

Distributed throughout Stockport;
Central, East & South Manchester;
Tameside, N.E. Cheshire & Macclesfield

Volume 18 Issue 4

OPENING TIMES

APRIL 2002 No:216

6,700 CIRCULATED
EVERY MONTH



FREE

FULL PINT FARCE

"I thoroughly applaud his campaign to make sure that the British pint is a good, honest pint." – Tony Blair, June 1997

Trade Secretary Patricia Hewitt has announced plans to break the Government's repeated promises, and manifesto commitment, to introduce full-pint legislation, *writes Ted Bruning*. Instead, she aims to enshrine in law industry guidelines recommending that every pint need only be 95 per cent liquid.

She says that publicans caught serving short pints would face fines of up to £1,000 and the loss of their licences.

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has reacted with outrage to legislation which would allow publicans—especially big managed house companies which cynically budget to get 76 pints or more out of a 72-pint cask—to continue ripping off consumers. Head of Campaigns Mike Benner accused the DTI of bowing to big business.

"The Government has been promising a full pint since 1997 and now appears to be sticking two fingers up to Britain's 15 million beer drinkers by proposing to make it legal to serve a pint that is five per cent short," he said.

"This is despite the fact that realistic proposals already exist for a 100 per cent liquid pint law."

He said the Government's decision to ditch the existing proposals had been announced even though current industry self-regulation had failed—a quarter of pints surveyed by CAMRA were short of the industry's 95 per cent guidelines. Research showed that over 80 per cent of adults thought a pint should be 100 per cent liquid, and the DTI had received complaints and support for a full pint law from over 9,000 consumers.

CAMRA is urging a mass protest against Ms Hewitt's proposal. The deadline for consultation is 1 July and in the meantime Mike Benner and CAMRA's National Chairman Dave Goodwin are seeking an urgent meeting with consumer affairs minister Melanie Johnson. CAMRA's Campaigns Department is seeking to build a united front among consumer rights groups and the trading standards community to head off the DTI's plans.

"We will...tighten legislation to ensure consumers are protected from small measures and get a full pint" – *Labour Party website*. The words "...and get a full pint" have now been deleted.

IN APRIL'S OPENING TIMES

Editors View	2	Mild - What Is It?	12
Pub of the Month	4	Challenge Entry	13
Brewery News	5	5 Years Ago	15
Manchester Matters	6	Curmudgeon	15
Stockie on the Oche	7	High Peak Pub	16
Mild Stagger	8	Macc News	17
Mild Challenge	10	Camra Calling	18
Mild - Who Brews It	11	Beer Monster	19



Making Music

Details of the entertainment on offer at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again sponsored by the Stockport Express, have now been released and we are able to bring you this exclusive preview. Along with some well established Festival favourites, this year we are bringing you some bands new to the event, all well-established professional musicians and sure to make the event go with a swing. On Thursday night A Few Good Men return to this year's festival. Unfortunately last year due to the beer running out they did not have a chance to show their full worth, so this year they are to appear on our opening night. Their music reflects their own original songs as well as cover songs. The Friday unctime session will be in the hands of the Mighty Wurlitzer, always a very popular session with the young and old. The entertainment for Friday evening will be that of The Purple Gang". One of their legendary singles was 'Granny Takes A Trip'. They have supported big name bands including Pink Floyd, T. Rex, David Bowie, Slade and Jimi Hendrix. Friday night is always our busiest session so arrive early to hear this band. Saturday lunchtime is our quiet drinkers session which has proved so popular in recent years. Festival-goers should note that from 8.30pm every night the family Room will be the quiet room for those who want to drink away from the hustle and bustle of the main hall. This proved so popular last year we aim to double the size of the room this time round.

On Saturday night The Winchesters make a welcome return to this year's festival. This band are guaranteed to make the evening go with a swing. Quite a show band, they have been a huge success on their previous Festival outings – with good music and interesting beers and ciders, why not make this your party night?

Next month we preview some of the highlights from the beer, cider and Perry on offer – and there are certainly some treats in store! Don't forget those important diary dates – May 30th, 31st and 1st June at Stockport Town Hall.



PHOENIX BREWERY

GREEN LANE, HEYWOOD, OL10 2EP TEL. 01706 627009



MORE CHOICE BETTER BEER

1998 International Brewing Awards
Wobbly Bob awarded Silver Medal



Tel/Fax: 01706 522227 Mobile: 07970 177 306

april special



maelstrom abv 5.0%

An strong pale golden coloured ale. Full malt flavours lead to an intensely bitter finish and a powerful hop aroma.

UNIT 9, CANALSIDE INDUSTRIAL ESTATE,
WOODBINE St. EAST. ROCHDALE. LANCS. OL16 5LB

IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

The Government's announcement that is to abandon election pledge to legislate for full pints has produced pretty predictable reactions. There has been much wailing and gnashing of teeth on the part of us CAMRA folk which the licensed trade, particularly in the shape of the *Morning Advertiser* and *The Publican* have been jubilant at the outbreak of 'common sense'. While it may be heresy to say this, I suspect that both consumers' (entirely justifiable) outrage and the trade's jubilation are likely to prove misplaced, and largely for the same reasons.

