



OPENING TIMES



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FREE

S&N GOES LOCAL

Britain's small brewers are celebrating a breakthrough in their Access to Market campaign – thanks to giant pubco Scottish & Newcastle Retail.

The 1,450-strong chain – currently up for sale – turned to the micro sector when it sought to stem a drop in beer sales. And now it is ready to extend its Local Heroes scheme, which has allowed 42 micros to deliver their ales direct to over 400 Scottish & Newcastle Retail managed pubs in their areas – without having to trunk them to distant depots first.

The initiative is based on research suggesting that the availability of a locally-brewed real ale is often the key determinant in deciding which pub a group of people will choose – even if not all of them are ale-drinkers.

S&N Retail's Edward Theakston said: "A Local Hero is a beer with a strong genuine appeal, a strong local following, and a reputation for quality. The size of the brewery is of no importance. "We believe we can sell locally-produced cask ales to local pubs, providing the quality is appropriate and the pub is appropriate." The Society of Independent Brewers has been campaigning for several years for direct access to pubco-owned outlets. Now commercial director Nick Stafford of Yorkshire's Hambleton Ales is urging other chains to follow S&N Retail's lead. "This is a great way of promoting small brewers' beers," he said. "It is model and a philosophy that could be replicated by other pubcos."

One of the brewers involved is Mordue of Tyne & Wear, whose Workie Ticket is a former Champion Beer of Britain. It is dealing direct with 10 S&N Retail pubs, and co-owner Garry Fawson said: "We are over the moon with this scheme and are very happy with the way it is rolling out.

"S&N Retail realised that having a local cask beer in a pub was a way of building trade, because people were willing to bypass other pubs to get there even if only one of the group wanted to drink the beer. "We are in a win-win situation: we have new outlets and S&N Retail is getting extra trade. Where we can deal directly with the landlord we are doing great volumes, and through our experience of the area we know of other pubs where our beers will sell."

But one stumbling block for small brewers seeking to save money, reduce pollution, and speed up the return of their casks is the problem of invoicing. "We still need to find a way of getting small brewers' beers, especially those from rural areas, into leased and tenanted pubs," said Mr Stafford.

CAIN'S WIN CHALLENGE

A specially brewed Cains Beer has beaten hundreds of rival ales to win the prestigious Tesco Autumn Beer Challenge and secure a contract to supply 650 of the company's supermarkets throughout the UK.

The premium bottled ale will now be listed exclusively in Tesco - a huge boost to Liverpool brewery Cains - which had entered the competition's large brewery category for the first time.

Over 80 different UK breweries were given the brief to create a beer that would revitalise a jaded pallet and cut through the excesses of Christmas. The ten best entrants were selected to go into the national final. A select panel of ten judges - including leading beer writers and industry experts - blind-tasted all of the finalist's beers. The winning selection was based on appearance, aroma, taste and flavours, after-taste and overall appeal.

Cains joint managing director Sudarghara Dusanj said: "Winning a prize like this is an amazing achievement for a regional brewery and a great result for the hard work of the team of people working for the brewery."

"Our beers are popular in the North West and we produce CAMRA prizewinning ales but to see our new bottled ale listed in all Tesco stores will be a huge boost to business. The brewery has made huge steps towards recovery since July 2002 - it is back in the black, sales of our new keg ales are going well and now we have brewed a major prizewinning ale for the UK's leading supermarket chain."

INSIDE AUGUST'S OPENING TIMES

Pub of the Month	3	Treasure Hunt	7	Five Years Ago	15
Pub News	5	Brewery News	9	Curmudgeon	15
Cask Beer Week	5	Macc Pub News	10	Peak Pub News	16
Stagger	6	Pub Grub	11	Manchester Matters	18

PROACTIVE HOLT'S

Availability of handpumped mild a year on

Twelve months ago Dave Hallows went in search of handpumped Holt's Mild – and found that many pubs, contrary to the brewery's declared policy, were only offering the gassed up 'smooth' version. He's now been back to see how things have changed...

