

February 2010

**Opening**
TIMES

Opening
THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

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

Local Pub of the Year 2010

The Railway, Wellington Road North – page 13



Crowds flock to National Winter Ales Festival – see page 11



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The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for February is the Old Star on Cheadle High Street. Stuart Ballantyne is a longstanding fan of the pub and explains why it won.



LONG-TIME readers of *Opening Times* may feel a sense of déjà vu here. The Old Star was a previous Pub of the Month winner (in October 2003) and the lucky recipients were Mary Hughes and Tony Nastari, who will also be picking up the award this time. However a lot has happened in the intervening years.

For a start Mary and Tony left the pub, and while they successfully ran a number of other Hydes houses, the fortunes of the Old Star were rather more mixed.

A number of short-term licensees saw the pub's trade decline markedly – so much so that experienced trouble shooters were needed to restore the pub's fortunes. Welcome back Tony and Mary!

It was time to reunite the Star with its loyal customers by getting all the basics right. Tony quickly got to work on the beer, restoring the quality of the Hydes Light and Bitter to award-winning competence, and as a result cask beer volumes have almost doubled. Plans are in hand to extend the range, providing trade will support it.

Mary reintroduced pub food, with a new menu offering quality food at good prices. Two meals for £5 are understandably popular, and the very successful pensioners' Christmas party has been reintroduced. In addition the Old Star features regular darts and quiz nights, plus a monthly philosophy night! Full 50-seat coaches regularly run to the races at Carlisle, Worcester and Ludlow. If you are getting the picture of a great community local then you are not far off the mark.

In short the Old Star has been restored as a genuine and friendly community local run by dedicated licensees who care about the quality of their beer and food, both served in a relaxing atmosphere. I don't think there is any more to say.

This well deserved award will be presented on Thursday 25 February from around 8pm. Arrive early to make sure you get a seat.



The Pub of the Month award is sponsored by Stephenson's, a local family firm that has been supplying the local pub and catering trade for over 140 years. Check out their advert on this page.

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Opening Times - Comment

Congratulations, thanks and deep respect to all those who organised and staffed this year's National Winter Ales Festival – notably organiser Graham Donning and his deputy Peter Alexander who drove the project through in the face of some not inconsiderable scepticism.

The move to the Sheridan Suite, about a mile and a half from the City Centre, always carried a certain amount of risk as to how many people would make the journey there. Happily those risks proved entirely unfounded as a record crowd made the short journey to Miles Platting to attend what was arguably the best event yet. The venue, beer range and all round quality of the event have attracted many plaudits. Hopefully this resounding success will put paid once and for all to any talk of moving the event away from Manchester. See you all there in 2011.

Congratulations too to Ray and Pam Ford of the Railway in Heaton Norris who have scooped this year's Pub of the Year Award from Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA. Over the coming months we will also be featuring the winning pubs from the other CAMRA branches that contribute to *Opening Times*.

Opening Times - Information

Opening Times is produced by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Additional material is supplied by the High Peak & NE Cheshire, Trafford & Hulme, North Manchester and Macclesfield & E Cheshire Branches. The views expressed are not necessarily those of CAMRA either locally or nationally. 7,000 copies a month are printed by Phil Powell Printing of Failsworth. All articles copyright CAMRA unless otherwise stated.

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Copy Date for the March issue is Friday 19 February

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Opening Times 306 - Contents

Pub of the Month	3	Stockport Pub of the Year	13
Stagger	7	CAMRA Awards Gallery	15
High Peak Pub News	8	Stockport Supping	16
Peak Practice	9	Manchester Matters	17
Brewery News	11	T&H Pub of the Season	17
Winter Ales Festival	11	Woods and Trees	19
Curmudgeon	12	CAMRA Calling	22

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2002

Navy



2002

Wobbly Bob

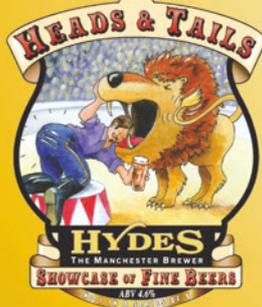


2004

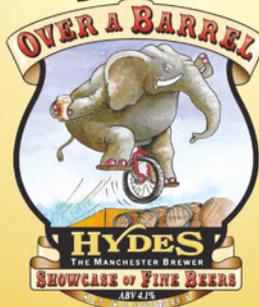
Wobbly Bob

A SHOWCASE OF FINE BEERS

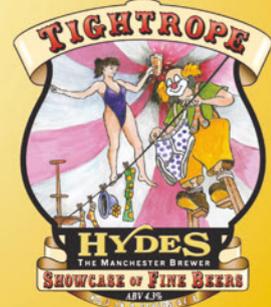
Another Great Range of Craft Ales for 2010



