



BEARTOWN GETS NEW PUB

The ever-expanding Beartown Brewery have picked up another pub in the Opening Times area – the Cheshire Ring in Hyde.

Last month we reported how the pub – once a famous freehouse – had been put up for sale by Enterprise Inns. A delicensed future apparently beckoned but the pub has been rescued by the Congleton-based micro and it set to reopen towards the end of this month.

There will be one major difference from the other Beartown pubs – the Cheshire Ring will not be a managed house but a tenancy, Beartown's first. The incoming tenants are Duncan and Rachel Ward who we caught up with at Stockport Beer Festival at the end of May.



Duncan has an impressive pedigree when it comes to pubs and beer. His first pub (and Good Beer Guide entry) was in Norwich back in 1986. He then opened the Hobgoblin in Reading in 1993 and sold over 1,500 different real ales before he left, and again gained entry in the Good Beer Guide. This was followed by a spell selling real ale and British food in upstate New York and then a couple of years with the Sunday Times Wine Club. Phew!

Naturally, someone with this track record wasn't going to stay away from the pub scene or too long. This, couple with a desire to relocate to the north, saw Duncan circulate many local micros with his CV and Beartown had the good sense to take him on.

So, what's planned for the pub? Expect reasonable prices at all times, for a start. There will be a proper no-smoking room and a non-smoking section of the bar to get served at. Children will be welcome in the no-smoking room up to 8.00pm, too. Nor will there be any loud music or noisy gaming machines. What there will be is proper 'real food' cooked on the premises, a well-thought out wine list and of course, a cracking range of beers. Being a tenant, Duncan is only tied to Beartown for draught real ales so well known for their range and quality. The rest he can source himself so expect a good range of bottled and draught foreign beers together with real cider and perry.

It's good to see the Cheshire Ring rescued. In its heyday it was a real 'destination pub', well known for choice and quality. If all goes to plan, that role is about to be regained. We'll bring you a further report once the pub has opened.

MULTI RECORD BREAKER!

The hot weather brought out the crowds and helped turn the 17th Stockport Beer & Cider Festival into the best yet, with several records broken during the course of the three-day event.

A slow start on Thursday night, where attendance and sales were down, was more than made up over the next two days. Friday night saw the highest attendance at any session ever, with 1,300 people through the doors during the course of the evening session. They were a thirsty crowd, too, with over 4,250 pints of beer downed in that one session alone.

Total attendance was over 4,300 – a record, we think, and total beer sales totalled almost 13,000 pints. On top of that, cider and perry sales exceeded 2,000 pints – the second best ever, and over 60 new members were recruited – the highest number for some years. Despite the high temperatures, beer quality held up well and, unlike last year, was almost all gone by the time the bar closed on Saturday night.



Agleeful Festival Organiser, Jim Flynn, pictured above with Festival (and Olde Vic) Licensee Steve Brannan, was cock-a-hoop. He told Opening Times: "Last year we competed with a Bank Holiday and World Cup football. This year we have bounced back with a vengeance with records broken or equalled all over the place. Next year we 'come of age' with our 18th festival so we will try and make it that little bit special, although this year is going to be a hard act to follow." Jim also took the opportunity to thank not only the numerous festival sponsors, including the Stockport Express, Robinson's and Hydes' breweries, and festival licensee Steve Brannan, 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 that even at the busiest sessions no-one had to wait very long to be served."

**INSIDE
JUNE'S
OPENING
TIMES**

Editors View	2	Book Review	7	Mild Challenge	11	Curmudgeon	15
Pub Grub	4	Beer & Cider Awards	8	Macc Pub News	12	Peak Pub News	17
Pub of the Month	5	GBBF 2003	9	CAMRA Calling	14	Manchester Matters	18
Stagger	6	Thai me to the Tusk.	10	Five Years Ago	15	Pub News	19



PHOENIX BREWERY

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

Best Bitter, Old Oak, Navy, Double Dagger,
Monkeytown Mild, Arizona, White Monk,
Pale Moonlight, Midsummer Madness, Bantam,
White Monk, Black Shadow, March Hare,
May Fly, Sticky Wicket, Double Gold,
Flash Flood, Black Bee, White Tornado,
Last Leaf, Massacre, Porter, Snowbound,
Wobbly Bob, White Hurricane, Uncle Fester,
Christmas Kiss, Humbug, Tyke, Thirsty Moon,

MORE CHOICE BETTER BEER

International Brewing Awards



1998
Wobbly Bob
Silver Medal



2002
Wobbly Bob
Gold Medal



2002
Navy
Gold Medal

IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

This month I'm going to indulge in some unashamed self-congratulation. And why not? First - well done to everyone involved with Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Records fell like nine-pins and it's a real tribute to the hard work of all our volunteer staff and organisers. Here's looking to next year!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Congratulations also to all those involved with the new Stockport Pub Guide, Viaducts & Vaults 3. Of the three guides to Stockport pubs that CAMRA has produced, this must be the best yet. It's got everything you want in a pub guide and more besides - if you've not got your yet then order one today - the address is on the opposite page. Alastair Walker and his editorial/production team have done a superb job here.

Lots of people were involved in the production of Viaducts & Vaults 3, not least my co-editor here on Opening Times, Paul Hutchings. Paul is largely responsible for the slick and professional appearance of the book and I know he dedicated a huge amount of time to what I hope will be another award-winning guide. Thanks to one and all. Sorry there's no Brewery News this month, what with the Festival I seem to have run out of time. Sorry - but it'll be back next month.

John Clarke

Whilst adding my congratulations to the organisers of the very successful Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, and echoing John's recommendation of Viaducts & Vaults 3 - its amazing that 7 long years have elapsed since its predecessor hit the streets - I would just like to say a few words here in praise of the traditional family-owned regional brewers who remain the unsung champions (and by far, the largest producers) of cask ale. In those seven years, the proportion of pubs in Stockport selling only fizzy chemicals has increased from 6% to 30%. That it has not increased more has been largely due to the influence of the local family owned brewer - Robinsons, with help from Holts, who have opened more pubs in the area, and Hydes who have recently shown their confidence and commitment with the refurbishment of the Moss Rose into the 'Four Heaton's'. It was also nice to see my old friends Fullers in London increasing their profits by nearly 10%. Here's to you.