First call was the **Grove Inn**, Ashton New Road, Clayton and what a transformation to the pub under the present manager Patrica Heathcoate! The handpumped mild was straight back on since she had the pub a year ago and on song when I called. The Grove has always been a good pub and has gone on from strength to strength. One of the best and convivial vaults in the neighbourhood. *Mild Hold.*

Just up Ashton New Road and over the border to Tameside is **Halfway House** in Droylsden. To think that a year ago the pub was one of the worst offenders of not bothering with the proper mild; now it is available and in good nick. I'm pleased to say that now the availability of mild in East Manchester is a lot better as far as Holt's pubs are concerned. *Mild Hold.*

I knew good things couldn't last, when I entered **The Claremont** on Claremont Road, Moss Side. Even though there was a change of management five months ago, there are still two mild handpumps sitting side-by-side doing nothing at all. I've lost count the number of times I've told the brewery of this unhappy situation and have drawn a blank. *No change, just smooth mild here.*

I have a colleague, who on hearing that **The Kingsway**, Kingsway in Burnage had decided to put back on the handpumped mild a year ago, he said "it was a mistake and it wouldn't last." Ye of little faith! It is still on and in good nick when I called. *Mild Hold.*

I knew from a recent Stagger that there is a problem at **The Orion**, Burton Road, Withington. A group had gone in on a Friday night and had to stop the bar staff from serving them smooth! I had been in a month ago to find the same problem and told the brewery about it too. When I called this time, to be fair the bar staff seemed to be aware of the situation and rang upstairs. I was told the Manager was on holiday, so they couldn't put it on for me. Don't they have relief managers at Holt's then? For a Saturday afternoon the pub was again strangely quiet. What is annoying, is when I asked them if the handpumped mild was normally on, I was told that it was, when it clearly isn't. Even the Mild handpump in the vault doesn't work and hasn't done for over a year. The last manager *did* put on the proper stuff. Well, eventually and tenuously! *Mild Loss.*

To buck myself up, I headed for some really good Holt's establishments. The **Griffin Hotel** on Didsbury Road, Heaton Mersey is one of these. Lovingly restored and tastefully extended - there was no problem in getting a fine example of the proper mild. Lastly, I finished the day in the **Sidings** along Broom Lane in Levenshulme. The modern built pub has undergone something of a transformation (no smooth mild either!). Tastefully refurbished in both rooms, the pub is a well-run ship under manager Sandra Booth. A good community feel and a traditional vault with good service, coupled with both bitter and mild on song, showed to me just what can be done.

The Orion and Claremont take note.....



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2002
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 Gold Medal

IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

But credit where credit is due: Scottish & Newcastle Retail's Local Heroes initiative is a ground-breaker its competitors would do well to emulate.

Despite the Government's unilateral revocation of the Beer Orders, the guest ale market is alive and vibrant. Even though the cask beer market is still in overall decline, it is now common knowledge that real ales from the regional and micro sectors are in growth. If pubcos - whether, like S&N Retail, they are tied to a brewery or not - want to increase sales of what is still a far from negligible component of the mix, it makes sense to stock what the public manifestly wants. That the pubcos themselves are well aware of this self-evident truth is proved time and time again as the big players seek to expand their ranges of real ales.

Localism can only reinforce the strength of the guest ale market. From the point of view of the micros concerned, localism has many benefits. It gives them control over the freshness and quality of their beer. It allows them to strike up a relationship with stockists and consumers, which they need if they are to market their brands effectively. It means they don't have to devote capital to buying pubs they might not have the skills to operate. And - never to be underrated - it means they can get their empties back promptly.

For S&N Retail, it generates trade even from consumers who don't drink real ale - and for a very simple reason. Lager and alcopop drinkers can get their favourite brands pretty much anywhere. All other things - the state of the loos, the size of the car park and so on - being equal, they might as well humour the insistent real ale fan in their midst and head for a pub where he (or, increasingly, she) will be just as well served as they are.

And there's an added bonus for the community too: localism means less congestion and cleaner air. It's always seemed crazy for micros to have to pack their beer off to a depot 50 or 100 miles away just to see it return a week or more later to the pub down the road. The Local Heroes initiative chips away at the absurdity of it - not a lot, but every little helps.