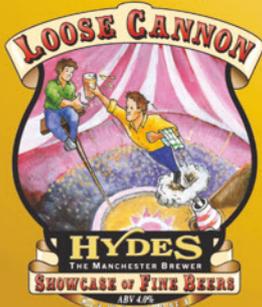
Jan - Feb abv 4.6%



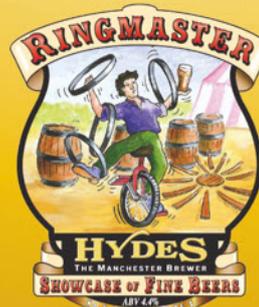
March - April abv 4.1%



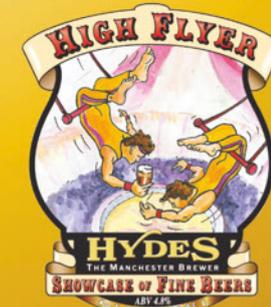
May - June abv 4.3%



July - August abv 4.0%



Sept - Oct abv 4.4%



Nov - Dec abv 4.8%

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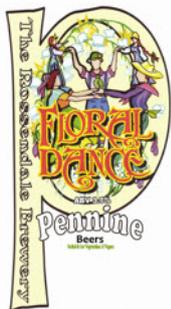
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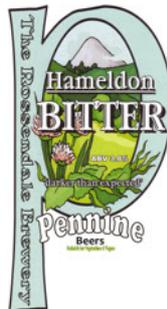


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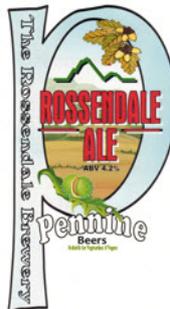
Floral Dance
3.6%

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Hameldon Bitter
3.8%

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Rossendale Ale
4.2%

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Railway Sleeper
4.2%

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Pitch Porter
5%

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Sunshine
5.3%

A hoppy and bitter golden beer with a citrus character. The lingering finish is dry and spicy.

***Our ales can all be sampled at The Griffin, Haslingden;
The Railway, Portwood Stockport or The Sportsman, Hyde.***



Stagger

A famous Stagger up one of Stockport's most historic thoroughfares often yields thin pickings but several real highlights remain, finds *John Clarke*.

HILLGATE was once the main road and coaching route through Stockport. In the 19th Century it was at the heart of an industrial and residential area. Not surprisingly it was lined with pubs. Perhaps more surprisingly a fair few remain, despite several losses in recent years. Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA have staged the Hillgate Stagger every year since about 1975 but rarely is this escapade written up. This year was different.

Starting point was on Underbank at the **Queens Head**, or Turners Vaults as it is popularly known. Sam Smiths spent a lot of money on an extensive refurbishment-cum-rebuild well over 20 years ago and it remains a historic gem. The one cask beer is Old Brewery Bitter and at £1.29 a pint the pub was unsurprisingly busy with a lively crowd at 7.30pm. The beer wasn't at all bad – "perfectly fine" was one verdict. We pressed on.



The next pub, **Winters**, wasn't around in 1975. Then it was a jewellery shop but has since been turned into a pub by Manchester brewers Joseph Holt. Many historic features were retained, not least the impressive clock on the outside wall. New licensees had recently taken over and I have to say the quality of the Holts Bitter (the sole cask beer on the night) was some of the best I have had there for a long time. The pub and its staff were notably friendly, too – something that's not always been my experience here.

Next one up was the **Spread Eagle** but this has been turned into an office by Robinsons. So it was across the road to the **Royal Oak** on High Street. Last year I had some terrible beer at this pub. This year it was a bit better but still wouldn't win any prizes – come on Robbies this place is just across the road from the brewery. The pub itself was pleasant enough though, albeit with some very loud music dominating the back room.

The **Bishop Blaize**, permanently up for sale these days, now offers no cask beer so it was on to the **Red Bull**. This rambling, characterful pub has had a lot of money spent on it by Robinsons and it must now be one of their flagship outlets. The work involved moving the bar back to get rid of a difficult bottleneck at the entrance and, more significantly, an extension into a neighbouring cottage. This has all been done without sacrificing the traditional feel of the place. It was packed and buzzing but the notably efficient service meant we weren't



waiting long to sample the Hatters, Unicorn, Dizzy Blond or Mr Scrooge. They were all good, with perhaps the Hatters being the least well regarded of the four.

Then it was off to the **Waterloo** on Waterloo Road. Another busy, warm and comfortable pub dominated not by music but the noise of conversation. A fine local. Another Robinsons house so more Hatters and Unicorn and both on fine form.

Back to Hillgate and the former **Black Lion** has been turned into offices so it was across the road to the **Sun & Castle**. This used to be a Tetley pub but now it's another Holts house. A good crowd in here and a good atmosphere, too, with a warm and welcoming feel.



The licensees are obviously trying hard to put lots on and get the crowds in. Just the bitter on cask and comfortably above average.

There follows a clutch of lost pubs. The **Golden Lion** and the **Pack Horse** have been converted to other use. The **Crown** ("Corner Cupboard") is still with us but the hand pumps sit unused on the bar.

So it was the **Star & Garter** where a darts tournament was underway. The pub was busy with a mixed crowd and again it's clear that the licensees are trying hard to get the punters in.

Sadly, it was let down by the beer – neither the Hatters nor the Unicorn were up to much at all and turned out to be the worst beer of the night by some margin.

The worst beer of the night was traditionally had in the next, and now long-closed, pub. This was the **Rams Head** which has since seen various uses including a lap dance club and Indian restaurant.

