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Robbies Pubs and Brewery Celebrate First Class Beer

An awards night at Marple's Ring O'Bells last month saw four pubs in the Opening Times area pick up awards in Robinson's Bar & Cellar Awards. At the same time, the brewery itself presented with a CAMRA award for its contribution to quality cask beers.

Robinson's in-house Bar & Cellar Competition is now in its fifth year and this year was remarkable in that four of the five award winners came from the Marple area. Every pub in Robinson's estate is entered in the competition which sees impromptu cellar visits, and additional marks awarded for beer quality, presentation and bar appearance. Those pubs making it through to the finals are subjected to a further visit by Head Brewer Chris Hellin and Marketing Manager Oliver Robinson where scores out of a possible 300 maximum are awarded. At the awards night, Production Director David Robinson explained that just three points separated this year's top three pubs, such were the high standards. In third place, with 294 points, were Peter and Gail Brady from the Admiral Rodney in Prestbury who particularly impressed the judges by the good work Peter does in difficult cellar conditions.

Second place went to last year's winners, Steve and Jan Healy of the Railway, Rose Hill, with a score of 295 point and just missing out on two consecutive wins by one point. The Railway was also the only pub to score 100% for a perfect cellar.



This year's winning pub is the Ring O'Bells itself, run by Murray and Marjorie Johns. Their score of 296 included a 100% score for beer quality. Commended by David Robinson for "oozing quality management in the way they look after the pub", Murray made a generous acceptance speech which took care to thank everyone involved in the running of the pub. This award topped of a good year for the pub, Murray having previously picked up a British Institute in Innkeeping Licensee of the Year award.

A further award was made to the pub with the most improved cellar and this went to the Devonshire Arms in Mellor which also achieved a perfect score for bar appearance.

Cask Champions

After the winning pubs had been presented with their prizes, Stockport & South Manchester Branch Chairman took the stage to make a special presentation to David Robinson and Chris Hellin. Explaining that the branch's Cask Champion Award was not presented every year, John made the point that this year Robinson's were clear winners. CAMRA sought to promote cask beer and the best way of doing this was to make sure that every pint was a good one. The Cask Champion Award is given to organisations, pubs or breweries making a particular impact on cask beer quality in the Stockport and South Manchester areas and, since the advent of the bar & Cellar Competition, the high quality of the beer leaving the brewery was now matched by the beer served in many more Robinson's pubs. Another factor in the award was the introduction of a range of quality seasonal ales, which added to the interest of the beer range in those Robinson's pubs that stocked them.

Accepting the award, David Robinson thanked CAMRA for its support over the years and commented that these days CAMRA and Robinson's were very much singing from the same hymn sheet.

RAILWAY ON TRACK

For the second year running, a Stockport pub has made it to the finals of CAMRA's National Pub of the Year competition.

Last month news came through that the Railway, Portwood, was one of the final four pubs bidding for CAMRA's ultimate pub accolade. Having taken both local and regional pub of the year titles in his stride, Railway licensee Alex Lord was stunned at this latest development. "I just don't believe it", Alex told OT, "this really is fantastic news."

With a full range of Porter Brewing Co's superb beers, guest beer at weekends, traditional cider, a wide range of foreign beers and excellent home-made food, the Railway really does have plenty to offer and this latest success is fully deserved. This is a view shared by Porter Brewing's Dave Porter. "Obviously I'm elated at the recognition for what we do at the Railway. What we do, we aim to do very well and I'm delighted at the pub's success."

As last year, the Stockport pub is the only urban pub in the finals, the other three being The Swan, Little Totham, Essex; The Plough & Harrow, Monkash, Glamorgan; The Albert Tavern, Freuchie, Fife. After last year's win for the Nursery, will lightning strike twice in the same place? He deadline for judging is December 31 with the results announced during CAMRA's National Pubs Week which runs from 22 February to 1 March.



Our pictures show: above right; David Robinson with Marjorie and Murray Johns of the Ring O'Bells and their awards; above OT Editor and Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA branch chairman John Clarke flanked by (left) Robinson's brewer Chris Hellin and (right) David Robinson with their Cask Champion award.



A MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS

SPECIAL FEATURE ON LICENSING REFORM - PAGES 3-4

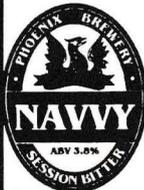
(Contents listing can be found on page 2)





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MORE CHOICE BETTER BEER



2002 International Brewing Awards
Gold Medals for Navy and Wobbly Bob

IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

Well, licensing reform is with us at last. Let's not kid ourselves, though, that it's all going to be plain sailing. The legislation will doubtless be subject to considerable amendment before it hits the statute books, and it has to be said that so far it not exactly perfect. Many publicans are concerned that the transfer of licensing control to local authorities will lead to an increase in costs and red tape. This is a difficult one to call. Certainly the system needed reform – in this day and age people quite rightly expect regulatory regimes to be transparent and accessible, and not only to just those who own and run pubs, but also to those who use them and who live in the communities in which they are located. It is unclear that what is proposed will achieve those objectives. Furthermore national guidelines need to be enforced to prevent local politicians grandstanding or acting in an oppressive manner. Having said all that, licensing has been in the hands of Scottish local authorities for some time with no adverse effects. Many trade figures would like control to remain with the magistrates and it has to be said that if licensing benches had shown a willingness to radically reform to allow greater access and transparency then they would perhaps not have been sidelined as is currently proposed. Perhaps it's not too late for them to grasp this particular nettle.