The main obstacle to localism, so far, has been the problem of invoicing. With stock controlled centrally, it's easy for S&N Retail to keep abreast of what's going in and out of its managed houses. For leased and tenanted estates, it's more of a problem. But it's not insoluble - bar-code readers and "spy-in-the-cellar" meters already exist; it's just a matter of applying them correctly. Every argument in the book says pubcos must take their first steps down the road to localism. Now it's only a question of will.

John Clarke

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PUB OF THE MONTH AUGUST 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
31						



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for August 2003 will be the Church Inn, Ravenoak Road, Cheadle Hulme. The Church is very much the traditional pub in the village; why, it even has roses around the door! It attracts a very local clientele who represent a good cross section of the community who have at their hearts good ale and fine food. At the helm for the past 17 years are Simon and



Rosemary Bromley who have been past recipients of this award in July of 1994 and previously in May 1988. In the intervening fifteen years, very probably little has altered in terms of levels of service, welcome and quality; the one exception to that has to be the addition of Edwardo's Restaurant (managed by Carol and Eddie Sumner) about two and a half years ago. This combines homespun favourites with a raft of daily specials that are obviously appreciated judging by the number of reserved signs you see upon tables for the evening sitting.

The food is by no means the only draw, as the Church has featured for many years in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide for the quality of its Robinson's beers - Hatters, Old Stockport and Best Bitter alongside the seasonal beers.

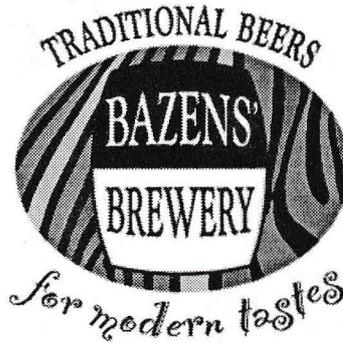
The surroundings give an air of its bucolic past - behind a neatly tended, hedged garden lie two (now combined), small, low cottages which greet the visitor. Yet inside it is far larger than appearances would otherwise suggest. The warmth of a wood-panelled, beamed lounge with its match-boarded bar leads to the rear restaurant room which doubles as a drinking area after 8.30 at night. A rare feature, at least in Cheadle Hulme, is a small, separate vault decorated in a somewhat spartan fashion, but externally the roof of this room is festooned with picturesque blooms. The floral attention does not stop there, as various tubs and window boxes abound with colour.

Continuity and quality like this are well worth celebrating - join us when we present this well deserved award on Thursday 28 August, from 8.00pm. **MMc**

The Church is at 90 Ravenoak Road at its junction with Church Road and Ack Lane, Cheadle Hulme. Suitable hourly buses to get you there are the 20.15 number 313 from Stockport via Adswold; the 19.59 number 157 from Manchester via Didsbury (2022) and Cheadle (2030); and the 20.15 number 157 from Woodford via Bramhall. Cheadle Hulme BR station is within a half mile too.

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 232:
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- FlatbaC 4.2% (Voted Beer of the Festival, Stockport, 2003)
- Lionbrew 4.4% (July/August)
- Cliff Bier 5.2% Black Pig Mild 3.6%
- Pacific Bitter 3.8% Best/Flying Zebra 4.5%