Robinson's **Flying Dutchman** was next. Like many of the others this is a pub I visit once a year on this particular night and it is usually very busy but not tonight – although it did begin to fill up as we left. Until Robbies rebuilt it many years ago it was a right old dump as well. Now it's modern and serviceable. The sole cask beer, Unicorn on electric pump, was pretty good – in fact it was not only about the best beer I have had in this pub, but also some of the best of the night.



Across the road the **Royal Mortar** is shut so the next stop was the **Bowling Green** on Charles Street. A good honest boozier this, with a good local crowd in obviously having a great time. This is a pub that knows its customers and brings them in. The cask offering here is Black Sheep Bitter, and was notably well-conditioned and full flavoured. We were finishing on a high as this was also one of the top beers of a long night. The penultimate pub, the **Wheatsheaf** didn't trouble us as no cask beer is sold.

And so it was to the **Blossoms** on Buxton Road (as the A6 becomes at this point). This is just a fantastic multi-roomed pub that has won an armful of awards. Robinson's again, with the hand pumped Hatters and Unicorn accompanied by a cask of Old Tom on the bar. All three were on top form – the Old Tom dangerously so, given what had gone before.



And that was that for another year. A mixed collection of pubs. Of course this is just a snapshot of what we found on this particular night so both the pubs and the beer could be quite different at another time. Having said that the beer was overall amongst the best the Hillgate Stagger has produced for some years. With the increasing need for pubs to focus on quality, this is a welcome sign.



High Peak

PUB NEWS

WITH FRANK WOOD

Frank Wood takes a back seat this month, handing over to Alf Clark who has discovered a hidden gem...Chalkers Snooker Club in New Mills.

QUITE often we forget that there are a number of private members clubs out there that provide their members with not only some first class facilities (which includes nine snooker and pool tables, darts, sky sports) but also an excellent choice of well-kept cask beers.

By their very nature we too often fall into the trap of thinking that 'club' equals 'keg'. That is certainly not the case here as the club refuses point blank to stock keg opting instead for real ales.



So in the Newtown area of New Mills there is a real hidden gem of a club that prides itself in serving up some excellent cask beers. Chalkers Snooker Club, located within Redmoor Mill, just off the A6 Buxton Road and close to Newtown Railway station has been on

the scene for some 12 years.

It has four hand pumps with two regular offerings, Theakston's Bitter and Dark Mild, plus a regularly changing guest beer. Depending upon when you visit the selection includes, amongst others, Marston's Pedigree, Courage Directors, Yorkshire Terrier and Timothy Taylor's Landlord.

On the evening of my visit the owner Allan Robinson was serving an excellent pint of Courage Directors as his guest beer, replaced later in the evening by Timothy Taylor's Landlord, also in fine form. His Theakston's was also in tiptop condition, especially the dark mild.



The visit coincided with the annual Sett Valley Quiz League Finals Night and the club was full of quizzers from almost twenty pubs in the area. They were clearly having a fantastic night out enjoying the selection of beers on offer.

Although it is a private members club Allan extends to all CAMRA members an open invitation to visit and enjoy his beers. The Club is open seven days a week from midday until midnight. It is also available for a whole host of functions or events that can be housed within the large party room.

Chalkers Snooker Club, Redmoor Mill, Buxton Road, Newtown, New Mills, SK22 3JT (Tel: 01663 742336)

WHEN Paul Linskey called in for a pint in his local five years ago, he could not have known that it would lead to romance and the start of a business at the **Hunters** public house, Chisworth. That night he met Yvonne Jaundrell, and now the couple have taken on the tenancy of the Hunters and started their new life and business together.

On the night of their first meeting Yvonne was in fact working at a pub in High Lane when Paul called in for his pint, and since then she has built a wealth of experience in the trade. For his part, Paul had been in the trade before, and so taking on the Hunters and moving in together for the first time is now their perfect new start.

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PEAK Practice



The next beer festival in Chinley is eagerly anticipated by Robin Wignall who tells you how to get there and back...

THE Winter Festival at the **Old Hall** at Whitehough, Chinley, is all set for 26, 27, 28, February, from 12.00 till late each day. A warm welcome can be expected with friendly staff ready for a good attendance. Over 2,500 folk attended the September event. Ales from near and far, especially winter seasonal brews are expected. Look out for a good choice of sumptuous ciders, and mulled wine will also help to wash down homemade winter stews. Entertainment will see a variety of folk music over the weekend.

Getting there is manageable by public transport. Trains from Manchester and the east side of Stockport run roughly hourly, and there are one or two fast trains calling at Stockport and then Chinley in the evening rush hour. Trains to Whaley Bridge run hourly throughout the day, and should connect with the 189/190 bus up to teatime. The Bowers bus links Whaley Bridge, Chinley, Chapel en le Frith and Buxton. It is an hourly service during the day on Saturday till teatime. On Friday an hourly service becomes less regular in mid-afternoon. There is no Sunday service for this bus.

It is but a short walk to the Old Hall from Chinley Station, bus and train stops. The effort will be well worth while.

