



# OPENING TIMES



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JUNE 2002 No:218

6,700 CIRCULATED EVERY MONTH

FREE

## FESTIVAL FROLICS

Despite competing with the Bank Holiday, World Cup football and gloriously sunny weather, the organisers of Stockport's 16<sup>th</sup> Beer & Cider Festival are celebrating a comfortably successful event.

Record breaking Thursday and Friday night sessions made up for smaller than expected crowds on Friday and Saturday lunchtimes with the end result that the numbers attending fell just 37 short of the predicted 4000 crowd.

Not only that, but careful husbandry of the beer and cider stocks meant that even when the Festival shut at 11pm on Saturday night there were still more than 20 beers and over a dozen ciders and perries to choose from.

Festival organiser Jim Flynn was particularly pleased with this. "I was disappointed that the beer ran out early last year although there was nothing we could do about it at the time. This time we had plenty of stocks to last and I hope to see a bumper crowd on Saturday night next year." Jim also took the opportunity to thank not only the numerous festival sponsors, including the Stockport Express, licensee Steve Brannan of Ye Olde Vic, but also the many CAMRA members who gave up their time to help staff the event. "With over 120 volunteer staff we were able to make sure the festival was both well-run and policed. I was particularly proud of the fact that even at the busiest sessions no-one had to wait very long to be served."

Customer feedback was also very positive, with a particular number of compliments about the quality of the beers on sale.

### Beer, Cider & Perry of the Festival

It is now traditional for the festival's customers and staff to vote for their favourite beers, ciders and perries. It is equally traditional for the votes to be very close and this year was no exception.

On the beer front, third place was shared between Simmer Dim from Valhalla Brewery in the Shetlands and Old Freddy Walker, a powerful old ale from Moor Brewery in Somerset. Second place went to Alba, an unusual strong ale from Heather Ales of Strathaven, near Glasgow. The winner, though, was the magnificent White Amarillo from the Durham Brewery, a crisp, hoppy beer in the classic Durham style. With cider and perry, there were a number of highly commended entries including Minchew Blakeney Red, the French Bermond Cider from Normandy, Barker's Perry, Hecks Bramley with Honey and Ralph's Dry Cider.

The winning cider, though, was a long-time festival favourite, Yarlington Mill, made by Dennis Gwatkin of Abbeydore in Herefordshire. The winning perry has also picked up awards before but this was the first award at Stockport. This went to Hendre Huffcap made by Hecks of Street, Somerset. Congratulations to all concerned.

Tuesday 6th August 5pm-10.30pm £6  
 Wednesday 7th August 11.30-3pm £2  
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This year's Great British Beer Festival takes place from 6th-10th August at London Olympia. This annual celebration of Britain's best beers is not to be missed with its great pub atmosphere, huge selection of beer styles as well as live music on each day. This year sees a wide variety of musicians including Humphrey Lyttleton, Paul Jones and Dave Kelly from the Blues Band as well as brass bands and string quartets, so there really should be music to suit all tastes. Pub quizzes, tombolas, pub games, wandering entertainers and auctions also provide entertainment throughout the festival. As well as a huge selection of ales, there is also cider, perry and some of the finest beers from around the world including real lagers. The choice can be overwhelming with over seven hundred different beverages on sale but fortunately we provide tasting notes for many of the beers to help you make your selection and our knowledgeable bar staff are also able to provide guidance. There is a fantastic selection of food available at all times to help soak up the alcohol. If you wish to bring children there is a Family Room for under 18s with entertainers and games, however supervision must be provided by a family member.

### Win a FREE trip to the home of Czech beer

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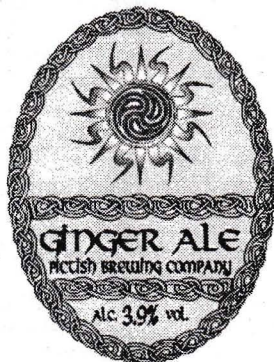


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**IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..**

It's BRICKBATS and BOUQUETS this month. First, many thanks to all those who made this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival such a success. Due to the unusual circumstances this year, running it on an extended Bank Holiday weekend and against the background of the World Cup, it was always going to be difficult to predict how the festival would fare.

However you, our customers, did us proud with two record evening sessions on Thursday and Friday. Many thanks to all of you, we couldn't do it without you. See you next year!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Let's be clear, we are 100% behind Manchester hosting the Commonwealth Games. The city will be on the international stage and will be able to showcase everything it has to offer to the thousands of foreign visitors and journalists who will be descending on us.

Well, almost everything. Amongst other things, Manchester is one of the country's great brewing centres. Yes, indeed. It might not be able to match the huge volume of beer that comes out of Burton but it does have the biggest concentration of family brewers anywhere in the UK. Hydes, Holts, Lees and Robinson's keep alive a tradition that has all but vanished in many parts of the country. Take in the north west as a whole and you can double that number. These old brewers are also complemented by a huge number of new micro brewers, ranging from small pub-based operators to substantial enterprises like Phoenix.