The current situation is that there are voluntary guidelines whereby you should get at least 95% liquid beer in your glass and a top-up should be given with good grace if requested. There is however no legal entitlement to any of this and, in busy town and city centre bars short measure is commonplace. Smooth beers and stouts frequently have a thick foaming head, which can sit atop no more than 90% liquid at best. Cask ales are often similarly dispensed, particularly in those pubs with a high turnover of relatively inexperienced staff. That's now all going by the board. In future 95% becomes the legal minimum. Top-ups will be a legal right. Has the trade (which supports these proposals) given any thought as to how all this is to be enforced? Armed at last with a legal definition of what is and isn't a short measure, Trading Standards officers will be on the prowl. So, how can your average pub avoid prosecution? Unless we are to be faced with the absurdity of glasses with a 95% line, bar staff will have to be instructed to make sure that each and every pint is effectively a brim measure with just a small collar of foam. Given that a brim-measure pint glass does in fact hold a little more 20 fluid ounces, this would to all intents and purposes result in as near as damn it that elusive 100% liquid pint. So, where does that leave your average pint of smooth or, for that matter those pubs whose regulars like a good thick head on their beer, cask or keg? Profit margins on the former are about to evaporate while the latter will only be able to keep their customers happy by investing in oversize glasses. Licensed trade militants may think they have won the battle – perhaps they have, but it could well be consumers who turn out to have won the war.

★ ★ ★ ★

You will see there's lots about Mild in this issue. With the launch of our Mild Challenge this is a good chance try some of these excellent beers if you're not already a fan. Our thanks go to both the Stockport Express for once again sponsoring this event and or the record number of pubs who have supported it by taking part.

★ ★ ★ ★

Finally – apologies to the Crescent in Salford. Gremlins last month managed to get their nest beer festival as running from Thursday 2 May to Friday 6 May. The festival does in fact run until Monday 6 May (and is always worth a visit or two, by the way).

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 216

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 CD-R, 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!



The Sixteenth

STOCKPORT BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL

Stockport Town Hall
30th May to 1st June 2002

Supporting
**ST ANN'S
HOSPICE**

5 Minutes from Bus & Train Stations



EVENING
5.30PM-11.00PM
ADMISSION £2
LIVE MUSIC
**A Few
Good Men**

100 BEERS,
CIDERS &
PERRIES-BEERS
FROM
**£1
PER PINT**
BEFORE 8PM



LUNCH
11.30AM-3.30PM
ADMISSION £0.50
LIVE MUSIC
**The Mighty
Wurlitzer**

EVENING
5.30PM-11.00PM
ADMISSION £3
LIVE MUSIC
**The Purple
Gang**



LUNCH
11.30AM-4.00PM
ADMISSION £1
QUIET DRINKING
SESSION

HOT & COLD FOOD
AT ALL SESSIONS

EVENING
6.30PM-11.00PM
ADMISSION £2
LIVE MUSIC
**The
Winchesters**

ORGANISED BY THE
CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE
FREE ENTRY
TO CAMRA MEMBERS

FAMILY ROOM
until 8.30pm
QUIET ROOM
from 8.30pm



Visit our Web Site: www.stockportfestival.fsnet.co.uk

Sponsored by The **STOCKPORT EXPRESS**

CENTRO

Always laid Back Til Later



74 Tib St Manchester N/4

Draught Budvar, Lindeboom, Hoegaarden, Belle Vue Kriek and Becks Plus a selection of American and European Bottled Beers.

**Real Ales this month from
Pictish, Hydes, Durham, Salamander,
Boggart Hole, Slaters and Beowulf**

EVERY SATURDAY

12AM - 7PM

**ALL CASK ALES £1.50 A PINT
WHATEVER THE ABV!**

The only Northern Quarter Bar serving Real Ales after midnight!

PARTIES CATERED FOR
Tel: 0161 835 2863

PUB OF THE MONTH APRIL 2002

Su M Tu W Th F Sa

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
14	15	16	17	18	19
21	22	23	24	25	26
28	29	30			



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for April 2002 is the Ash, Manchester Road on the Heaton Chapel/Norris border.

Three or four years ago, if you had walked into the Ash you would have seen very few customers, a pub that was in desperate need of a serious makeover and, behind the scenes, a kitchen that had been condemned by Environmental Health. This was the desperate situation that Jayne and Bryan Hall faced when they came into the pub two and a half years ago and took over the lease with the owners, Unique Pub Company.

Close on half a million pounds later, the Ash is a different place altogether after a root and branch refurbishment. Largely open-plan, the pub is now comfortably furnished with a dining area, vault area with pool and large screen TV for football and a sizeable function room to the rear. There is entertainment every Thursday and Friday night, it boasts one of the area's top darts teams and it has become very popular for its food.

The date on the ornate exterior proclaims the pub to have been built in 1901 but there has been a pub on this site for hundreds of years. At the back is what is now probably one of the best pub gardens in Stockport.

Having previously run the Grapes in Heaton Norris, where they also won a Pub of the Month award, Jayne and Bryan have not only reversed years of under-investment but have turned round a moribund soulless pub into a thriving local. Along with the redevelopment has come real ale again with Boddingtons Bitter and at least one guest beer on handpump.