Paul Hutchings

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 230

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).

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).

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.



Tel/Fax: 01706 522227 Mobile: 07970 177 306

June special



ginger ale alc 3.9%

A crisp refreshing golden coloured ale.
Brewed using ginger for a distinctive
spicy flavour and aroma.

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

www.pictish-brewing.co.uk

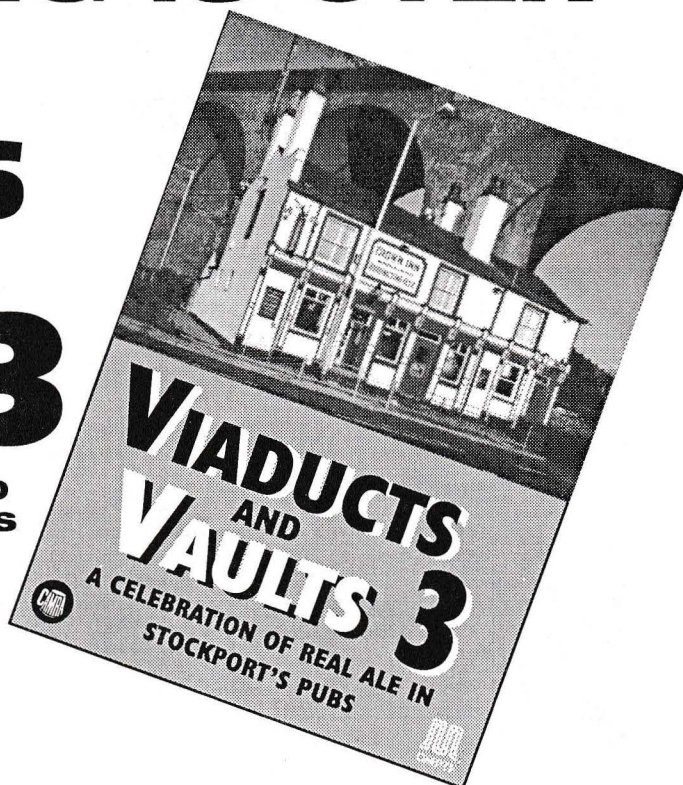
COPY DATE FOR JULY ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS JUNE 27

THE WAITING IS OVER

VIADUCTS AND VAULTS 3

THE COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO
REAL ALE IN STOCKPORT'S PUBS

IS OUT!



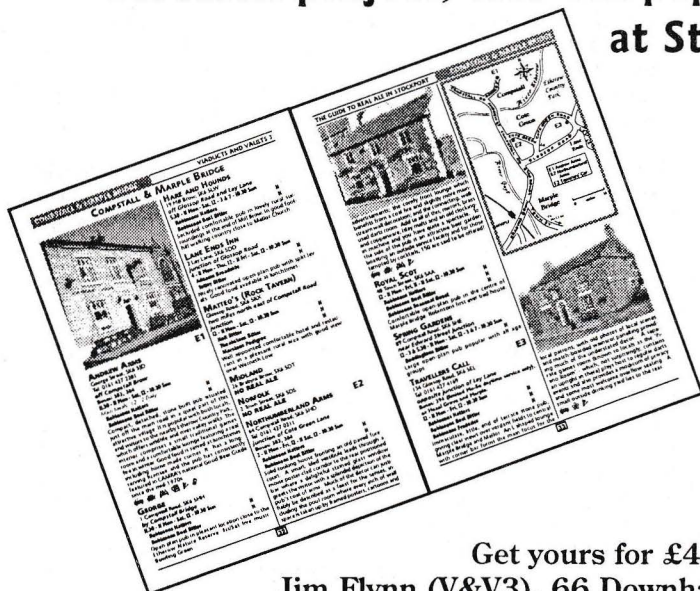
AND ONLY £4.95

Viaducts and Vaults 3

- A Celebration of Real Ale In Stockport's Pubs

The long awaited follow-up to CAMRA's two previous
award-winning Stockport pub and beer guides.

Now better than ever, packed with descriptions,
photographs, maps and articles, after a year-long
research project, this A5 paperbook book was launched
at Stockport's Beer & Cider Festival.



*"If you are a regular OT reader, you may think you know
Stockport's pubs well enough not to need a guide to them.
Believe me, you couldn't be more wrong! There's a nugget
on every page, from the pub write-ups to the boxed descrip-
tions which humour the book's name by detailing Stockport's
many viaducts. One of the very best guides CAMRA has
produced in recent years, this is an essential purchase..."*

Rhys P Jones

*"If you drink in the Stockport area and intend to use
more than one pub, it will become an indispensable
companion..."*

The BeerMonster™

Get yours for £4.95 (post and packing free) from:

Jim Flynn (V&V3), 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK2 5XA.
Make cheques payable to 'CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester'.



STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR



ANGELLA & CHANTAL

WELCOME YOU
TO THE

NAVIGATION

Top of Lancashire Hill
Tel
0161 480 6626

Open ALLDAY every day

6 HAND PULLED BEERS

KROMBACHER PILS

REAL CIDER (FROM THE BARREL)

ERDINGER WHEAT BEER



BELGIAN & CZECH BOTTLED BEERS

**REAL ALE
REAL PRICE**

Visit our Website
www.beartownbrewery.co.uk



The Lloyd's Hotel, Chorlton

The Lloyd's Hotel, has had a chequered history. I don't know how long it's been a pub – it might well have started out in the hands of one of Manchester's long-gone breweries – Hardy's Crown Brewery in Hulme perhaps? Or the Cornbrook Brewery, maybe. I say this because it ultimately fell into the hands of Bass who did lots of silly things with it, none of which were very successful. Luckily, they have now done the decent thing and sold it to JW Lees, a brewery company that certainly knows how to run pubs.

