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JUNE 2001 No:206

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FESTIVAL FRENZY!

Stockport's 15th Beer & Cider Festival Breaks All Records

'Record breaking'. That's the only way to describe the massive success of this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, run by CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, and sponsored by the Stockport Express.

Huge crowds at each session saw attendance swell by a massive 10 per cent to over 4,300, with over 1,100 visitors on Friday night alone – although the large number of bar staff ensured no-one had to wait very long to be served.

Demand was such that the beer ran out earlier than expected on Saturday night, with the last drop squeezed from the last barrel at 9.35pm. Luckily the band (the excellent Few Good Men) played on and the cider bar stayed open for another half-hour before supplies ran dry there, too. Festival Organiser, CAMRA's Jim Flynn, was over the moon: "This really was a huge success and my thanks go to everyone involved, the organising committee, our volunteer staff, the Stockport Express for their superb advance publicity and, of course, the drinking public of Stockport and beyond who turned out in such huge numbers".

Acknowledging the early closure, Jim told Opening Times, "I'm sorry that the beer and cider ran out relatively early but demand this year really did take us by surprise. Beer sales hit a record high and cider sales, almost 50 per cent up over last year, were simply phenomenal. Obviously next year we'll be seeing what we can do to make sure we are able to stay open until 11.00pm on Saturday."

Beer of the Festival

Some of the most eagerly awaited news was – who had won Beer of the Festival? This award is voted for by festival customers throughout the three-day event and this year's voting was widely spread across many of the beers on offer – surely a testament to the high quality of the range and the skills of the festival beer managers. The category winners were:

- Mild:** Highgate Dark Mild (Walsall & Highgate Brewery)
Bitter: Festival Special (Roosters Brewery)
Premium: Summer Solstice (Pictish Brewery)
Special Beer: a tie between
 Jigsaw (Salopian Brewery) &
 Kelpie (Heather Ales)

Stout/Porter: Lamp Oil (Cambrinus Craft Brewery)

Strong Ale: Old Tom (Robinson's)

The title Beer of the Festival went to Pictish Brewery for their excellent Summer Solstice, a real triumph for Richard Sutton's relatively new operation in Rochdale.



Some of the record crowd attending this year's festival

The NATIONAL CIDER & PERRY

STOCKPORT TOWN HALL CHAMPIONSHIPS 1st & 2nd JUNE 2001

One of the highlights of the Festival is the judging in CAMRA's National Cider & Perry Awards, although this will probably be the final time that the event will be at Stockport. Next year the contest is expected to move south to the Reading Beer Festival. After three preliminary rounds, two judging panels, comprising CAMRA cider specialists, cider writers and Stockport MP Ann Coffey, who spared a couple of hours from General Election campaigning, worked their way through each of the six cider and perry finalists. The judging was a close run thing but the Champion perry was Hecks Hendre Huffcap from Somerset, with two Herefordshire producers in second place. Second was Franklin's Perry and third Gwatkin's Oldfield Perry.

Herefordshire also dominated the national cider awards with all three winners coming from that county. For the third year running, Champion Cider was Weston's Old Rosie, with Dunkerton's Organic Cider second and Gwatkin's Foxwhelp third. A new producer, Merrylegs, whose cider is fermented in Stockport, came a creditable fourth in the national rankings gaining a special "commended" award.



Perry Judges hard at work

Merrylegs' John Reek was also delighted to win the 'peoples' pint' award as Cider of the Festival award for his Stockport Triple S cider. The Perry of the Festival award went to Troggi Perry from Monmouthshire. Interviewed after the awards were announced, John Reek told Opening Times, "I'd just like to thank everyone for their continuing support. This really is fantastic news."

IN JUNE'S OPENING TIMES

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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

These words are penned as the General Election approaches and you will undoubtedly be reading them after it's all over bar the shouting. It very much looks as though Labour will be returned for a second term of office and if this is the case then there are two items of unfinished business affecting pub goers which need to be addressed.

Firstly, will we now see some sensible reform of our antiquated licensing laws? It was just 12 months ago that Opening Times as hailing proposals for reform and here we are, a year further on, and despite much consultation and publication of proposals, we still wait for concrete action.

Also still ricocheting around the corridors of power are the proposals to guarantee drinkers a full pint. The consultation on this has been endless and the delay has given the vested interests of the bigger brewers – aided it must be said by trade (gutter)press hacks who should know better – to mount a campaign based on distortion, misinformation and downright lies to maintain the status quo. Too often have similar proposals vanished into a General Election campaign and failed to emerge from the other side. It mustn't be allowed to happen this time.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

On a happier note, this has so far been a tremendously successful year for local real ale campaigners. The Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge was the first to break all records and this was closely followed by Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Opening Times adds its thanks to all those who both organised and supported both events.

There's also a moral here. The big brewers (again aided by lazy trade press journalists) keep telling you that real ale has no future and is in terminal decline. These assertions have always sat uneasily alongside the stream of impressive production and profit increases from dedicated real ale brewers, both large and small. And now the drinkers of Stockport and Manchester have conclusively demonstrated that the demand for quality real ales is strong, sustainable and very much alive.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In our haste to put together last month's Opening Times we forgot (OK, I forgot) to mention that the front page article on country pubs was based on an item in Ouse Boozer, the excellent magazine produced by York CAMRA. Apologies all round. (it's also worth checking out the York CAMRA website at www.yorkcamra.free-online.co.uk).

John Clarke

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

We (OK, I) should apologise to readers still awaiting the downloadable form of OT. Be assured it is coming, for we are using a *.pdf (a portable document version) internally already. We have still to decide whether to launch this month or next, and are awaiting the results of our tests with the very latest version of Adobe Acrobat. Those of you who visit the branch website will no doubt here of it first, but final details will definitely feature in the July issue.

P.B. Hutchings

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 206

OPENING TIMES is published by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA - The Campaign for Real Ale. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the campaign either locally or nationally. Editors: John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD. ☎ (0161) 477 1973; Paul Hutchings, 8 The Green, Heaton Norris, Stockport Cheshire, SK4 2NP. ☎ & Fax (0161) 432 8384. News, articles and letters welcome. All editorial items may be submitted in most popular WP formats or preferably ASCII on IBM-PC format 3.5" disks (which will eventually be returned!) or via e-mail to johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com Adverts or photos should be "hard copy" or in CorelDraw 3,5 or 7 (*.cdr) format or TIFF or EPS files (submit printed proofs for checking and ensure that any "include all fonts" options are on). All editorial items © CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged. All Advertising images are copyright the respective design sources (Largely CPPR, but all other copyrights and trademarks acknowledged).

Fight for Consumer Choice in Pubs - Join CAMRA now - see page 19!

PUB OF THE MONTH JUNE 2001

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The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for June is the Victoria on Wilmslow Road in Withington.

Sited in the centre of Withington, the Victoria, which has had a slightly chequered history in recent years, has now very much found its role as the 'village' local. This welcome period of stability and all-round improvement to the pub is down to the arrival of Edgar Ambrose and Janice Oliver some two years ago.

Janice and Edgar took on the pub after a short period of closure and immediately set about changing its fortunes. Their background helped of course - Janice is very experienced in the trade, having worked at the Cross Keys in Adswold, and Edgar had previously worked in finance - but it has essentially been down to sheer hard work and determination that has seen the pub so markedly transformed.

The atmosphere is hugely better and, despite the mainly open-plan format, the pub is nicely broken up into a number of different areas giving the feel of a multi-roomed pub. Naturally, plenty of real ale is sold, too with Hydes' Mild, Bitter, Jekyll's Gold and the various seasonal beers all available on handpump and of top quality. Indeed such is the high standard of the beer that not only has the pub recently gained a 'Cask Marque' award, but it will also feature in the next national Good Beer Guide.

All in all, the Victoria is a tremendously improved pub and this very well deserved award will be presented on Thursday 28th June when an excellent night is promised.

Being on Wilmslow Road, the Victoria is well-served by public transport. From Stockport bus number 42 runs frequently and from Cheadle and Cheadle Hulme buses 157 and 45A run hourly.

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

CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 206:

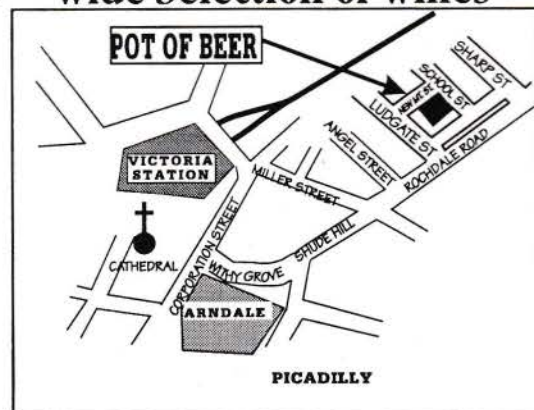
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STAGGER

with Paul Moss

Siberian Openshaw

A decidedly Siberian wind greeted the handful of stagers who set out to explore Openshaw. A minibus took us to our start point, and, en route, some of our party pointed out numerous sites of former East Manchester pubs long since bulldozed and replaced with other developments, whilst others were left standing but closed and boarded.