Other aspects of the proposed legislation are certainly questionable. The abolition of drinking up time will force every pub to apply for an extension to their hours, simply to maintain the status quo. And the proposal that children should be allowed unaccompanied into those pubs which choose to admit them is, frankly, bonkers and a recipe for disorder. Indeed it is difficult to imagine any reputable licensee signing up to that particular proposal.

Despite the obvious or perceived flaws in the proposals, the fact that at last something is going to be done about our antiquated licensing laws is to be applauded and is a welcome Christmas present for all pub-goers.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

And on that festive note, all that remains is for me to wish all our readers, advertisers and all those licensees who take OT in their pubs, a very happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.

John Clarke & P.B. Hutchings

IN DECEMBER'S OPENING TIMES

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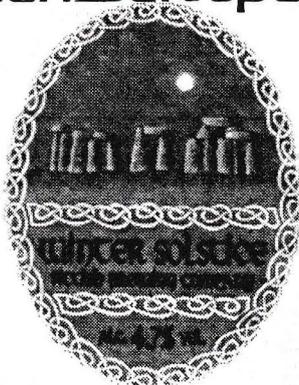
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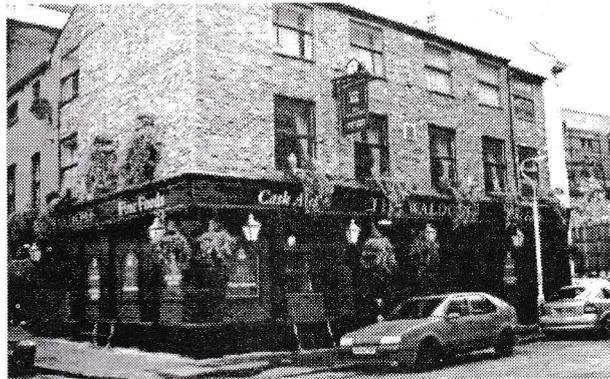
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| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | MERRY CHRISTMAS | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | HAPPY NEW YEAR | | | |



Manchester City Centre is increasingly dominated by bland mega-pubs and soul-less bars dispensing bottles to the undiscerning on weekend evenings. It is pleasant to be able to recognise the achievement of a pub that defies the trend, serving a varied community in all the ways that a true town centre community pub should. The Stockport & South Manchester Branch Pub of the month for December 2002 is the Waldorf on Gore Street, a stones-throw from Piccadilly.

In the capable hands of Wayne Nuttall for the last seven years, first as manager and latterly as tenant, the Waldorf has survived the many changes in the area (including the ever-expanding Malmaison hotel opposite, and the appearance of the "superpubs"). Throughout it has been a beacon of comfort and quality, serving an ever-excellent pint of Taylor's Landlord, and three other ales, which change regularly, though one will almost always be a 'brand' beer for those who know nothing better. There is a very popular lunchtime food menu available Mondays to Fridays, a function room (with a late license for those organising functions), and the pubs character changes several times a day, as different groups come and go. Live sport is shown on a large projector screen, and there are numerous social events based around the pub, which while basically one room, is well divided into distinct well-furnished comfortable areas, all served from a central bar. Wayne has this month taken on additionally the nearby Crown & Anchor on Hilton Street, which he hopes to run in a similar style. It should prove a success.

All in all the Waldorf a thriving classic town centre pub, doing all the main things well. Why not join us the evening of the 17th (a Tuesday) for what should prove an enjoyable and convivial evening. There is a 192 stop opposite and the mainline station is a couple of minutes away.