Yet not one of these companies can legally associate itself directly with the Games. What could have been a county-wide celebration of the Games in the region's pubs (another of our great assets), enthusing locals and entertaining visitors alike, has been passed up. Instead the lacklustre Boddingtons Commonwealth Ale is being made available in just 200 outlets in the north west. Boddington's of course is owned by Interbrew, based in that well-known Manchester district of Leuven (that's in Belgium, by the way). Whilst accepting the need for sponsorship to enable the Games to make money, it beggars belief that a deal has been struck in terms which, for our local brewers at any rate, make a mockery of what is one of the Games' great strengths - their inclusiveness.

*John Clarke*

Hands up all those of you who were able to take advantage of Chancellor Gordon Brown's generous duty cut on the price of a pint of micro-brewery brewed beer for Her Majesty's Jubilee Weekend. Er...I'm sorry, can't see any raised hands...., come on, SOMEBODY, surely... ..well in fact no. Although I, like you, am sure that the duty cut will happen, it certainly did not happen in May, nor will it in June. July, maybe. And what benefit will you get? Well probably very little. Leaving aside the fact that 83% of beer consumed in pubs is factory produced (and not eligible) and that 11% of the rest is brewed by the Regionals (Robbies, Hydes, Lees, Holts and their ilk) - and not, (sadly) therefore, eligible; the remaining 6% of micro-brewery (eligible) beer, most of which is drunk by the sort of discerning consumer who reads OT, is largely drunk in pubs owned by companies who are pocketing the entire price cut. Hopefully, it WILL be good for the micros, who can now compete on price with the chemical factories (eg John Smiths) for the pubco business, but the amount of saving you and I will see? Basically - nada!

*P.B. Hutchings*

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

# PUB OF THE MONTH JUNE 2002

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30



## The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for June is the Grapes on Castle Street, Edgeley.

In these days when pubs are being themed, branded or otherwise made over, it is the plain, simple community local which increasingly remains the backbone of cask ale and the traditional pub spirit. In many ways the Grapes sums this up to a tee. A straightforward two-roomer, knocked about a bit perhaps thirty years ago and apart from a lick of paint now and again, largely untouched since, the Grapes succeeds when many industry 'experts' will tell you that it should have no future.

There's no food, no children's play area, not even a beer garden. The cask beer range is just mild and bitter, albeit Robinson's Hatters and Best always served in top condition. So what's the secret of the Grapes' success?

Community spirit is the answer. While the night-time visitor might find the pub quiet, at lunchtime and in the afternoons and right through to early evening the Grapes attracts a loyal, lively crowd of regulars who appreciate the simple and continuing qualities that this pub has. Great beer and efficient, welcoming staff are part of the equation but most of all it's down to the names over the door. Last month Dave and Sandra George celebrated 25 years at the helm of the Grapes and it's down to them that the pub has remained its plain, solid, welcoming self while so much of the nearby pub scene has changed, often for the worse.

Continuity like this is well worth celebrating - join us when we present this well deserved award on Thursday 27 June, from 8.00pm.

JC.

The Grapes is at the Stockport end of Castle Street. Numerous buses including 313, 28, 11, 309, 310, 369 and 371 will drop you nearby.

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.

## CAMRA PRESENTATIONS

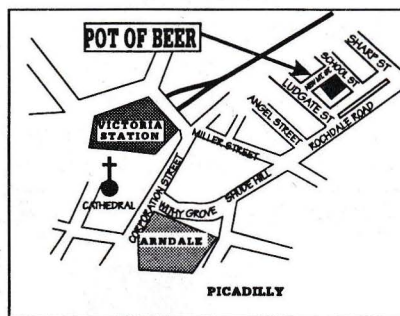
Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA (The Campaign for Real Ale)'s last two Pub of the Month awards were presented to Vinnie Burke and Irene McEwen (right) of the Royal Mortar on Hillgate in May, and to Jayne and Bryan Hall of the Ash, Manchester Road, Heaton Norris (below, with Stockport Beer & Cider Festival Organiser & local CAMRA stalwart Jim Flynn - on the left of the photo), both great evenings in two good local pubs. CAMRA locally campaigns vigorously to support all that is best in the licensed trade, and these presentation nights allow for a good time to be had by members, and the pubs' regular customers.



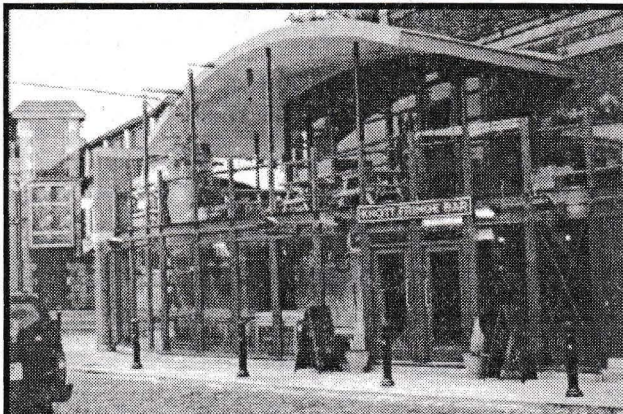
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## A BELGIAN EXPERIENCE

**R**elaxing in Le Trappiste with a glass of De Koninck, Antwerp's finest ale and served in its distinctive glass, watching the bustling crowds outside, soothed by the jazz wafting in the background within, you begin to envy the Belgians and their stylish bar culture. The efficient staff, moving from table to table, taking an order for a speciality beer here (a Trappist ale perhaps, or possibly a lambic fruit beer), and an order for food there, from the traditional Croque Monsieur to an a-la-carte special, only serves to reinforce this impression. Le Trappiste, though, is a Belgian bar with a difference, not least due to the fact that it's on Greenwood Street in Altrincham.

