



OPENING TIMES



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

Volume 19 Issue 5

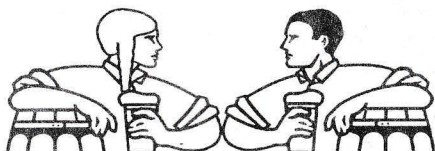
MAY 2003 No:229

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FESTIVAL FEVER

Countdown Underway to Stockport's Main Event



Stockport's 17th Beer & CIDER FESTIVAL

STOCKPORT TOWN HALL
29TH-31ST MAY 2003

Ware now well and truly in the run-up to this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again kindly sponsored by the Stockport Express. The entertainment is booked, the glasses and T-shirts ordered, the license obtained (many thanks to Steve Brannan of Ye Olde Vic for being our licensee) and, most importantly, the beer and cider order has been worked out.

As usual Opening Times is taking this opportunity to bring you just a small taster of the many beers on offer. There really will be something for every taste, whether you like mild, bitter, stout or strong ales. While there will be beers from all around the UK, there are perhaps two themes this year – West Yorkshire and the Celtic fringe.

West Yorkshire will be represented by beers from Eastwood & Sanders, Ossett, Anglo-Dutch, Salamander, Golcar and Upper Aggbrig. The Celtic nations are represented by beers from Wales, Scotland, Cornwall, the Isle of Man, Orkney and the Irish Republic.

There will be up to **eight** milds available from the classic Bank Top Dark Mild, the superb Bullmastiff Ebony Dark, Wentworth's Gun Park Dark and the rare Hydes Welsh Dark.

Lovers of bitter will be well catered for with no less than **58** standard and premium bitters available during the course of the Festival. Beartown Brewery will be brewing a Festival Special for us and this will have to compete with heavyweight contenders such as Roosters, Marble, Abbeydale, and Phoenix. Among many highlights for lovers of the hop will be Durham White Amarillo, the excellent Wentworth WPA and four beers each from Ossett and Eastwood & Sanders.. This will be one of **8** stouts and porters which include Dwan Carden's Sweet Stout, Moor Peat Porter, Hebridean Celtic Black Ale and, a stunning beer this, Wentworth Oatmeal Stout.

There will also be **10** special beers including a ginger beer from Abbeydale, wheat beers from Dwan and Okells, Nethergate's classic Umbel Magna coriander beer, O'Hanlon's Port Stout and at least one cask lager – the excellent Kellerbier from Upper Aggbrig.

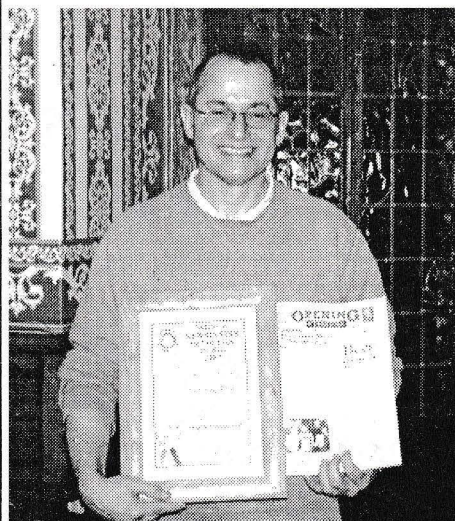
Bringing up the rear we also have **9** strong ales and this year there are some real treats here. Robinson's Old Tom is a firm favourite of course but others to try include Anglo-Dutch Tabatha The Knackered at 6 per cent, Moor Old Freddy Walker at a powerful 7.3 per cent and this year's two brain cell killers, the 11 per cent Thomas Sykes Ale from Burton Bridge and the 10 per cent Mogadog from Bullmastiff. The 8 per cent Liquid Lobotomy from Garton isn't to be sniffed at either.

So, something for everyone. Do remember, though, that not all beers will be on at the same time and one or two may not even arrive (although we usually have an acceptable alternative if that happens). You can also visit the Festival Website at: www.stockportfestival.fsnet.co.uk

AWARD FOR OPENING TIMES


We always knew Opening Times was one of the best – and now it's official! At the recent CAMRA AGM in Exeter, we were stunned to be presented with a special award for the magazine.

It was almost 10 years ago that Opening Times won the first ever CAMRA Newsletter of the Year Award and this latest award was in recognition of what we have achieved since then. The citation read out by National Executive member Sarah Durham reads, "One newsletter which deserves a particular mention is Opening Times from Stockport & South Manchester. This was the first ever winner of these awards and has been published continuously since, keeping to its high standards both in production and content with a particular strength in hard effective campaigning, which has achieved many successes. It is for this that the judges have awarded this fine newsletter a special Highly Commended Award".





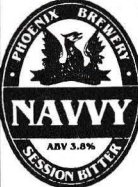


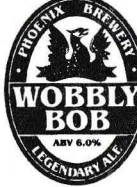


A gobsmacked Ed1 (seen here grinning inanely) was presented with the award and for once was totally lost for words!