PBH

PLEASE NOTE THE EARLY DATE - AND DIFFERENT WEEKDAY

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

OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING

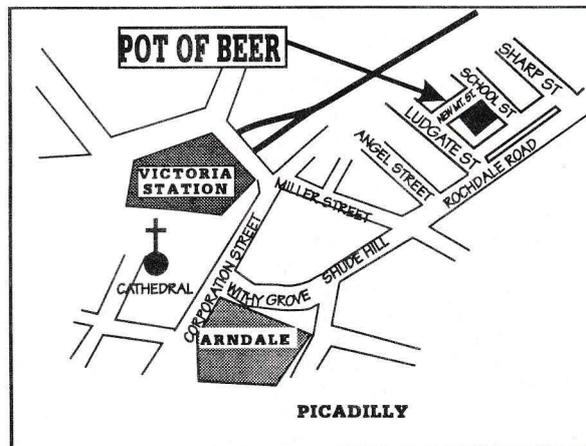
ADVERTISING RATES: 1/8 page (60mm x 85mm): £30; 1/4 page (120mm x 85mm): £50; 1/2 page (horiz: 174mm x 120mm; vert: 250mm x 85mm): £85; Full page (175mm x 240mm) £140. Surcharges apply for back page. Discounts available on adverts of 1/4 page or above for runs of insertions. Advert design & origination usually free of charge unless large costs involved. Ring 0161 477 1973 for details. Artwork should be submitted as hard copy (positive bromide) or PC COMPATIBLE (NOT MAC) *.eps, *.tiff or *.cdr (Corel Draw versions 3, 5 or 7 - please state which AND you MUST include hard copy back-up).

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LICENSING REFORM - THE FACTS

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LICENSING LAWS

As they are about to largely disappear, Opening Times looks back at the way our licensing laws have developed. As you will see many of them originate from the First World War, almost 90 years ago...

1872 - The Intoxicating Liquor (Licensing) Bill of 1872 first introduced restrictions on opening hours and was universally reviled. 800,000 people petitioned against the Bill which was eventually passed and became known as the Aberdare Act. The Act sought to put an end to gin palace type premises and was designed to make life difficult for landlords.

1914 - Licensing changes introduced. In August 1914 powers to close public houses and to restrict pub opening hours were given to military and naval authorities. This power was extended to civil authorities shortly afterwards. In October 1914 evening closing time in London became 10.00pm instead of 12.30am.

1915 - Opening hours reduced from 16-17 hours (19.5 hours in London) to 5.5 hours and evening closing was 9 - 9.30pm.

1916 - The Government via the Central Control Board took over the four breweries in Carlisle as well as 235 pubs in the Carlisle, Gretna and Annan area. The next year pubs in the Enfield Lock area of London and Invergordon in Scotland were taken over. In all these areas there were worries that the effectiveness of the munitions factories were being endangered by drunkenness amongst the workers.

The State Management System, as it was called, banned Sunday drinking, the consumption of spirits on a Saturday and the use of spirit chasers. Food, soft drinks and facilities for women were introduced to pubs. There was even a call for the Nationalisation of the brewing industry and pubs.

1921 - The 1921 Licensing Act transferred the assets of the Control Board to The Home Office and The Scottish Office. The State Management system carried on until it was abolished by Edward Heath in the 1970s. The 1921 Act also set opening hours at 8-9 hours a day, with afternoon closing. And 5 hours on a Sunday.

1964 - The 1964 Licensing Act replaced the 1921 Licensing Act and other subsequent amendments.

Since 1964 there have been at least a dozen separate Acts and Deregulation Orders making certain amendments and adjustments to licensing law. These include all day opening on weekdays (1988); all day opening on Sundays (1995). This piecemeal tinkering with licensing legislation continues. Currently the Government is finalising legislation to allow pubs to stay open for up to 36 hours over the New Years Eve period.

The 1964 Act runs to 155 pages; 204 sections and 15 schedules. It includes regulations for seamen's canteens, licences in the Carlisle district and Sunday closing in Wales and Monmouth!

OPENING TIMES will follow the progress of the proposed Licensing reforms through Parliament and into Law and will contain regular updates.

REFORM - THE CHANGES AT A GLANCE

1. Local authorities responsible for all licensing for drink and entertainment. Councils will have to promote four licensing objectives: prevention of crime and disorder; public safety; prevention of public nuisance; protection of children from harm.
2. Separate licenses for the premises and portable personal licences for publicans.
3. Permitted hours to be abolished with each pub choosing its own hours, subject to objections from others.
4. New applicants for licences must gain an accreditation qualification and be checked out by the Criminal Records Bureau.
5. Just one licence for both drink and public entertainment.
6. Children's access to pubs to be the norm, except where there is good reason to exclude them.
7. Minor changes to the rules concerning consumption of alcohol by 16 and 17 years olds. Spirits and alcopops excluded from this provision.
8. Local authorities will be free to allow drinking at football matches in their locality.
9. Courts and local authorities will be able to use a flexible range of sanctions against both premises and personal licence holders. These will range from warnings to modification of licence conditions to revocation.
10. There will be an avenue of appeal to the magistrates court.

END OF DRINKING-UP TIME

Drinking-up time will disappear under the proposals for licensing reform, the government has confirmed.

The end of the 20-minute 'period of grace' means that pubs which have no plans to change their opening hours after the Licensing Bill becomes law will have to apply to close later in order to simply maintain the status quo.