Yes, really. Le Trappiste opened its doors on 17 May and is very much the brainchild of Wayne Reece, who has already made an impression on the town's drinking scene with his stewardship of the Old Market Tavern, which he continues to run.

In fact Wayne had previously considered converting a former bar in the Market Tavern's cellar into a Belgian-style operation but instead decided to go for a completely separate venue. He'd had an interest in the Greenwood Street property for some time and trialed a Belgian night there some 4½ years ago, although only recently did a lease become available on the right terms.

The bar, designed to operate as an authentic Belgian café-bar, operates over three levels, the ground floor supplemented by two mezzanines. Pale lemon walls, exposed brickwork and mellow colours make for a sophisticated yet relaxed atmosphere. The Belgian theme is enhanced by wall mounted references to Tintin and Poirot, old beer adverts and, upstairs, a growing gallery of 'old masters'.

In true Belgian fashion, table service prevails, with no standing permitted apart from a small area near the bar for those waiting a free seat. Another authentic touch is the combined beer and food menu, the latter ranging from traditional snacks like Croque Monsieur (essentially an upmarket ham and cheese toastie) to superbly executed specials (and always including a vegetarian option). Wayne has taken great pains to get the food just right and this now accounts for some 40% of Le Trappiste's sales.



The main emphasis, though, remains the beers. Even though booking is now required on most nights, and particularly at weekends, those wishing to book a table and just have a few drinks are as equally welcome as those wishing to eat.

There are two cask ales, with Taylor's Landlord likely to be a permanent feature, alongside six Belgian beers on draught - La Chouffe, Timmerman's Peche, Liefman's Kriek, De Koninck, Westmalle Dubble and La Trappe Blonde. These are supplemented by a bottled beer list including all the monastery-brewed Trappist beers (with the exception of the very rare Westvleteren), the famously sour and acidic lambic beers from Cantillon and numerous other Belgian specialities, all served in the appropriate glass. In common with the best Belgian bars the beers are presented for the customer to pour personally.

The aim is to expand the range, and for those beers that come with rare or expensive glasses, customers will have to 'pay' a deposit in the form of a shoe, which will be hoist aloft in a lobster pot!

While Le Trappiste is very much Wayne's baby, the day to day operations are in the very able hands of licensee Deirdre Zube, an American who came to the UK when her husband was transferred here by Motorola. Her affable outgoing style and the very efficient staff have made Le Trappiste an almost overnight success, particularly with its target 30-plus age group. This can only increase when the outside street is pedestrianised and the big windows folded back on fine days. Get there soon - but don't forget to book ahead at weekends.

JC.

Le Trappiste is at 40 Greenwood Street, Altrincham. Book on 0780 175 8282. Opening hours are 12-3 and 6-11, Monday, Wednesday, Friday; 12-4 and 6-11 Thursday and Saturday; 12-5 Sunday. Food is available from 12-3 and 7.30-10 every day.



## BREATHE IN AND OUT ...AND IT FEELS FLUFFY

### Judging CAMRA's champion cider and perry

If you've ever been to Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, you'll know that we really do like our cider. That's why we hosted CAMRA's National Cider and Perry Championship for four years from 1998 to 2001. But we always knew we couldn't hog it forever, and this year it was the turn of the Reading Beer & Cider Festival to take over this important event. Rhys Jones went along to see how it went...

A fine spring day, with warm sunshine and a light cooling breeze - what perfect conditions to enjoy cider in a meadow. Now Reading's never struck me as the most characterful of places, but the King's Meadow is a welcome green space between the station and the river Thames, and it is here that Reading Beer & Cider Festival pitches its tents.

One large marquee houses the beer, cider, and main stage, while there's a smaller tent for "overflow" drinking and to serve as the "quiet room" when bands are playing, and a number of food concessions scattered around outside. The long bar in the big tent is quite a sight - the longest continuous bar in Britain, claim the organisers - and when I arrive, 50<sup>th</sup> or so in the Saturday opening time queue, the substantial area devoted to cider and perry is already well populated by well-known faces on the cider scene, both sides of the bar.

The programme promises cider and/or perry from 36 different producers, including a massive 16 perries. For the moment, a number are withdrawn from sale to conserve stocks for the final round of judging. Even so, there's more than enough to go at, and I try some perry from the seldom-seen Worcestershire maker Barkers. A very pleasant drop - if this has failed to make the final judging, the judges should have some real treats in store. Soon enough, I'm "volunteered" to join the final judging panel for cider. Six ciders, five people - mainly CAMRA cider activists from hither and yon, including festival organiser Andrew Lord, with technical assistance from industry expert Andrew Lea. The first couple of samples poured found us a quiescent crew - brows furrowed, scores and comments dutifully noted down, but not much interaction. Sample no. 3, though, really got us talking - an elusive but complex aroma led to a fascinating, full-flavoured drink which, despite being the sweetest so far, held a teasing balance that kept on board those of us who prefer our cider dry. Tongues loosened by this splendid stuff (which would prove to be the championship winner), from now on the banter flowed fast and loose. A classic overheard phrase was "breathe in and out and it feels fluffy" (a description of the fault in cider fermentation known as "mouse"), while the cry "Happy Guy Fawkes Night" greeted a disappointingly sulphurous sample.