Lees in turn appear to have spent a small fortune on the place – it was certainly closed for long enough while the builders were in. I didn't know the pub before, after all there was simply no reason to visit it, but now it's very airy and spacious. In fact it's pretty much what you'd expect from a traditional pub reinvented in a modern idiom – you know, polished floors, light décor, a combination of open spaces and more intimate alcoves, and a restrained use of bric-a-brac. Naturally there's a no-smoking area and board games are available should the urge take you.

Apart from the main bar area, there's a restaurant at the back, and upstairs 'The Boardroom' which can be booked for small functions. At the back a bowling green has miraculously survived the pub's various incarnations and hopefully will now gain a new lease of life. Yes it's all very good...and yet. Perhaps it's the sheer newness of everything but the Lloyds certainly lacks the immediate charms of, say, Rain Bar, Lees' highly successful City Centre flagship. My companion for the evening, who we shall call The Brewer, put his finger on it – "It's really well done, really well laid out but it holds no charm for me." Indeed.

The beer range added to the slight air of disappointment, too. While there were plenty of posters advertising the Lees seasonal range, only GB Mild and Bitter were available on handpump. Well, actually the mild had run out, so it was bitter or nothing. This was OK.

So, to the food. This is available either in the restaurant or at your table in the pub proper and comes from an extensive menu which presents quite a skilful blend of pub grub favourites with rather more adventurous dishes. It covers the whole gamut from snacks, sandwiches ("served in ciabatta or country multi cereal bread"), hot panini sandwiches, hot wraps, grills, 'tradition with a twist' and a small range of puddings.

Something for everyone really, and as we had essentially just called in for a mid-evening bite during a tour of Chorlton, it's a shame we were unable to do this justice. We did pick two very different dishes, though – I chose 'posh fish and chips' from the 'tradition with a twist' menu, while The Brewer had a main course sized chicken and bacon salad. I think he came off best.

The posh fish and chips is described as "white fish, salmon coated in batter and lobster tails coated in breadcrumbs, served with chips". Well, it didn't exactly do everything it said on the tin, so to speak, as all three components came battered (and pretty ordinary batter it was, too) with a reasonable heap of fries. Not bad, I suppose, but not that posh either and, at £7.25, only average value.

The salad, though, was a much better bet. The menu says this comprises "chargrilled chicken fillet and thin strips of bacon on a bed of mixed leaves with croutons, parmesan and caesar dressing". This really did live up to expectations and made for an impressive plateful with plenty of well-cooked chicken and bacon, surmounting a large heap of well-dressed leaves. Better value at £6.95.

Time constraints meant we had no time for pudding, not even the intriguingly described Raspberry Splodge, which sounded just my type of dish.

Perhaps it needs time to bed down. Perhaps we caught it on an off night. The Lloyd's ought to be a real asset to the Chorlton drinking scene and it certainly adds some additional variety but at the moment, well to me at least, certainly falls a little way short of being a 'must visit' if you're in the area. A return visit in a few months time will probably show which way it's going to go.

The Lloyd's Hotel is at 617 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton.
Phone 0161 861 6990.



THE BOUNDARY

OPEN ALL DAY
EVERY DAY



COME & SEE OUR NEW LOOK!

Food Available:

Mon - Sat 11.00 - 9.00pm

Sun 12.00 - 9.00pm

in our Conservatory Restaurant

(Bookings Taken on:

0161 355 2169)

**Quality
Range of
Guest Ales
Always
Available**

SUMMER BEER FESTIVAL

Wednesday 18 - Sunday 22 June

60+ BEERS

Live Music Fri & Sat

Specialists in Catering, Mobile Bars and functions

The Boundary, 2 Audenshaw Road, Audenshaw,
Manchester M34 5HD

Phone 0161 330 1679

Fax: 0161 285 3456

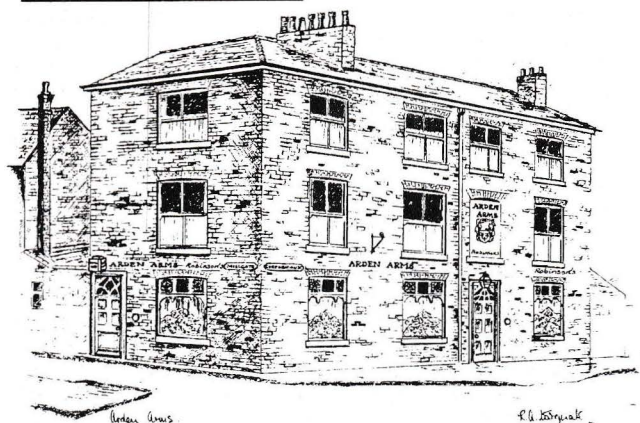
Environmental Services Tameside
Clean Food Award 1999



Corporate Member of the
Guild Of Master Caterers

PUB OF THE MONTH JUNE 2003

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	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					



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for June, the Arden Arms (Millgate, Stockport) is a classic pub by any definition. Apart from a sensitive alteration to bring an old kitchen into public use, this Grade II listed building has remained essentially unchanged for 150 years or more. So, it was with considerable sadness that local drinkers watched as the pub entered a spiral of decline, culminating in the eviction of one set of tenants by Robinson's. Happily those days are now firmly in the distant past and the pub has been restored to its former glory – a much used cliché which just happens to be true in the case of the Arden Arms.

Those responsible for this transformation are Joe Quinn and Steve King who took over the pub in late 1999. They made an immediate start with a thorough redecoration and spruce up, and followed this with a comprehensive programme of restoration which now sees the pub gleam and sparkle much as it did during its heyday under the long-term tenancy of Jack May.

Joe and Steve made their names when they owned That Café in Levenshulme, which became something of a gastronomic oasis under their tenure. Unsurprisingly then, a high-class food operation was introduced where well-cooked and imaginative food, 'restaurant food at pub prices', now adds to the pub's many attractions.