A spokeswoman for the Department of Culture, Media & Sport said: "It was felt that because closing times are going to be staggered, the drinking-up time law has really served its purpose. The closing time that pubs state on their application will be the time they have to close their doors. What time they actually stop serving will be a matter for the pub to decide." The change in the rules will be made clear to pubs when they apply for the new-style licences. Licensed trade associations are warning that publicans should not state a final closing time assuming they will be given a further 20 minutes to allow customers to finish their drinks. Tony Payne, chief executive of the Federation of Licensed Victuallers Associations advised licensees: "If you want to finish serving at 12 midnight, put down on the licence application for a terminal hour of 12.30am," he said. "We will not be automatically given a further 20 minutes to let people drink up so include this drinking-up time beforehand."




**Wishing a Merry Xmas
And a
Very Happy New Year
From John, Jen And All
at the White House
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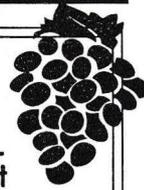


*Merry Christmas and
A Happy New Year*

From Dave, Sandra and the Staff at

THE GRAPES

Castle Street Edgeley
Robinson's Hatters and Best Bitter
We're in the 2003 Good Beer Guide






LICENSING REFORM

REFORM AT LAST

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is raising a toast to the reform of liquor licensing law announced in the Queen's Speech. British pub goers can look forward to a more flexible approach to pub opening hours from the summer of 2004.

Mike Benner, Head of Campaigns and Communications said, "After years of campaigning we can finally look forward to longer opening hours for pubs which will boost tourism and help stamp out binge drinking through a more relaxed and responsible approach to enjoying alcohol."

Recent CAMRA research reveals that seven out of ten British adults support longer opening hours for pubs.

Mike Benner added, "This will be a popular change with consumers who are tired of unnecessary restrictions on when and where they can enjoy a drink. The current laws are largely based on laws introduced during the First World War and have no place in today's society."

CAMRA has dismissed claims that the new Act may lead to a free for all, with all pubs opening 24 hours a day and unrestricted access for children. Mr. Benner said, "It is natural that people are concerned about a more relaxed approach to licensing after restrictions have been in place for so long, but it is simply not the case that all pubs will be able to open for 24 hours a day. Pubs will have to submit operating plans to the licensing authority and the police and local residents will have a say on the hours the pub will be able to stay open. It is likely that most pubs will just apply for an extra hour or two on Friday and Saturday nights."

"It will be up to publicans and the licensing authority to decide on the suitability of premises for children. It is not that case that kids will have access to premises without restriction, but it will mean that pubs will become more family friendly which will benefit millions of people."

"There were fears that our streets would be invaded by drunks when the law was changed in 1988 to allow pubs to stay open in the afternoon, but these fears proved unfounded as there was no significant increase in alcohol consumption or alcohol related disorder. The same will be true following these changes and we can all look forward to the benefits of a more relaxed approach to enjoying a drink."

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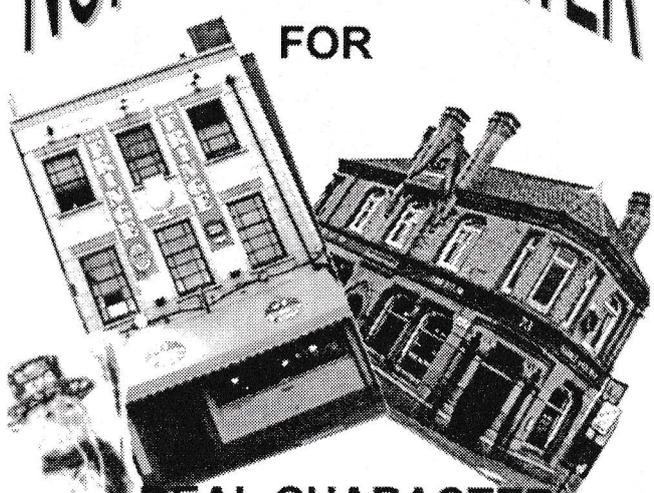
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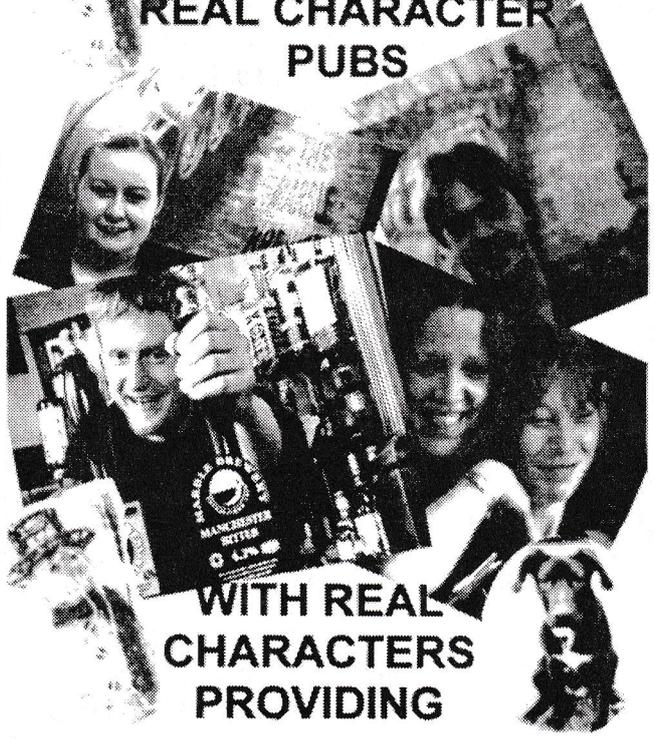
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STAGGER