So come along on Thursday 25 April to celebrate the rebirth of the Ash through the dedication of two highly professional licensees. There will be two guest beers on the night plus an extension until midnight. Can't afford to miss it, can you? JF.

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

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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



THE OLDHAM ALE HOUSE:

REAL ALES - REAL FIRES - REAL FOOD!

OLDHAM'S widest selection of CASK

Function Room Available

36 UNION ST. OLDHAM Tel: (0161) 620 9571



The National Scene

Cask Ale Week is to be renamed Real Beer Week. The event, which was launched last year, celebrates Britain's heritage of cask ales produced by family-owned brewers. The event is organised by the Independent Family Brewers of Britain, representing 33 companies that account for some 50% of the country's cask ale production and own just under 5,000 pubs. Planned for the autumn, the week-long event will offer customers the chance to "try before they buy" as part of an attempt to widen the appeal of real ale. Opening Times will bring you news of events in the north west as it becomes available.

Coors Brewers has confirmed that 320 jobs are to go by the end of the year following the closure of the former Mitchells & Butlers brewery at Cape Hill in Birmingham. No cask ale is produced at the brewery with 70% of production devoted to bottled Bass Ale (a brand owned by Interbrew which will now have to find a home for it). Coors have guaranteed the future of its three remaining breweries at Burton, Tadcaster and Alton, Hants.

Local Family Brewers

Apart from their regular seasonal beers, there are another two brews in the pipeline from Robinson's. Following the deserved success of Cumbria Way, initially brewed for the Hartleys estate, next month will see the launch of a new beer aimed at the company's Welsh pubs. Snowdon Bitter will be a 4% ABV beer, a touch darker than Robinson's standard beers, full-bodied and with some citrus notes in the finish. Readers won't have to travel to Wales to try it though, as a cask has been ordered for Stockport Beer Festival.

The second newcomer is Stadium Bitter, brewed to commemorate the Commonwealth Games and available from July onwards. Described as a full-bodied beer with a unique hop character, this 4.4% ABV brew will be darker than Old Stockport and slightly more bitter than Best Bitter. A similar product will also be available in bottle. Last month's news about medal winners at the International Brewers Competition held at Burton-on-Trent, omitted to mention Joseph Holt who have gained a medal for their cask conditioned mild. Which medal, Gold, Silver or Bronze will only be announced at the prize ceremony to be held at the Guild Hall on April 14th. Everyone at the brewery is extremely pleased with this result, a spokesperson close to the Brewing team, was delighted with the result and said it did not matter just what the category of medal was. Even to receive a Bronze with the competition from all over the world was quite an achievement.

Meanwhile, the installation work, followed by commissioning of the new 30-Barrel plant is nearing completion. At the end of April, the first test brew is planned to see how the new equipment is functioning. The test Brew will be for internal use only, not being made available to the public.

The first brew that will be on sale via Holt's pubs is to be Baton Bitter, another brew to mark the Commonwealth Games. Apart from the name, we currently have no details about the specification.

There's also news from Hydes' who are to launch a new chain of 'prestige' pubs. Hydes Heritage Inns is the brainchild of new board member Stephen Kalton, who has something of a history with this kind of development. His previous company, Watling Street Inns, was behind outlets such as the Governor's House in Cheadle Hulme and before that he revamped a number of Robinson's houses - readers with very long memories will recall the battle to save the Red Lion in Cheadle from an unwelcome refurbishment by Playmaster Leisure. The first 'Heritage Inn' is the Coach & Four in Wilmslow, which was due to, reopen as we went to press. In common with future 'Heritage Inns', this will feature quality fixtures and fittings, period furniture and other décor, which featured in Watling Street outlets. There will be food, Hydes' cask ales and bottled beers. Future Hydes pubs to be similarly badged include the Bulls Head in Lymm and the Horse & Farrier, Gatley.

Further to our feature last month, Brooklyn Best from Lees is now in the pubs and has turned out very much to live up to expectations.

Belying its 5% ABV, this is an easy beer to drink, combining a good body and lip-smacking hop bitterness which just demands a second pint. One to seek out, we think.

Micro Magic

As ever, our local micro-brewers continue to come up with a range of new beers.

At Heywood, Phoenix Brewery have St George's Ale (ABV 4.3%) out in mid-April while at the end of the month (and running throughout May) theirs is the welcome return of Black Shadow (4%) and Mayflower (4.4%). Near neighbours, Pictish of Rochdale are also reprising a favourite from last year, the Strong (5%), pale gold and very bitter Maelstrom.

There are no new beers to report from Bolton's Bank Top, and there has been a temporary hitch in the two Commonwealth Games beers (Boneshaker and Spitting Feathers) we reported last month, although both are still expected to appear.

In Moston, Boggart Hole Clough Brewery is now producing a monthly special and for April this is Onyx Ale, a 4.9% light mild, brewed with our Mild Challenge in mind, so look out for it in those Challenge pubs offering guest milds. Boggart brewer Mark Dade tells us that, much to his surprise, the current biggest seller is the powerful Steaming Boggart. At 9% this isn't a beer to be trifled with (and 18 gallons have been ordered for Stockport Beer Festival!). The brewery is now bottling and Steaming Boggart is one of four beers that have been bottled so far, virtually all of which have been 'exported' to Yorkshire and the North East. Hopefully, the beers may also appear in Carringtons (Didsbury and Chorlton) - we'll let you know if they do.