All of the pubs we visited are located on or near Ashton Old Road, and the bus dropped us at the western end of our route, the **Pack Horse**. This is a large Holt's (formerly Greenall's, I'm told) establishment with an imposing main-road frontage, though on closer inspection the pub is rather shabby both inside and out. On the left of the central front door is a spacious vault; however, we opted for the lounge on the right. This is also large and open plan, with a small separate raised drinking area opposite the centrally-sited horseshoe bar which serves both rooms. Handpumps advertised mild and bitter, but sadly no mild was available. Bitters all round, then, and the consensus was that this was acceptable if nothing special.

Crossing over, we left the main road for a while to walk along Ogden Lane. Passing the **High Bank Inn**, which sports fairy lights in the window, a tacky illuminated Boddington's sign, and no real ale, we came next to **Banks's Royal Oak**. Here, the bar is situated in the cosy lounge to the left, which has a Victorian-style fireplace and feels a bit like your own front room. To the right is the vault, which offers pool and darts. One cask ale was advertised - a pumpclip for Mansfield cask dark mild was stuck onto the face of a keg font. Unfortunately, the man serving seemed not to know what he was serving, first telling us that it was keg beer, and then, when the cask pump clip was pointed out, saying "if that's what it says, it must be". We ventured halves, and found the beer thin, sweetish, carbonic and with very little flavour other than caramel - not recommended.

Back on Ashton Old Road, and noting that the nearby **Lord Raglan** is currently closed and displaying a property agent's board, our next stop was **Robinson's Forrester's Arms**, offering a respectable pint of hand-pulled Best Bitter. Essentially, this is a small, one-roomed affair, mostly taken up by the lounge area on the left. There was not much chance of a seat here, as the pub was already busy not long after eight o'clock. Instead, we stood next to the pool table which fills most of the small vault area front right, which is given a cheerful feel by the fresh-looking red gloss coating the woodwork, radiators and interior doors, and which boasts a collection of sporting trophies.

Also close by are the tastefully-themed, cask-free **Screwie Hughie's**, which still displays the sign from its previous incarnation as the Halfway House, and the **Concert Inn** on Fairfield Street, which boasts the Boddington's name high up in the stonework but also has no real ale.

Turning the corner onto Abbey Hey lane, we next visited the **Oddfellows Arms**. Even before we entered, we were impressed to see a surviving etched-glass window bearing the name of the pub, and there was plenty more of this to be seen inside, where we found a friendly, cosy establishment serving an excellent pint of Boddington's Bitter. The interior is U-shaped; one leg is nicely carpeted and upholstered to make a lounge, and beyond the central bar the other side is more of a vault. We were told by the licensee that the pub has recently been acquired by Eccles-base pub company **Dorbieres**, who are planning a modest refurbishment - new carpets and upholstery, and a lick of paint - although this seemed to us scarcely necessary.

Having lingered a little in the Oddfellows, we headed back onto the main road, to the **Albion**. The signage outside is definitively **Whitbread**, though who owns it now is anybody's guess. Inside,

we found a bustling, friendly local with a vault and lounge, identifiable from the etched glass panels in the doors, separated by the central bar. Three handpumped ales were available: Tetley Bitter, Boddington's Bitter, and Holt's Bitter. We all opted for the Holt's, and found it fair, if not at its best. If the busy atmosphere, full notice board and plethora of sporting trophies are any indication, this must be a thriving pub.

Still further east along Ashton Old Road, we passed **CK's** (formerly the Gransmoor), advertising Banks's Ales but offering no cask beer. Further still, the **Crown Inn** promised "Boddington's Traditional Cask", but this proved to be a deception, and we found no real ale available. Never mind, the sign outside the Grove next door, a former Wilson's house, was encouraging: "Hand Pulled Traditional Ales". Inside, I had a brief impression of a cosy, multi-roomed feel to the pub, before we discovered that this too was being less than honest, and offered no cask ale.

This did, however, mean we had more time to spend in our last pub, Holt's Railway, on Manshaw Road. This is a positively cavernous Victorian establishment with front rooms either side of the wide lobby. We chose the "News Room" on the left ("Certified for Officers", of course); this is really the vault, complete with dart board and cards; four of us taking the opportunity to play a game of cribbage. This was served by a hatch from the bar, through which we could see another, more open, drinking area to the rear of the pub, where most of the other customers were sitting. Both mild and bitter were available on handpump, and both in fine condition. We particularly enjoyed the mild - our best beer of the night, and a fitting end to an enjoyable stagger.

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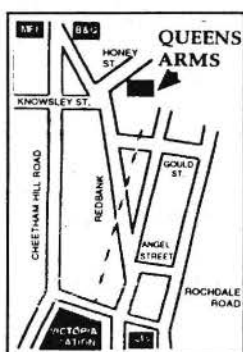
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This month Desert Island Beers comes from former Stockport & South Manchester branch chairman, long-time real ale campaigner and cider enthusiast, Rhys Jones...

It's easy, said the Editor. Just write about your five favourite beers. OK, fine. But hang on, my five most fondly remembered tonight might be completely different tomorrow - and how about the places I enjoyed them, or the company, or...oh well, never mind, here goes.

Apparently, the imBible (Good Beer Guide) is taken as read, and the current Champion Beer of Britain - Moorhouses Black Cat - stands in for Shakespeare, but those aside, I find my thoughts straying to a long-past Great British Beer Festival, not long after CAMRA had started taking a serious interest in cider. David Kitton's very first Traditional Cider Directory had just come out, and there on the bar was this extraordinary stuff called **Fleming's Dry Cider**. Nobody seemed quite sure where it was from - consensus seemed to be somewhere around Wellington in Herefordshire - but it was pale, chock-full of tannin, and had the faintest medicinal twang to bring to mind as Islay malt whisky. Mr Fleming's not been heard of much since, and sometimes I think I only dreamed the stuff, but it's been my measure for all the cider I've tasted afterwards.

Moving forward a few years, it was in 1989 that one of brewing's great characters Brendan Dobbin set up his West Coast Brewery in the cellars of the Kings Arms on Helmsshore Walk, just round the corner from Lloyd George's birthplace in Ardwick. Admittedly, we had to wait a while to enjoy Brendan's truly world-beating beer, but it was worth the wait for the glorious revelation that was **Sierra Nevada Pale Ale**. Its 5% strength was forgotten as the cleansing blast of those Cascade hops demanded that you try just one more - somehow, there was always time for one more pint before the last bus down Hyde Road...

My next snapshot in time is of Lincoln Beer Festival, which I attended in company with the personage nowadays referred to as Ed (1). We were all getting pretty used to pale highly-hopped bitters by this time, but hang on, what's this, I didn't know there was a brewery in Oakham? Well, there was now, and they had a beer named after some legendary dwarf who'd been baked in a pie for the King of England. **Jeffrey Hudson's Bitter** it was (and is, even though the brewery is now in Peterborough), and perhaps its greatest achievement was to demonstrate that such a glorious hoppiness - floral, aromatic, without a trace of harshness - could be delivered at session bitter strength. I still do my best to persuade pubs to order it for special occasions, and it still blows people away.

All this pale stuff is all very well, but sometimes you feel the need for a really first-class stout, and one of the glories of the (hopefully) mature phase of the real ale revival is that once neglected styles like stout are now properly appreciated. So I was hugely pleased when

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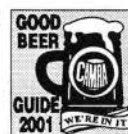
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Flannery's Oatmeal Stout from my home town of Aberystwyth, a luscious, rich beer yet with a beautifully refreshing dryness, picked up the accolade of CAMRA's Champion Beer of Wales a couple of years back. Sadly, Flannery's Brewery imploded financially earlier this year, and while the beers have been very well matched by Hereford's Spinning Dog Brewery, their long-term future is not assured. Nonetheless, Oatmeal Stout and its stablemates flew the flag for high-quality distinctive beer in a town far from the beer-drinking mainstream, and their influence will assuredly be long-lasting.

But Aberystwyth is nowhere near so far from the cask beer mainstream as the Republic of Ireland, where for so long Guinness and its dismal Smithwicks/McArdles keg ale brands held sway. CAMRA purists turn the page now, for my final beer I remember best in its nitro-keg form. I stepped off the Dublin-Cork express at the sleepy Irish midlands town of Thurles, ambled down to the market square, and down a side street discovered a brew-pub as sleek and chic as Mash & Air in its heyday. Unlike that unlamented establishment, however, the prices - and the people - were of this planet, and the beers declared their quality in the glass rather than through risibly pretentious tasting notes. The brewery is Dwan, and for me, then and now, the star of their range is An Dubhain, a 5% ABV beer that sums up everything a real Irish stout should be about. I gather the influence of the sainted Brendan Dobbin hangs over Dwan, and it's been no surprise to see their beers, in cask form, gather awards this side the water.