with Peter Edwardson

Stockport Market Place

September's Stagger took us to the Market Place area of Stockport, where the concentration of pubs meant that the amount of walking needed would be fairly limited, therefore giving more drinking time.

We began at the **Arden Arms**, just off the Market Place on Millgate, in the shadow of Asda. The attractions of this classic multi-roomed pub with its unique snug behind the bar have been widely documented, and it features on CAMRA's National Inventory of historic pub interiors. We found it fairly busy for early Friday evening. Four beers were available - Robinson's Hatters Mild, Best Bitter, Snowdon and Cooper's Bell, the latest seasonal offering. The Best Bitter was not tried, but all the other beers were pretty good, with Hatters the pick of the bunch.

We then moved up the hill to the Market Place itself and the **Pack Horse** with its attractive half-timbered frontage. This is a pleasant little pub, remodelled a few years back to give a main bar area with standing room, and two lounges opening off. An unusual feature was the extensive library of paperback books. Two beers were available - Tetley Bitter, which was about average, and Ansell's Bitter, rarely seen in this neck of the woods, which most of us chose and found to be rather better than the Tetleys.

A few doors along we came to the **Bull's Head**, directly facing the impressive glass-roofed Market Hall. This is a big pub with an imposing frontage and a spacious, high-ceilinged interior with plenty of comfortable seating, which looked as if it had recently received a smart refurbishment. The décor included numerous pictures of famous jazz musicians. It was fairly quiet at this time, but the disco-style lights hinted at the live music that was to come on later in the evening. The two standard Robinson's beers were available, Best Bitter being good, the Hatters shading more towards average.

Next on the agenda was the **Baker's Vaults**, another Robinson's pub with a high-ceilinged interior, divided into vault and lounge sides by a central bar. Live music also featured here, with "Casual Ties" just in the process of setting up. We found the Hatter's Mild somewhat disappointing, but this was due to reaching the end of the barrel, and it was much improved once a new one had been put on. The Best Bitter was fine. Unusually, both real ales are served here through free-flow electric dispense from T-bar fonts, which could be confusing to the casual customer.

The shortest of many short walks of the evening took us across the road to the **Boar's Head**, a prominent corner building with something of the style of an old coaching inn. Since my last visit, Samuel Smith's had carried out a very impressive refurbishment, which actually involved the reinstatement of some internal walls to create a number of cosy, intimate rooms. The former music room at the rear of the pub has been converted into a comfortable lounge and brought more into the main drinking area. As always in Sam's pubs, the only real ale available was Old Brewery Bitter, which was generally considered on good form, although this distinctive, malty beer isn't to everyone's taste. Nobody could complain about the price, though, an amazing £1.16 a pint, which has not changed for several years despite duty increases. We succeeded in recruiting two new CAMRA members here, father and daughter Harry and Gill. A brief look inside **Bamboozza** - formerly Addison's, and before that Yates's Wine Lodge - confirmed that no real ale was available, so we headed up the hill past the Parish Church to the **Old Rectory**, a Henry's Table pub-restaurant now owned by Scottish & Newcastle. The bar areas have a "gentleman's club" feel with easy chairs and extensive wood panelling, although clearly were not the venue of choice for Friday night revellers. None of us found much to praise in the only real ale available, Theakston's Best Bitter, although this was probably due more to it being inherently lacklustre than any failings of cellarmanship.

The row of powerful bikes parked outside and the thunderous strains of Van Halen's "Why Can't This Be Love" coming from within gave a clear indication that the next pub, the **Thatched House**, would be quite a contrast. Someone told me the name of



the band, but as conversation inside was impossible it passed me by. Creditably for a venue of this kind, three real ales were available - Worthington Bitter and Morland Old Speckled Hen, both of which were of average quality, and Boddingtons Bitter, on which opinions were divided between good and disappointing. The interior was spartan and low-lit, in keeping with the general feel of the place, and to be honest, while I'm not averse to the odd bit of rock'n'roll, this was too earsplitting to be remotely enjoyable, which perhaps explained why most of the bikers were outside with their machines.