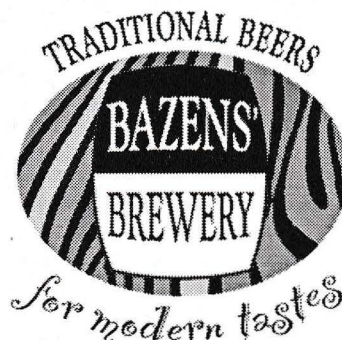
Foremost amongst those attractions has to be the superbly kept Robinson's ales. Best Bitter and Hatters Mild are the mainstays, although these are joined by Old Tom for the winter months and the current seasonal is also usually available. All the beer is invariably in immaculate condition and it is no surprise that the Arden Arms is once again a fixture in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide. Joe and Steve's efforts in rescuing one of the town's classic pubs was recognised with a previous Pub of the Month Award in December 2000. They have gone on to create a flagship for quality and excellence on all fronts. It is this unflagging commitment and dedication to making sure the Arden stays at the very forefront of the local pub scene that a second award is now being made.

This very well deserved award will be presented on Thursday 26 June from 8.00pm onwards. An excellent night is in prospect – get there early to bag a seat.. JC.

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 230:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Butler, Jim Flynn, Peter Edwardson, Phil Levison, Rhys Jones, Mark McConachie, Anthony Firmin, Phil Booton, Frank Wood, Dave Hallows, Tom Lord, Brian Taylor.



Bullocks 4.3% (Singular hopped Taurean beer)
Pacific Bitter 3.8%
Flatbac 4.2%
Best Bitter/Flying Zebra 4.5%
Black Pig Mild 3.6%
Knoll's Porter 5.2%

Regular outlets include

The King's Arms and The Albert Vaults, Salford,
The Trackside, Bury, Waters Green & The Sun, Macclesfield,
The Knott Bar, Corbieres & Bar Centro, Manchester.

For more info, please see www.bazensbrewery.co.uk, phone

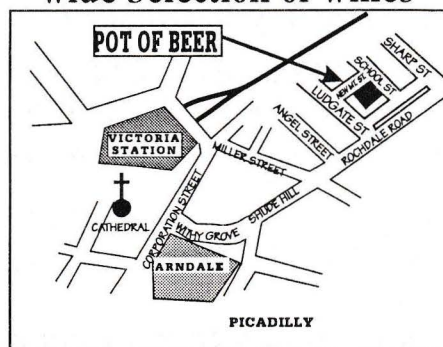
0161 708 0247

or email enquiries@bazensbrewery.co.uk

POT OF BEER

36 NEW MOUNT ST
(0161) 834 8579

- Everchanging Guest Cask Ales
- Robinsons Dark Hatters Mild
- Draught Leffe Blond & Hoegaarden
- Black Rat Traditional Cider
- Continental Bottled Beers
- Wide Selection of Wines



**OPEN 12 NOON TO 11PM
MONDAY TO SATURDAY**



STAGGER

with Jim Flynn

West Didsbury & Withington Wander

The pub scene in West Didsbury was not well known to me and therefore when I joined a sizeable group of fellow staggerers at the **Woodstock** on Barlow Moor Road, I was looking forward to the evening with more than the usual interest.

This first pub used to be the headquarters of the British Council, and with the wood panelling, large rooms and high ceilings it still has that feel about it. The pub is in three levels with an upstairs and downstairs bar, although there is no real ale upstairs. It was at this pint that my bank manager had to be resuscitated with the very ordinary Old Speckled Hen selling at £2.50 a pint and the only marginally superior Boddingtons Bitter at £2.40.

Walking past the now gaudy and keg-only **Barleycorn** we found our way to the **Four In Hand** on the corner of Lapwing Lane and Palatine Road. They certainly go in for barn-like pubs in West Didsbury, with this pub almost as big as the first. On the bar was certainly my first sighting of a keg Marstons Pedigree font. When will these breweries learn that when they produce a keg version of their real ale brands they are in great danger of confusing the public and damaging the brands themselves. The cask ales available were Banks's Bitter and Marston's Bitter, both considered more than reasonable.

Moving down Lapwing Lane we arrived at what must be the smallest pub in West Didsbury, the **Railway**. At one time it must have been a really small place because as can be seen from the frontage it has been extended into the shop next door. It's an impressive conversion, though, and you can well see why it has recently picked up a prize in CAMRA's national Pub Design Awards. Ignoring the smooth lager on handpump (why oh why do Holts do this?), I tried the Holt's Mild but had to ask for it to be

exchanged for the Bitter. We found both this and the seasonal Blackwell (at a huge £2.05 for Holts - and in a tied house, too!) both disappointingly indifferent.

Across the road is the **Metropolitan**, another huge pub. Previously the notorious Midland, it had been transformed into what must be a real goldmine. The pub and the restaurant area, with its high vaulted ceiling, were incredibly busy. It was a very pleasant spring evening and we sat outside under the veranda heaters. Most of us tried the Taylors Landlord, which was the best beer thus far into the Stagger. The Black Sheep and Marstons Pedigree were also well received. I normally prefer small and cosier pubs, but for once I have to say that on this night I found the **Metropolitan** the best pub in West Didsbury.

Down Burton Road we moved into Withington and the **Old House At Home**. The L-shaped pub was comparatively quiet and I have to say that in my eyes it isn't the most characterful of pubs. It was however the home of the best received beer of the night. Skippers Cornish Blond, a lager-style hoppy wheat beer at 5%ABV. Almost as well received was the Boddingtons Bitter.

Further down Burton Road is the **Orion**, a stereotypical street corner Holts pub (although one they bought off Whitbread a good few years ago). The pub's slightly worn textures give you the feeling that perhaps it has seen better days and needs some investment. It may be that the Withington drinking public feel the same because I have never seen it so quiet on a weekend evening. There was a mild handpump in the vault but when mild was ordered the bar staff reached for the smooth pump. I thought Holts had banned this practice. The Bitter however was pleasant enough.

Turning the corner on to Wilmslow Road we bypassed the new very sad **White Lion** (keg) and also the unfortunately keg-only **Albert**. Our destination was my favourite pub of the night, the **Victoria**. From the etched windows to the pictures of Hydes Brewery in the past to the unique 'bum rests' around the bar (do you sit or stand?), this traditional pub has character. Of the four Hydes' beers on sale, Mild, Bitter, Jekyll's Gold and the seasonal Copper Hopper, we tried the Mild and the seasonal and found both on good form.