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IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

Space it at a bit of a premium in this issue so, I'll keep this one brief. Firstly, I have to mention the award presented to Opening Times at the recent CAMRA AGM. Achieving recognition such as this from your peers is always pleasing and goes a long way to making all the hard work that is put into OT worthwhile. My co-editor, Paul Hutchings, couldn't make it to Exeter so I would like to take this opportunity of thanking him for all the effort he puts into OT each month, it really is very much appreciated, and without Paul's efforts, Opening Times would look half as good as it does. Thanks are also due to the legion of people who contribute to OT, those who distribute it and of course to those pubs which stock it and all our advertisers, without whose support we just couldn't put together such a large publication. We aren't resting on our laurels, though, and later this year we are looking to make some major improvements to Opening Times. More on that in due course.

★ ★ ★

Last month the research organisation, A C Neilson, released some figures on the state of the cask ale market. Not only were they grossly misleading, in our view, but they also appear to have been presented in a way guaranteed to do the cask ale market the most damage. We are carrying out our own research and a very different picture is emerging. More on this next time.

It was also announced by Scottish & Newcastle - the last of the old 'Big Six' National brewing combines still to have a managed pub estate (1400 pubs), that it was bowing to city pressure and putting its estate up for auction. The money will allow S&N to buy troubled cider maker HP Bulmer (hopefully its well-regarded real-ale wholesale operation will be subject to a rumoured management buy-out) and to look at acquiring other foreign breweries,

★ ★ ★

Finally, it's Stockport Beer Festival time - make sure you all get down there and have a few pints. I'm sure myself and Ed2 will be there extensively toasting OT's success!

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 229

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).

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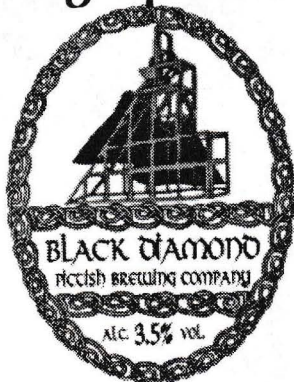
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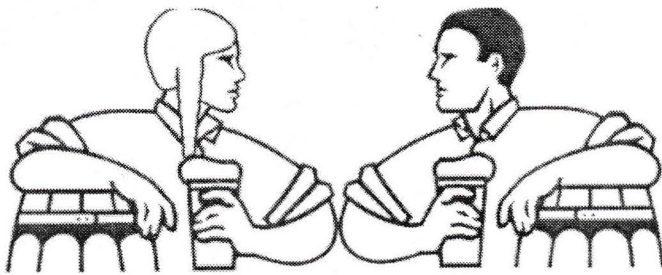


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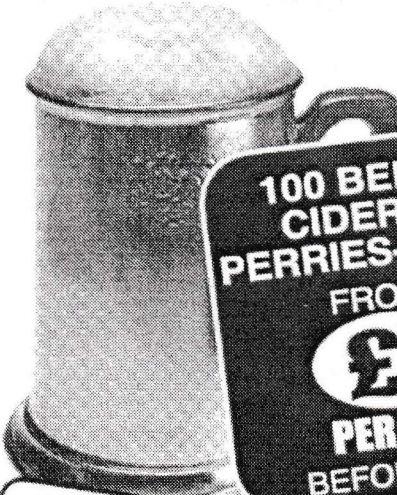
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Stockport's 17th Beer & CIDER FESTIVAL

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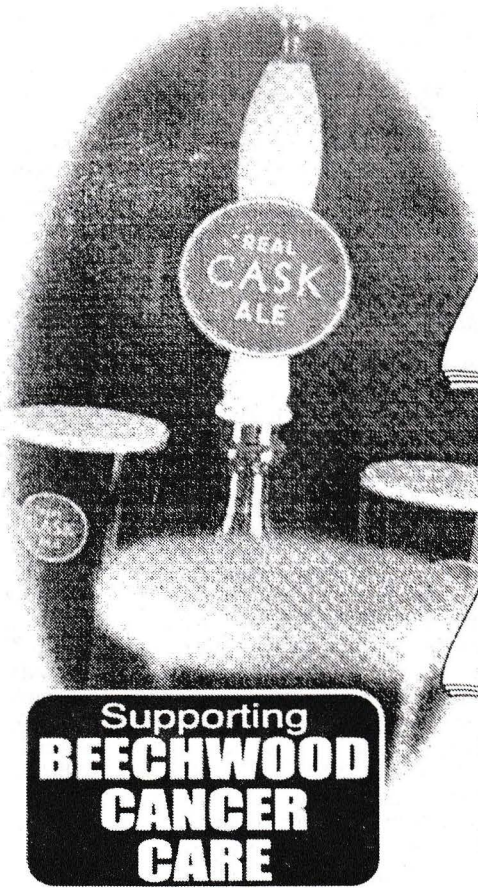
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The Caledonia, Ashton-under-Lyne

Like in many post-industrial northern towns, Ashton town centre is not a thing of great beauty, a situation not helped by the lack of any imposing civic buildings (as in Bolton town hall) or other imposing features (as in Stockport's viaduct). The town's pub scene is equally uninspiring. Many of the remaining central pubs have been turned into night-time circuit bars and plenty of the rest offer nothing in the way of real ale. There are a few honourable exceptions, though. One of the best is the Caledonia on Warrington Street. This welcoming Robinson's pub has been run by Alan and Louise for several years now and has become a firm local favourite for both its range of beer and also the extensive range of food available. Obviously there's a tie to Robinson's beers but the best use is made of what is now quite an extensive range of beers available. Apart from the usual Hatters and Best Bitter, the Cally has been one of the few pubs selling Frederics since the day this underrated premium beer was introduced. Cumbria Way or Snowdon are also regularly sold and of course the current seasonal is usually available, too (although Sod's Law dictated that wasn't the case when this article was prepared).