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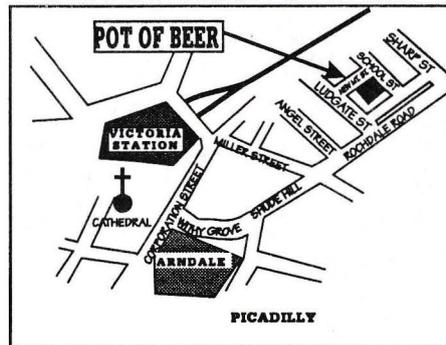
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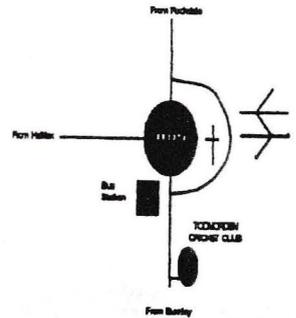
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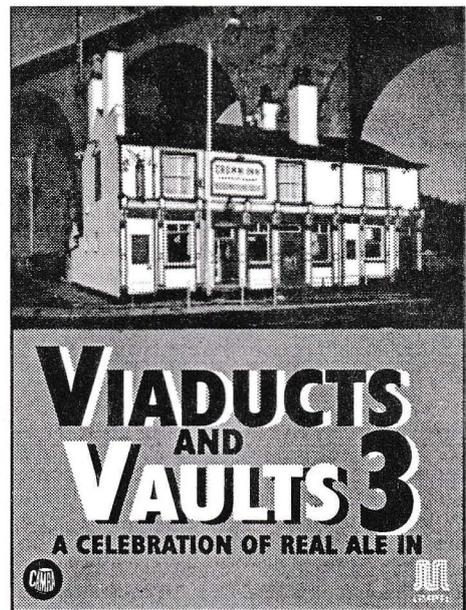
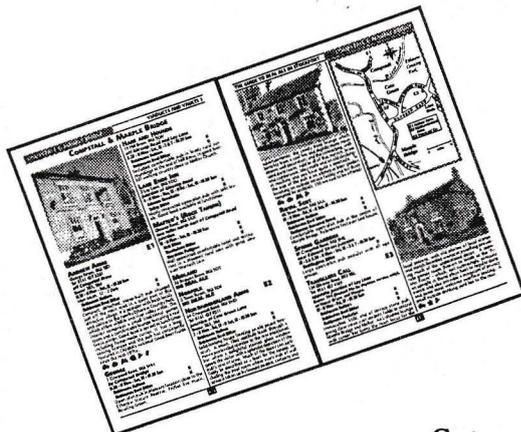


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The Royal Oak on Wilmslow Road in Didsbury is to host its second annual international cheese and pate' festival from Monday 18 to Friday 22 August. Featuring up to 50 different cheeses, some extremely rare, from all corners of this country and others from across Europe, this is the biggest event of its kind to be held locally. Fresh cheeses will be delivered daily and it is hoped to have around twenty odd different cheeses available each day. To accommodate all these cheeses, lunchtime serving will be extended to open from 12am to 4pm.

Burtonwood Brewery has finalised the sale of 31 of its underperforming pubs to the former Boddingtons and Mulligans director Derek Wade. The pubs, which are located across the width of the UK from Leicester in the south to Manchester in the north, were sold for £2.6m. Mr Wade has formed a partnership with Mike Scott, former commercial director at Boddingtons Pub Company, specialising in bottom-end tenanted houses. Current trading across Burtonwood's managed and tenanted pubs is in line with expectations and both estates are showing the same sales growth as the previous year - even though it is trading in fewer pubs. Burtonwood said that it has also acquired or agreed terms to buy six new pubs. The company has 440 tenanted houses and 37 managed houses. At the Shady Oak in Bramhall, a "Manchester Sign Language" course is now being run free of charge on Tuesday evenings from 8-9pm by Ray, one of the regulars. Thwaites Bitter is now a regular beer here alongside the Tetley Bitter and Old Speckled Hen.

In Stockport, the Crown on Hillgate remains closed and awaiting a new tenant and in the town centre, the Bridge Street Wine Bar (ex-Briarly's, ex-Hole I'th' Wall, ex-Castlewood etc etc) was again closed and boarded as we went to press. Also looking very sorry for itself is the former Blue Bell on Shaw Heath. The pun signs have now been taken down and a 'for sale' sign put up.

A long time supporter of real ale, Heaton Moor Conservative Club had had handpumped Boddingtons Bitter for some years. This has now been joined by Beartown Kodiak Gold. This should be a bonus for members and guests.

CASK BEER WEEK

This year's Cask Beer Week from 19-28 September promises to be bigger and better than ever.

The event, the third, is run by the Independent Family Brewers of Britain, with backing from CAMRA, Cask Marque and Coors. Events already planned include a giant pint race through the streets of London, the publication of a national consumer survey of cask beer drinkers and promotions in pubs across the country.

Speaking at the event's trade launch, IFBB chairman Anthony Fuller said: "We want to encourage customers to try cask beer and to discover its diverse and unique flavours for themselves."

"We believe we are brewing the best product in the world, and we are confident that anyone trying cask ales will soon agree with us."