A little time to reconsider the first-tasted samples, then it was time for final verdicts. Judging forms were handed in, and some quick and efficient secretarial work from the ever-helpful Reading team came up with the all-important results:

#### CAMRA Champion Perry of Britain 2002

1. Minchew Blakeney Red
2. Hindlip Sweet
3. Hecks Hendre Huffcap

#### CAMRA Champion Cider of Britain 2002

1. Gwatkin Yarlinton Mill
2. Cornish Orchards Medium
3. Burrow Hill Sweet

Released from my duties, having helped to judge the cider finalist I was eager to try the winning perry. Kevin Minchew's products hardly ever disappoint, and this example of Blakeney Red was up to his highest standards. Now it was time to take a broader look at the range, and pretty impressive it was. Fans of Welsh or East Anglian ciders will have been disappointed - I gathered there had been difficulties, as there often are, in assembling the full range desired. But other regions were well-represented, with a particular strength in Cornish ciders, very welcome as they seldom seem to make it east of the Tamar. Three producers were previously unknown to me, of which one - Cornish Orchards - won silver in the cider class, while the splendidly dry Wick Court perry from Gloucestershire, though not amongst the winners, is something I shall certainly look out for in future. The ciders were well presented, the programme notes were useful, and staff helpful and well-informed.

Any criticisms are really little more than nit-picking, but it was a bit of a blunder not to have any ABVs (alcohol content) displayed; and the smartly printed cask cards unfortunately used too large a font size to accommodate the longer producer names, so that Lower Whiddon Farm appeared as "Lower Whiddo" - there's still something to be said for low-tech, hopefully legible handwriting!

Those of us involved in Stockport Festival's cider bar over the years can be proud of our achievement in showing that CAMRA's cider and perry championship could be successfully run at a regional festival. I do envy Reading their spacious outdoor setting, and they made a great job of it. I'm sure the decision to hold the judging at Reading next year can be no more than a formality, and I'd urge all cider and perry fans to get there for a great time. It'll take place over the May Day Bank Holiday weekend, and the final round of judging will be on the Saturday.



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**No-Go Games**

**T**he Commonwealth Games are arguably the high point of Manchester's history over the past 100 years, putting the city well and truly in the international spotlight. It is ironic then that the region's brewers have been forbidden from joining in the celebrations to mark this momentous occasion.

Many local brewers were planning beers to mark the Games. These plans have now either been scrapped or changed following the intervention of Peter Tomkies, the 'Brand Protection Manager' for Manchester 2002 Ltd, the company charged with delivering the Games on budget.

To meet this budget, use of the name and logo has been sold to a variety of sponsors, and as far as beer goes the purchaser is Interbrew in the guise of Boddingtons at Strangeways. The result? The only commemorative beer is the frankly uninspiring Boddingtons Commonwealth Ale, which resembles little more than a 5% version of the standard brew. It will be available in about 200 outlets - hardly making for a region-wide beery celebration of the Games.

As for the other brewers? To quote Tomkies in a letter he has sent to CAMRA:

"...We must insist that breweries do not undertake any activity or produce any material that creates an association between the ...Commonwealth Games and their company or products"

While making the perfectly valid point that use of any trademark etc owned by the Games should not be used, he then tightens the screw with the words:

"In addition they must ensure that the promotion and marketing of their beers does not create any association with the Commonwealth Games either directly or by implication"

This is all backed up by the implied threat of legal action against any brewer which dares infringe these stringent restrictions. Luckily, some of the region's brewers are effectively getting round this nonsense by coincidentally producing beers that just happen to have non-committal, vaguely sporting, themes. Hence next month you will be able to enjoy Lees Sprinter, Robinson's Stadium Bitter and Holt's Baton Bitter. Don't also overlook the new beer from Boggart Hole Clough Brewery celebrating a local woodland sprite, 'Common Elf'.



**Family Favourites**



Holt's are on the move, with a £6 million investment earmarked for new pubs, refurbishments, the introduction of hot food to nine outlets and improvements to the Derby Brewery. One pub has already been bought, in New Moston, and a former bank in Bury is being converted into Wyldes, due to open this summer. On the beer front, Baton Bitter and the stronger Baton Gold will be out soon and further special beers are being planned. These include Edward's Amber (in memory of two Edward Holts) and a stronger winter ale, Thunderbolt. Early 2003 may even see a bitter brewed with honey.

Hydes current seasonal is Red Admiral, featuring hops of the same name. It's a pale copper, 4.4%, refreshing bitter. Ideal for the early summer and one of the best craft beers so far. Hydes also surprised everyone by producing a one-off beer to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee. This was Gowd'n Reign, a pale gold, fresh, light beer brewed with three hop varieties. Very drinkable it was too, especially when you consider it had an alcohol content of 6.8 per cent!