Up in Nangreaves, the Leyden Brewery is producing Gold Rush, a 4% pale bitter which is selling very well. At the end of the month, Brendan Leyden will also be doing a beer swap with Bushy's Brewery on the Isle of Man, with 100 gallon going each way. Bushy's beers aren't seen over here that regularly so it will be good to have them making an appearance in the local free trade.

5

CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

The Old Glove Works

CASK ALE BAR & EVENT SUITE

Top 6 1999 Cask Ale Pub of The Year

UP TO 6 EVER CHANGING CASK ALES

Open every day - from midday

(Please note our closing times:

Closed from 8pm Mon & Tue; 11pm Wed & Thurs;

Midnight Closing on Fri & Sat, 10.30pm Sun

No Admission after 10.45pm)

Food Available:

12 - 2pm Mon - Fri

5.30pm Friday - Hot

Roast Muffins

Live Entertainment:

Thursdays 9pm

Sundays 3 - 6pm



Resident DJ 8pm
Friday & Saturday (60s, 70s, 80s)

PRESENT THIS 'AD'
BETWEEN 12 - 3PM ON SUNDAYS
FOR ONE PINT OF ANY CASK ALE
FOR £1

Event Suite for Your Special Occasions
2 Outdoor Riverside Drinking Areas

Riverside Mill, George St
Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 8AY
01457 858432



MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

The phone rings. "My name's Derek Adams and I'm phoning about your articles on pubs with signs saying they sold real ale when they don't." Yees...? "Well, mine's the other way round - when I put real ale in, I forgot to put up signs saying so!"

And so it proved to be. The pub in question is the former Bird in Hand on Oldham Road, Miles Platting. A former rough house, long since closed and boarded, the pub has now been reborn as the **Ace of Diamonds** and is now a very pleasant place to drink indeed.

Derek is in fact a demolition contractor with a yard at the back of the pub and he initially bought the place to knock it down. He was however persuaded that in the right hands it might actually have potential as a pub and, being very much a beer fan, he decided to have a go. It's been completely refitted and with strictly enforced over-25's only and no swearing policies Derek has also succeeded in making the Ace of Diamonds a safe and pleasant place to drink.

On the beer front there are three on handpump. Thwaites Bitter is the staple and this is accompanied by two changing beers from the Saddleworth Brewery at Uppermill - possibly the only regular outlet for these beers outside the Church Inn where they are brewed. When I've called these have been the new Jubilee Bitter (4.4% and very tasty) and the powerful (5.4%) Shaftbender, which is like a stout.

"I'm trying to turn it back into what I remember pubs being like," says Derek, and so far I'd say he's succeeded. The pub, which is open all day, is only a short bus ride (number 83) from Oldham Street and so is arguably the latest addition to the famous Northern Quarter crawl (and hence its inclusion in this column).

Other City News

In the City Centre we await the opening of the latest Wetherspoons this month. This is the **Waterhouse** on Princess Street and, given the building it occupies, it could perhaps be the best of their City Centre outlets. Of course, speculation has inevitably turned to what impact this will have on the neighbouring **City Arms** and **Vine**. Both major on lunchtime food but both are rather more expensive than your average Wetherspoon pub. Time will tell, I suppose.

Elsewhere there's not much to report in the City Centre. Cask beer (in the form of Kimberley Ales) looks to have gone from **Courtneys** on

Parsonage Gardens and an elaborate, but keg-only, Irish theme bar has opened in the Printworks (I won't dignify it with a name-check). Bass, or whoever they are today, have put the keg-only **Bar 5** and **Bar 10** up for sale. There's also an "All Enquiries" sign on the **Crown**, Deansgate which appears to be up for grabs again. In the right hands this ought to be a very successful pub indeed and it's something of a mystery to me why it keeps failing.

A pub most certainly not failing is the **Marble Arch** on Rochdale Road - this is now open on Sundays and has also introduced a new food menu. I know from experience that the food here is always worth trying so another early visit looks to be on the cards.

Out and About

Rumours of a new Wetherspoons in Fallowfield (in the development opposite Revolution) and they've also been looking at sites in Withington, apparently. No immediate developments, though. I also paid a belated visit to Longsight and Levenshulme and found it a generally dispiriting experience. The **Bay Horse** remains keg and this has been joined by **O'Connors** which has reverted to its former name, the **Spring Bank Tavern**. By far and way the high spot in Longsight was the **Sir Edwin Chadwick**, one of my favourite Wetherspoon outlets. It's obviously very well run and for some reason manages to have a more pubby atmosphere than many Wetherspoon pubs. All the cask beers are just 99p, including the guests and the food is equally good value. Where else can you get a mixed grill for £4.49? Further south both the **Midway** and **Farmers Arms** are to let, but still open. The former had what appears to be a disused handpump for something called 'Clarinbridge Bitter' while the Farmers, which not long ago had a sign in the window advertising the presence of Lees Bitter, is also now all keg. As are the **Little Vic** and **Hennigans Bar**. The **Church** is the same, despite the presence of pumpclips suggesting otherwise.