Retracing our steps we went back down Wilmslow Road, past the **Turnpike** (why do Sam Smiths have so many keg pubs?) we arrived at our final port of call, Marston's **Red Lion**. We aimed for

6

CAMRA
CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE



"THE COUNTRY PUB IN THE TOWN"

BAR OPEN ALL DAY, EVERY DAY

Lunch Mon - Sat 12 - 2pm

Sunday 12 till 3pm

TRADITIONAL SUNDAY LUNCH £4.95

- OR TRY OUR SET MENU AT ONLY £7.95 for 3 Courses

Evening Meals 7pm till 9pm Mon - Sat

Quiz Nights 1st Tuesday of Every Month

Themed Food Available on Quiz Nights



FULL TABLE SERVICE EVERY EVENING
NEW HOSTESS - JULIE

Recommended in CAMRA's New Pub Food Guide

THE HIND'S HEAD

Come and Try our famously good

TRADITIONAL HAND PULLED BEERS

Taylors Landlord, Marstons Pedigree,
Old Speckled Hen, Black Sheep Bitter,
John Smiths Cask & Guest Beers

AT THE INN WITH THE REPUTATION FOR
EXCELLENT FOOD AT AFFORDABLE PRICES

Try our extensive new menu, from light snacks to
full meals, and our daily specials boards,
complemented by an excellent wine selection

Full Menu, Daily Specials and
Traditional Roasts in our
conservatory Restaurant

Senior Citizens Menu
Monday ~ Thursday

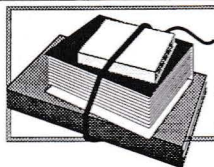
(2 courses + tea or coffee £4.95)

Stockport CAMRA Pub of the Month Oct 2000
MANCHESTER ROAD, HEATON CHAPEL
STOCKPORT, TEL 0161 431 9301

the vault only to find the door locked. Thus we fought our way into the very crowded lounge - you can certainly see why this was the biggest volume pub in Marston's entire estate. Bitter and Pedigree were ordered and both found to be very enjoyable, although in truth the pub was perhaps just *too* busy to really relax and enjoy either it or the beer. Still, it was good to end the night in a thriving pub obviously selling large quantities of real ale.

And so ended a mixed and ultimately enjoyable Stagger. I didn't know all of these pubs but none totally disappointed, although the combination of high prices and very ordinary beer perhaps made the Woodstock the least enjoyable pub of the night.

Of course, this report can only be a snapshot of what one group of people found on one particular night. It can't be taken as a once and for all judgement of either the pubs or their beers - as ever why not visit some of them yourselves to see how much you agree...or otherwise!



BOOK REVIEW



Viaducts & Vaults 3, CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester, 96pp, £4.95

It's fortunate that the Stockport pub deemed visually striking enough to feature on television ads for the 2001 census has also been one of the town's best pubs for many years. That's good enough reason for the Crown on Heaton Lane to feature once again on the cover of the latest edition of CAMRA's guide to Stockport's pubs.

The guide's previous edition, in 1996, came at a high point of real ale availability in the town's pubs. Today, though real ale is still easy to find in Stockport, there has been a disturbing increase in the number of pubs selling only keg or smooth beers, with, for example, only four of Reddish's nine pubs offering the real stuff. CAMRA, of course, is dedicated to the cause of quality beers in quality pubs, and a splendidly passionate article by editor Alastair Walker acts as a rallying cry against "artificial beers from corporate, soul-less tyrants" and in favour of the craft-made beers that make it worthwhile going to the pub.

A range of thematic articles, scattered amongst the pub listings but easily found from the table of contents, covers every aspect of Stockport drinking, from mild to Robinson's export trade. All have clearly been written expressly for the guide, rather than recycling "standard issue" CAMRA publicity; I was particularly taken by the organisation of the breweries section, which can all too easily turn into a straight alphabetical list. I did wonder, though, whether there might have been scope for a piece in real ale in the off-trade.

While the articles are important, a pub guide is ultimately judged by the quality of the pub listings and descriptions, and Viaducts & Vaults 3 scores highly here. Logically arranged in district order, every pub gets a basic name and address listing, with the stern warning "NO REAL ALE" appended to the keg-only establishments. Everywhere that does sell real ale, though, gets at least a listing of opening hours, beers available, and a couple of lines description, while the highly recommended pubs get an extended description, a photograph (or one of Rosemary Wignall's excellent pen and ink drawings) and facilities denoted by an extensive range of symbols (they even distinguish between large and small car parks!). The descriptions are clearly written by people who know the pub, and have been skilfully edited into a consistent and readable style.

The practical side of the guide has not been ignored, with clear maps, public transport information, and that too often neglected necessity, a comprehensive index. The design is crisp, clean, and logical, even the blank pages provided for notes at the end being enlivened by delightful photographic cameos from some of the town's most characterful pubs. And while the book had been some months in gestation, the details have been revised until the last possible date, so that, for example, the Vine in Cheadle appears under its strange new name Barsh. (Admittedly the renaming of the Moss Rose in Heaton Norris has not been caught, but this did take place only days before the guide hit the streets - and indeed the possibility of the pub changing its name is mentioned).

If you are a regular OT reader, you may think you know Stockport's pubs well enough not to need a guide to them. Believe me, you couldn't be more wrong! There's a nugget on every page, from the pub write-ups to the boxed descriptions which humour the book's name by detailing Stockport's many viaducts. One of the very best guides CAMRA has produced in recent years, this is an essential purchase for anyone who ever drinks in Stockport whether regularly or occasionally. Very highly recommended.

RPJ.