Robinson's currently have Young Tom as their seasonal and next month this will be followed up with Stadium Bitter. Also out now is the new Snowdon Bitter brewed for the company's Welsh estate, but also available elsewhere - Opening Times tried it in

Stockport's Swan With Two Necks. A darkish, 4 per cent beer, it slightly resembles a souped-up version of Hatters, but is none the worse for that, being refreshing and easily drinkable. There's no reason why it shouldn't emulate the success of Cumbria Way.

Robinson's are also plunging into the export market. The brewer has won an order to supply beer to 40 Italian bars with 300 firkins (9-gallon casks) of Frederics. This follows an enthusiastic response to the beer earlier this year at the Rimini Trade Fair. Robbies joined forces with five other independent brewers to clinch the contract, which sees each brewer get a two-month slot during the year.

This could be just the tip of the iceberg and if all goes according to plan, there could be an on-going listing of Frederics in over 100 bars and restaurants around Italy next year. Old Tom is also likely to be available there next year after an equally enthusiastic reception at the Rimini event. Marketing Manager Oliver Robinson has been out to Italy to sample the quality of the beer being sold (it's a dirty job but someone has to do it!) and has been very impressed with what he found, with great pains being taken to get both the condition and the temperature of the beer just right.

The United States is also a new export market for Robinson's with a deal recently clinched to ship 3,000 cases of bottled beer into

*Dave and Sue Welcome You To*

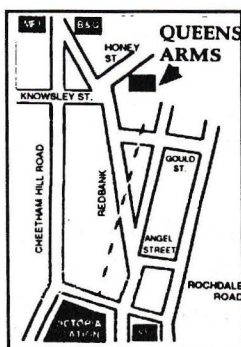
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Old Tom and Hartleys XB and**

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**plus....**

**YOUNG TOM &  
SNOWDON ALE**

*A WARM WELCOME IN A TRADITIONAL PUB*



America over the next 12 months. A report in the trade press featured a reception at the UK consulate in New York with representation from several UK brewers. Robinson's seemed to particularly hit the spot with Old Tom but also featured a new bottled beer, Northern Glory.

### New Brewery for Salford

Richard Bazen, former brewer at Bridgewater Brewery and latterly Phoenix, has left the latter (on amicable terms let it be said) and is now poised to set up his own brewing operation.

Bazens' Brewery will be based in Salford and as we went to press Richard was examining premises on Muslin Street, which is behind the Crescent pub (handy as an informal brewery tap).

First indications are that this is promising and if all goes to plan, the next step will be to have the 5-barrel plant constructed. Richard already has a friend of a friend who works as a stainless steel fabricator lined up for this. The aim is to have something that very closely resembles the Bridgewater Brewery layout. Casks have also already been ordered.

The aim is to move quickly once the premises have been signed for, so, if all goes to plan the first beers could emerge by the end of July. Beer names are still being worked on but Navigator will be back and Richard is also looking at a 4% blond beer, a 4.5% premium and a 5.5% special bitter. These will be supplemented by seasonal beers as trade develops. Will the wondrous (and award-winning) Delph Porter also make a return? OT is in close contact with Richard so hopefully there will be more news next month.

Apologies to all concerned for the lack of micro-brewery news this month - pressures of time and space prevented us from doing it justice - look for our bumper round-up next time!

## MINISTER'S HOURS REFORM PROMISE

**C**ulture Secretary Tessa Jowell has reaffirmed the Government's commitment to licensing reform in England and Wales.

Speaking at the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference of the Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers, Ms Jowell recognised the contribution of the pub trade to the economy and reassured it that the Government would fulfil its promise to reform licensing laws.

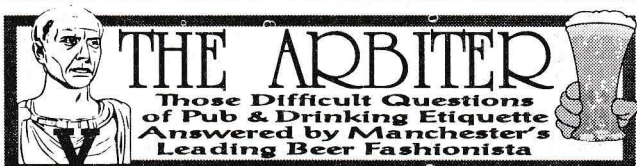
Ms Jowell said: "Pubs are at the heart of our communities. They bring a great deal of enjoyment and social contact to people of all ages. They are also vital for the generation of new employment opportunities that breathe life into communities. Sales of alcohol of around £30 billion each year generate duty and VAT that buys our country's schools, roads, and hospitals and puts policemen on our streets.

"But our licensing laws speak for another decade not our own. I am determined that we deliver on our promises and bring forward our new proposals to modernise our licensing laws as soon as possible." The promised changes to the current licensing regime would see up to 24-hour opening subject to consideration of impact on local residents, a single liquor and public entertainment licence, and the transfer of licensing from magistrates to local authorities.

Ms Jowell said the problems of disorder and disturbance associated with fixed and artificially early closing times would be eliminated.

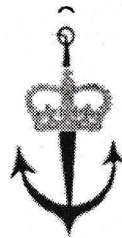
The proposals would also allow children unlimited access to pubs and bars subject to the licensee's discretion, and Ms Jowell stressed the importance of allowing children to understand and experience alcohol in a controlled way.

"By failing to modernise and by allowing strict Edwardian laws to deny children real access to the world of pubs, we have made a rod for our own backs," she said.



**THE ARBITER**  
Those Difficult Questions  
of Pub & Drinking Etiquette  
Answered by Manchester's  
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The drinks are on us this month as we offer *Opening Times* readers the chance to win a tray of **Hartleys XB** in 500ml bottles. Meanwhile it's congratulations to Mr R Elder of Midlothian who won a copy of *The History of Robinson's Brewery* in our April quiz.