The **Horseshoe**, which appears to have been recently redecorated (and very nice it looks too) still has real ale in the shape of John Smiths Cask. And a surprisingly tasty pint it was as well. However the **Railway** is both for sale and keg only while the **Union** was actually shut. There is however a glimmer of hope in the shape of the **Pack Horse**. Now run by the Levenshulme Pub Company, Holts Bitter has been installed. Admittedly this was a bit tired when I tried it but full marks for taking the plunge - let's all hope this is a success.

I couldn't take any more after that and headed home. Let's hope there's better news next time.

THE ROACH TWINS Band

ANTHOLOGY ALBUM

Titled

BLUES FROM THE COBBLES

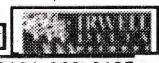
19 of your favorite songs on a superb double CD

Priced at 12 Pounds (including p+p)

Cheques payable to Irwell Delta Records
PO BOX, 192, MANCHESTER, M38, 9XB

Also available from Piccadilly, Records, 51, Oldham st, M1

Gig info Kings Arms, Bloom St, Salford. 0161 832 0167



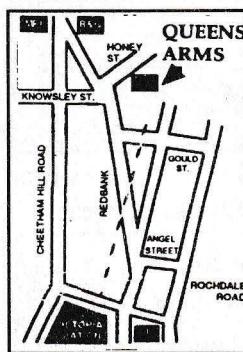
Dave and Sue Welcome You To THE QUEENS ARMS

HONEY STREET, CHEETHAM

Try the fine range of beers supporting
independent brewers in their excellent free house!

Bantam Bitter £1.25 a pint,

Open: 12 noon - 11.00 p.m. Monday - Saturday
12 noon - 10.30 p.m. Sunday



Beer Garden

Families Welcome

Hot & Cold Food

We're in the
Good Beer
Guide 2002!

0161 834 4239



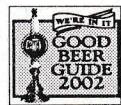
THE CASTLE

OLDHAM STREET, MANCHESTER
NOW SERVING THE **COMPLETE**
RANGE OF ROBINSONS CASK BEERS!

Old Stockport Bitter, Best Bitter,
Hatters Mild, Dark Mild, Frederics,
Old Tom and Hartleys XB and

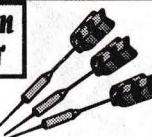
Cumbrian Way
re-introducing....
Stockport Arches
(4% abv)

A WARM WELCOME IN A TRADITIONAL PUB



Stockie on The Ache

By John Taylor



As we enter the final stages of this season's Stockport Licensed Houses Darts and Crib Leagues, nerves are starting to set in.

After two great wins last month, Reddish WMC narrowly won their next two matches 4-3 against sides in the bottom half of the table. First up were the Sidings who were finally beaten with late wins by captain Jeff Pearson with legs of 20 & 25 and his third 180 of the season, and Dave Beckett (22 & 23). The following week they won at home on the final leg of the match against the Nursery Inn, and that was after the visitors had been 2-0 up, with Andy Proctor in great form going out in 20 & 19. Jeff Pearson was again the saviour for Reddish winning in 20 & 24; prior to that he had been supported by Mick Allen who hit two legs of 20 darts and Pete Day Snr (20 & 21). If this team goes on and lifts this year's Super League title it will of course be very well deserved, but it's safe to say that they won't be one of the great championship sides that have entertained Stockport vaults over the years. One thing this side has got is seven very good players and an excellent belief in themselves; that whatever happens they will always find four winners on the night. They were very unlucky to suffer their only two defeats this season, against their biggest rivals - present champions Royal Mortar and their predecessors the Ash Hotel, whose team previously played out of the Nicholsons Arms.

The Mortar also won on the final leg of their match against the league's fourth placed team, the Magnet. The two Petes, Woodin and Connolly, had earlier put the champs 2-0 up, but the Heaton Norris side hit back with wins for Geoff Millward, Derek Higgins and Tommy Cooper (24 & 20). Tony Daniels then levelled the scores and the final pairing saw Darryl Fitton take on the Magnet's Dave Tracey. Darryl took the first leg in 14 darts and also hit his

sixth 180 of the season; Dave hit back going one better in 13 darts; Darryl then won the final leg in a nail-biting 24 darts, and more importantly two league points.

The Ash Hotel's great escape came in deepest Brinnington, at the Jack & Jill. The visitors went 3-0 up with wins for Dave Adshead (23 & 22), Gary Townley and John McArdle, but then the Jack hit back through Mark Smith, Pete Sim-Mutch (19 & 23) and young Mark Matthews, who took the scalp of Cheshire player Paul Yates, to level the scores at 3-3. It was left to Brinnington old boy Ray Matthews (23 & 26) and a 180 to win it for the Ash.