The pub has been impressively refurbished (a move which also saw the introduction of letting bedrooms) and now basically comprises on large L-shaped area, albeit nicely broken up into different areas and levels, including a no-smoking area.

The Saturday lunchtime I called saw the pub busy with a mixture of football-viewing regulars and passing shoppers, many of whom were tucking into lunch of one form or another. The menu is wide-ranging covering sandwiches, salads, burgers, jacket potatoes right up to more substantial main meals. These are generally priced in the £4.25-4.50 range and include staples such as gammon steak, fish and chips, sausages and mash etc alongside one or two more unusual offerings. The steak and mushroom in ginger wine pie won 2nd prize in last year's British Meat Pie of the Year contest (I only noticed this on the menu after I had ordered, otherwise this would have been a 'must try'). A previous prize-winner was the pub's steak and ale hotpot. This is a fabulous creation comprising steak, carrots and onions braised in ale, all topped off the black pudding, bacon, sliced potatoes and melted cheese. There is also a range of 'spicy delights' covering chillies, pasta and curry dishes. I decided to go for a chicken, ham and leek pie while my dining companion couldn't resist the steak and ale hotpot. Both dishes didn't disappoint and each made for a filling meal.

The chicken etc pie comprised a very well filled small pie dish, with generous amounts of chicken, ham and leek all bound together with a rich cheesy sauce and topped with a short crust pastry lid. Crispy fries were a welcome accompaniment although the rather watery carrots and peas added little to the enjoyment of what was otherwise a fine dish. No complaints at all about any aspect of the hotpot. The menu description was spot on and a rich, filling bowl of food was accompanied by a whole barmcake (very useful for mopping up the tasty gravy) and a small bowl of red cabbage. Both of our meals were washed down with some very well-kept Hatters, which provided an ideal accompaniment to the quite rich food we had ordered.

All in all very well-judged and presented pub food which was difficult to fault in any major way. It is easy to see why the Caledonia is so popular and while food is obviously a major part of the operation here, it remains first and foremost a pub with food, rather than a quasi-restaurant that just happens to sell beer as well.

The lunchtime menu is available 11-2.30 Monday to Saturday and 12-3 on Sundays. There is also a special evening menu that provides for more substantial meals with starters and puddings, too. The main meals here are rather more adventurous and range in price from £7.50 up to £9.95 for a 10oz fillet steak. This menu is available between 5 and 7pm Tuesday to Thursday and 5-8 Saturday and Sunday. The Caledonia is a pub working well on many levels and the food is just one aspect of what is obviously a very professional operation. Highly recommended.

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PUB OF THE MONTH MAY 2003

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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



Good local pubs, with good beer and an atmosphere to match are becoming hard to find these days, especially in an area like Heald Green, where pubs of any kind are few and far between. However, situated prominently on the junction of the A34 (Wilmslow Road) and Finney Lane is the Griffin, Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA's Pub of the Month for May.

The Griffin is an excellent community local in the truest sense – friendly atmosphere, good service, good beer and wholesome, no-frills food. Factors clearly appreciated by the pub's regulars, and evident by the steady trade throughout the day, seven days a week. A dart board, pool table and television are available in a separate vault (another rarity these days), leaving the spacious lounge and large snug free for friendly conversation or just a quiet drink.

Being a Holt's pub, the beer is very nicely priced and of excellent quality. On a recent minibus tour of suburban pubs, the Holt's beers, and particularly the mild, were of outstanding quality and this reflects the high standards set by Diane Davenport, the licensee. Diane came to the Griffin over five years ago from the Angel in Knutsford. This followed successful periods at the Old Monkey in the City Centre, the Griffin, Heaton Mersey; and the Grafton, Chorlton-on-Medlock. A few months ago there were rumours that Diane would be leaving – happily these were unfounded and she remains firmly in charge of the pub.

The hard work over the years by Diane and her staff makes the Griffin well worth a visit (and not just on the night of 22 May when this well-earned award will be presented) and shows why this will in fact be the second Pub of the Month Award the Griffin has earned under Diane's expert stewardship. **JC/PB**

The Griffin is served by several bus services – from Stockport numbers 368,369 and 312 will drop you nearby; from Manchester the 45 will do the same.

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

CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 229:
John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Butler, Mark McConachie, Peter Edwardson, Phil Levison, Frank Wood, Tom Lord, Brian Taylor, Jim Flynn, Chris Walkden, Anthony Firmin, John Tune, Dave Hallows.