To enter this month's competition, all you have to do is answer the following two questions.

1. What are the two predominant colours of the Hartleys XB pump clip?
2. In which Cumbrian town is Hartleys based?

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](mailto:info@barryhook.com)  
Normal competition rules apply

# STAGGER

with Mark McConachie

## Ladybarn, Fallowfield and Rusholme

It was the eve of the Muslim Eid festival weekend so I knew that the latter part of our foray would involve a fair amount of carnival activity and lively crowds. By contrast, our start point was the calmness of Green Street in Ladybarn.

The White Swan is located just off Mauldeth Road in the village's centre; it's a large 1930's Robinson's house (that was originally a Kay's Atlas Brewery house) that has a sizeable beer garden and some interesting external features, like the 'Outdoor Dept.', still visible. Internally much has changed, a tiled corridor takes you to the front two rooms which are reasonably intact; left is a darts room, right a plusher room; the corridor then opens out into the main part of the pub complete with large bar. Toward the rear of the bar is a pool room and a small, separate vault. The sole cask offering on the large bar was Robbies Best which we reckoned was in fair nick.

Off then to Ladybarn Lane and the ex Talbot, now rejoicing in the name Peninsula. Completely restyled internally, it is a far cry from the tired and care-worn pub of old. Rich autumn and berry-fruit hues combine with a melange of furniture styles from bentwood chairs to leather sofas. It is now an L-shaped, fairly open space that seems to work very well. Could this be the new sophisticated face of Ladybarn? Designed to appeal to a young market, there were two surprises in store for us - Wadworth 6X and Black Sheep bitter on handpull! A pleasant surprise came following the ordering of the latter - it was only £1.60 a pint. Now I call that a reasonable price given the surroundings and the expectations of such an establishment. Only the Black Sheep was tried and that was found to be a most reasonable drink. A slap on the back to all concerned for having the guts to try cask ale here, well done.

Over next to the Brewers Arms - the subject of a campaign in these pages against pubs with misleading signage. Here, the sign stated it sold Cask-conditioned ales yet there were none on sale inside. As we had made an appointment beforehand to talk to the licensee about this, we were expected. Good news came out of all this with some cask beer expected on sale in the near future (*and has now arrived in the shape of Tetley Bitter. Well done! - Ed(1)*).

The Derby Arms is just off Ladybarn Lane and over the last few years has been a trusty seller of Holts bitter. Not so tonight though, and apparently for some time too, as the pub is now keg. Our mid-point meeting place was the Friendship (Hydes) on Wilmslow Road. This is a large, high-set Victorian pile with a beer patio out front to enable drinkers to interact with the fast-paced goings-on in one of the busiest parts of Fallowfield. Inside, the pub was very busy with students, locals and football followers - the three customer types who typify the Friendship. Football plays a large part here, what with large-screen television and an association with Man. City, I believe. Refurbished some years ago, it appears to be wearing well; with a front and side lounge area, and a back vault-cum-darts area surrounding a reverse J-shaped bar.

VINNIE, IRENE AND STAFF WELCOME ALL TO

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SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS



**SERVING ROBINSONS ALES**

DARTS - TUESDAY NIGHTS - POOL



Three Hydes beers were on sale this evening, the Light got above average marks; the Bitter was average to good, whilst the Jekylls came out only average. The pub usually sells one of the Hydes seasonal ales but there was no sign of it this time.

A veritable bus garage of pubs and bars followed all without a drop of cask ale between them. These include XS, Orange Grove, Revolution, Robinski's (It's a Scream!), Queen of Hearts, Scruffy Murphys and Sofa; apologies to any keg outlet that I may have missed from this list. It had begun to rain and sleet heavily so we dashed across the road and decked on to the first city-bound bus we encountered. A short half-mile ride later we decked-off again at Platt Lane to sample the pub delights of Rusholme.

Hereabouts, Wilmslow Road only offers pubs that are keg, thus we gave Hardy's Well (good looking pinball machine in there, though), the Huntsman, and the Clarence the miss and went straight to the Welcome just off Dickenson Road.

This is a Greenalls house which thrives upon tradition - traditional pub layout, albeit with some slight opening out; traditional beer in the form of handpulled Greenalls, Tetley and Worthington bitters, plus Bass; traditional music in the form of a rootsy-folksy duo (or was it a trio?) strumming-up in back corner; and most of all a traditional clientele - a good cross-section of people covering all age groups. There are three areas to the pub - a vault for cards and TV, a long lounge broken into two parts for relaxed chatting and drinking, and the stand-up bar area festooned with signed monochrome photos of the stars of entertainment who once plied their trade at the nearby Dickenson Road BBC TV studios (now gone). It is great to see this place is still alive and thriving, long may it remain so. The cask beers were on fine form, especially the Bass, whilst the Tetley and Worthy were deemed agreeable.