At the other end of the table, the Royal Oak seem destined for at least one season in the Premier Division, with just six matches left they are four points adrift at the bottom of the league. As to who will be relegated with them is anyone's guess, with just eight points separating the next seven teams. The Super League table is as follows:

Team	Pld	Won	Pts	Crib
Royal Mortar	20	18	36	33
Reddish WMC	20	18	36	26
Ash Hotel	20	17	34	31
Magnet	20	15	30	30
Bobby Peel	20	14	28	28
Printers Arms	20	11	22	37
Nth Reddish WMC	20	8	16	29
Club Leisure	20	7	14	26
Wembley	20	6	12	34
Nursery Inn	20	6	12	29
Moss Rose	20	6	12	28
Jack & Jill	20	6	12	27
Sidings	20	5	10	27
Royal Oak	20	3	6	35

Hot off the press - the Royal Mortar defeated Reddish WMC 4-3 in the semi-final of the team knock-out. Details of that match and the other semi between the Ash and the Bobby Peel to follow in May. Well, that's it for another month. See you soon - John Taylor



LETTERS OPENING TIMES

From: Dave Nunn, Hazel Grove

The first letter published in OT is potentially libellous. The words ALL and HAZEL GROVE were never used in my 'pondlife' letter last year. The letter was intended to comment on racist dialog heard frequently in pubs in Stockport and beyond. There was some perverse idea that because I frequented certain pubs I was writing about those regulars. Almost all have listened to my point of view and a few hand shakes have been exchanged.

The Brown's comments were designed to raise awareness of the class of real ale.

Comprehension of English is required. Please read.

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

The Waters Green Tavern



96 Waters Green,
Macclesfield,
Cheshire SK11 6LH
Tel: 01625 422653

opposite the Railway Station

Ever Changing Guest Beers
including: Phoenix, Roosters,
Oakham, Abbeydale, Pictish
and many more...

Your Hosts Brian and Tracey

Bar Meals Served Mon to Sat Lunch
This is not a free house



THE CRESCENT

SALFORD - 0161 736 5600

OPEN ALL DAY, EVERY DAY



10 Cask Ales Always Available including
HYDES BITTER, ROOSTERS SPECIAL,
PHOENIX THIRSTY MOON
Plus 8 guests including a mild

Erdinger on Draught, Liefmans Kriek
+ Quality Doubles Bar

Regularly changing BELGIAN Guest Beer

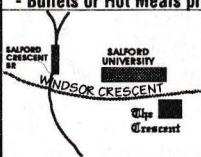
NEXT CRESCENT BEER FESTIVAL
THURSDAY 2 TO MONDAY 6 MAY

(More details Next Month)

LIVE FOOTBALL ON ITV DIGITAL

Food Served Every Lunchtime from 11.30am (12 on Sun)
Free Chip Barrels Mondays 5 - 6pm
Wed 5 - 8pm Choice of 6 curries (Veg & Meat) + Rice £3.20

Function/Party Room available for FREE hire
- Buffets or Hot Meals provided on request

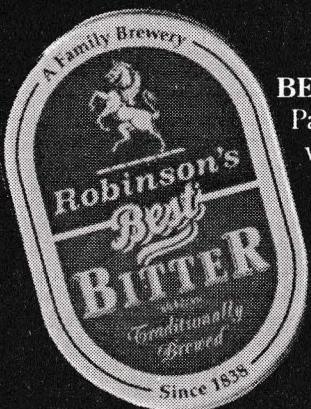


TV & GAMES Room
Open for darts and table football



Robinson's

COMPETITION



BEST BITTER
Pale and bright
with a full bitterness
derived from choice
aroma hops

In the first of our series of monthly competitions, we're offering you the chance to win a copy of *The History of Robinson's Brewery*, a superb full colour hardback book charting the development of the Stockport Company, signed by the three current directors.

To enter, all you have to do is answer the following two questions.

1. To what ABV is Best Bitter brewed?
2. What is Robinson's seasonal beer for March and April?

ROBINSON'S

Send your answers by the end of the month to: Robinson's Competition, BHA, 94 Churchgate, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 1YJ.
Or by fax to 0161 477 0809 or e-mail info@barryhook.com
Normal competition rules apply

MILD STAGGER

with John Clarke

Going Mild In Stockport

This month's Stagger is a crawl with a difference. Reflecting the Mild theme of this issue and looking forward to the Mild Challenge, this is a tour round some classic local pubs with the aim of trying a different mild in each one. So, here we go... If you're going to start a pub crawl anywhere, it might as well be in CAMRA's National Pub of the Year and so there was a good turnout at the **Nursery**, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Regular readers of OT will by now be very familiar with this classic, unspoilt, multi-roomed 1930's gem. Even at 7.30 in the evening the pub was busy. Four Hydes beers are sold – Jekyll's Gold and the current craft ale (Styrian Spring at the time of our visit) on handpump together with Bitter and Mild on metered electric dispense. Of course, **Hydes Mild** (ABV 3.5%) was the beer here – a mid-brown beer with a malty aroma and taste followed by a dry finish. As you might expect it was on fine form.

From there it's only a short(ish) walk downhill to the **Moss Rose** on Didsbury Road. Architecturally a million miles from the Nursery, it's been described as the ugliest pub in Stockport. That may be, but inside it's a thriving, well-run local with an excellent atmosphere. The beer's good too – Hydes' again this time Bitter and Light, both on electric pumps. **Light** (ABV 3.5%) is another mild from Hydes and, as its name suggests, is a pale session beer with a good malt-hop balance.

