping

WITH CLIFTON BELL



THE Orchid Pub Group bought 290 pubs from the Punch Group for £571 million in April 2006. They have subsequently spent some £50 million refurbishing and "repositioning" many of these pubs.

Punch seem to have got themselves a reputation for being lukewarm about cask beers in general and the guest beer market in particular. However Orchid have a rather different approach and have signed up to the Direct Delivery Scheme run by SIBA, the organisation representing many of the country's micro brewers, and some regionals, too. Not only that but they seem quite happy to let many of their managers off the leash when it comes to using this scheme to source guest beers.

Why am I telling you this? Well, not only are there a sprinkling of these pubs across the *Opening Times* area, and not just in Stockport, but they are showing a growing interest in cask beers.

The **Gardeners Arms** in Offerton is an Orchid pub, although currently offering just Tetley Bitter on handpump. The other three in Stockport are being a little more adventurous however. We have already reported on the transformation of the **Carousel** in Reddish with its changing guest beers. Ian Wardle at the **Plough** in Heaton Moor works closely with Howard Town Brewery of Glossop to source his house beer and some specials, notably one to mark Stockport County's promotion.

Now Gary Willis at the **Bulls Head** in Hazel Grove has teamed up with Denton's Hornbeam Brewery to commission a series of



house beers, all featuring a play on the pub's name. So you can expect to see the likes of Bull's Head, Bull's Best, Bull & Ox, Bulls Horn and more on two

of the pub's handpumps. Gary tells me that cask sales are increasingly healthy in the pub and he hopes to increase the number of cask beer from three to five. Pictured are Gary (right), his partner Claire and Hornbeam's Kevin Rothwell.

THE pub scene in Edgeley is not an easy one, but licensee Sue Forrester of the **Greyhound** is upbeat about things. She has been there four years now and in that time has managed to ensure a cask beer is on the bar every week. She chooses a different beer every fortnight from the Punch list; when OT called this was Black Sheep bitter, and in good form. Trade is steady but peaks on football and rugby days. Then, sales of the cask beer increase as the supporters seem to favour cask.

By contrast the **Hollywood**, while still open is up for let. Sadly it's sold no real ale for some years. The **Bow Garrett** on Higher Brinkway, has been closed for about a month now. Although it also sold no cask, the pub was well maintained, and well-run.

UP on Heaton Moor, the **Crown** was tastefully redecorated last month. The colour scheme is much lighter now, whilst maintaining that traditional pub look. Also maintained are the five cask beers on offer - Tetley Dark Mild; Boddies; plus three guest beers along the lines of Deuchars, Bombardier and such.

The pub at the **Village** in Cheadle is now renamed as the **'Victory'** with Greene King IPA, Spitfire and Adnams Broadside all on handpump. The **Cheadle Royal** meanwhile is now down to one cask ale - Greene King Abbott. Finally the **Weavers** in Cheadle village is closed, boarded and up for sale.

NEWBIES SCOOP TOP AWARDS

NEWCOMERS to the brewing scene scooped the honours in the Beer of the Festival competition at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Not only that but all three winning beers were essentially one-offs, unlikely to be seen in cask again.



Top of the tree with the overall Beer of the Festival Award is **Marble Brewery** with their Festival Special, sponsored by Ye Olde Woolpack. This superbly hoppy 4.2% ABV beer had a moreish dry finish. While Marble Brewery have of course been around for over 10 years now, this beer was the first beer

devised and brewed by Warren McCoubrey, the newest member of the brewing team. Warren has in fact now left the brewery to run the New Continental, a multi-beer free house due to open shortly in Preston. The date for this presentation has yet to be decided - look out for it in future issues of *Opening Times*.



Runner-up was **Cellar Rat Brewing Co's** Rosey Rat, another 4.2% hoppy beer, infused with rosemary. Cellar Rat beers are very new to the local scene and have a strong connection with the Crown on Heaton Lane, Stockport. As we went to press the latest beer Rat A***ed, a very hoppy IPA at 9% ABV

(yes, that's nine per cent) was maturing at the brewery where these beers are made. The award was due to be presented on 5th July at the Crown when a further new Cellar Rat beer was promised - a 4.8% ABV smoked vanilla mild!

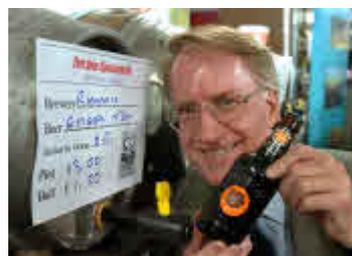
Third place was won by another speciality beer, Chocolate Cherry Mild (3.8%) from **Dunham Massey Brewery**. John Costello's brewery has only been in operation since last October and this will be his first CAMRA award.