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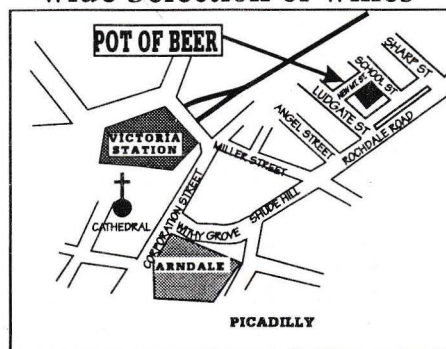
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Our crawl was to begin tonight at **The Grove**, just north of Commercial Road. Tastefully decorated, a large lounge separated from the lobby by three Spanish-style rustic arches: "viaduct to vault" opined the curly-haired blonde in our party. She was also taken by the giant pink rabbit on the bar back. Local scenes of old Stockport and black and white tiling decorate the bar area. Geometric, comfortable snug with Manchester City memorabilia. A Bell's Brewery mosaic is still visible in the vestibule tiles. The beers on sale were Robbies Hatters and Best as the Bell's beers went long ago along with the brewery. We found them to be in good condition. Taking our lives in our hands, we hared across the busy London Road to the **Anchor**. A large house offering three fair-sized rooms in Robbies cream decor and red dralon upholstery. A muted nautical theme is used throughout with photos, a ship's wheel, boat lamps, even a figurehead of a Turk. The pub offers a Wednesday themed curry night as well as an extensive menu available weekday lunchtimes and on Sundays. On the ale front, once again it was Robbies Hatters and Best (this time on electric freeflow dispense) and in much the same good condition as the Grove. The interestingly named **Brewers Green** divides this pub from our next, the **Woodman**. This street is also part of one of the borough's walking routes - The Fred Perry Way. Originally a single cottage, but now extended both sides to incorporate adjoining properties. This gives a spartan vault / pool room and a dining area flanking the popular bar. Quite a number of people in tonight as it is popular with the young crowd. There are a number of idiosyncratic African artefacts on display, presumably reflecting the taste of the new licensee (or more likely his mum, who had the tenancy previously). On the night the Robbies Best was average, and not up to the standard of the last two pubs. The **George & Dragon** by Stepping Hill Hospital was passed by as it is now selling only keg

beers. This is a sorry tale, as I recall the pub being somewhat of an 'alehouse' some years ago; it provided a welcome change in the Robinson's diet on a pub crawl. Ah, well...



Northwards in to Great Moor now and to the **Crown**. An imposing, three-gabled house set back slightly from the road. Two large, well-furnished rooms (one with large TV for football) at the front, are divided from the curved bar by a fine, carved staircase. Some period features remain, such as etched Crown windows, panelling and tiling; the latter tiles, featuring a crown atop an escutcheon, enhance the modern bar counter. The modern archways are a touch incongruous, but the room layouts remain. The wooden screen that hides the entrance to the Gents is an unusual relic. For the sporting, a good bowling green can be found at the back whilst, back inside and through a Gothic arch, lurks a vividly-coloured pool room. This was the busiest pub so far and the Robinson's beers the best we had had so far with Best just edging it over a good Hatters.

During our time inside the Crown a fog had descended outside as we made our way to the **Travellers Call**, was it to get thicker? The Travellers is a small and, seemingly, always busy three roomer. The Robbies here ranked as some of the best beer of the night, with Hatters scoring it over the Best (in oversize pots, too), whilst the Old Tom went untried. A most striking feature of the decor is a vast collection of brass nauticalia and bells. As well as the ships' bells and hand bells, there are port-holes, propellers, lanterns and telescopes. The TV and Darts room remains free of this style, whilst the front snug has a well stocked fish tank set amid-ships the chimney breast. Outside, one finds a small beer garden, bizarrely furnished with a red telephone box, traffic lights and a well, surmounted by a giant red bell - all highly entertaining. The pub is also notable for its fundraising, £58,000 has been collected in 16 years by means of a ten-mile annual walk. Note the old Stockport boundary marker outside on the Cherry Tree corner.

The fog had cleared as we walked to the **Dog & Partridge** (the final Great Moor house). This is a smallish pub sympathetically extended on both sides many years ago. With its varied decor of tartan and wood panels in many rooms it has quite the country club feel to it. A large beer garden/play area to the rear means it often attracts a varied custom - tonight it was very busy with a mixed crowd, two of whom, Sharon and her mother, latched onto a number of our party. Regaling us with tales of her 40th birthday, the Robbies Hatters and Best slipped down easily; the Old Tom was sampled by a couple of hardy souls who thought it only average.

The final part of our tri-area crawl was at hand now as we wandered into Heaviley and the **Duke of York** (well, your author didn't wander, but decked-on to one of the frequent 192 buses to cut down the half-mile so that it is). Robinson's again, this time though Best and Snowdon were the offerings and both in very reasonable nick. Bustling with a mixed crowd tonight, the Duke is far larger than it looks with three plush rooms at the front and a two-level vault at the rear. A large beer garden with play area at the rear is also a well used facility. A rather unusual feature, and slightly disconcerting, were the Acroprops (extendable pieces of scaffolding) that were holding up parts of the ceiling - a temporary feature, no doubt.