The Old Glove Works

CASK ALE BAR & EVENT SUITE

Top 6 1999 Cask Ale Pub of The Year

UP TO 6 EVER CHANGING CASK ALES

Open every day - from midday

(Please note our closing times:

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

Midnight Closing on Fri & Sat, 10.30pm Sun

No Admission after 10.45pm)

Food Available:

12 - 2pm Mon - Fri

5.30pm Friday - Hot

Roast Muffins

Live Entertainment:

Thursdays 9pm

Sundays 3 - 6pm

Resident DJ 8pm

Friday & Saturday (60s, 70s, 80s)



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

Event Suite for Your Special Occasions

2 Outdoor Riverside Drinking Areas

Riverside Mill, George St
Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 8AY

01457 858432



*Steve, Johanne, Molly &
sometimes Jess welcome you to*

Ye Olde Vic

1 Chatham Street, Edgeley, Stockport
(0161) 480 2410

Opening Hours:

Mon - Fri: 5pm - 11pm;

Sat: 7pm - 11pm;

Sun: 7pm - 10.30pm



5 Alternating Cask Beers

*Westons Traditional Cider chilled,
Grimbergen Belgian Bottled Beers*

Selection from 12 single malts in
35cl measures

Solid Fuel Open Fire

An Establishment for the Discerning Drinker!!

**We still maintain our no swearing and
good behaviour policy.**





CAMRA FESTIVAL BEER & CIDER AWARDS

One of the highlights of the Stockport Beer & Cider Festival is the customers' votes for their favourite beers and ciders. It is traditional for the votes to be very close and this year was no exception, despite a higher than usual number of votes being cast.

In the beer categories the winning beers were:

Mild - Wentworth Gun Park Dark, from Rotherham.

Bitter - Bazens' Flatbac, from Salford

Premium Bitter - Whim Cascade, from Hartington, Derbyshire

Special Beer - Abbeydale Redemption, a real ginger beer from Sheffield

Stout/Porter - a tie between RCH Old Slug Porter from Somerset and Wentworth Oatmeal Stout, from Rotherham.

Strong/Old Ales - Robinson's Old Tom, local favourite, of course. Total votes cast for each of the category winner were compared to establish the most popular beers. There was a tie for second place between two very different beers - the powerful Old Tom and the very modern and hoppy Whim Cascade, made entirely with Cascade hops from the USA. The overall winner, though, was Bazens' Flatbac, a pale, citrusy, hoppy beer, very much in the modern style. Congratulations to all concerned.



In the Cider and Perry competition there was an even closer race. The winning cider, though, is an old favourite from Ted Jones in Herefordshire. Ted doesn't sell his cider commercially but always donates us a tub each his cider and perry for which we make a donation to a local hospice in Herefordshire.

There was little to choose between the top two perries so, unusually, a runner-up award is to be made. This will be going to the relatively unknown Newtons Court in Herefordshire, for their organic perry. The champion perry though, was another old favourite from Brian Browning of Gloucestershire. Brian is the uncle of well-known cider maker (and multiple-Stockport award winner) Dennis Gwatkin, so quality obviously runs in the family.

Macclesfield

There have been some other major beer and cider contests recently, too. The Macclesfield Beer Festival in early May hosted the Champion Beer of Cheshire competition. The beers submitted were: Beartown - Kodiak Gold & Wheat Bear; Burtonwood - Bitter & Top Hat; Coach House - Honey Pot & Dick Turpin, Khean - All Rounder & Village Green; Storm - Windgather & Silk of Amnesia; Weetwood -

Eastgate Ale & Oasthouse Gold. The result is as follows 1st Weetwood Eastgate Ale, 2nd Khean All Rounder, 3rd Beartown Wheat Bear, 4th Burtonwood Bitter & 5th Coach House Honey Pot.

National Cider & Perry Champions

CAMRA's National Cider & Perry Championships were held at the Reading Beer & Cider Festival at the beginning of May. The winner were:

Perry - Bronze - Barkers Dry; Silver - Impaired Vision Medium; Gold - Hartlands Sweet

Cider - Bronze - Hecks Hang Down; Silver - Gwynt y Ddraig Medium; Gold - Summers Medium.

**VIADUCTS
& VAULTS 3**
DETAILS PAGE 3
REVIEW PAGE 7

**OUT
TOW
W**

GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL

Held at London Olympia every year, the Great British Beer Festival is Britain's biggest beer festival and has much to offer you. Why not catch up with friends or unwind after work with a good quality pint? There is also live entertainment and music, traditional pub games and a fine selection of food including many pub favourites. Drop in and enjoy all the fun at the Great British Beer Festival from 5th-9th August.

The festival brings together the widest beer range from around the country with a handpicked selection of over 700 real ales, ciders and perries. Our enthusiastic bar staff are also happy to advise you on the wide-ranging international choice of beers and real lagers including beer from Germany, Belgium, Italy, USA, Russia and the Czech Republic.

Cider drinkers will find a wide choice of real ciders on offer at the Real Cider and Perry Bar and there is also a large range of bottled real ales for you to enjoy at the Bottled Beer Bar. There are dozens of different bars at the festival and you will find many of your favourites as well as some of the newest beers available. What's more, to truly appreciate the tastes on offer, you could attend one of our tutored beer tastings hosted by our international team of beer experts.

CAMRA welcomes families to the festival and provides a Family Room with entertainers and games which is open until 9pm every night. Children must be supervised by a family member at all times. You can also bring along your work colleagues as we provide corporate hospitality, please visit the festival website, www.gbbf.org for further details or telephone CAMRA on 01727 867201.

2002 saw a record 44,000 visitors from around the country through the door over five days. Between them they downed 200,000 pints as well as bottled beers, cider, perry, and a selection from our international beer bar. Visitors enjoy the unique festival atmosphere and nearly 90% of visitors rated the festival as excellent or good.

The Great British Beer Festival is open every day from Tuesday 5th August to Saturday 9th August and full details of opening times, prices and live music can be found at www.gbbf.org or on our Information Line 0900 525 2525 (calls to this number cost 60p per minute). Tickets can be booked online or by telephoning 01727 867201; discounts are available for CAMRA members. Remember to leave your car at home as London Olympia is easily reached by public transport.

Thrills.
& spills
At the
Great British Beer Festival



London Olympia
5th-9th August 2003
www.gbbf.org



THAI ME TO THE ELEPHANT TUSK!

Anthony Firmin writes from exotic parts

My partner and I decided to celebrate Christmas and New Year in a hotter and sunnier climate. A last minute holiday deal was found and off we went to Thailand.