The beer which managed to combine all the flavours without being sickly sweet was originally destined for the bottle only but we managed to persuade John to let us have a couple of casks. Since the success at the festival the beer has also appeared in a couple of local free houses. The award is due to be presented on 30 August.



New Beer from Robinsons Makes Debut

A brand new beer from Robinsons made its public debut at the beer festival. Releasing a one-off cask of the new brew was a coup for the festival, and based on sales a winner with festival goers.



The 22nd Stockport Beer and Cider Festival was the chosen venue for Robbies to give local drinkers an early taste of their Ginger Tom before it goes on sale

to the public. Ahead of the festival, Ginger Tom had already proved its credentials by beating off around 100 other beers to win a place in the Sainsbury's Beer Challenge.

The beer is a combination of Robinson's award winning Old Tom and Fentiman's Ginger Beer, which uses a traditional recipe dating back to 1900. "Releasing our one and only cask of Ginger Tom as a draught beer at the festival has provided some very encouraging feedback and confidence is now high as to how future sales will perform. By making it through to the final 15 with Sainsbury's we have already secured an order for 40,000 bottles. Ultimate victory in their Beer Challenge would result in a permanent listing in more than 300 stores and would be very good news for everybody at the brewery," Head Brewer Chris Hellin (pictured above) told *Opening Times*.



Brewery NEWS...

New Micro Passes Ancient Test

In a ceremony dating back 725 years, the beer brewed by John Costello of the newly-established **Dunham Massey Brewery** was declared as "...good and wholesome for men's bodies..." by the official Ale Taster (Alan Jackson) of the ancient Court Leet of Altrincham.

Traditionally, amongst the administrative duties of the Court Leet, was the responsibility for ensuring the quality of ale brewed for sale in Altrincham. Punishment meted out to an offending Ale House keeper for bad or weak ale or short measure was severe, including a spell in the stocks with bad ale poured over him or being forced to drink a large amount of the condemned ale, thus the saying "drunk till he bust". Deservedly, John received his certificate of approval from the Provost of the Court Leet.



The official Ale Taster of the ancient Court Leet of Altrincham sampling a brew from the new Dunham Massey Brewery

Dunham Massey has also produced a new cask beer – Little Bollington Bitter (3.7%) is an excellent light hoppy summer beer. Look out for it.

Elsewhere around the region, the local micros continue to supply characterful and tasty beers:

Bazens' – the July special in the Salford Series is Old Punch Ale (4.3%). This commemorates a beer of the same name brewed by the old Salford firm of Walker & Homfrays to mark the Bicentenary of the Salford Charter in 1931. Bazens' beers are on particularly good form at the moment – Pacific has been very enjoyable of late.

Shedded – Salford's newest brewer launched a test brew at the last New Oxford beer festival with Right Shed Fred, a quaffable 4% bitter. The brewer tells us that the current brew length is just 9 gallons and yes, the brewery really is in a garden shed.



More test brews are in the pipeline. A stout recipe has already been devised. Speaking of which....

Millstone Brewery is still going full tilt. Look for the latest in the Pubs Series, Gate Hangs Well (4.1%) a pale beer brewed with Centennial hops. This is selling very well. *Opening Times* also understands that the long awaited Millstone Stout may finally appear later this year. About time too!

Hornbeam Brewery – look out for Owd Peg (4.1%), a fruity and very hoppy beer using Galena hops for bittering and Susan hops for aroma. Also out this month is Champagne Ale (4%-ish) using the highly aromatic Nelson Sauvin hops. Should be a cracker.

Phoenix – the 3.8% Hopsack is selling extremely well as is Midsummer Madness (4.5%). White Tornado is also a beer to look out for. Their characteristic clean hoppy bitterness makes Phoenix beers superb summer drinks.



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Wadworth & Co Ltd, Northgate Brewery, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 1JW.
www.wadworth.co.uk



Hornbeam Brewery 1st Anniversary

Hornbeam Brewery would like to say an enormous "thank-you" for all the support and encouragement received during our first year as independent brewers

Look out for the new monthly beers

- Owd Peg 4.2% ABV available - July
- Champagne Ale 4.0% ABV available - August

Recently launched "Party Home Bar" delivered in either firkin (9 gallon) or pin (4.5 gallon) with a genuine beer engine

Brewing Awards

- Dark Domination 6% ABV **Champion Beer of Leeds 2008** Available Sept till Dec
- Malt Mountain Mild 3.6% ABV **Champion Beer of Rugby 2008** Available April till June

Hornbeam Brewery, Unit 1-1C Grey Street, Denton M34 3RU
Tel 0161 340 5627 e-mail Kevin@hornbeambrewery.com



Here is our monthly round-up of what's happening in the local CAMRA branches. Members of all branches are of course very welcome to attend each others' events.