So, there we are - four beers and a cider, and only two of them with a more-or-less assured future. Cause for concern? Well, there's always been a rapid turnover in the brewing industry, right back to the 19th century when almost every pub brewed its own. What matters is not so much individual beers, but customer's thirst and passion for the best. So really, the future of good beer depends on you - go out to a decent pub now, and start the search for a pint you might nominate as one of your Desert Island Beers in a few years' time.

TREASURE HUNT 2001

The Annual North Manchester CAMRA Independents Day treasure hunt will take place on Saturday 7th July. This year's event is organised by last year's winning team the 'Castle Knights' and will start from the Beer House, Angel Street, Manchester at 12.00noon.

Teams of up to four are invited to take part and there is an entry fee of £2.00 per team.

All teams should be back at the Beer House by 20.00hrs where hot food will be served, the cost of the food being included in the entry fee. The treasure hunt answer forms will be marked whilst the teams enjoy the food and prizes will then be awarded to the winning team.

So... if you and some friends fancy an afternoon's strolling round some of Manchester's most excellent pubs and enjoying beers brewed by independent breweries, please come along.

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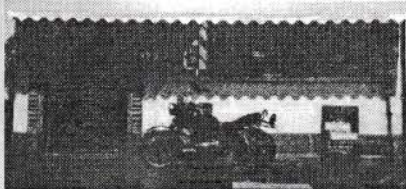
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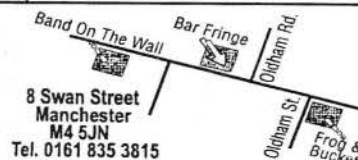
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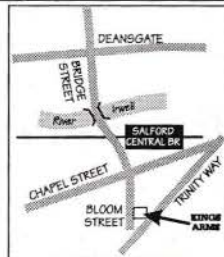
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Next month sees the next wave of seasonal beers from Robinson's, Hydes' and Lees. Robbies have decided to repeat their original six seasonals for another year, so next month will see the return of Whistling Will. The first time around, this beer only went in about 12 pubs so hopefully more Robinson's customers will get to try it this time. Lees are also repeating



a previous favourite in the form of Summer Scorchier while Hydes' are the only one with something completely new. This will be "Hit's The Spot", described as a light pale beer at 4 per cent ABV, and which will also have a 'hint of lemon'. Should be interesting.

Congratulations are due to Coach House Brewery at Warrington for winning CAMRA's Champion Beer of Cheshire award with their Pete Postlethwaite. Runner-up was Weetwood Brewery's Oasthouse Gold with Burtonwood's Top Hat third.

Among the local micros, Phoenix have a raft of new beers out this month. Midsummer Madness is a 4.5 per cent bitter, as is Tennis Elbow. Sticky Wicket comes in at 4.7 per cent. Phoenix were also delighted to learn that their White Monk would be on sale at CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival in August. More of the Great British Beer Festival next time.

Perhaps the most eagerly awaited new beer from Phoenix is their cask-conditioned lager. This 4.8 per cent beer is unfiltered and is being left to clear naturally and will have been in storage for about two months when it is released in early July. The name? Pilsner Irwell!

Bolton's Bank Top brewery has nothing new in the immediate pipeline, although John Feeney has ordered some 'Pride of Ringwood' Australian hops. These have a high alpha-acid content, which means they should produce a wonderfully bitter beer. Pictish Brewery, fresh from its Stockport Beer of the Festival award for Summer Solstice, has something different coming out this month. Ginger Ale is a 3.9 per cent beer with "a distinctive spicy flavour and aroma". As with all Pictish beers, this will be one to look out for.

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS
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THE LAB REPORT

On Saturday 5th May 2001 a 2.5 beer barrel brew plant was collected from the North Cotswold Brewery in Shipston-On-Stour and delivered to the Lowes Arms, Denton where it will be known as "The LAB".

The history of the equipment is that it was converted from cellar tanks by MossBrew in the spring of 1996 and installed at the "Stag and Griffin Brewery", it was then moved to the "Viking Brewery" and in the summer of 1999 to the "North Cotswold Brewery". Last Autumn it was advertised in CAMRA's newspaper "Whats Brewing" when it was purchased by Anthony Firmin for "The LAB".

Anthony, a keen homebrewer, had been considering the idea of a micro-brewery for nearly 2 years. Last autumn he was discussing this with Stockport and South Manchester CAMRA branch chairman John Clarke over a beer in The Crescent in Salford and who suggested Anthony get in touch with Peter Wood of the Lowes Arms in Denton. A meeting was arranged and the plans started to bear fruition resulting in the delivery of the equipment on Saturday.

In the coming weeks "The LAB" has to get all the final regulatory approvals and get the equipment plumbed and wired in along with some test brews. This could take between 4 and 8 weeks. "We would have liked the brewery to be open in time for the Stockport Beer Festival" said Anthony, "but we want to get everything right before the first brew. But now the equipment has been delivered we can't wait to get brewing". Peter Wood, who was also a keen home brewer before he entered the licensed trade said he is "very enthusiastic about a micro-brewery coming to the Lowes Arms and I am looking forward to getting the first brew underway".

The beers so far planned are a traditional bitter called "Broomstairs Bitter" at 3.8% and an IPA style beer called "Houghton Ale" at 4.2%. Stop Press - test brewing is due to start at The LAB by the end of June with a formal launch about one month later. Opening Times will bring you regular updates on progress.

THE REQUEST STOP BEER HOP

The Sixth Beer Festival at the Bhurtpore Inn, Aston, near Nantwich, takes place from Tuesday 10 July to Sunday 15 July. All day opening is on Saturday 14 July (see advert).

The Bhurtpore Inn is twelve minutes walk from Wrenbury Station which is a request stop on the Crewe-Shrewsbury line. Following a substantial increase in passenger number, the Crewe and Shrewsbury Passenger Association has arranged with Wales & West Trains for two trains to stop specially at Wrenbury on Saturday 14 July. The 11.33 and 14.33 Manchester Piccadilly-Cardiff express trains will make a special stop at Wrenbury, these trains will also call at Wilmslow at 11.49 and 14.49.

In addition, to ease the return journey, the Association has arranged for two through trains to call at Wrenbury at 17.05 and 19.36. OT readers should note that due to engineering work, none of these trains will be calling at Stockport, although there are extensive substitute buses between Stockport and both Piccadilly and Wilmslow.

This year also sees the 'Wrenbury Double' as the Paradise Brewery, adjacent to Wrenbury Station, will be hosting its own beer festival from 10-15 July. With 90-plus beers promised at the Bhurtpore Festival plus a good range of beers promised at the Paradise Festival, Wrenbury could well merit the title Beer Festival Capital of Britain!

John Cresswell is Chairman of the Passenger Association told Opening Times: "Last year saw record numbers using Wrenbury station for the Beer Festival weekend, I hope we will see even more this year. It may seem odd that a rail user group promotes a beer festival, but beer festivals certainly increase passenger numbers at Wrenbury, and that is what we are in business for."



Robinson's BREWING UP A TREAT

Stockport real ale drinkers can be proud of the commitment that Frederic Robinson Limited makes to ensuring that its beers reach them in prime condition.

Two factors that set Robinson's cask-conditioned ales apart from their competitors have been the brewery's commitment to using carefully selected ingredients together with a tried and trusted brewing process. A dedication to quality control has also helped Robinson's to win awards for their brands including Best Bitter, Frederics and Old Tom.

Robinson's uses the best quality malt made from barley, and the choicest hops - to give its beers distinctive bitterness and aroma. In addition, there is an excellent supply of first class water from bore holes at the Unicorn Brewery.

The brewing process begins at the top of the brewery where the malt is ground and mixed with hot water. The sugary liquid or wort is separated from the husks and placed in large dome-shaped vessels called coppers where it is boiled with hops.

This extracts the bittering resins from the hops, sterilises the wort and precipitates residual protein. The hops are then filtered off in the hop back, leaving the wort bright and ready for cooling.

By this stage, the hot wort is nearly at the bottom of the brewery and so it is pumped up again to large holding tanks, prior to passing through the wort coolers.

The cooling plant or paraflows consist of a large number of adjacent stainless steel plates, arranged so that hot wort is running in alternative spaces between the plates.

In the intervening spaces, cold liquor (water) is running in the opposite direction so that the hot wort emerges cold, and cold liquor emerges hot. To help achieve energy efficiencies the hot liquor is then redirected into the brewing process.

The cooled wort is run into fermenting vessels, into which yeast is pitched, while maintaining strict temperature control. The wort is slowly converted to beer over the next four to seven days as the yeast feeds on the wort sugars, producing alcohol and evolving carbon dioxide in the process.