Much has been written of the four micro-breweries in Bangkok and plans were made to visit a couple of these - one of which served food and featured a couple of shows of traditional Thai dancing every evening. However, our visit to Bangkok didn't go quite to plan and as we were only there for 3 days the micro-brewery visits had to be postponed for future times.

The rest of our Thai holiday was spent at the resort village of Cha-Am about 120km south of Bangkok which was pleasant and relaxing. The only beer the hotel could offer was Singha which as most people know is nothing to get excited about.

Most evenings were spent in the small town of Hua-Hin about 15km south of our hotel eating in the ever so cheap cafes and restaurants, and drinking in the bars which were not obvious pick-up places for the local girls. We also spent time visiting the night markets and shops in search of high quality fake goods for presents.

It was during one of these endless shopping excursions that something caught my attention. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the words "Brewing Company" and all further thoughts of shopping were lost, much to my partner's disgust, and a bee-line was made for the "Hua-Hin Brewing Company".

The building itself has been made to look like it is a run down ramshackled collection of shacks and huts all conjoined with a myriad of steps as if it is on the harbour. It is connected to the Hilton Hotel, which dominates the centre of this small town. The decision was made - we were going for a drink so up the steps we went! There was a band playing inside, which made conversation impossible so we opted for an outside table in the warm evening air.

The beer menu was reviewed and I was not disappointed!! Three beers were on offer from the brewery - so they were all to be tried. All the beers appear to be of keg type dispense. The beers were...

★ Sabai Sabai Wheat Ale (4.5%): a smooth yet cloudy wheat beer with a slight lemony taste. A nice beer to relax to. Very morish.

★ Dancing Monkey Lager (5.0%): a pleasant lager, nothing exceptional about it although you couldn't tell it was 5.0%! The pub's description says "have a few glasses of Dancing Monkey and we guarantee you will make a fool of yourself on the dance floor". You will be relieved to hear I didn't!!!

★ Elephant Tusk Dark Ale (6.0%): This was stunning. There were lots of roast malt flavours combined with cascade hops to give this beer an interesting taste, the hops were not too overpowering. Very moreish and very dangerous - you couldn't tell it was 6.0%. Again their description says "Have a few glasses of Elephant Tusk and impress your girlfriend". I did and she wasn't!!

All the beers were the same price...0.3 ltr £1.70, 0.5 ltr £2.45 and 1 ltr £4.40. Compared to the local Singha beer these were very expensive indeed. They also offered beer by the metre at £9.25, I presume this is their equivalent of a yard of ale which maybe the future of things to come?

The smell from the outdoor barbecue was enough to convince my other half that we should eat here. The menu comprises mostly of freshly caught sea-food and is reasonably cheap although quite expensive compared to other cafes in the area. The food was succulent and fresh and was the perfect accompaniment to the beer.

After much asking I was able to obtain some information about the history of the brewery. The Hua-Hin Brewing Company started in 1923 on the docks of a small fishing village 20km from Hua-Hi. The founder was local fishing tycoon Sopchoke Chulasughandra Sr and he originally served his Moonshine beer to local fishermen. The beer was often swapped for the catch of the day, however Sopchoke soon realised that beer was a lucrative business and opened to the public in 1937. The business was passed to his playboy son Sopchoke Jnr. in 1963 and pictures of his many girlfriends adorn the walls of the bar.

The Hua-Hin Brewing Company is renowned in the area for the high quality of the beer that it serves as well as the sea-food (the catch is still provided by local fishermen). The beer is 100% natural and is now brewed by the great grandson of the founder. There are some copper brewing vessels behind the bar but as these contained a number of holes they obviously were not part of the brewery. What I gathered from the bar staff the beer isn't brewed on the premises and I was unable to find out where the brewery was located.

After finishing our meal we went inside to watch the band play - they sounded very good from outside. The inside of the pub is large arranged on two floors with a long bar on the ground floor. There is also quite a large stage and a dance floor for when you have had too much Dancing Monkey!!

Many bars in tourist areas are pick-up places for local Thai girls (I am sure you know what I mean) and the Hua-Hin Brewing Company was no exception. It was amusing, yet embarrassing, to listen to a couple of guys trying to negotiate a price for the night with a couple of Thai girls with the obvious language difficulties and the loud music. You have been warned!

We visited the brewpub on several more occasions and the beer and food were excellent every time. The pub advertises a happy hour from 18:00 - 20:00 when a singer and pianist plays and the beer is half price. There were only about a dozen people in the place and for us this was a better time to visit.

There is a shop in the pub selling t-shirts, polo shirts, baseball caps and a few other bits and pieces. Not surprisingly, compared to all the shops on the street, it is relatively expensive.

So if you have had a hard day at the beach you at least know that there is some decent beer waiting for you in Hua-Hin.

Hua-Hin Brewing Company, 33 Naresdamri Road, Hua-Hin 71100, Thailand. Tel: +66(0) 3251-2888

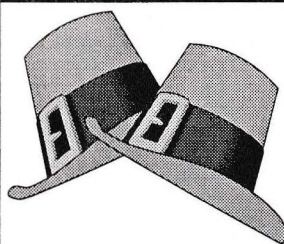
Out of Our Circulation Area ? Having Difficulty Getting Your Copy?

Postal subscriptions to Opening Times are available.
Cheque payable to Opening Times for
£5.50 for 12 issues.

Write to: John Tune,

4 Sandown Road, Cheadle Heath,
Stockport SK3 0JF

<http://mywebpage.netscape.com/openingtimes/>



Mark &
Anita
Welcome You
To

The Hatters Arms

Church Lane, Marple

0161 427 1529

for a snug and cosy relaxing atmosphere

*Enjoy Robinson's Traditional Ales
at their Best*

*Including the Seasonal Beers
For the height of indulgence use our original
Bell-push for service at your table*



Thursday Night Quiz Starts 9.30
Meals Served Lunch & Evening





2003 MILD CHALLENGE ROUND-UP

This year's Mild Challenge was another great success, writes Mild Challenge Coordinator, Mark McConachie. For those not in the know, this is a 'passport scheme' whereby participating pubs stamp a drinker's mild card when they have a pint or half-pint of mild in that pub.