The **Stockport & South Manchester** branch covers Stockport Borough apart from Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley and Marple, plus that part of Manchester from the River Medlock in the north to the M56/Princess Parkway in the south-west. *Branch Contact – Pete Farrand 07786 283990*

Thursday 10th July – Branch Meeting: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. **Guest Speaker – Mike Benner CAMRA Chief Executive.** Starts 8.00pm

Friday 18th – Stagger: Shaw Heath, Cale Green and Higher Hillgate. Meet 7.30 Armoury, Shaw Heath; 8.30 Adswood Hotel, Adswood Lane West.

Saturday 19th – Trip to Ashover Brewery. Depart 10am Crown, Heaton Lane. Book with Dave Platt or Margaret O'Brien on 0161 256 1166.

Thursday 24th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Florist, Shaw Heath, Stockport. From 8pm.

Sunday 3rd August – Mild Champion presentation to Cheshire Ring, Hyde. From 2pm.

The **High Peak & North East Cheshire** Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple, Tameside and Derbyshire from Glossop to Buxton. *Branch Contact – Tom Lord 0161 427 7099*

Monday 14th – Branch Meeting: Royal Hotel, Hayfield. Starts 8.30pm.

The **Trafford & Hulme** Branch covers the Borough of Trafford, Manchester West of the M56/Princess Parkway and a large part of the City Centre. *Branch Contact – John Ison 0161 962 7976. Branch website: www.thcamra.org.uk*

Friday 11th / Saturday 12th – Chorlton Beer Festival, St Clements Church, Chorlton.

Thursday 16th – Pub of the Season presentation to Swan With Two Nicks, Little Bollington. From 8.30pm.

Saturday 26th – Day out in Bury with members of Rochdale, Oldham & Bury Branch. Details nearer the time from contact.

Saturday 31st – Social at Jacksons Boat. From 8pm.

Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the **Macclesfield & East Cheshire** Branch covers a wide area from Knutsford to Congleton. *Branch Contact – Tony Icke 01625861833*

Monday 7th – Campaigning Meeting: Plough, Eaton. Starts 8pm.

Monday 21st – Social: Freemasons and Railway, Handforth. Starts 8pm.

The **North Manchester** Branch covers The Northern Quarter and North East Manchester plus the City of Salford. *Branch Contact – Dave Hallows 07983 944992. davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk*

Wednesday 9th - Branch Pub of the Year Presentation: New Oxford, Bexley Sq, Salford. From 8pm.

Wednesday 16th - Branch Meeting: New Oxford, Bexley Sq, Salford. Starts 8pm.

Wednesday 23rd - Social: Duke of Wellington, Weardale Rd, Blackley. Starts 8pm.

Wednesday 30th - N4 City Crawl: Crown & Kettle, Oldham Rd, 7.30, Bar Fringe, Swan St, 8pm (call in at Burton Arms), Smithfield, 9pm.

It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale



Join CAMRA Today..

Just fill in the form below and send, with a cheque (payable to CAMRA Ltd) or for Three Months free membership (for those renewing or joining by Direct Debit) complete the Direct Debit Form. All forms should be addressed to: **Mark McConachie, CAMRA Membership, 39 Fox Street, Edgeley, Stockport. Tel 0161 429 9356.** Alternatively you can join online at www.camra.org.uk.



Title Surname Forename(s) Date of Birth

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Partner Title Surname Forename(s) Date of Birth

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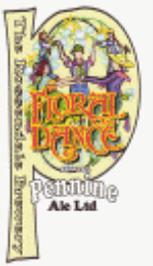
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- If an error is made by CAMRA or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.
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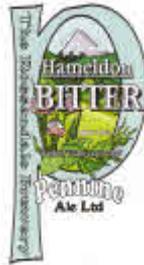
Pennine Ale Ltd

THE ROSSENDALE BREWERY

All of our beers will soon be available to the Free Trade.
Landlords please try them at one of our pubs below: -



The Railway,
1, Avenue Street,
Portwood,
Stockport
0161 429 6062



The Sportsman,
57, Mottram Road,
Hyde,
Cheshire
0161 368 5000



The Griffin Inn
(Site of our Rosendale Brewery),
84-86, Hud Rake,
Haslingden,
Lancashire
01706 21 40 21