We returned down the hill and on to Hillgate and the **Spread Eagle**, which was frequented by a much older and more sedate clientele than the previous pub. Built into the front of Robinson's brewery, the "brewery tap" has been greatly improved in recent years by keen licensees and is now a very pleasant place to drink, although it would benefit from more chairs and benches and fewer stools. One member of the party was feeling a little peckish and found satisfaction with a pork pie, pickled onion and mustard at 85p. Robinson's Hatters Mild and Best Bitter were both pretty good, although perhaps a little too cold. Old Tom was also on sale, in third of a pint nips as well as halves, and the two brave individuals who tried it pronounced it very good indeed.

Karaoke was in progress at **Winter's**, although not finding a very large audience. This pub, converted some years ago from a former jeweller's, with a distinctive external clock, always gives me the feeling of sitting in a shop window. As a Holt's pub it brought a new beer for the evening, although as the mild was the inferior "smooth" version, Bitter was the only real ale available, which was generally felt to be above average. It's interesting that Sam Smith's beer is now cheaper than Holt's - the bitter being £1.24 a pint here.

Our final port of call was the **Queen's Head**, often known as Turner's Vaults, another pub of great historic character. It has a long, narrow interior with a front bar, wood-panelled News Room and cosy snug at the back. We managed to find a seat and the Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter, again at a very reasonable £1.16 a pint, did not disappoint. Both this pub and the Boar's Head are tributes to Sam's sympathetic conservation of their pubs, a lesson that could be learned by many other pub owning companies.

Thus ended a very enjoyable evening during which we had experienced some excellent beer and a variety of characterful pub interiors. As always, the views expressed are only the impressions of a group of people on one particular night - why not try at least a few of the pubs yourself and see what you think?



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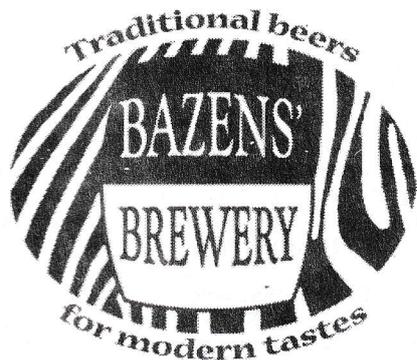
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QUEENS TRIBUTE - FREE BEER

As we reported last month, the Queen's Arms, Honey Street, Cheetham, is the new *City Life* Pub of the Year. Owners Sue and Dave Price have contacted OT to express their thanks for the support from their customers over the years:

"Dear All
We would like to thank everybody for your welcome support over the years to enable us to have achieved City Life "Manchester Food & Drink Festival" Pub of the Year.
To celebrate, just hand this article to our staff to claim your free pint of beer (December only) and one pint per person"

★ ★ ★ ★

Also a date for your diary - 27, 28 February and 1, 2 March, the "Four Corners" Beer Festival which consists so far of the Queens, the Pot of Beer, the Marble Arch and the Beer House.

STAY SAFE!

Don't drink and drive This Christmas

As a reader of "Opening Times" you will know that alcohol is very much part of the world we live in. Have a few drinks too many, and the only things that normally suffer are your head and stomach. But combine driving with your drinking and you have a lethal cocktail which could have a lasting effect - on your own and other people's lives.

Each year in Britain, some five hundred people die in road accidents involving drivers and motorcycle riders over the legal blood alcohol limit. Fifteen per cent of all drivers and riders killed are over the limit and around 50 per cent at night between the hours of 10pm and 4am.

The more you drink, the greater the problem. Some people's driving performance may be affected even below the legal limit. Twice the limit, and you are at least twenty times more likely to have an accident.

Contrary to popular opinion, alcohol is a depressant. It slows down the activity of the brain and makes you less alert, while at the same time giving you a strong but false sense of confidence. The more you drink, the more your brain is affected, and the greater your chances of having an accident.

⊕ Alcohol slows down your reactions

⊕ Alcohol affects your judgement

Those who believe that sticking to weaker drinks will stop them going over the limit are sadly mistaken. It's not the type of alcohol that's important, it's the total amount of alcohol the drink contains. Alcohol takes effect quickly and wears off slowly. Once you've had a drink, there is nothing you can do to reduce the level of alcohol in your blood.

⊕ Exercise doesn't work

⊕ Nor does black coffee

⊕ Nor medicines of any kind

⊕ Nor vitamins

The only thing that will reduce the level of alcohol in your blood is time - and a long time at that. The body gets rid of alcohol at a very slow rate - equivalent to about half a pint of beer in every hour. If you have been on a long or late drinking session, you might still be over the limit the morning after, or even at lunchtime.