A longer walk now to the **Crown**, Heaton Lane. This multi-beer freehouse is now a firm favourite on the Stockport pub scene. It retains much of its Victorian multi-roomed layout, complete with no-smoking room, and is also making a name for itself as something of a live music venue. For many, though, the main draw is the constantly changing range of guest beers – up to 10 at a time and all invariably on top form. There are pumps dedicated to beers from Whim, Bank Top, Phoenix and Pictish breweries and another reserved for a mild. Tonight this was **B&T Shefford Dark** (ABV 3.8%) from Bedfordshire. This is a well-balanced beer with a sweetish, roast malt aftertaste and, like the two previous pubs, was rated very highly indeed.

You can't do a pub crawl in Stockport without meeting Robinson's and so from the Crown it was just across the road to the **Pineapple**. A comfortable, locals' pub, the Pineapple feels as though it should be tucked away in the suburbs, but here it is, just off Mersey Square. It's surprisingly big, too, with two lounge areas and a large games room at the back. Robinson's Best Bitter and Hatters are on electric pumps and in addition Cumbria Way was on handpull. Robinson's have recently dropped the 'mild' tag from **Hatters** (ABV 3.3%) but it's still the same beer – another light mild with a refreshing dry, malty flavour and aftertaste. It's an excellent example of the style so let's all hope the slight name change leads to an upswing in sales.

If this Stagger had been run a few weeks later, the next stop would have been the **Swan With Two Necks** on Princes Street. Another popular Robbies pub and another 1930's gem – and for the duration of the Mild Challenge selling the rare **Robinson's Dark Mild** (ABV 3.3%). This is Hatters darkened with caramel and is only regularly sold in a handful of pubs. The caramel lends a sweeter, richer dimension to the beer, which is extremely more-ish.

The next actual stop was after a walk up Lancashire Hill to the latest addition to the Stockport real ale scene. This is the Beartown Brewery-owned **Navigation**. In the short space of time since it was bought by the Congleton brewer, this pub has become a firm favourite with locals and itinerant cask ale lovers alike. There are always six cask ales on offer, rotating throughout Beartown's extensive range. This includes two milds, one of which is always on sale. The weaker of the two is **Ambeardextrous** (ABV 3.5%) a dark, rich ale which belies its relatively low strength. A rather different proposition is **Black Bear** (ABV 5%), a dark brown beer

with roast and malt flavours leading to a mellow, sweetish finish – and which just goes to prove that ‘mild’ doesn’t always mean ‘weak’. It was Black Bear we had tonight, and again it was a beer at the top of its form.

Another walk now, downhill thankfully, to the **Railway** on Great Portwood Street. Another micro-brewery tied house, this time belonging to the Porter Brewing Co of Haslingden. Another Pub of the Year, too, having just been voted local CAMRA Pub of the Year for 2002. It sells the full range of beers produced by eponymous brewer Dave Porter, and enthusiastic licensee Alex Lord ensures quality remains high. There are up to eight cask beers on sale here but the beer of choice was **Porter Dark Mild** (ABV 3.3%), a true dark mild with a slight maltiness and a good hint of roast in the finish. It was so good, we had to stay for another and finish the night here.

There are few parts of the country where a Stagger such as this would be possible, so endangered is traditional cask-conditioned mild. In Stockport, though, this was just the tip of the iceberg, with many other pubs selling the beer. It would easy to be complacent and that’s where the danger lies. Mild sales continue to decline – it really is a case of ‘use it or lose it’, or perhaps that should be ‘drink it or sink it’.

Buxton Jubilee CAMRA Beerfest

**Friday 17th May 1900 - 2400,
Saturday 18th 1200 - 1700, & 1900 - 1am**

Pitch Marquee, Buxton Football Club Ground, Silverlands, Buxton

Live band on each night with music until 1130pm

£7 ENTRY FOR EVENING SESSIONS

(includes 2 drinks, engraved glass, band)

£1.50 ENTRY TO SAT AFTERNOON SESSION -

childrens fairground rides, brassband, burgers, football games (world cup fever time), etc..

All proceeds in aid of local charities & BFC youth teams.
OVER 20 DIFFERENT REAL ALES.....

Jayne & Bryan welcome you to

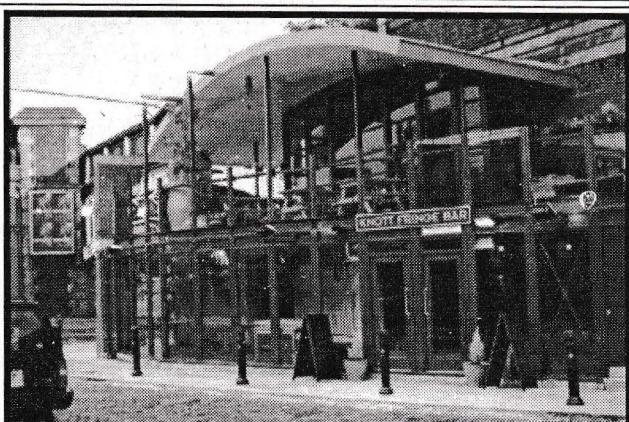
THE ASH HOTEL

232 Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel 0161 476 0399

- ★ An Extensive Menu of Freshly prepared Meals 7 days a week
 - Sunday to Friday 12 noon till 7pm
 - Serving till 9pm Saturday(20% Discount Every Monday & Tuesday for Senior Citizens)
 - ★ Fantastic Function Suite for Parties of 30 - 120 for all types of Function, Party or Conference
 - ★ Large Patio, Garden & Children's play Area
 - ★ Huge Car Park
 - ★ Traditional Vault Area
 - ★ Entertainment Every Thursday & Friday night
 - ★ Licensed Thursday, Friday & Saturday till midnight
- LOCAL CAMRA PUB of the Month APRIL 2002