By this time the yeast has multiplied substantially and is now skimmed off the surface. The fermentation process causes a natural temperature rise and on completion the beer is cooled prior to transfer, via road tanker, to Robinson's Unicorn Packaging Centre at Bredbury.

Beers for racking into casks as traditional draught beer are centrifuged in order to regulate the amount of yeast to be added to each cask and are then primed by the addition of a small quantity of sugar.

This will later cause the residual yeast in the beer to start fermenting again. It is this secondary fermentation that is responsible for the condition or sparkle in the beer.

During the cask racking operation, when dry hops are added, casks are also fined to help the yeast settle to the bottom of the cask. Once this process is complete the casks are held in temperature controlled storage ready for distribution.

To see the brewing process in operation for yourself, why not arrange a brewery tour. For more information contact Lea Carr the visits guide and organiser on 0161 480 6571.

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CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

UNSPOILT BY PROGRESS

That, is of course the motto of Wolverhampton & Dudley, (Banks's), the Brewer currently under attack by Robert Bourne, a Canadian Finance House, a German Bank, and Pubmaster, the pub-owning group.

The saga has been going on now for over 18 months, which is a ridiculously long time for the employees of the company, in pubs, breweries, distribution etc. to have a potential axe hanging over their jobs. In fact, threat, offer, withdrawal, "due diligence" etc. have taken so long that even the almost comatose Takeover Panel have finally stepped in and started issuing deadlines. Last Friday the consortium finally made a bid - at least 30p a share less than expected, and less than an hour before the bidding deadline expired. Wolves' board are expected to mount a vigorous defence, but their plan involves "maximising shareholder value" by breaking up the company. Whichever way it goes, it is a lose/lose scenario for the employees and drinkers in general.

All that Pubmaster wants are the pubs. After Wolves absorbed Marstons a couple of years ago, it took a lot longer than expected to mesh the two pub-estates, and, bravely, Wolves tried to keep all their breweries going (Camerons, Mansfield, Marstons and Banks. It weakened them (as far as the boys with braces but no brains (the City calls them analysts) were concerned and the bids started. Wolves defence is to sell/close all but Marstons (which uniquely in the world still uses the classic Burton Union system of brewing) and Banks, with a readiness to close Marstons if necessary. There is no doubt that Mr Bourne would close the lot. He is a believer in the concept that "there is no money in brewing". Interesting...so from where exactly are the pubs to get their beer?

In any event, the Takeover Panel have indicated that further extensive delays and lengthy "offer periods" will not go unpunished so the grisly saga should be over by July. We "afficianados" often knock Pedigree for being less than it used to be, but I intend to get some in soon, so as to say a long goodbye to an old and neglected friend, before it is too late. Unspoilt by Progress, indeed! PBH

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Interbrew 1/2 Government DTI 0

Its very difficult to feel sorry for Belgian brewing giant Interbrew. When boss Hugo Powell made his unconditional offer for Bass, having already bought Whitbread's brewing interests, pundits in Britain were aghast, feeling it could not but fall foul of the regulators, and that Interbrew would have egg all over their collective face.

It did. They did. The Department of Trade & Industry referred the bid to the Competition Authorities, who said the Bass buyout would create a dual monopoly (with Scottish & Newcastle the other player) that would distort the market. In fact the Interbrew shares crumbled by 30% of their value. Interbrew (and for a time, the Belgian government) cried foul. They threatened court action. They took court action, saying that the DTI's instruction to immediately sell Bass was unfair and disproportionate, and hurt only Interbrew (a Belgian company that would have had 34% of the UK beer market) and not S&N with about 30% (a British company, who incidentally control well over 40% of the French market). And believe it or not, they won. Up to a point.

The court ruled that DTI minister Steven Byers had acted unfairly by not looking at other options, namely the possibility of selling Whitbread or less drastic restructuring. What it means is that although something will be done, Interbrew have time either to dispose of Bass piecemeal, or to make an offer the TI cannot be bothered to refuse. Interbrew shares are climbing again, and Hugo Powell no longer looks quite as stupid.

**Joint Cask Ales of the Month
Itchen Valley Pure Gold (4.8% abv)**

Its getting warmer and my mind turns to strongish pale beer. I had this twice in the same day, first at the very wonderful Hobgoblin in Oxford, while watching Inzamad get his 5000th run on TV (it was a boundary, so he didn't have to!) and it was quite excellent. Clean, pale gold, fruit and malt dominating the taste but with a gorgeous dry and hoppy finish. Later it was at the Stockport Beerfest. Hmm. In comparison to a lot of others it was excellent, but the comparison showed me that a festival's beers can rarely compare with those served from a pub cellar, at the correct temperature, and by handpump (no sparkler). It was also on, and in very good nick, the previous week at the Beer House May Fest, but there I was more impressed by...

Bath SPA Special (5.0% abv)

Another pale, uncompromisingly dry strong ale. Massive floral hop nose, dry taste with a good balance between hop and malt, and a dry finish leaving just a smidgeon of bitter hop in the aftertaste. A first class 'IPA' style. I was drawn to this by the Real Ale Internet newsgroup where my posting of Ian's Beer list had led to a few comments, many of them moaning that this particular beer was not available when they called. It was obviously worth seeking out. Some other comments though, profoundly irritated me. It seems a few whingers expect staff to scurry down cellar stairs to collect beers that are not on (and often not settled) because of their desire to "tick" or "scratch" them. They presumably will pay all costs/loss of livelihood that the inevitable (occasional) accidents will incur, too. Ian won't have it, the previous incumbents did (but almost invariably went themselves rather than using staff). Personally I think that if 16 beers at a time, changing when drunk, at monthly beer festivals, won't satisfy you, you've got to be a bit sad.

**Foreign Beer of the Month
Tegernsee Maibock (7.0% abv)**

If Ian Casson at the Beer House does nothing else right this year (which is incredibly unlikely) I will still be forever grateful to him for putting this on sale. His recent Maifest included in addition to 35 British Ales including a joint Beer of the Month above) a number of draught German beers including four new to the UK. I went, expecting to enjoy the old favourites like Augustiner Edelstoff and the Tegernsee Export Hell (well known as my favourite pale beer). I had high hopes of the same brewery's Maibock given its divine dark winter doppelbock that now makes an annual appearance at National Winter Ales Festival, but oh my. Oh my. WHAT a beer. Mid brown in colour, and medium to full-bodied in the mouth, with a faintly malty aroma, and then the taste... an utter explosion of complex flavours that Jilly Goolden would be hard put to describe. It had everything, malt, fruit, chocolate, toffee, butter-scotch, then a bouquet of hops... then the next sip, and more, more, more flavours. So complex it defies rational exposition. So complex its one fault may be that it was too complex. As Mr Toad said "Oh my, oh my...poop...poop." There may be some more at the end of the month. Oh my. Beer of the Millennium, without a doubt. The best thing I've ever had in my mouth (I was bottle fed).

CENTRO

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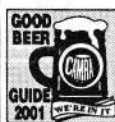
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"NOT MUCH FUN IN STALINGRAD..?"

So goes a rather topical line from the Monty Python North Minehead By-Election sketch. Certainly the town of Oldham has seen happier times, but it should be remembered that whilst one would not be so stupid as to say that lightning etc., the flare-up was unusual, and the town centre at least is generally no more troubled than anywhere else in Greater Manchester. So now is just as good a time as any to tell you about the Oldham Ale Trail.

Four pubs, two independent free houses, and two owned by breweries, have combined to form an easily walked 'Ale Trail', offering up to 15 different cask beers. The manager of one pub (Porter's Ashton Arms on Clegg Street) has moved to another - The Bath Hotel on Union St (formerly known as Doctor Syntax), but otherwise the trail has become firmly established, and indeed might offer even more varied tipples when the Bath's refurbishment is finished later this month.

The Buck & Union (also on Union St.) is run by Tony & Linda who had the Centro in its last successful incarnation, and is fast building a reputation for well kept cask beers, and wholesome good value food. Porter's Ashton Arms has become a strong outlet for Porter beers, and is a large, multi-level establishment, always offering almost all of David Porter's splendid beers. The Bank Top Tavern on Kings Square is a Lees pub, offering mild, bitter and their splendid seasonal range (the next one incoming being the splendid Summer Scorcher) is again, a welcoming, and busy, beer drinkers pub. A review of the re-opened Bath Hotel will follow shortly, but it should be fully open shortly after this issue appears, serving a multiple choice of ales.

Oldham is an interesting town, and the drive to improve the real-ale scene there is very welcome. Oh, one further point, if I were you I would avoid the Wetherspoons outlet, because it's one of those that never seems to have any guest beer, and on my previous four attempts, no real ale at all.