How To Avoid The Problem

Plan in advance. Take a minibus or taxi. Use the bus, train or tram. If you can't arrange transport home, then fix up somewhere to stay. If you are in a group, decide amongst yourselves that whoever will be driving will not drink for the evening. Drink soft drinks. **Don't be a statistic this Christmas. Don't drink and drive.** For once the cliché is right. Drinking and driving really wrecks lives.

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Dave and Sue Welcome You To
THE QUEENS ARMS

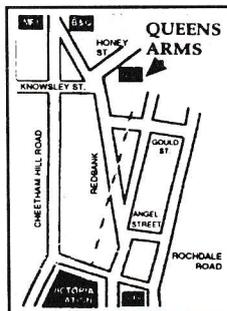
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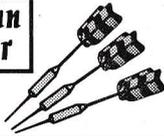
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Good Beer
Guide 2003!



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Stockie The che

By John Taylor



Question - which darts league is the only one in the world ever to have provided two automatic qualifiers for 'World Embassy Finals'?
Answer - the Stockport Licensed Houses Super League. Their names - present England International Tony O'Shea, who plays for the Union in Reddish, and Darryl Fitton, who plays in the same league for the Royal Mortar on Hillgate. It's a great honour for the town, and I'm sure both players will be doing their best to make us all proud of their performances during the tournament, which takes place in January. Either of them is capable of lifting the world crown, it just requires a little luck, a good deal of consistency during the week, and an abundance of talent - which they both have, of course. In the first round Tony, who is the number six seed, has been drawn against former world champion Ted Hankey in a very difficult opening match on Monday 6 December. Darryl plays the lesser-know but just as dangerous John Burton from Wales the day before. The only sad part is that they have both been drawn in the same half and so won't be able to play each other in the final. The full draw is:

- Jarkko Komula (Fin) -v- Vincent Van Der Noort (Neth)
- Tony David (1) (Aut) -v- Brian Sorensen (Den)
- Ritchie Davies (Wal) v Albertino Essers (Neth)
- John Walton (8) (Eng) v Martin Phillips (Wal)
- Peter Johnstone (Scot) v Gary Anderson (Scot)
- Andy Fordham (5) (Eng) v Stefan Nagy (Swe)
- Peter Hunt (NZ) v Bob Taylor (Scot)
- Martin Adams (4) (Eng) v Co Stompe (Neth)
- Darryl Fitton (Eng) v John Burton (Wal)
- Raymond Barneveld (2) (Neth) v Matt Clark (Eng)
- Gary Robson (Eng) v Robert Wagner (Nor)
- Tony Eccles (7) (Eng) v Erik Clarys (Bel)
- Colin Monk (Eng) v Shaun Greatbatch (Eng)
- Tony O'Shea (6) (Eng) v Ted Hankey (Eng)
- Dennis Harbour (Eng) v James Wade (Eng)
- Mervyn King (3) (Eng) v Steve Coote (Eng)

Back to the real world, and still heading the Super League are the present champions Reddish WMC, who are four point clear of the Royal Mortar and six point clear of third placed Union Inn. These three are now well clear of the rest and with just seven fixtures remaining they still have to play each other. The Mortar are looking very strong at the moment and have won their last three matches 7-0. The union, though, recently lost ground having somehow lost 4-2 to Club Leisure with both teams only able to field six players. Prior to that match the club had lost their six previous fixtures. The champions also nearly came unstuck when in Week 18 they narrowly defeated Greg Steer 4-3. At the other end of the table, the Jack & Jill look to be heading back to the Premier Division after a couple of seasons in the top flight. Who will be joining them is anyone's guess with just two points separating six teams.

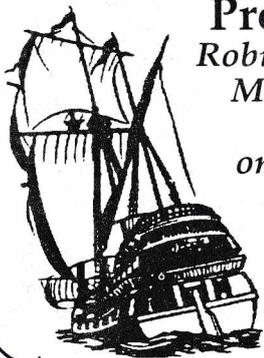
In the team knock-out quarter finals, the results were as follows:
 Royal Mortar 7-0 Club Leisure; John Hollins with legs of 18 & 19.
 Union Inn 5-2 Royal Oak; Brian Adshead with two legs of 17 darts and brother Dave (24 & 14), Tony O'Shea (20 & 18) were the Reddish stars.
 Salisbury Club 2-5 Magnet; best darts Derek Higgins (21 & 17) for the visitors. Copperfield 'A' 1-4 Reddish WMC; Dave Beckett (24 & 16) and a maximum for the champs.

The semi-final draw, with matches to be played on 10 December is:
 Royal Mortar-v-Reddish WMC @ the Copperfields; Union Inn-v-Magnet @ Old King.

Next month we might be getting some feedback from the new Stockport World Darts Champion, or you might just have to put up with me again. Well that's it for another month, see you soon

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9

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New Local Micros

Greater Manchester looks set to gain not one but three new micro brewers – all in the Oldham area. The Greenfield Brewery went into production on 16 November. Based in the Waterside Mill, Greenfield (where else?), the brewery is the concept of Peter Percival, who has been the brewer at the Church in Uppermill for the past three years.