Just across Nangreave Road lies the **Bamford Arms**. This is a Travel Inn with upstairs restaurant attached, does this work as a pub or a hotel bar? Make your own minds up. The Whitbread rustic, library look is in vogue. Usually there are three beers on, tonight we had Boddies (which went untried), Tetley bitter and Pedigree both were average to good in quality. Across the ever busy Buxton Road lies the borough's largest church by far, St.



- Bullocks 4.3% (Singular hopped Taurean beer)
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- Flatbac 4.2%
- Best Bitter/Flying Zebra 4.5%
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Georges - I must pay a visit one day to see the interior. Beside the church is another magnificent erection in the form of Robinson's Blossoms. Built as a coaching house in the 18th century, this three-roomed pub with lobby bar is reported to be the exit place for an escape tunnel from Bramhall Hall, and was used for the planning meetings when designing St. Georges Church. Nowadays it supports two separate Lodges of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes. Neville and his staff provide a warm, friendly atmosphere and excellent service - this pub is well worth a visit. It is also one of the few Stockport pubs to offer a pinball game. Three beers are offered - Hatters, Best and the powerful Old Tom, all three were sampled, with none found to be wanting. Easily some of the best beers of a very pleasant, if somewhat Robinson's-skewed, stagger. All of the pubs outlined herein are accessible by buses 191, 192 and 199, all of them from central Stockport. Nine different pubs, all splendid in their own way; and not a bad pint in any of them. Beer choice was somewhat limited, so if you do not like Robbies, you're really stuffed! For a change, you may wish to pop into the Wheatsheaf at the top of Higher Hillgate as they do Tetley, Pedigree and a guest beer.

FESTIVAL SPONSORS KEEP PRICES DOWN



Stockport's 17th Beer & CIDER FESTIVAL

STOCKPORT TOWN HALL
29TH-31ST MAY 2003

After the accolades Festival-goers gave the pricing policy at last year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, the organisers have announced that once again the Festival's sponsors have helped keep prices really keen. The Festival has also continues with beer priced at only £1 a pint before 8.00pm, which must be amongst the most competitively priced beer at any festival in the UK.

Festival Organiser Jim Flynn told Opening Times "Without the help and loyalty of our sponsors prices would be at least 10p a pint dearer. The fact that these companies and businesses want to be part of the Festival just shows how much it has become a key annual social event in the area. Our grateful thanks go to them all" At the time of going to press, the following festival sponsors had been announced:

- The Stockport Express - sponsors of the Festival itself, the Family Room and the Quiet Room.
- Frderic Robinson Ltd - sponsors of the Festival glasses and t-shirts.
- Hydes Brewery Ltd - sponsors of the Festival programme and the Festival Stewarding Team.
- Ye Olde Vic, Chatham Street, Edgeley - sponsor of the Festival Special Beer from Beartown Brewery of Congleton

There are still a few sponsorship opportunities remaining for local firms. If you are interested, contact Jim Flynn on 0161 432 1816.

CAMRA REGIONAL EVENTS

U-26 Socials

Thursday 22 May 8pm: Marble Brewery Tap visit. £2 on night including 1½ pints of Marble beers. Contact Ian Kenny on 0161 728 3642 to book.

Saturday 7 June: Microbrewery Tap Minibus Crawl. £4 for bus. To book contact Rick Yates on 0161 282 7447 or 07762427552. Visiting 5 Brew pubs.

Annual CAMRA Independents Day Treasure Hunt

Saturday 5th July: Starting from the Marble Arch, Rochdale Road, Manchester from 12 noon. Food provided on return in the evening. Teams of around four members are invited to turn up on the day. More details will be provided in the June Edition.

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Family Brewers Update

May sees new beers from all four of the local family brewers...

Robinson's have their latest seasonal out this month and this is the welcome return of Young Tom, a weaker version of the legendary Old Tom and a beer which has been one of the top selling seasonals for Robbies. Also at long last the brewery have produced a dedicated pump-clip for the rare dark mild. Now christened 'Dark Hatters', the new clip can be seen in the Pot of Beer and Circus Tavern, Manchester. That's not to say that the beer is now freely available - pubs wanting the beer still have to make a strong case before they will be allowed to sell it.



Hydes bring out the latest in their 'Fine Beers in the Making' series of craft ales this month. The May/June beer is Hubble Bubble, a 4.4% pale gold beer described as full bodied with a clean, dry flavour and a rounded finish. In a surprise move, Hydes also produced a small quantity of 'By George' a special for St George's Day which, we understand, was a version of Jekyll's Gold produced for those pubs wishing to celebrate the saint's day.

The latest beer from **Lees** should be rather special, brewed as it is to mark to company's 175th anniversary. The 4.6% '1828 Anniversary Ale' is described as "a malty brew to salute the millions who have enjoyed a pint of John Willies over the years". Lees new beers are always worth seeking out - Manchester's Rain Bar will be a guaranteed outlet. Lees are also looking to up the expansion of their tied estate with the appointment of a new executive to actively pursue this - let's hope they don't overlook us down here in Stockport and South Manchester as they formulate their expansion plans.