Beer at the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge in December included Wychwood Bah Humbug 4.8% and Brakspear Oh Be Joyful 4.8%, both from the brewery at Whitney. Marston's have provided a pump clip update on the Jennings situation. Some beers are being brewed elsewhere whilst Jennings brewery is brought back into production. In the meantime 10p from every pint sold of beer badged as Jennings, is being donated to the Cumbria flood relief fund.

My comments about pubs showing their strength when dealing with pre-booked meals for big groups also apply to the **Shady Oak** at Fernilee. The whole experience can be recommended. So can the beers from the various breweries in the Marston's empire.

As previously mentioned the **Navigation** at Buxworth changed hands at the end of November. Roger Cockerell and Janet Flynn have bought the lease. Some changes have to be made to bring parts of the premises into the 21st century, but the aim is to make a sympathetic restoration of this heritage canal side pub. A new food menu will be developed in a revamped kitchen, and in time breakfasts, all day food, bar snacks and increased restaurant use are all on the agenda. Beer is a work in progress with a revamp of the cellar a priority. Some bar remodelling can be expected. Initial indications are that ale drinkers can expect beer from Robinson's and local microbreweries, including Beartown and Howard Town. In the last six years I have been pleased with the range and quality of beers at the Navigation, but I have been promised an improvement! More as this story unfolds.

Young's Special has been available locally again. I found a very good pint at the **Dog & Partridge** at Bridgemont and I have had very good reports from the **White Hart** in Whaley Bridge. I understand that Cask Marque accreditation has been gained at the White Hart. Well done to all concerned.

Another snippet of brewing history has come to light through an old photo of the New Inn in Whaley Bridge. Though the pub is now closed and trades as an antique business, it was at one time a purveyor of ales from the North Cheshire Brewery. This brewery was in Macclesfield, and was taken over by neighbour Lonsdale and Adshead in 1928. This in turn went to Ind Coope in 1950 and the premises to Whitbread in 1967. The big names, even though they are themselves no more, of course bring the demise of local interests. The present rise of local microbreweries gives us much to celebrate.

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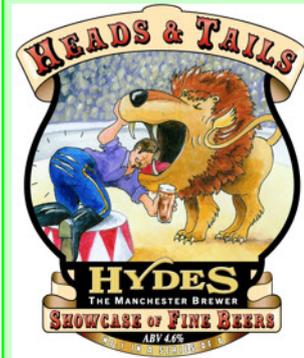
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Brewery NEWS

Hydes Craft Ales 2010

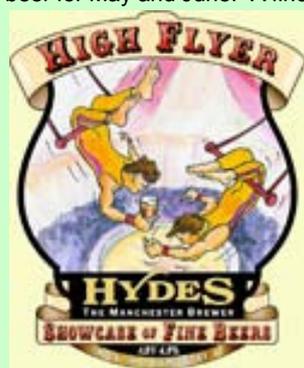
HYDES have announced their 2010 craft ale programme which this year will have a circus theme. The named ales are all produced under the headline 'A Showcase of Fine Beers from Hydes'. Each has an amusing, individually illustrated pump clip depicting a circus act including the trapeze, a tightrope walker, the ringmaster and the human cannonball, not to mention a performing elephant.



The first of these beers, Heads & Tails (4.6%) is out now. Brewed with Tipple Pale Ale and Crystal malts, and using Fuggle and Challenger hops, the beer is described as "a highly quaffable flavoursome ale, chestnut brown with a silky smooth finish".

For March and April the beer will be Over A Barrel (4.1%). Again with the same malt and hop combination as Heads & Tails, but this time also dry hopped with Fuggles this promises to be an "amber Spring beer (with) a thumping great hoppy flavour, heavy on the hops."

The 4.3% ABV Tightrope is the beer for May and June. "A fine light copper beer, with just a very subtle floral overtone" this is made with Tipple Pale Ale malt with Fuggle and Kent Golding hops, with dry hopping with Styrian Goldings.



The beer for July and August is Loose Cannon (4%), a light and refreshing beer using Tipple Pale Ale malt and three hop varieties – Styrian Goldings, Liberty and Whitbread Goldings with additional dry hopping with Liberty hops.

September and October sees the autumnal Ringmaster (4.4%), a "mellow and full flavoured ale with a rich chestnut colour". Pale ale and Cara malts are used here along with Fuggle and Golding hops. The last beer in the programme is usually dark and interesting and so it is this year. High Flyer (4.8%) uses pale ale malt, chocolate malt, black malt and roast barley. This will be an almost black beer with coffee, toffee and liquorice on the palate.

Copper Dragon News

Copper Dragon beers from Skipton are almost ubiquitous in the free trade on this side of the Pennines. They are good beers too, so there was concern when rumours began circulating about the financial health of the brewery before Christmas.

The problems stemmed from the loss making pub company which led to a very unsympathetic bank putting Copper Dragon itself into administration just before Christmas. The good news is that owner Steve Taylor has bought his company out of administration, acquiring in the process the 25% of the shares he didn't already own. He's saved six of the pubs, too. The end result – all systems go and business as usual. And sighs of relief all round.



National Winter Ales Festival – Round-up and Results



WELL – would they or wouldn't they? Moving the National Winter Ales Festival from the well-placed New Century Hall to the Sheridan Suite, about a mile and a half from the City Centre was always something of a gamble. So would the people come?