With backing from friends Mark Atherton and Richard Hankinson, he took over the unit in early October and the brewing plant was supplied by none other than Dave Porter of Porter Brewing Co. It's a 5-6 barrel plant, entirely purpose built with, initially two fermenters. Two beers have been produced to date – Bill O'Jacks is a 4.1% light, golden, hoppy bitter, while Greenfields Ale is a 4% dark amber winter beer, with a mild taste. Look out for a full report on this new venture next month.

Also just into production is Paul Robinson's Ramsbottom Brewery with Rammy, a 3.6% session beer. More news on this one next time, too.

Also in the pipeline is something called the 'Bookworm Brewery' which will see a large plant (from 8-15 barrels we hear) installed in a bar-restaurant-brewery operation housed at a former library on Beal Lane in Shaw. It's all just in the planning stage at the moment and we don't know who's behind the operation. More news if and when we get it.

Family Favourites

HYDES Hydes' latest seasonal, Winter Fuggle (5%) is proving to be something of a success. Extremely smooth and drinkable, it has been compared by some to a strong mild. Well worth seeking out. They have also announced the craft ale programme for 2003 which is themed around the brewing process under the general heading "Fine Beers In The Making". The planned beers are:

January/February - Malt & Mash, a 4.5% russet coloured beer
March/April - Copper Hopper, a 4.2% bitter brewed using American Cascade hops. **May/June** - Hubble Bubble, 4.4%, pale gold

with a clean dry flavour. **July/August** - Rack 'n' Ruin - a 4.1% summer ale brewed with three hop varieties. **September/October** - Firkin Fruity, a 4.5% beer described as a classic berry red ale
November/December - Rompers Rein, the 5% Christmas beer brewed with black malts, with a hint of fruit and spice to produce a dark chocolate coloured beer.

Hydes XXXX, the 6.8% ABV winter ale is to be brewed again this year. It should be available from early December although which outlets will sell it remains unclear at this time. We have asked the brewery for a list of outlets so that readers can seek it out should they wish to do so. For the first time (ever, we think) Hydes are going to market XXXX. It is to be promoted via posters, T-shirts and polo shirts. Contact the brewery for prices and to see if they have one in your size.

The next seasonal beer to emerge from **Holt's** will be called Blackwell and it will be available at the end of January. Production of Thunderholt will cease but it will be brewed again next October. 'Blackwell' was the name of Sir Edward Holt's weekend retreat in Bowness-in-Windermere, built in the 1890s. The building has been fully restored and now operates as an Arts & Crafts centre. The new beer will be quite different in style from Thunderholt, with an ABV of 4.4%.

Robinson's current seasonal is the well-received Robin Bitter, a malty beer with a dry aftertaste. This has been one of the most popular of Robbies current round of seasonal beers. Next month sees a brand new beer introduced to the Robinson's seasonal portfolio - Double Hop is a pale, crisp, hoppy 5% beer, currently being exported (in bottle) to the USA.

Micro Magic

As usual, the local micro brewers have plenty of beers in the pipeline for the festive season...

Pictish - Brewer Richard Sutton is still rushed off his feet, so great is demand for his beers. This month's special is the return of an old favourite, Winter Solstice. The strong Rudolph's Rocket Fuel will also be brewed if Richard has time. One story that he is keen to kill is the rumour that Pictish has been bought by Phoenix Brewery. "If anyone wants to buy me, they've got to give me the money to retire", Richard told OT.

Beartown - Beartown brewery have produced a new beer called Pandamonium, a 4.5% Blackcurrant Stout which is currently on sale at the Navigation, top of Lancashire Hill, in Stockport. This new beer came as something of a surprise to Angella the licensee as it was just delivered without her knowing of the beer's existence or her ordering it. OT has of course tried it and can say it is an excellent well-balanced beer, not over sweet or cloying as some fruit beers can be but with a definite aroma and taste of blackcurrants. At £1.60 a pint it is well worth a try.

Work is also well underway on the new Beartown Brewery pub in Fallowfield. Bruins, as it is to be called, is set to open on 6 December. We've had a sneak preview and can report that unlike the other Beartown outlets, this will be much more in the café bar format with clean lines, an impressive beechwood bar front and plenty of space for vertical drinking.

Phoenix - as ever, the reliable Phoenix Brewery has a clutch of new beers out this month, many with a festive feel. Humbug (7%) and Golden Glow (6.5%) are well-established favourites but also look out for Snow Bound (4.3%, pale and hoppy), Flash flood (4.1%, pale, well-balanced with a citrus finish) and Christmas Kiss (4.5%, mid-brown, brewed with Progress and Goldings hops). The excellent Phoenix Porter (5%) is also available now, too.



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