Fine Cask Ales including
Boddingtons and Ever Changing
Guest Beers



**K
N
O
T
T
F
R
I
N
G
E
B
A
R**

**IT'S NOT
BAR FRINGE -
IT'S
KNOTT
FRINGE BAR**

The Uniquely Civilized Bar on Deansgate

(underneath the Railway Arches)

**5 Handpumps:
Beers From
Phoenix,
Boggart Hole,
Marble Brewery &
Regional Guests**

PLUS

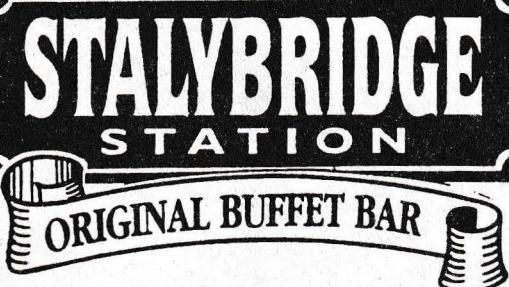
St Louis Kriek, Draught Hoegaarden & small range of Belgian Bottles Imported Draught Krombacher

GUEST FOREIGN BEERS and ever expanding range of bottled German Beers including Augustiner, Fruh Kolsch & Schneider Aventinus

Food Served 12 - 8

**K
N
O
T
T
F
R
I
N
G
E
B
A
R**

9
CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE



BANK HOLIDAY REAL ALE EXTRAVAGANZA

*Up to 10 Beers on Pump

THURS 2 ~

~ MON 6 MAY

UP TO

60 ALES



featuring

RECENT BREWS

ONE OFFS

FESTIVAL SPECIALS

FOREIGN BOTTLED BEERS

SCRUMPIES & PERRIES

SAT: BREWERYANA SALE

JAZZ, FOLK
MORRIS & BRASS

HOME COOKED FOOD
always available

NO CHARGE FOR ADMISSION



STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER

MILD CHALLENGE 2002

Following the success of last year's competition, we have once again teamed up with the Stockport Express to bring you another Mild Challenge, and again we have stretched our wings to include parts of Manchester and Salford along with a few other pubs further afield. The previous Challenges have been a great success and if you haven't taken part before, try and have a go this time. It's fun and it's easy. It's also a chance to visit some new pubs, try new beers and, of course, to win some great prizes.

The Challenge runs from Sunday 6 April to Sunday 12 May and offers everyone taking part the chance to win something. All completed entries will receive either a free entry ticket for the 2002 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival or, if you're a member of CAMRA, a voucher for two free pints of mild at the Festival.

We are also again featuring the Mild Challenge Extra - visit a participating pub in 12 different areas, using the headings shown on the card, and you will win a special Mild Challenge T-shirt; visit all participating pubs and you will win a specially engraved pewter tankard.

This year we are also especially grateful to Robinson's for enabling us to offer an extra-special prize: every completed entry will go into a draw and the first 10 pulled out will win a visit to the brewery to see how the famous Hatters is made. Too good to miss out on? Definitely! So, what do you have to do? It's easy...

First, get a card. All participating pubs have a stock or you can use the version printed on pages 12 & 13 of this issue of Opening Times. Additionally you can get one from the Mild Challenge address: 39 Fox Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9EL

When you buy a pint or a half of cask mild in one of the pubs taking part, ask the bar staff to stamp your card. Remember, though, you can only get one stamp from each pub.

When you've filled the card (you'll need 12 different stamps from 12 different pubs) send it to the Mild Challenge address on the card and, after our closing date, we will send off your prizes.

Simple isn't it? Happy Drinking!

DIDSbury DOINGS

New licensees at the Royal Oak in Didsbury are Hazel and Robert Long, who have come from the Carter's Arms in Sale. They have some fifteen years experience in the licensing trade with the last eight years spent running Banks's / Marstons pubs. Their plans for the pub are business as usual but Banks's bitter is to be dropped due to poor sales, background music is to be introduced to give the pub a more convivial atmosphere at quiet times, and Sky sports on television is to be introduced for major sporting events. The next guest beer to go on will be Morrells Graduate a 4.8% ABV beer now brewed by the Thomas Hardy Burtonwood brewery in Dorchester, Devon.

Nearby at the Fletcher Moss in Didsbury the assistant manager Lesley Clayton is to become the licensee of her own pub. Hydes brewery have offered her management of the Vine Inn in Nantwich, she takes over from Monday 22 April. We wish her and her husband well in their new venture.

The former Griffiths DIY shop in Didsbury that Wetherspoons attempted to buy to turn into a pub (but were refused permission by the local magistrates) now looks set to become an M & S food store.