Oh yes. Thousands of them – so much so that attendance broke last year's record and came early evening Saturday a sell-out was on the cards. Not only that but the feedback from those who went has been hugely positive. Typical was the following from Alan Styles who journeyed all the way from Kent:

Firstly, well done Manchester CAMRA! I think you got it right in 2010? Excellent. Fabulous. Superb. Top class. A much improved venue, easy bus ride from Piccadilly. Well laid out and with four separate bars, never difficult getting served.

Dropping by late Saturday afternoon, *Opening Times* caught up with organiser Graham Donning and his deputy Peter Alexander (pictures right and left aside). Tired but elated Graham was full of praise for the hardworking staff: "All I can say is a big 'thank you' to all those CAMRA members who gave up their free time to make this event such a huge success. Not only have many local members risen to the challenge but we have had volunteers from all over the country. We really are now on the map as a major national event and look forward to even bigger and better festivals here in Manchester in the coming years".



The highlight of the Festival of course is the judging for the Champion Winter Beer of Britain, announced on Wednesday afternoon. There were four preliminary judging rounds covering Old Ales/ Strong Milds, Stout, Porter and Barley Wine. The winners were:

- Old Ale/Strong Mild:** Breconshire Ramblers Ruin (Brecon)
- Stout:** Acorn Gorlovka Imperial Stout (Barnsley)
- Porter:** Elland 1872 Porter (Elland, West Yorkshire)
- Barley Wine:** Robinson's Old Tom (Stockport)



Elland Brewer Dave Sanders (left) was elated by his success:

"It's absolutely brilliant; we came second last year and I am thrilled to finish on top in 2010. We originally started brewing this beer at the West Yorkshire brewery, so there's quite a history behind this Victorian recipe."

1872 Porter will now go forward to the Champion Beer of Britain competition at the Great British Beer Festival in August.

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We plan to offer real Milds and Stouts when trade supports it.

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WINTER ALES FESTIVAL

12, 13 &
14 FEBRUARY

6 PENNINE ALES

16 GUEST ALES

2 PERMANENT
GUEST ALES

FOOD IS AVAILABLE
FRI, SAT & SUN
12:00 TILL 5:00

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Class 124 'Trans-Pennine' dmu with 4-wheel van in tow skirts Selby Street, Hull



Curmudgeon



Ersatzzenbrau is on its way

SCIENTISTS led by the appropriately-named Professor David Nutt, who was sacked from his government post last year for suggesting ecstasy and cannabis were safer than alcohol, say they have come up with a form of synthetic alcohol that they claim will eliminate many of our supposed alcohol problems. Apparently it replicates the effects of alcohol but can then be reversed by an antidote, leaving people hangover-free.

However, this completely misses the point. Alcoholic drinks have been enjoyed for thousands of years – they are part of our history and culture. Even when produced on an industrial scale, they are essentially made from natural ingredients rather than being synthesised in a laboratory.

It often seems to be believed by members of the drug lobby that people only, or primarily, drink alcohol to get drunk, whereas nothing could be further from the truth. People consume alcoholic drinks, even the bog-standard ones, because they like the taste. Beer and cider in particular can be extremely refreshing, while whisky may raise your spirits on a chilly day. And wine in particular, but beer and cider too, can be an excellent complement to food. If people purely wanted to drink for the effect, they would drink vodka diluted with the mixer of their choice. But, in general, they don't.

It's also probably true to say that, on a large majority of occasions when people drink alcohol, they experience nothing more than a slight glow. Of course people are not indifferent to the effect of alcohol, but it is not consumed solely for the effect in the way that cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine and LSD are. Despite what the drug lobby claim, it is not "just another drug". And I can't honestly see beer, cider, wines and spirits disappearing any day soon.

Bigger Spoonfuls

BEFORE Christmas, J. D. Wetherspoon announced that over the next five years, they planned to open 250 new pubs, which would create over 10,000 new jobs. At a time when much of the pub trade is struggling, you have to give them credit for knowing what they are doing and creating a chain of busy, successful pubs. They offer a wide range of food and drink at reasonable prices in a welcoming, non-threatening environment, and now sell more cask beer than any other pub company. And Chairman Tim Martin is one of the few industry leaders who is willing to question the prevailing anti-drink orthodoxy.

However, you have to wonder how many of those 10,000 will be a net gain for the pub trade, and how many will simply replace jobs in other pubs that end up closing because of the competition from Wetherspoons. And it's difficult not to feel a twinge of regret for the loss of small, quirky, individual pubs, however grotty they may have been, to be replaced by what often come across as bland, standardised drinking emporiums. But independently-run pubs can't be sheltered from the realities of competition, and if they want to continue to exist alongside Wetherspoons, and justify charging higher prices, they need to offer something distinctively different and better in terms of atmosphere, standards of service and quality of food and drink.

Curmudgeon Online:

www.curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com



Pub of the Year 2010

WITH some strong contenders and a close vote, the contest for this year's Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Year was particularly nail biting.