Holt's moved forward the launch of their next seasonal beer, "Edward's" so it should be out by the time you read this. It has been made with honey in the fermentation process and comes in at 4.1%ABV but despite this will still retail at the same price as the slightly weaker bitter, £1.29 a pint. Also, soon to be available, is a bottled version of ThunderHolt but at 5% ABV, for the 'Take Home Trade'





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Micro Magic

We don't know whether there's something in the water up there, but the Oldham brewing scene just keeps on growing. Two new micros are in the pipeline here. First there's the **Millstone Brewery** which, if all goes according to plan, will occupy the same building as the Greenfield Brewery, and, also in common with Greenfield, have its plant installed by Dave Porter of Porter Brewing. Now we hear of a second project - this is to be the **Owl Brewing Company**, which will occupy part of the currently-closed Hope Hotel, Greenacres Road, Oldham. The rest of the pub (closed since May 2001) will reopen as The Owl's Nest and operate as a brewery tap for the new venture. The man behind this venture is one Gordon Potts who is hoping the Oldham Council will give the green light to the project, which will cost an estimated £100,00. Meanwhile the established brewers are continuing to produce the goods, with a constant stream of new beers.

Boggart Hole Clough officially have just one new beer out this month, the 5% Half Cut, described as a red ale. We say 'officially' as brewer Mark Dade does have the habit of slipping out a few extra new beers unannounced. Boggart Hole are also now in the beer distribution business as a proper wholesaler (as opposed to just swapping beers with other micros) covering the whole of the UK.



Bank Top at Bolton have no new beers out this month - not only is brewer John Feeney off on a well-deserved holiday, but the brewery is still running to stand still with sales often exceeding production and a consequent reduction of beer on hand. The superb Dark Mild has been picking up a clutch of awards, coming first in its class and third overall in the Society of Independent Brewers' north of England championship. John tells us that Celebration, the 5% special commissioned by Bolton Council sold out straight away and may reappear, under a new name and in bottle.



Phoenix at Heywood have a number of new beers in the pipeline this month - look out for Mayfly, 4.4%; Midsummer Madness, 4.5%; Tennis Elbow, 4.5% and Sticky Wicket, 4.7%. These are all bitters but also check out a new mild - Black Shadow at 4%. This will feature at Stockport Beer Festival.



The new **Greenfield Brewery** is going great guns. The regular beers, Bill's O'Jacks (4.1%), Dobcross Bitter (4.2%) and the mild, Greenfield Ale (4%) have been joined by two new beers recently. Friesland Ale is a 4.4% dark bitter which, while dark in colour is light in body with a good bitter character coming from First Gold hops. The second newcomer is Delph Donkey a very pale and very bitter beer using Pioneer hops, which, we think, are an American variety. It is good to report that business is booming at this newcomer to the local scene. Closer to home in Dukinfield, the **Shaws Brewery** has been going for 12 months now and had settled in well. Due to the size of the plant, only two beers are produced at any one time. One of these is the Best Bitter (4%) and the other is one of IPA (4.8%), Tame Valley Ale (4.3%) and the new Beltane Ale. This latter is a 4.5% pale ale with quite a bitter taste - the first brew used Cascade hops from the USA but the second will use a different variety, Willamette.. To ensure that control can be kept over the casks, deliveries are currently restricted to Tameside, West Yorkshire, north Derbyshire and Cheshire.

Congelton's Khean Brewing Co will also be producing a new beer this month although brewer Ken Newsome hadn't formulated this when we contacted him. He did tell us that the Village Green has been so popular that it is still in production and will be entered into the Champion Beer





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**A WARM WELCOME
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of Cheshire competition, to be held at this month's Macclesfield Beer Festival. The beer is perhaps unique in being brewed using a blend of American and Pott Shrigley hops!

Peter Wood at **THE LAB** informs us of a few changes and tweaks to beers. A new formulation of Haughton Weave has seen hoppiness reduced in line with customer comments; it remains at 4.5% ABV. To make Broomstairs bitter 'smoother', the chocolate malt has now been removed, with the colour and taste coming from roasted barley. Frog Bog has reduced aroma hops to make it more 'sessionable'. A new IPA beer should be production, most likely to be called Audenshaw IPA (3.8%). It will be light in colour and using purely bittering



hops, no aroma hops to give a refreshing, clean on the palate beer.



Pictish Brewery of Rochdale has two new beers out this month. One is a former 'Beer of the Festival at Stockport, the 4.7% Summer Solstice, described as "A crisp refreshing blonde ale. Rounded pale malt flavours in the mouth are balanced by a subtle bitterness which leads to a dry finish with a delicate floral hop aroma". Also available is the 3.5% Black Diamond, a full bodied, rich, dark Mild with roast barley flavours dominating the palate. Both will of course be available at the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport which has a pump reserved for Pictish products.

THE SALFORD BREWERY SYNDICATE

The well-established Bazen's micro and the brand new Facer's have come together under one roof in a venture currently unique in British brewing. Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA paid the first ever CAMRA visit to the new operation - and came away very impressed with what they saw, heard - and tasted!