Obtaining twelve or more different stamps gets that drinker a variety of prizes - free entry to this festival, free pints of mild at this festival, a commemorative T-shirt, a commemorative Sweatshirt, a personally engraved pewter tankard or a combination of the aforesaid prizes.

This year's Challenge ran for five weeks from April 5th to May 11th with a mammoth 81 pubs taking part from as far afield as Salford and the city centre in the north, to Glossop in the east and Whaley Bridge in the south. Final results show that just under one hundred people returned their cards (many more will have started, but not completed a card for whatever reason). Although a slight drop on last year, more entrants have visited more pubs and sampled more mild by dint of entering the Mild Challenge Super - 36 pub visits needed - nearly a third of entrants took this option. Thirteen hardy souls managed to complete the challenge in its entirety by collecting stamps in all 81 pubs.

This is great news for mild sales and great news for the publicans who supported CAMRA in this important campaigning issue. On Mark's travels he encountered many licensees who told him that interest in the Challenge and mild were both up, additionally many people had travelled to pubs they had never visited before. All round a great effort and a huge success; Mark would like to pass on his grateful thanks to all of the publicans who took part, all of the people who entered the challenge, and to all those in CAMRA who assisted in distributing / collecting the mild challenge material.

PRAGUE REVISITED

Local member *Phil Booton* has been to Prague, armed with the two-part guide that appeared in *Opening Times* last year. He found one or two gems that we missed...

Pivni Galerie, U Pruhonu 9: The best find of the trip! This is a beershop in the inner suburb of Holesovice, selling a wide range of beers from small and medium-sized Czech breweries. The good news is that it has a small bar area with two beers on draught. Any of the bottles can be drunk on the premises. The owner speaks excellent English and English language beer lists are available. A host of beers available nowhere else in Prague. Also lots of beer mats for the tegetologists amongst you. Opening hours are 10.00-20.00 Monday-Friday, 10.00-13.00 Saturday, closed Sunday. It's a fair way from the centre near the old Mestian Brewery - but trams 3 or 14 will get you there. A must visit if in Prague.

Kyvadlo, V Jame 5: A rare outlet for Bernard beers, with three being available on draught. A smart bar just off Vodickova near the Novomestsky Pivovar. Also does good food.

Hlucna Samota, Zahrebska 14: Local bar some way south of Wenceslas Square. Rather food-oriented with an extensive menu. Does Hoegaarden and Kelt, a dark, Guinness like beer, which was unfortunately rather undistinguished. Very attractive bar staff! **U Svatcho Tomase, Letenska 12:** Cavernous beer hall aimed at the tourist trade. A misleading list of beers on a blackboard outside which were not actually available. Interesting for the decor but for no other reason.

XXX, Senovazne Namesti 2: Bare boarded bar in a small square near the Powder Tower. No pornography in evidence! An outlet for Krusovice beers. May close early if no custom.

These details have been added to the previous articles which now available as an on-line guide to Prague. For your copy, e-mail Ed1 at johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com.

TAKING UP THE CHALLENGE

Chris Walkden took up the year's Mild Challenge - here's how he got on...

Congratulations to the organisers and all the publicans that have taken part in this year's Mild Challenge. In particular, I was pleased to see that the Mild Challenge Super had been introduced with a target of 36 pubs which gives you something to aim at in between the minimum target of 12 pubs or all 80-plus. I did visit the whole lot a couple of years ago and it was hard work. Last year, time constraints did not allow this, so I did the only other challenge (12 pubs in 12 different areas) in one day - and with 12 different milds to boot - and no Robbies. This year again I had little time, so the "Super" was an ideal and achievable challenge whilst leaving some time for my other interests (as well as a full time job !!).

I tried to sample as many different milds in the 36 pubs I visited. Eventually I notched up 20 different milds from 18 different breweries. Some of the pubs with Guest Milds, such as the Stalybridge Station Buffet, actually had two milds on during my visit (Cropton Barny and Titanic Mild at 4%) but only one stamp was allowed !!, I caught up with the Titanic at The Knott as there was no Ginger Marble available whilst the Marble Arch was also out of stock so I had to make do with an excellent Highgate Dark. The Crescent in Salford had Archers Keene Special at 5% - a real treat and the strongest mild encountered on my travels - and it was at the start of a day out in Manchester Centre!

Many local breweries were represented including the LAB micro in Denton although Lees only had one pub and Holts only two pubs in the Challenge. By contrast, there were 15 Hydes pubs in which to sample their Mild or Light. I later discovered that the rare (for these parts) Welsh Dark was on in the Conway, Cheadle Hulme after I had already got all my stamps - but I did make the trip to try it anyway.

After managing to do the Challenge last year without a pint of Robbies, this year I visited 12 Robbies pubs in 12 different areas. The Blossoms in Heaviley provided me with the best pint of mild of the whole challenge (but only just) whilst the worst was also Robbies in a pub outside our area. It was nice to see that their Dark Mild has now been rebadged as Hatters Dark with new pump clips - perhaps it may become more widely available? Robbies prices do seem to vary tremendously - I paid £1.90 for a pint of mild in one pub and £1.45 in another.

The 36 pubs I visited were in 25 different areas and included six I had never visited before. One of these was The Nelson in Didsbury where a pint of M&B Mild was only £1.40. The cheapest price was as usual the Porters Dark Mild in the Railway at £1.20, the most expensive the guest in the Olde Vic in Edgeley (£2.00) which was Slaters Monkey Magic at the time of my visit. Generally speaking, the pubs with guest milds were charging the highest prices, but they do not have the economies of scale of tied pubs. What they do do, though, is give us an excellent choice of beers - including milds - from right across the country.

So there is plenty of variety of mild beers in our area if you look for them. Milds are not always weak beers and they certainly cover a wide variety of flavours. So if you completed the Challenge, congratulations - if you didn't just try a pint of mild next time you come across one - you may be pleasantly surprised at what you find.

THE CASTLE

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

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

**Cumbria Way
and Snowdon Ale
A WARM WELCOME
IN A TRADITIONAL PUB**



VIADUCTS AND VAULTS 3 - OUT NOW! ONLY £4.95 ORDER YOUR COPY - See Page 3