So, off into the sleety night and across a thronging Wilmslow Road alive with Eid celebrants and the smells of Asian cuisine to the

Albert (Hydes) on Walmer Street. Here, two beers awaited our sampling - Hydes bitter and Jekylls Gold, both were comfortably on above average form. The style of the Albert was described by one of our number as being "still Irish to the heart", and I do not think anyone could disagree with that sentiment; a two-room, no-nonsense boozier that enjoys a trade from folk who shun the garishness and flounce of newer pretenders for the simple pleasures of a friendly back-street local where talk and good company are the order of the day.

On our final leg now and on to Claremont Road to find that the Nelson (ex Lord Lyon) has been done up in fine style but no cask ale - this place used to sell Holts some years ago. Another keg pub, and a very quiet one too, was Whitbread's Sherwood. Turning tail, we enter Victory Street and pass the Gardeners as it too does not sell cask beer, to drop into the Osborne House another Hydes house, this one standing hard by a newly built mosque. Upon entry a lateral bar divides the pub into front and back areas - front vault and snug, some booth-type areas to the side and reasonable-sized lounge facing you. The decor has a comfortable lived-in appearance that immediately settles one in to an easy frame of mind and ready for the Hydes Mild and Bitter that are on offer. The former gained good marks, whilst the latter walked away with the beer of the night title. Well done the Osborne.

All in all a good stagger, with beer quality being generally average to good which beats previous sojourns to these parts. As it turned out the Eid festival had no effect on our crawl, as seemingly, there were far fewer revellers and they were better behaved. This made their night of celebration a far more pleasant experience for all.

**Apologies to Dave Preston who should have been credited with the by-line on last month's Bramhall & District Stagger, but by some electronic error appeared to have been penned by our dear own Ed(1). Sorry Dave.**

## MILD CHALLENGE NEWS



With Mark McConachie, Challenge Co-ordinator.

**W**ell, that's another year's Mild Challenge over with then - and together with a mammoth pub entry of 83, we've had a great response from you, the drinkers.

108 people entered the challenge, of whom a whopping 84 completed the Challenge Extra (for the T-Shirt) and 13 individuals went on to do all 83 pubs to be awarded the special Tankard (I completed my 83 on May 3rd). Well done to you all.

My grateful thanks go out to all 83 participating pubs and their staff for hosting the challenge; to Hydes for sponsoring their pubs; and to Robinson's for hosting the brewery visit prize winners. Special thanks to licensees who went that bit farther - like Peter Wood at the Lowes, Denton who brewed Jet Amber especially for the event; to Steve Brannan at the Olde Vic, Edgeley who persisted with some interesting beers despite low sales; and the guys at the Nelson, Stockport who were so enthusiastic about the whole thing.

For 2003 we plan some changes to make the challenge both more interesting and more fun. Added to the Challenge Extra and Challenge Ultra (all the pubs) we are thinking of adding Challenge Super for doing 36 pubs, say. There will be some new prizes to be had too, so look out for news nearer the event. My advice is to get training now in preparation for next year's event. So get supping some mild!

### CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 218:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Chris Walkden, Mark McConachie, Rhys Jones, Phil Levison, John Taylor, Peter Edwardson, Chris Wainwright, Frank Wood, Tom Lord, Tim Jones, John Cresswell, Stewart Revell.

**COPY DATE FOR THE JULY 2002 ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS JUNE 28**

## LETTERS OPENING TIMES

From Bob Mason, Gee Cross:

*Just a note to say how enjoyable doing the Mild Challenge is - not that I need an excuse to visit the many excellent pubs which we are lucky to have in this area!*

*I decided to make my Challenge a bit different this year by just having milds from the micros and/or guest milds - no sneaking the odd Robbies just to get a stamp. In fact no Holts, Hydes or Lees either - I drink enough of theirs during the rest of the year! Twelve excellent pubs and many pints of excellent mild - Beartown Ambeardextrous (Navigation), Porters Dark (Railway), Moorhouse Black Cat (Sportsman), Phoenix Monkey Magic (Buffet Bar), Theakstons (Nelson), Ossett Dark Ruby (Olde Vic), Bank Top Dark (Crown), Greene King (Smithfield), Swale (Beer House), Uncut Amber (Marble Arch), Dark Island (Lass O'Gowrie) and Jet Amber (Lowes Arms). Compliments to all the above on their excellent ale.*

From John Hesketh, Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar:

*Feedback from your Mild Challenge. This is just to let you know the results of us joining in the Challenge for the first time.*

*Plenty of customers asked for cards and plenty of 'trail followers' have visited from near and far.*

*My regulars, who expect a mild to be available at most times, have tried the more rare milds, provoking positive reactions and discussions - surely the real point of the exercise! The following milds have been on offer during the last five weeks: Hanby - Black Magic Plus (4%), Hart - Aquarius Mild (3.9%) Moorhouses - Black Cat (3.6%), Burton Bridge - XL Mild (4%) Cottage - Mild (4%), Paradise - Marbury Mild (3.8%) Belvoir - Mild (4.2%), Eccleshall - Monkey Magic (3.4%) Buffy's - Mild (4.2%), Fisherrow - Klondyke 60/- (3.5%) Leyden - Picador Mild (3.6%), Phoenix - Mayfly (4.4%) Fisherrow - Stalybridge Dark (4.9%), Leadmill - Marehay (3.8%), Bryson - Midland Mild (3.5%), Beowulf - Cimmerian Mild (3.6%) Rudgate - Ruby Mild (4.4%), Beechams - Mild (4.5%) Wolf - Mild (3.7%)*

*And they've all been drunk! In fact the current total of different guest beers served during the last five-plus years stands at just over 3,800.*



# MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

**T**his month, I'm just concentrating on three items of good news – the usual general round-up will return next time. First – there's great news from the **Brewers Arms** (Ladybarn Lane, Fallowfield) where landlady Tracy Maun tells me that cask beer has now been installed. As the pub has been keg-only for some time, they are starting off with Tetley Bitter, one of the better mainstream beers and which should hopefully wean the locals back on to the real thing. I know that Tracy is very much a beer fan and all being well this could be the start of greater things at the Brewers. More power to her elbow, say I.