Bazen's Brewery, based at Agecroft Industrial Estate, will be familiar to many OT readers. Richard Bazen has quite a brewing pedigree, having made his mark locally at Bridgewater Ales before going on to brew at Tony Allen's Phoenix Brewery. After leaving Phoenix he set up Bazen's with wife Jude, with the new outfit's beers becoming an instant hit on the local scene.

Pacific Bitter (3.8%) and Flatbac (4.2%) are the mainstays, supplemented by Knoll's Porter, Black Pig Mild, Bazen's Best and a range of seasonals based on an astrological theme. Demand was such that the original premises were rapidly outgrown.

Meanwhile, Boddington's head brewer David Facer was facing redundancy and aimed to set upon his own. David has had a long career in the brewing industry, starting at Wilsons in Newton Heath, moving on to Tetleys at Leeds, Chesters in Salford and finally Boddingtons, where he was head brewer for the last four years. Craft brewing was, however, new to him. 'Facer's First Draught' was literally the first beer he had brewed on a micro scale - hence the name!



David and Anne Facer

The first brew was brewed and fermented at Bazen's Brewery in Agecroft. However, the two concerns have now co-located to new premises at Knoll Street Industrial Park at The Cliff, Salford. In a unique arrangement, both breweries will share premises and equipment but still run as separate concerns. The semi-derelict unit was transformed in a matter of weeks and when Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA visited on 14 March, brewing hadn't yet started, with the first brew due on Tuesday 18.

Everything was very new and indeed more new eight-barrel fermenters were still under construction at Boggart Hole Clough. In fact, the brewing equipment will be split, rather than individual vessels being shared. Each concern has its own ingredients, offices and telephone numbers - all under the one roof. The current capacity is five barrels but this will shortly increase to give each brewer a 15-barrel capacity.

The Beers

The Bazen's range is fairly well-known and on our visit a cask of the excellent Flatbac was available for sampling. Richard and Jude also told us about the new seasonal range loosely based on an astrological theme, each using a single hop variety. The February/March beer was Sea God (4.3%) using Pacific Hallertau hops and made with crystal rye and crystal malt to create a medium amber beer.

The March/April (Aries) beer is Golding Fleece, a 4.4% golden beer brewed using Golding hops and marketed under the slogan 'rammed full of Goldings', while the latest based on the theme of Taurus, is 'Bullocks', a 4.3% beer brewed using American Mount Hood hops. Also available to try were two Facer's beers. First Draught is brewed using Optic Pale Ale and Crystal Rye malts with a hedgerow hop called 'Jenny' for bittering and a generous late addition of Bramling Cross for aroma. The 4.1 per cent beer has a gentle introduction but becomes increasingly bitter and quenching as you drink leaving that all-important "I'll have another" aftertaste. The second beer was a 'special' - an extra-dry-hopped version of First Draught. At first David thought he'd overdone the dry-hopping but this had matured out to give a dry, refreshing beer. Something similar to this will be marketed as Rhapsody with a third beer being the 4.7-4.8 per cent Landslide, which will be a stronger and again dry-hopped version of First Draught which will be aimed to not drink its strength. Future special may include a mild, a porter and a wheat beer, the first of which, Facer's Dark Mild, should appear this month. This will use Halcyon malt, and crystal and roast rye malts. The name hadn't been picked as we went to press but one idea is Rye Smile.



Jude and Richard Bazen

One 'syndicate' beer is likely to be a cask lager. This should be a 5 per cent beer, which will be conditioned for a month before release into the trade. Only three brews are likely over the summer months.

The visit also included excellent chicken and veggie curries to soak up the copious samples on offer and it was an excellent evening spent discussing beer and brewing with Richard and Jude Bazen, and David and Anne Facer. With the wealth of brewing experience and dedication to quality which have come together in this new operation, success should be guaranteed. Out thanks go to all involved for a superb evening.



Bazen's Brewery can be contacted on 0161 708 0247. Facer's Brewery can be contacted on 0161 792 7755.

HOPPY DAY IN OSSETT

The latest CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester visit involved a foreign trip- across t'border and into Yorkshire. Our highly under-powered minibus obviously didn't want to be climbing hills and going to foreign parts, but nevertheless it got us to our first target, the Brewers Pride in Ossett, West Yorkshire on schedule.

The Brewers Pride is located at the edge of town and is just adjacent to the Healy Mills Railway Yards. More importantly, it is also next to the Ossett Brewery, here a tour had been organised. We had left plenty of time to sample some of the beers on offer in the pub as well as a bite to eat before our tour and we were not to be disappointed. Although the pub and brewery are not connected, three Ossett beers are usually available and today these were the 3.8% Pale Gold, 4.3% Silver King and the 5.2% Excelsior. Between us, all were tried and they were in excellent form. The well balanced and orangey Pale Gold was described by one of our number as "unassuming but nevertheless forceful" whilst another likened it to "a maiden aunt on speed"! This pretentiousness was suitably mocked.