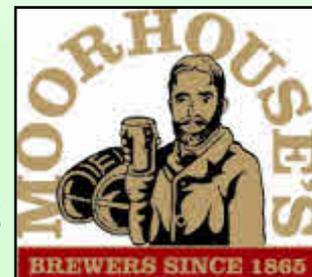
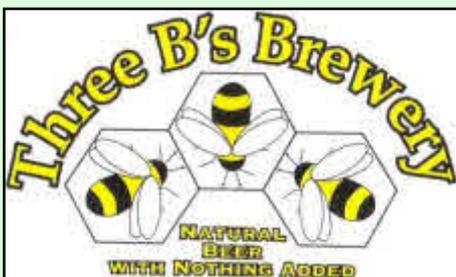


Contact Geoff Oliver
01706 21 40 21



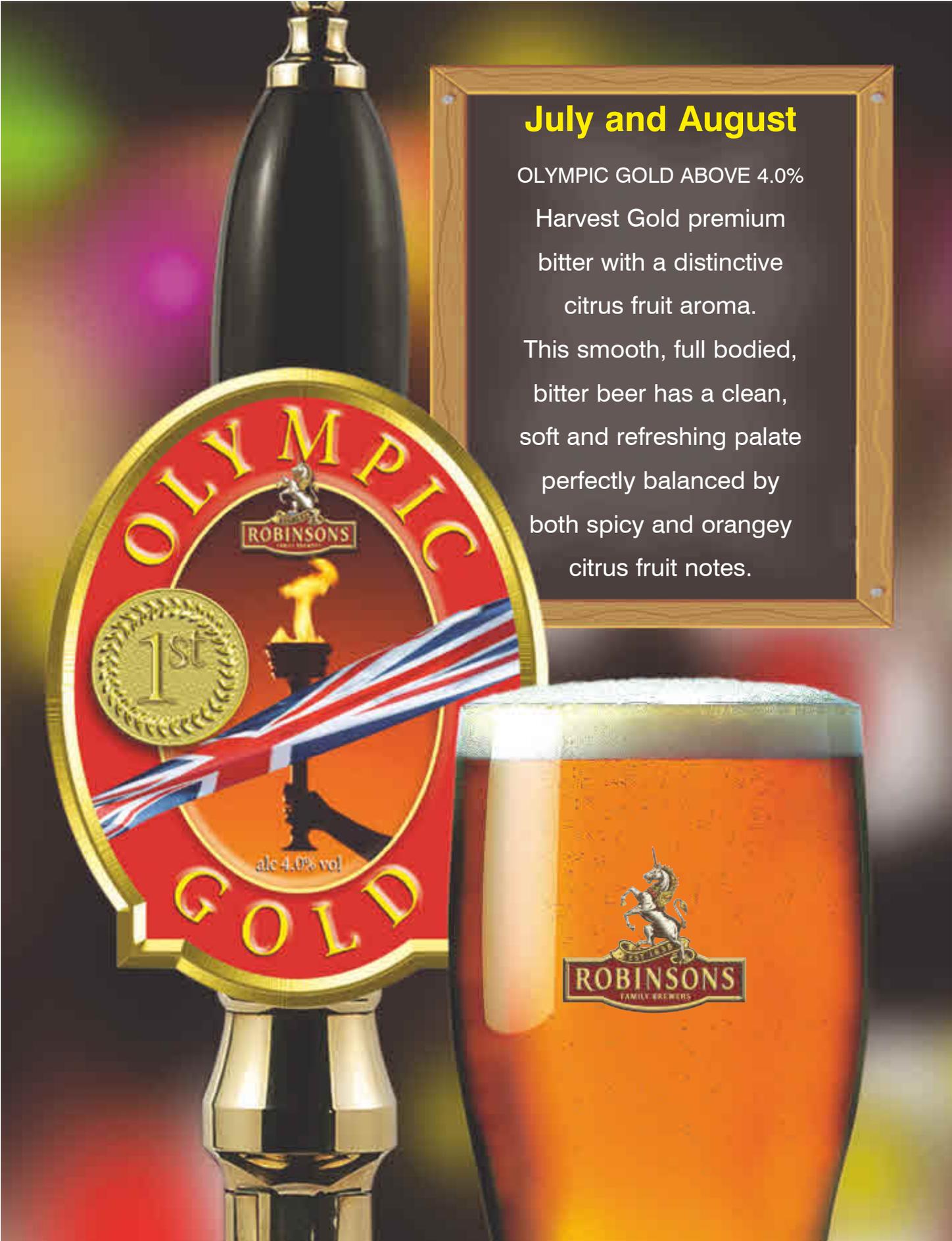
wetherspoon

Supporting local breweries
throughout the North West



a wider selection available at your local

Wetherspoon



July and August

OLYMPIC GOLD ABOVE 4.0%

Harvest Gold premium bitter with a distinctive citrus fruit aroma.

This smooth, full bodied, bitter beer has a clean, soft and refreshing palate perfectly balanced by both spicy and orangey citrus fruit notes.