## C&A Back On Top

There's also a double helping of good news from the City Centre. The **Crown & Anchor** on Hilton Street has been a favourite amongst beer drinkers for many years, although in recent times it's been very much living on past glories. As these words were typed there was still a 'To Let' sign on the wall but that should be coming down now as the pub was in fact taken over by new tenants on 13 May. The tenants in question are Gordon McTear and Don Bremner who have the Enterprise Inns pub on a 21-year lease. Both are keen beer fans with a long record in the trade and their stated aim is to restore the pub to its place on the local real ale scene. In this they are being ably assisted by bar manager Roy Griffiths, who has been at the C&A since last October and has some 25-years experience in the trade. The first thing they did on taking over was clean the place up (carpets, seating and kitchen were all steam-cleaned) and redecorate in traditional style. It's certainly fair to say that the pub now looks brighter and more welcoming than it has done for some considerable time. The outside is also due to be re-signed and re-lit in the near future.

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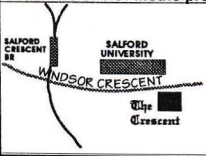
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Function/Party Room available for FREE hire  
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The beer range is restricted to the Enterprise Inns list but since this features between 60 and 70 cask ales at any one time, this is no great burden. Boddingtons Bitter has been relegated to keg-only status ("its proper place", says Gordon) and plays just a supporting role to four cask beers. These will remain more or less fixed at Taylor's Landlord, Adnams Bitter, Black Sheep Special and Fuller's London Pride. There may be the occasional change (on a recent visit Bateman's XXXB had replaced the Landlord) and they are willing to accept suggestions for possible guest beers.

Apart from the beer, the Crown & Anchor now offers quite a tidy little food operation. The menu runs from cold and hot sandwiches, snacks, light meals to bigger meals from the chargrill and old favourites like Chilli. Vegetarians are catered for and an interesting addition is a selection of small items ranging from Italian meatballs in tomato sauce, a bowl of spiced olives, tiger prawns with garlic butter and hummous – 12 in all which can be ordered singly at £1.75 or three for £4.95. Food is currently available from 12 to 3 (ish) although after the World Cup it will also be sold in the evening.

Another feature is 'laid back Sunday' which sees the pub opening from 11am for breakfasts and brunches (the bar of course doesn't open until midday). There will also be a no-charge cash-back machine available.

It all sounds like a recipe for success, and so far the signs are good with plenty of trade evident on my subsequent visits. Highly recommended.

## New Life in the Lass

Another City institution back on the way up is the Lass O'Gowrie on Charles Street. The new manager is Chris Nagy who took over in April. Chris has plenty of experience in the trade both as licensee and also on the brewing side – he used to run the Minerva brew-pub in Hull.

The pub itself is due for a refurbishment in the not-too-distant future but will remain largely unchanged, as will the enterprising guest beers on offer. The major changes, though, are downstairs in the brewery.

The Las O'Gowrie has been brewing since 1983 and as such is one of the longest surviving 'new wave' brewpubs. Unfortunately for most of that time the beers, LOG 35 and LOG 42, haven't been much to write home about, despite selling in large quantities. All that has now changed.

When Chris took over there were clear problems with the brewery and he called on the assistance of Keith Bott from Titanic Brewery who confirmed the presence of a yeast infection. The brewery was therefore closed and completely cleaned out.

Starting with a clean slate, Chris has dropped the names LOG35 and LOG42. In fact LOG35 has gone completely. The new LOG42 is in effect a different beer: full-bodied, but lighter in both colour and body, and with a good bitterness and plenty of hop character. It's a 4.1% beer and is now called Lass Ale. Chris says it was inspired by a beer sold in the pub in 1860. It's very drinkable indeed (as I found to my cost one night) and it is intended to supplement this with further beers.

There may be a second permanent beer in the 5 per cent region but there will certainly be a number of specials and seasonal beers. A formal 'relaunch' is planned for August when Chris hopes to have as many as four house beers available as a mini 'own beer festival'. I asked Chris what the future was for all this, as the pub is owned by Laurel Pub Co. It seems that they are very supportive indeed. The aim is to get the brewery up to capacity and it may even supply other Laurel pubs. The duty cut has helped, too. You won't be seeing the price of the beer come down, but the added financial return it brings has helped secure the brewery's future with the Laurel management.

**HELP HOLD BACK THE NITROKEG TIDE!  
JOIN CAMRA (PAGE 19) & DRINK REAL ALE**



**REMEMBER!  
IF IN DOUBT -  
ASK IF IT'S CASK**