However there can only be one winner and this year a relative newcomer to the real ale scene emerged victorious. The winning pub is the **Railway** on Wellington Road North, Heaton Norris (just up the A6 from the town centre), run by Ray and Pam Ford.

For many years the Railway was pretty run of the mill doing nothing special at all. It didn't even sell cask beer for a time. When Ray and Pam took over in November 2008 cask beer made a comeback but still the pub laboured under the dead hand of its owning pub company, Punch Group.

However all this changed last summer when Ray and Pam bought their pub from Punch. This in itself was quite a leap in the dark given the current economic climate and the tales of doom and gloom that surround the pub trade. However on top of that Ray then set about increasing the cask beer range in a pub where many of the regulars didn't touch the stuff.

He has now succeeded in getting the range up to five cask beers – Holts Bitter and four changing guests – without compromising on quality.

Alongside this, the Railway is making a name for itself with the top quality live jazz that features on Sunday nights.

Plans for the future include regular food, notably Sunday lunches, and hopefully the introduction of traditional cider. A beer festival is planned for later in the year.

Commitment and enthusiasm are the name of the game here – both will be much in evidence when we present this award on Saturday 27 February. Getting there couldn't be easier – while Heaton Norris station across the road closed over 50 years ago, the pub is well served by the many buses that travel up and down the A6.

Nursery is Runner-up



Commitment and enthusiasm are also much in evidence at this year's runner-up, the **Nursery** on Green Lane, Heaton Norris.

A multiple award winner, having previously been National Pub of the Year, the Nursery is now run by Simon

and Louise Wetton who have continued the pub's long traditions of good beer, good food and general good cheer.

The Nursery is truly at the heart of its community and features a large range of Hydes beers, Owd Oak, Mild, Bitter, Jekyll's Gold and craft ales, along with a changing guest beer. The pub itself is an unspoilt gem from the 1930s and features on CAMRA's National Inventory of unspoilt pub interiors.

The Railway

Good Beer and Good Cheer

- Monday Cask Ales
- Stockport Darts and Crib League
- (Mixed) J. Holt
- Tuesday plus 3
- Stockport Darts and Crib League
- Wednesday changing
- Tango Poker League guest ales
- Friday Sunday
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CAMRA AWARDS GALLERY



A trio of awards from this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Top left, Stockport & South Manchester Branch Chairman John Clarke (*right*) present the overall Beer of the Festival award to Dave Porter and his team at Outstanding Brewery for Outstanding Stout. The runner –up award went to local family brewer Robinson's for their excellent Old Tom. John Clarke is pictured (*above right*) presenting the silver award to Robinsons Head Brewer Chris Hellin. Third place went to Dunham Massey Brewery for their multiple award-winning Chocolate Cherry Mild. In the central photograph, CAMRA's Mark McConachie (*left*) is shown presenting the bronze award to Dunham Massey's owner John Costello.



This year's **Cider Circuit** was more popular than ever with a record number of people taking part. On Sunday 6 December a presentation afternoon was held at the **Cheshire Ring** in Hyde where Wayne provided welcome hospitality and one of his now legendary belly pork and cider stews. Winner of the main prize, 36 pints of Weston's Old Rosie, generously donated by cider wholesaler John Reek, was won by Steven Dutton of Timperley. He is seen here, *above left*, receiving his prize from CAMRA's John Clarke. *Above right* is a picture of some of the other prize winners with their bottles of cider and perry. Look out for this year's Cider Circuit in October's *Opening Times*.



Mild was on our minds in April and May as we again ran the popular Mild Challenge, this year renamed **Mild Magic**. As ever this proved very popular with over 100 people submitting entries. There were a variety of prizes on offer including a visit to **Hydes Brewery** which still makes three cask milds. Pictured *above left* are the lucky winners of the Hydes tour enjoying some of the beers that were available on the night. Our thanks to Hydes for allowing us to offer this excellent prize. **Marble Brewery** allowed us to offer the prize of being "Brewer for a Day" and the winner here was Mark Charney from North Manchester CAMRA. He is pictured here *above right* getting stuck in. Again thanks to Marble for this prize. It was back to Marble for another Mild Magic event. Participants are asked to vote for their favourite mild pubs, one in Stockport and one outside the borough. The "outside Stockport" award was won by the **Marble Arch** and pictured *above* John Clarke presents the Champion Mild Pub award to managers Vicky and Marc.

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New faces at pubs across town are in the news this month.

CLAIRE Isaacs is the new licensee of the **Adswood**. Claire is running the Robinson's pub in Adswood Lane East, Stockport along with her partner Paul Weigert and is eager to confirm its place at the heart of the local community.

In addition, as well as finding new recruits for the pub's darts team Claire and Paul will also be setting up a pool team in the near future. Looking further ahead, the couple are delighted with the Adswood's spacious beer garden and are promising a raft of family fun next summer including barbecues and a bouncy castle. This year will see them laying on bar snacks and traditional Sunday lunches, having already introduced sandwiches on their takeover of the pub.



Claire and Paul have both gained experience of the licensed trade at another Robinson's pub, the Bird in Hand, Hazel Grove, which is run by Claire's mother. Our photograph shows Claire with brewery director Dennis Robinson after attending a five day training course at the brewery.