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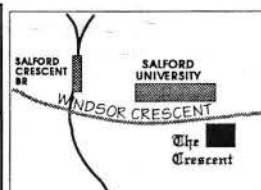
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Lose the Beer Gut

One of the more memorable recent TV ads (I think it may have been for a fashionable make of plimsolls) showed a man being pursued by a giant "beer gut". It's certainly commonplace to link drinking beer with developing a distinctive barrel-shaped physique.

But recent research has shown that the heavy drinker's rotund shape has as much to do with his sedentary lifestyle and consumption of crisps, kebabs and curries as with his beer intake. What stone-cold sober person has ever gone for a chicken vindaloo with all the extras at eleven in the evening? And beer in fact has surprisingly few calories - a standard pint has fewer, for example, than a couple of chocolate digestives or a packet of crisps.

Body shape is also dictated as much by genes as by diet. Dawn French could go on every crash diet and exercise plan known to woman and still not remotely resemble Kate Moss. We all know people who are knocking it back in the pub almost every night and still look like whippets, while others have the classic "beer gut" shape yet hardly touch a drop.

Obviously, if you have a tendency to pile on the pounds (and, let's face it, most of us do), then drinking a lot of beer isn't going to help matters. But there's really no evidence that, compared to other alcoholic drinks or calorie-laden foods, beer has any uniquely fattening properties, and neither is it going to give you a particular body shape that nothing else would.

Campaign for Real Pubs

The big pub operators' latest bright idea - the upmarket rustic dining pub - has recently begun to make an appearance in this area. These establishments loudly trumpet how they embody the ambience and hospitality of the traditional inn, but in fact nothing remotely like them existed even twenty years ago. It's difficult to define a real pub, but you know one when you see one, and these places, which make it clear that the casual drinker is not welcome, certainly don't qualify.

Real pubs have regulars who drop in for a couple of pints and a chat, they have sociable bench seating, not just individual chairs and tables, they attract people for a wide range of activities such as pub sports, quizzes and live music, and while they may serve food - and often very good food at that - they never let it dominate to the exclusion of all else. Most important of all, they evolve gradually over time rather than springing full-formed from a marketing man's fevered imagination following a long lunch in the wine bar.

Fortunately around here we're still well-supplied with real pubs, although in some of the more prosperous parts of rural Cheshire they're fast becoming as rare as hen's teeth. But all too often we fail to value things until they're gone, and more should be done both to celebrate real pubs and promote their continued survival and success. Drinking in them more often is probably the best place to start.

Curmudgeon Online: www.curmudgeon.co.uk

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JUNE '96

"Festival Fever" was the front page headline, together with a photograph of an extremely crowded Stockport Town Hall, with a row of casks extending into the distance. Local CAMRA members were said to be celebrating the runaway success of the 10th Festival, even though attendance was slightly down, probably due to the poor Saturday weather that year, as the actual amount of beer and cider sold was the highest it had ever been.

It had been reported that the brewery in the Old Pint Pot pub on the Crescent in Salford was due to come on stream during May - but problems with the electrics had set the project back, and the latest proposed launch date was mid-June.

Sales of dark mild in the North West had been slowly reducing during the previous few years, even though traditionally this had been one of its stronger regions. But there were now signs of a comeback, possibly due in part to a resurgence in the taste for the dark stouts and porters. Cain's of Liverpool were optimistic, as their roasty-dry black mild was growing in popularity. Also, John Willie Lees had reported that GB Dark Mild was on sale in all its 175 pubs, and increasingly as a guest beer in the free trade. Mild had long been thought of as a declining drink for an older population, but perhaps it's no longer a pensioners drink, and other people are trying it.

There was an odd item with the intriguing headline - "The Lunatics ARE Running The Asylum". OT had spotted an interview for a bar staff job (not management), at one of the London Termini establishments. Thirty pages of computer readable multiple choice psychometric testing (two different tests). For bar staff - whatever next, graphology and Chinese horoscopes?

Several Stockport pubs were on the market. Currently sporting "For Sale" signs were the Stanley Arms and Byrons in the Portwood area, and Ye Olde Vic in Edgeley. The first two were closed but the Vic was still open for business. It was suggested that perhaps one of the new micro-brewers could get a toehold in the local market. It was thought that the Stanley had been sold, but with a "change of use" in mind (and so it came to pass - the Stanley is now a carpet shop; Byrons became Porter's Railway and Ye Olde Vic continues to thrive as a free house).

Finally a couple of pub and club news items: Harry and Jessie Curran had retired from the Romper at Ringway, to be replaced by Tony and Beryl from the Four in Hand in Didsbury. The Labour Club on the A6 at Heaton Norris had installed cask Vaux Maxim alongside the well-kept Thwaites Mild and Bitter on handpump.

Letters to Opening Times are welcome by post to:
The Editor, Opening Times, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley,
Stockport. SK3 9HD or via the internet to
johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com



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Mild
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2001

Mild Challenge Round-Up

This year's Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge was the most successful ever, with all records broken.

The results speak for themselves:

- ☆ Highest ever number of participating pubs: this year no less than 66 pubs took part
- ☆ Completed cards submitted up 50% to 120
- ☆ Pewter tankards for those covering every pub also up 50% to 24
- ☆ Up to 2736 pints of mild drunk in the course of the Challenge - that's almost 10 standard barrels!

This really is a tremendous result and our thanks go to all those pubs and drinkers who made this year's Challenge such a success. Thanks also, of course, to the Stockport Express for their sponsorship. It also goes to show that despite claims of its demise, mild ale still has an audience. Perhaps there is a lesson there for our local brewers when they next consider their promotions and marketing policies.

Participants were full of praise, too, judging from some of the letters we received. Comments included:

- ☆ "Once again a great pub tour"
- ☆ "Thank you for organising this year's Challenge, I have enjoyed it very much"
- ☆ "Well another highly enjoyable Mild Challenge draws to a close and I'd like to pass on my congratulations for what I consider to be an excellent idea....long may the Challenge continue!"

Of the brave 24 who did the lot, one or two deserve a special mention. None less so that Steve Robinson and Sue Ridings of Heaton Norris, keen ramblers both, who covered every single pub on foot! Steve's account of their exploits will appear in next month's Opening Times. Another Mild Challenge hero is Dave Meynell of Romiley who is now the only person to have covered every pub on all five Mild Challenges. Congratulation to these three and the other 21 who are:

Dan Thomson, David Hope, Dave McCann, Michael Boardman, K Charlesworth, Jitka and Brian McClintock, Mark Charnley, Mark McConachie, Dave Hanson, A Oliver, David Brown, A Furniss, Steve Johnson, Ian McDonough, Phil Wyres, Dave Williams, Steve Smith, Chris Walkden and Alban Pearce.

"A STAMPER'S TALE"

Although I live in Eccles, I work in Manchester and my local after work is the Castle Hotel on Oldham Street. Therefore I always find out in advance that the Mild Challenge is taking place. In previous years I have just gone for the T-Shirt.

Last year Kath, the landlady of the Castle, and her friend Jane successfully visited all 63 pubs on the Challenge by public transport. Unfortunately this year they were unable to attempt this. So I decided that I would represent the Castle and do all 66 this year using public transport and shanks's pony, and have a pint in every pub (no half measures for me!). As can be seen I got off to a slow start but still completed it within time. My wife came with me on some of the trips and also my mate Howie who went for the T-Shirt but quite a lot I did on my own. This was not too bad however as I met many friendly people all over the place on both sides of the bar.

I have shown which areas the pubs are in except the Manchester and Stockport ones - I hope that these are obvious. Also I have shown Robinson's Hatters Mild as 'RHM' as it is quite ubiquitous throughout the article. It can be assumed, except where otherwise shown, any weekday trips took place after work.

Week One

Sun 08/04 - Beer House (1) - Tim Taylor's Golden Best.
 Tue 10/04 - Castle Hotel (2) - Robinson's Dark Mild.
 Thu 12/04 - Crown and Anchor (3) - Holt's Mild.

Week Two

Mon 16/04 - Easter Monday. Train to town, 192 bus to Longsight - Sir Edwin Chadwick (4) - Thwaites Best Mild. Long walk down Slade Lane and Burnage Lane to Burnage - Albion (5) - Hydes Light. Walk to Withington - Victoria (6) - Hydes Mild. Walk to Didsbury - Fletcher Moss (7) - Hydes Dark Mild and Royal Oak (8) - Banks's Mild. No.42 bus to Manchester for tram to Eccles.
 Thu 19/04 - Train to Stockport. Walk down to the Crown (1652hrs) - closed! Back to the Pineapple (9) - Robinson's Hatters Mild (RHM). Then to the Swan With Two Necks (10) - Robinson's Dark Mild (offered a choice by landlord). Tiviot (11) - RHM. Portwood - Railway (12) - Porters Dark Mild. Arden Arms (13) - RHM, then train back to Manchester.
 Fri 20/04 - Lass'o'Gowrie (14) - RHM. Smithfield (15) - Bank Top Dark Mild.
 Sat 21/04 - Train to Gatley - Horse and Farrier (16) - Hydes Light. Gothic (17) - Cains Dark. Prince of Wales (18) - Hydes Mild. Walk to Gatley South - High Grove (19) - Hydes Dark. Walk to Cheadle - Olde Star (20) - Hydes Dark. Crown (21) - Hydes Mild.