Notwithstanding this wonderful lineup, also on the bar was one of my recent favourites, Whim Cascade. Not surprisingly and like Silver King, it is made with Cascade Hops and can be sometimes sampled in the Crown on Heaton Lane, although it never lasts long! Others available were Taylors' Landlord (above average), Cottage Breast Bitter which had a blackcurrant tang, Hambleton Nightmare, (a porter) and the 7% Church End Rest In Peace which was malty with a marzipan taste. Addlestons Cider completed the range.

The pub has two front rooms, one with the bar, and a collection of breweriana including a mirror from the long departed Bentley Brewery. The tap room at the back has a TV and Pool table. This is obviously a good community pub as it got quite crowded for a Saturday lunchtime and that was before the Bradford Branch arrived on a motorised pub crawl.

Fortified with some excellent value for money food from a varied menu, we set off through the pub's beer garden for our tour of the Ossett Brewery. Our host was Paul Spencer who had tapped a barrel of HSB (Healy Special Bitter 4.2%) for our visit. This was a

typical Ossett beer, light coloured, rounded and well balanced. The beer is made from Cluster hops and Fawcetts lager malt whilst the Ossett yeast came from Wards via Kelham Island.

The brewery was founded in 1998 by Bob Lawson and a colleague who eventually left to set up a rival operation at the Red Lion, also in Ossett. Bob has over 30 years of brewery experience starting locally at Beverleys Eagle in Wakefield. When they were taken over and closed by Watneys - surprise, surprise- he moved to Matthew Brown in Blackburn before going to Joshua Tetley in Leeds for the next 25 years. Subsequently he commissioned breweries for the Firkin chain (remember them?) before operating the Kelham Island micro in Sheffield.

Brewing started in June 1998 and in September that year the brewery won its first award at The Huddersfield Beer Festival. During early 1999 Silver King was named Beer of the Festival at both Bradford and Leeds Festivals in the face of stiff opposition from over 100 other beers. More importantly perhaps, Bob's peers voted Excelsior Champion Beer of the SIBA Festival in September 1999. The brewery was certainly living up to its motto "Science and Art Combined" which along with its coat of arms is displayed on the distinctive pump clips. Soon the beers were proving so popular and winning more awards that an extension to the brewery was developed raising capacity from 10 barrels so that now, with 3 or 4 brews per week, they are producing 35 barrels per week- and selling it all. Ossett will be opening their first pub, The Bull in Liversedge in the summer. This will provide a steady outlet for the beer and aid one of the difficulties of marketing the beer in West Yorkshire which is awash with many excellent microbreweries. The brewery also delivers to a wide area stretching from Peterborough to Darlington on the East Coast and around Cheshire, Derbyshire, Sheffield, Liverpool and Manchester. Local outlets with an Ossett beer on are likely to be the Crown on Heaton Lane, the Olde Vic in Edgeley or the Glove Works in Glossop. Flying Firkin also distributes the beers nationally.

Ossett now have five members of staff in their team to operate the brewery and its collection of brewing equipment some of which is reclaimed from the milk industry. The plant consists of a 5 barrel mash tun, 3 fermenting vessels, (2 of which are 10 barrel capacity) and 8 tanks. Five staple beers are produced -the three in the pub plus Silver Shadow (3.9%) and Fine Fettle (4.8%) - the former uses eco -friendly English hedgerow hops whilst the latter is a refreshing pale ale. The brewing schedule is made up about a month in advance, so if you want to find out what is coming up you can visit their website at www.ossett-brewery.co.uk or give them a ring on 01924 261333

After a comprehensive tour of the brewery and an empty barrel of the excellent HSB, we thanked Paul for his time and hospitality and set off for home. Time had been allowed for a few stops on the way and first call was at the Red Lion to meet up again with the Bradford Branch. This stone clad brewpub was set up by Bob Lawson's erstwhile partner and is food orientated with one room occupied by a popular restaurant. However it was too early to eat, so we just had to concentrate on the beer. White Lion Bitter at 4.5% was light and hoppy as were the Golden Oldie (4.0%) and the Silver Bullet (4.6%) perhaps betraying their origins down the road. Also available was Roosters Yankee whilst next to come on were Phoenix Thirsty Moon and an Outlaw beer. I guess people in Ossett just like hops in their beer! None of our gang sampled the John Smiths Cask which was also on ...

One more stop before we headed back over the border and this was at the Good Beer Guide listed West Riding Refreshment Rooms at Dewsbury Railway Station. This is the main outlet for yet another local micro, the Anglo Dutch Brewing Company whose offering was Piston Proud (4.8%) which had a wonderful earthy taste. Also available were beers from Outlaw, Kelham Island and Springhead as well as Timothy Taylor staples Dark Mild and Landlord and Black Sheep Best and Riggwelter.

An excellent and hoppy day out in Yorkshire was rounded off on the right side of the Pennines at The Trackside in Bury. (We had to drop someone off there so it seemed churlish just to drive on straight away) Even though we were again in Red Rose territory, I have to say that if nothing else, these Yorkshire chappies certainly know how to brew beer that really grab the tastebuds like well, er, nothing else.

Our Ossett and two Anglo-Dutch beers should be on sale at this month's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival which is held at Stockport Town Hall from 29 - 31 May.






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