ANOTHER Robinsons pub with new faces is the **Grapes** on Castle Street in Edgeley. Andrew and Debbie Drennan took over at this popular local on 5 January.

The couple have been out of the trade for six years but before that ran the Rifleman's in Wilmslow for three years and Debbie worked at Altrincham's Old Market tavern for nine months. They want to maintain the Grapes's reputation as a good, traditional local and are considering boosting trade with a quiz night and also a "pie and pint" offer. On the beer front the handpumped Hatters and Unicorn may be joined by Dizzy Blonde and XB. Well worth a visit.



NEW-ISH faces at the **Crown**, Great Moor are Dennis and Maggie Davies. While there have been no major changes to the look of the pub since they took over, there have been huge improvements – so much so that the pub has just won the "Most Improved" award in Robinsons Bar & Cellar competition.

I am told that the pub is now much busier at times when it was often quiet, including Saturday nights when the place is now often packed. Dennis tells me there is a range of events including darts nights and, on the third Wednesday in each month, an acoustic night with Paul Sinclair.

Hatters, Unicorn and the increasingly rare Double Hop, are the cask beers (the latter very popular with the Hazel Grove Male Voice Choir who call on Monday nights after their rehearsals). Dennis tells me that he may also try the seasonal beers.

Hopefully room for more news next month.





One pub comes in from the cold and another comes back from the dead in a busy month.

THE Mark Addy Salford re-opened on Wednesday 28 October after the completion of a much anticipated renovation project designed to take the famous 1980's venue into a new era. Situated on Stanley Street, the Mark Addy enjoys an enviable riverside location, on the border between the City and Manchester, and was once the site of the New Bailey landing stage where horse-drawn boats loaded and unloaded their shipments.



It had however somewhat lost the plot in recent years and desperately needed a new sense of direction. It got it.

Last year a new partnership was formed to take over and rejuvenate the pub; a partnership that now includes award winning Manchester chef Robert Owen Brown, house manager Kevin Beswick (who had worked with Robert Owen Brown at both the Bridge and the Angel) and front of house/PR man John Mooney. There are other familiar faces from the Angel behind the bar, too.

The pub has had a major makeover with the bar now sited near to the entrance while the kitchen is located at the back of the pub. These changes make the pub much more welcoming and accessible.

The revamped Mark Addy is unashamedly food oriented and customers can look forward to a menu featuring a selection of Robert Owen Brown's signature dishes alongside a variety of regional classics and daily specials.

However drinkers are also welcome and the bar boasts a choice of four ever changing cask beers with the focus on micros so far (Marble beers feature regularly) and quality has been uniformly high.

Come the summer there are plans to make full use of the riverside terrace, including some private dining areas. One of the arches that line the terrace has already been converted into a smokehouse and there is talk of others being converted into an onsite brewery. One to watch – and highly recommended.

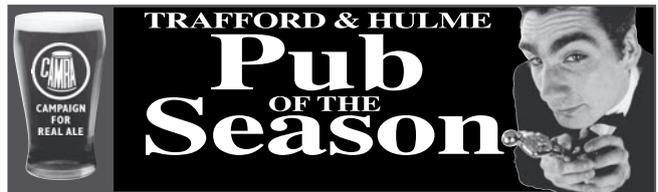
Queens, Honey Street, Red Bank

Now here's a thing. The Queens Arms, Red Bank was for many years a cask ale outpost of the Northern Quarter. A change of hands was followed by decline and closure. The pub's fairly obscure location suggested the closure would be permanent.



However on 16 January the pub reopened and the man at the helm is Jimmy Bibby, a familiar face on the city's free house scene. It's a brave move but Jimmy, a former regular at the Queens is sure it will work and is already being rewarded by the slow return of some former regulars.

The pub needed a major clean up but when OT called there were already strong echoes of its former glory with six handpumps dispensing a range of changing guest beers. Beer festivals and live bands are in the pipeline. The Queens is open from 12 to 12 every day – pay it a visit and give it your support. It deserves every chance of success.



On Thursday 14 January we were pleased to present Christine and James Hartley, of the Bulls Head, Sale, with the Winter Pub of the Season Award, writes Beverley Gobbett

Situated in a prominent position in the centre of Sale on the main A56 trunk road between Altrincham and Manchester, this Grade 2 listed building was built in 1879. It replaced an earlier pub on the same site, photos of which are displayed in the current building.

Over the years the Bull's Head has gradually deteriorated both inside and outside and eventually it closed early in 2008. However earlier this year the pub owner's Enterprise along with new tenants Christine and James Hartley have totally transformed this establishment, and have spent a considerable amount of time and money making the Bull's Head what it is today.

The outside has been cleaned up proudly advertising its original owners – Hardy's Crown Brewery, Hulme. Inside it is spotlessly clean with new carpets and furniture, but leaving many of its original fittings including the skylight which is illuminated in the evening and a wonderful working clock behind the bar.

Christine and James have been in the pub business for over 25 years but this is the first pub that they have managed themselves and are thus very enthusiastic about the building and everything that goes into it. The most important thing is making it a pub for the whole community. Customers during the day include shoppers and office workers whilst most evenings it is occupied by locals. Food and drink are two of the items which make a pub, all food is fresh, traditional and home-made, and is available everyday except Monday. The Sunday carvery is extremely popular especially for families. Also look out for the "Beef Cobbler!"