Week Three

Mon 23/04 - Train to Salford Crescent and walk to the Crescent (22) - Phoenix Monkeytown Mild. Kings Arms (23) - Moorhouses Black Cat Mild. Tue 24/04 - Castle Hotel.
 Wed 25/04 - Intended to go to Cheadle Hulme after work but some 'body' decided to jump in front of a train at Heaton Chapel which stopped the job for a while. Therefore I went to the Pot of Beer (24) - Robinson's Dark Mild. Marble Arch (25) - Marble Brewery Uncut Amber.
 Thu 26/04 - Train to Marple with my mate Howie (from Warrington) who is going for the T-Shirt. Marple (East) - Navigation (26) - RHM. Marple (West) - Pineapple (27) - RHM. Marple (Rose Hill) - Railway (28) - RHM. Train home.
 Fri 27/04 - Train to Gorton and walk to the Plough (29) - RHM. Then walk to Belle Vue - Pineapple (30) - Hydes Mild. Train to Manchester and Bulls Head for works do. Then train home.

Or "66, no make that 67 pints of your finest mild landlord"

Week Four

Mon 30/04 - Train to Cheadle Hulme and walk to the very end of Ravenoak Road to the Church (31) - RHM and then across the road to the Governors House (32) - No mild! So I had a pint of Kimberley Classic and got a stamp any way. Then back home.

Wed 02/05 - Met Howie in Manchester for train to Stockport - Spread Eagle (33) - RHM. Red Bull (34) - RHM. Then to the Railway in Portwood which I had already done but was required by Howie for his T-Shirt, so I had a pint of Floral Dance. Crown (35) - Bank Top Dark Mild. Olde Vic (36) - Enville Nailmaker Mild. Train home.

Thu 03/05 - Train to Manchester to Castle Hotel - Young Tom. Then train to Stockport - Winters (37) - Holts Mild. Star and Garter (38) - RHM. Royal Mortar (39) - RHM. Blossoms (40) - RHM. Stayed in Blossoms for a while with some friends then train home.

Fri 04/05 - Train to Bramhall, expecting to walk to Woodford but just in time for two hourly bus service to the Davenport Arms (41) - RHM. Then the long walk to Hazel Grove - Three Bears (42) - RHM. Another long walk to High Lane - Horse Shoe (43) - RHM. Walk back to Hazel Grove station for train to Davenport and walk to Cale Green - Adswood (44) - RHM, the landlady here was very friendly and said she would check up on me to make sure I did all the pubs. So if you read this then you know I was successful! Then walked back to Edgeley via the chip shop for a train to Manchester. Met up with Howie for train to Hyde Central - Sportsman's (45) - Magic Mushroom Mild which was very lively and took ages to pour - well worth the wait. Then train to Romiley then New Mills - Masons Arms (46) - RHM. Then train home.

Sat 05/05 - Train to Reddish North and walk to the Dane Bank, arr 1118hrs - not open. I knew that there would be a chance of this but at least I now knew exactly where it was for later on. So I set off walking to Denton, arriving at 1155hrs just as the Masons Arms (47) - RHM - opened its doors. Then walk down towards Bredbury - Arden Arms (48) - RHM and the Horsfield Arms (49) - RHM. A bit of a walk then to Romiley - Cow and Calf (50) - RHM and on to Romiley station. Got the train to Reddish North and off to the Dane Bank (51) - RHM. Train home.

Week Five

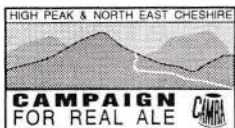
Sun 06/05 - Train to Manchester Airport and walk to Wythenshawe - Airport Hotel (52) - RHM. Walk to Heald Green - Griffin (53) - Holts Mild. Walk back to Heald Green station for the train to East Didsbury - Gateway (54) - Hydes Light. Next got the No.42 bus to Rusholme - Osborne House (55) -

Hydes Mild and then got the bus into town for the tram to Eccles.
 Wed 09/05 - Train to Marple (West) - Hatters (56) - RHM. Then Marple (East) - Ring O' Bells (57) - RHM. Walk up to Compstall - Andrew Arms (58) - RHM and then backtrack to Marple Bridge - Northumberland (59) - RHM. Then set off walking to Mellor to the Royal Oak (60) - RHM which is not as far up Longhurst Lane as I imagined. So I got an earlier train home from Marple than expected, then the tram home.

Thu 10/05 - 6 (or is it 7) to go! Train to Cheadle Hulme and walk to Adswood - Cross Keys (61) - Hydes Mild. Then expecting a long walk to Offerton I manage to get a bus just outside the Cross Keys to Shaw Heath saving me

(continued on next page)





JUNE FEATURED PUB Hare & Hounds Tavern

The Hare & Hounds is situated on Dooley Lane, between Marple and Hatherlow, by the River Goyt in Chadkirk, writes Tom Lord.

Evidence points to a pub having been on this site since 1807 but some form of alehouse probably existed before then. The cottages adjoining the pub disappeared several years ago when the main road was realigned to run behind what used to be the rear of the pub. Nowadays the pub is pleasant and welcoming with a large car park and outdoor drinking area. Walkers are welcome, but please be considerate about muddy boots. The pub is handy for the Goyt Way footpath, and for the nearby Chadkirk Trail.

The open-plan interior is well-designed with three separate areas: a lounge bar; a pleasant restaurant area; and a conservatory, also for dining. Both the dining area and conservatory are non-smoking. Good value meals are available in a pleasant family atmosphere, and bar snacks Tuesday to Friday 5.30-7.30pm and all day Saturday and Sunday. The beers add a valued aspect to the variety available in the Marple area, being Hydes' Bitter, Theakston Cool Cask and Charles Wells Bombardier, all on handpump.

All of these features go to make a pub which should not be overlooked and is well worth a visit.

Telephone 0161 427 0293. Public Transport: Buses Stockport-Marple (358/359/363/383/384) - alight bottom of Dan Bank and short walk down Dooley Lane.

(continued from previous page)

a good 20 minutes. Walk to Offerton - Fingerpost (62) - RHM. Walk to Edgeley - Grapes (63) - RHM and the Greyhound (64) - Greenalls Mild. Then walk across to Heaton Norris - Moss Rose (65) - Hydes Light and finally to the Nursery (66) - Hydes Mild. As a treat I get fish and chips from the chippy across the road from the Nursery, especially as it is the first time I have ever seen it open! Then walk back to Edgeley for the train home.

When I get home I ring Tom Lord of High Peak CAMRA who fills me in about pub No.67 - The Royal Oak in Strines and decide to go on the Saturday.

Sat 12/05 - Train into town for a pint in the Castle Hotel and then the train (last day of the Green DMU!) to New Mills Central and a walk back to Strines - Royal Oak (67) - RHM and an excellent meal. The landlady's son is quite happy to sign my card for me and explains that unfortunately they were missed off the card. I detect no bitterness for this oversight (I understand the landlady has received an apology) and sincerely hope that they will take part next year as it is an excellent pub (they have already agreed to take part next year - ed (1))

I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in this year's Mild Challenge, and visited thirty pubs I had never been to before. Although I don't know if I would attempt to do them all again as it is quite hard work - especially using the methods I did (i.e. public transport and on foot), I will certainly go for the T-Shirt again in the future. I would say however that if you fancy doing all the pubs it is very rewarding despite the hard work. Finally I would like to thank Stockport and South Manchester CAMRA for organising this event and thank all the publicans and their staff for the quality of their beer and friendliness of their welcome.

PS I only got really wet once! MC.



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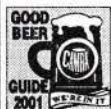


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CITIZENS OF CAINS

Chris Walkden reports on a marathon day out

It is not often that you can visit the whole tied estate of one well-known brewer in a day, but that was the object of a recent trip by Branch members and regulars of The Gothic in Gatley. Robert Cain and Son, based in Liverpool have nine tied pubs: eight are in Merseyside and the remaining one is the Gothic so all it needed was some organisation and transport. All the hard work was provided by Lorraine, the licensee of the Gothic, and, assisted by Stuart Ballantyne of CAMRA, she put together the programme and liaised with both the Brewery and the licensees of the pubs we were to visit.

There was a short delay to our departure from the Gothic as the coach had mistakenly gone to Cheadle Hulme. However, we were able to take advantage of the extra time to sample some of the delights of our first pub with Cain's Mild, Bitter, FA and Elixir- the latter being a seasonal special from the brewery- all being available and in fine form.

Our ferry to the Mersey soon arrived and we were away to our first destination, the Commercial Hotel in New Brighton. This is situated near the main shopping area at the end of a restored Victorian terrace and was previously a Peter Walker Heritage Inn-



it also retains their wording in one of the windows. The two-room pub was buzzing with customers unlike two other adjacent pubs- this was probably because of the excellent Cain's Mild and Bitter on offer at £1/pint- 'Happy Hour' here lasts from 11am to 7.30pm!! Also available at £1 for a 500ml bottle was Cain's 5% Cupid Ale, specially brewed for Valentines Day and presented in a protective sleeve like their spicy Christmas Ale.

With seven more pubs to visit, it was soon time to move on, next stop the Old Colonial in Birkenhead. The pub is set in the industrial outskirts of the town adjacent to the transport museum workshops and is unique in that it features a tram terminus in the back yard!! Restored trams operate frequently at Weekends and Bank Holidays down the mile or so of track to the Woodside Mersey Ferry Terminal. The return fare is £1- so if you are in Liverpool the pub is easily reached - you don't usually use a ferry and a tram on pub-crawls! A few of the party decided to ride the tram and still had plenty of time to sample the delights of the pub before we moved on.

The Old Colonial has two large rooms divided by opaque glass panels- one is a seating area and the other has a pool table. A small smoking lounge completely separated from the rest of the pub is to be found near the front. Cain's Mild, Bitter and FA were available as well as Barnsley Bitter and Brakspear's Bitter and all were in good condition. Cain's have an enlightened Guest Beer Policy that means a good variety of beers in their pubs.

It was in the Old Colonial that we were to discover that our next target, the Good Beer Guide listed Dispensary in Birkenhead was temporarily closed awaiting a new licensee. This was a terrible shame as reports suggest the pub had been superbly refurbished not so long ago. Alas, there was nothing else to do but set off under the Mersey to Liverpool City Centre, emerging from the tunnel just yards from our next stop, the Doctor Duncan pub on St. Johns Lane.

There are quite a few fine pubs in the centre of Liverpool and the Doctor Duncan is one of the best. It features an ornate Victorian tiled back room with huge windows allowing plenty of natural light. (In fact, the tiling is nearly as impressive as that to be found in the

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Gents toilets at The Philharmonic not far away- but this display is of course not on view to everyone!!) There are plenty of nooks and crannies in this multi-roomed, multi-level pub and a good selection of beers and food is available.

Cain's brew Dr Duncans IPA for the pub and this does not seem readily available elsewhere. More familiar were the Cain's Mild, Bitter, FA and Elixir whilst the guests on our visit were Boat Celeste, Ossett Silverlink, Greene King Abbott and Moorhouse's Black Cat- a quite different selection to that which had been noted earlier on in the week. I particularly liked the Ossett and there was praise for the good condition of the other beers. Little wonder then that the Doctor Duncan was last year's Merseyside Pub of the Year. The 1999 CAMRA Regional Pub of the year was our next stop- yet another **Dispensary**, this time on Renshaw Street only a couple of minutes walk away. The pub was almost derelict a few years ago, but was sympathetically restored by Cains such that it won a CAMRA/ English Heritage Pub Refurbishment Award. The one room corner pub was already packed when our party arrived but this did not stop the enjoyment of a wide range of beers - Cain's Mild, Bitter and FA were available as well as guest beers including Slater's excellent Supreme and the even more excellent Top Totty. A short coach ride brought us to the great red brick pile that is Cain's Brewery. The original Robert Cain Brewery was started on the site in the 1850s and the present building dates from 1902. Cain's merged with Walkers in the 1920's and their brewery was subsequently occupied by Higsons who were in turn taken over by Boddingtons in 1985. The brewery continued to produce real ale until 1990 when Whitbread took over Boddingtons and included the site in their UK "Tour Of Destruction" with production being transferred to Sheffield, itself now shut. (Ironically, having wreaked so much damage to local and regional brews over the years, Whitbread have now withdrawn completely from brewing to concentrate on their leisure interests.)

Despite everything, all was not lost as the site was almost immediately taken over by GB Breweries who initially concentrated on canned beer for the take-home trade. In March 1991, supported by CAMRA and an enthusiastic staff, Cain's Traditional Bitter was launched. This dark full-bodied bitter was an immediate success, but real ale production was not assured until the company became a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Danish Brewers, Faxe, in 1992. Formidable Ale (FA), a 5% hoppy beer was soon introduced and was rapidly followed by the dry and roasty Mild, a bold move considering the decline of this once popular style. They obviously found favour as the brewery was soon supplying around 300 outlets, mostly in Merseyside and eventually seasonal specials were also introduced.

Appropriately, the first Cain's tied pub was the **Brewery Tap**, situated on the corner of the brewery on Stanhope Street. This pub was previously known as the Grapes; the signs can still be seen in some of the brickwork. It would have been nice to have a brewery tour, but being Saturday, this was not possible. However, if you are interested in making the tour, these are available on Monday- Thursday at 6.30pm by advance booking only. (Call 0151-709 8234 or e-mail to info@cainsbeers.com) Tours cost £3.75 and include a light buffet and two free pints.

The single room pub was already busy with some Everton fans celebrating a rare victory, but the service was efficient and friendly. Some took to sitting outside in the sun at the tables provided: others remained inside to enjoy their beer. Here we found the Dr Duncan's IPA again as well as Mild, Bitter and FA, whilst the guests were Caledonian Flying Scotsman, Rebellion Zebedee and Hopback Fools Fortune- the latter was suffering a bit as it was at the end of the barrel.

Even though we were enjoying ourselves, time was pressing if we were to do justice to the two remaining pubs on the itinerary. When we told the locals that our next destination was the **Edinburgh** in Wavertree,

they wondered whether we would all fit in. I envisaged something like the Circus Tavern in Manchester, but in the event the Edinburgh was massive in comparison and we all just managed to get into the two rooms although it was necessary to re-arrange the furniture. In



addition, finding the pub was not without some entertainment as the directions from the brewery were far from clear.

Thanks to that man Dave Sheldon who was equipped with a pair of binoculars and a Good Beer Guide for just such an emergency, the pub was spotted up a side street. This was the cue for a round of celebratory cake, washed down with a superb glass of Bombardier. The supporting cast were Cain's Mild, Bitter and FA, all in good nick. And so it was off to our last stop, **Kelly's Dispensary** in Sefton. Here the licensee had laid on an excellent cold buffet which attracted the attention of the local yobbery who tried to get at it through the windows even though they were closed! The staff and some of the locals soon saw them off and then there was plenty of food to go round the whole pub. This pub recently won CAMRA Merseyside's Annual award for the Best Improved Ale House and features several side rooms, one with an unusual large marble table about 20 feet long at bar-counter height. Once again, Cain's Mild, Bitter and FA were available along with four guests, all of which had been featured in previous pubs on our tour.

Sadly, we soon had to pour ourselves back on the coach back to the **Gothic**, which was reached within the hour. Having just missed a bus home there was nothing else to do but sample some of the Elixir before a restorative walk to catch the last bus of the evening. Our day out had been long and tiring but well worth it. We had managed to visit all the operational Cain's pubs, drunk some excellent and varied beers and seen all manner of different pub architecture. Thanks once again to Lorraine and Stuart for all their hard work in pulling the programme together.

You might like to visit some of the pubs mentioned in this article, but if you can't make it to Merseyside, why not visit the Gothic in Gatley where you can try the range of Cain's Beers closer to home? It will be worth your while.



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

Diary	JUNE 2001	JUNE 2001	To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 33 Partner
	<p>Friday 8th – Trip to Marble Brewery followed by Northern Quarter Social.</p> <p>Thursday 14th – Monthly Branch Meeting: Boars Head, Market Place, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.</p> <p>Monday 18th – New Members and Meet The Public Night: Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport. From 8.30pm.</p> <p>Friday 22nd – King Street West & Shaw Heath Stagger: meet Crown, Heaton Lane 7.30pm; Armoury, Shaw Heath 8.30pm. Finish in Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley.</p> <p>Thursday 28th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Victoria, Wilmslow Rd, Withington. From 8.00pm.</p> <p>Saturday 7th July – Beer Festival Staff Party: Ye Olde Vic, Chatham Street, Edgeley. From 8.00pm.</p> <p><i>The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:</i></p> <p>Monday 4th - Committee Meeting: Lowes Arms, Denton. Starts 8.30pm.</p> <p>Monday 11th – Monthly Branch Meeting and AGM: Sportsman, Mottram Road, Hyde. Will all members please make every effort to attend. Starts 8.30pm</p>	<p>Saturday 23rd – Trip to Hart Brewery: details from Frank Wood and Tom Lord.</p> <p>Monday 2nd July – Committee Meeting: Royal Oak, High Lane. Starts 8.30pm.</p> <p><i>Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton. They have notified us of the following events:</i></p> <p>Monday 11th – Knutsford Crawl/Survey: a look at up to 7 town pubs. Visiting Legh Arms (7.30), Builders (8.00), Cross Keys (8.30) and onwards. Mobile number on the night 07779 647023.</p> <p>Monday 25th – Monthly Branch Meeting: Aventis Social Club, opp. Holmes Chapel Station. A famous outlet for Beartown Beers. Starts 8.00pm.</p> <p>Monday 9th July – Pub of the Season Presentation to Egerton Arms, Astbury</p>	



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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

Well, it's been another quiet month, although as usual there's plenty in the pipeline. Next month should see the opening of various outlets in the 'Circus' development on the corner of Portland Street and Oxford Street in the City Centre. Don't expect much in the way of cask beer though, with of course, the honourable exception of Wetherspoons.