New lines have been installed to dispense all the beers. Cask ale has returned after an absence of several years with two real ales on at all times and these are selling well. Regular beers have come from Black Sheep and Copper Dragon but several others have been seen and tried and all are kept in excellent condition.

All in all, it is good to see a pub such as the Bull's Head being successful especially in these times of recession. This is all down to Christine and James as well as help from regulars who frequent the pub and are delighted to see it doing so well. It is the reason that Trafford & Hulme CAMRA nominated the Bull's Head as their Pub of the Season.

In case you need to know, getting there is no problem with bus services 16, 18, 18A, 19, 41, and 263 passing the front door, and only five minutes walk from Sale Metrolink Station so why not give it a try.

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CAMRA Calling - What's On In The Local CAMRA

Stockport & South Manchester

Branch Contact: *Pete Farrand 01625 425734*
pete.farrand@googlemail.com
 Branch website: www.ssmcamra.org.uk

Thursday 11th – Branch Meeting: Blossoms, Buxton Rd, Heaviley. Starts 8pm. **NB selections for Good Beer Guide 2011 will be made at this meeting.**

Friday 19th – West Didsbury Stagger: 7.30 Woodstock, Barlow Moor Road; 8.30 Four In Hand, Palatine Road.

Thursday 25th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Star, Cheadle. From 8pm

Saturday 27th – Pub of the Year presentation to the Railway, Wellington Rd Nth, Heaton Norris. From 8pm.

High Peak & NE Cheshire

Branch Contact: *Mike Rose 07986 458517*
mikewrose@gmail.com
 Branch website: www.hpneccamra.org.uk/

Monday 8th – Branch Meeting: Sportsman, Strines. Good Beer Guide 2011 selections will be made at this meeting. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 8th March – Branch Meeting: Cotton Bale, Market Place, Hyde. Starts 8.30pm

North Manchester

Branch Contact: *Dave Hallows 07983 944992*
davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk

Wednesday 10th – Good Beer Guide 2011, City selection meeting and vote, King's Arms, Bloom Street, Salford. Starts 8pm.

Wednesday 17th – Branch Meeting: Black Lion, Blackfriars/Chapel St, Salford. Starts 8pm.

Wednesday 24th – Good Beer Guide 2011, Out of City/Final selection meeting & vote, Unicorn, Church St, M'cr City Centre. Starts 7.30pm.

Wednesday 3rd March – Oldham St. Crawl: Crown & Kettle, Oldham Rd, M'cr City Centre, 7.30pm: The City, Oldham St, 8.10pm; Northern, 8.40pm (Look in at Gulliver's); Castle Hotel, 9.20pm

4th March Branch Meeting at the Town Hall Tavern

Macclesfield & East Cheshire

Branch Contact: *Tony Icke 01625 861833*
contact@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk
 Branch website: www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk/

Monday 15th – Social: Railway, Mobberly. Now a free house with Dunham Massey beers.

Monday 22nd – Good Beer Guide 2011 final selection. Venue tbc.

Trafford & Hulme

Branch Contact: *John Ison 0161 962 7976*
 Branch website: www.thcamra.org.uk

Thursday 11th – Manchester survey. 8pm start at the Rising Sun (7pm for free steak and Ale pasties), 8.30pm St Ralph Abercrombie, 9.15 Nags Head, 10pm Town Hall Tavern, Finish at City Arms.

Thursday 18th – Good Beer Guide 2011 selection meeting at the Volunteers Arms, Cross St, Sale. Vote for your Good Beer Guide entry.

Thursday 25th – Altrincham survey. 8pm Tatton Arms, Tipping St; 8.45 Wetherspoons; Unicorn. 9.30 Bricklayers Arms; 10 Altrincham Working Mens Club, finish Old Market tavern.

Saturday 27th – Branch trip to Sheffield. Contact branch for details.

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**REGULAR WEEKEND BEER FESTIVALS
(ON THE LAST FULL WEEKEND OF EACH MONTH)**

TUESDAY NIGHT - QUIZ NIGHT



GBG 2010

WWW.THENEWOXFORD.CO.UK

**11 BEXLEY SQUARE, SALFORD
(JUST OFF CHAPEL ST)
TEL 0161 832 7082**

The Black Lion

*65 Chapel St, Salford
(corner Blackfriars St)
0161 834 4620*



A warm welcome awaits you

8 Guest Ales

*120 Belgian and German
Bottled Beers*

*Original and High Quality
Food prepared in our kitchen
by Megan van Dyke*

*Available
Monday - Friday
12-3 and 5-8
Saturday 12-9*

Sunday lunches coming soon

*Function Room
Available for hire*

*Bookings
Now Being Taken*

Dragon's Fire

February and March 2010

ABV 3.9%

Premium ruby red ale with distinctive spicy / floral American hop aroma.

This rich, full bodied, bitter beer has a predominately strong hop palate but also exhibits an interesting balance of biscuit malt and burnt toffee flavours.