I also hear news of a possible very interesting venture in the Deansgate Locks/Castlefield area although for the time being my lips must remain sealed on pain of death. Not too far away, I did put my head around the door of the **Crown** on Deansgate one night last month and saw all the pumpclips turned round, implying there was no cask beer on sale at that time. Hopefully this was just a blip - unfortunately at the time I didn't have the chance to stay and ask, so more next month on this one.

Still in the same area, the **Pack Horse** behind Deansgate Station also looks to have bitten the dust. It's closed and in the hands of a developer. Venturing further afield, I did manage to call into the refurbished **Olde Cock** in Didsbury. Betraying my prejudices, I went there without expecting very much and found myself enjoying the pub considerably. A fair amount of money has obviously been spent on giving the pub a more contemporary look with lots of polished wood set off by blocks of colour and it all works very well. The area around the bar is perhaps a little on the cavernous side and this has clearly been designed to accommodate the large amount of vertical drinking that goes on at the weekends. Around the edges, though, are plenty of cosy alcoves and areas for a quieter drink. The emphasis on cask beer isn't quite what it was but the one bank of four handpumps is the first thing you see as you walk in - Boddies Bitter occupies two of the pumps while the others are given over to guest beers - Caledonian 80/- and Deuchars IPA when I called. Quality was OK but nothing more.

A recent foray around the Ardwick / Beswick areas of East Manchester gleaned a few pieces of interesting news. First at Holt's **Seven Stars**, rumoured to be coming down to make way for urban regeneration, good news - the pub is to stay and Holt's have given the current licensee a five year contract. The surrounding housing and shops will be swept away (bar the Co-op building) and new housing built; also more of the railway arches will be unblocked to make the environment more open. On Ashton New Road, Diane at the **Britannia** (Lees) is very ebullient about the effect the Commonwealth Games will have upon the area. She has already benefited by the provision of breakfasts and such to the hungry stadium workers, but come the Games all of the buses to the stadium will terminate outside of the pub! Talk abounds about a major investment in the pub, possibly doubling its size, to take advantage of the Games and thence the stadium's use as the home

of Manchester City FC. On the other side of the stadium, on Alan Turing Way, a new family-style pub-restaurant is also to be built in time for the Games - more when we have it... Down the road at Banks's **Mitchell Arms**, Mick Hynes is a trifle more reserved about the impact the Games and football will have on the area and his pub, I don't think he need worry though, as with great beer (Banks's Mild and Bitter on meters) and a truly well-run pub, the Mitchell is undoubtedly the best pub in Ancoats.

Finally, the editor tells me that he has had yet another letter taking me to task about my continuing praise of **Mr Thomas's Chop House**. It's the high prices that concern our correspondent and yes, I've never pretended it's a cheap pub. But there are times when the sheer quality of an operation, such as we have here, makes the question of price very much a side issue. So, sorry Mr King, but it's a case of no regrets and no apologies.

THE TIME FOR CHANGE

CAMRA has warmly welcomed the news that the Government remains committed to the reform of our antiquated and bureaucratic liquor licensing laws. Proposed changes announced today will enable pubs to apply for longer opening hours and therefore better meet the needs of modern consumers.

Mike Benner, Head of Campaigns and Communications said, "The end of the 11pm terminal hour will help the English shake off the 'lager louts of Europe' label. I firmly believe that many of the problems we experience on our streets after closing time are a direct result of kicking everyone out of the pub at the same time. Too many people drink too much too quickly as closing time approaches and that causes problems. Treating people like adults will help overcome this and, over time, I believe younger people will adopt a more sensible approach to enjoying alcohol."

"Claims that longer hours will lead to drunken riots on our streets are not based on evidence. The Government introduced all-day opening in England and Wales during the week in 1988 and there was no significant increase in consumption. Today, people can barely believe that they couldn't get a drink on a hot afternoon before 1988."

CAMRA research carried out in 2000 shows that 61% of people believe pubs should be able to open when the landlord pleases, subject to proper controls to protect residents from nuisance. Mr Benner said, "This won't be a free for all. All pubs will have to apply for longer hours as part of a business plan and residents will be able to make objections. Most will only apply for extensions of an hour or two at weekends, but that will make all the difference to people who wish to have an extra drink without being told to go home or go on to a club."

CAMRA is urging the Government to introduce legislation as soon as possible.

Mr Benner added, "We've been working towards this outcome for thirty years - and we're keen to celebrate success with a late night pint!"



APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times 206)

I / We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale Limited, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.

NAME(S) DATE

ADDRESS

POSTCODE Date of Birth

SIGNATURE TELEPHONE NUMBER

I / We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: INDIVIDUAL £14 JOINT MEMBERSHIP £17

UNDER 26 YRS or OAP or REGISTERED DISABLED £8

Send To: Paul Moss, 60 Adelaide Road, Bramhall, Stockport SK7 1LU

those wishing to join CAMRA who live in the Marple, Bredbury, Woodley or Romiley areas, should write instead to: Tom Lord, 5 Vernon Drive, Marple, SK6 6JH.

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £8



THE BEER HOUSE

Angel St N/4 Mcr
Tel 01618397019

12 Real ales available including Thwaites, Taylors Landlord & up to 10 guest beers from independent breweries. Draught imported beers inc. Hoegaarden, Liefmans Kriek, Erdinger Weiss & 3 draught guest Belgian beers. 2 Draught ciders inc. Thatchers scrumpy. A wide range of imported bottled beers inc. Fruit, Wheat, Trappist and German beers.

Regular Beer Festivals featuring new & rare micro brewed beers

Monday 18th - Sunday 24th June :- The Flaming June Festival - featuring summer & wheat beers from all over the UK

Festival food including a selection of British meats, sausages, cheeses & breads.

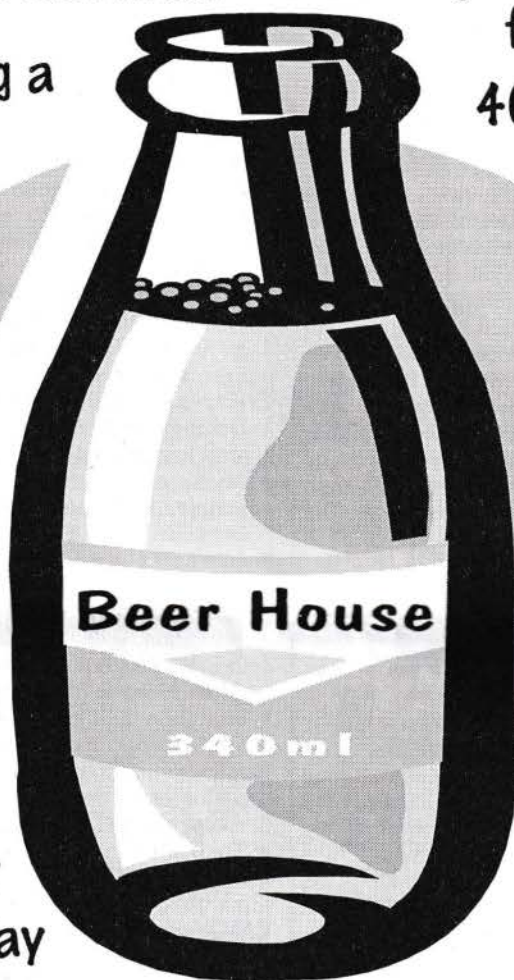
Food Served
lunchtimes
11.30 - 2
every day

Free chip buttys

Wednesday 5 - 6

Curry night Thursday

½ Price Menu Monday



40 + Real ales from UK
micro breweries

to include
a number
of wheat
and other
speciality
beers

16 Real
ales available
at any one time

For more details ring Ian or
Phil on 0161 839 7019

Function room available for free hire for meetings, parties etc - buffets or full menu available starting from as little as £1- per head
Theme nights once a month featuring promotions on draught products
Why not pay us a visit and while you're here have a wander around the rest of Manchesters Northern Quarter, with probably more choice of beers than any other area in the country !!!

MANCHESTERS PREMIER FREEHOUSE

6 Angel Street (off Rochdale Road), Northern Quarter, M/cr