"Cask ale is one of our country's greatest traditions, and this week, gives everyone involved, from brewers to distributors to drinkers, the opportunity to celebrate it."

CAMRA Head of Campaigns Mike Benner said: "As we are not planning a fourth phase of Ask if its cask this year, it is very important we throw our weight behind this initiative."

Next month Opening Times will bring you a full round-up of the events planned by our local family brewers in plenty of time for readers to take part, something we will be urging all OT readers to do.



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STAGGER

with Mark McConachie

Ardwick and City Centre

Our starting point of the evening had been advertised as the **Kings Head** on Chancellor Lane, unfortunately this much improved pub had gone onto keg beer having dropped the Cask Tetley. The landlady did tell me that she was hopeful of Tetley Imperial making an appearance during the summer months. As the **Union** (Burtonwood) on Higher Ardwick was also keg and the **Cleveland** (ex Mayfair Taverns) on Wilson Street was undergoing a major refit, possibly not even to pub use, we repaired to the **Apsley Cottage** on Apsley Grove in the shadow of the Apollo Theatre to make that our starting point.

The Apsley is a low whitewashed building and is still styled as a Wilson's house but its only beer these days is John Smiths Cask. For a cottage it is heavily rusticated and decorated with a great swathe of photographs of, what presumably are, pre-concert revelers and sundry other merry looking individuals. It is not the largest of pubs - two rooms, consisting of lounge and a Spartan looking vault, but our party was easily accommodated as there were few people in that night. I was surprised somewhat, as I thought with a concert being on next door it would be packed. Perhaps because the artist on that night was Darius (of Pop Idol and Colour Blind fame), the audience may have proved to be a tad young to frequent the Apsley. Whatever, we took our leave dodging the puddles and the mammoth pantechnicons parked up for the concert as we headed for nearby Ardwick Green and the delights of the **Church Inn** (Enterprise).

Externally, the Church is an appealing prospect, squat and cottagey in appearance, you enter through a surprisingly low door to an equally low-ceilinged bar area. The interior is L-shaped with a longish lounge area to the left, this is also on a lower level in parts; the right side of the pub has many tables and chairs that sees a

good deal of use during lunch hours when the pub is very popular with the many nearby office workers relaxing and dining on the good value meals offered. Sunny days see the outside tables at the front of the pub in full use as drinkers enjoy the verdant scene of Ardwick Green. The pub is noted for its guide dog fundraising abilities, framed pictures of the animals enjoy pride of place near the bar. There's a nice nod to the history of local pubs and the Green on one of the walls that is well worth a look see. The Church only sells Boddies and we found this to be of very similar good to average quality to the beer in the Apsley. As the **Park** (Burtonwood) on adjoining Cotter Street does not sell cask ale, we made our way to town.

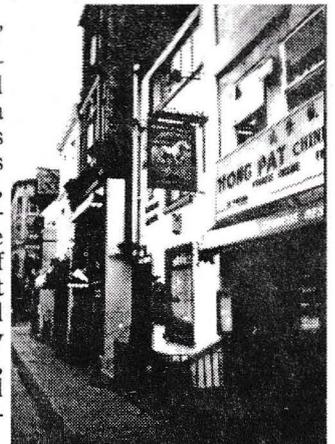
The **Bulls Head** (Burtonwood) sits on the corner of London Road and Fairfield Street giving the building a vaguely wedge shape. I still remember the old room layout and in one of them were posters depicting the various breeds of farm livestock and such; all gone now, of course. The Bull is now a large open space, wooden-floored with a good-sized stand-up drinking area in front of the bar. To the right of the bar, with its rather unusual bar back, is some high fixed seating, whilst to the left is an entire raised snuggy-type area. The lot being topped off with various epithets and twee sayings inscribed upon the walls. The beer range is much larger than the old Bulls, offering us Burtonwood bitter and Top Hat, Charles Wells Bombardier and Hook Norton Generation. All but the Bombardier were tried with a lot of us (there were almost ten of us now) opting for the Hook Norton. Nobody was disappointed, all beers coming out with very good marks.

Further along London Road lies **Monroes**, which the curly-haired blonde in our party described as having "the ambience of a stage bar with cask ale" - what can she mean? Well, cask ale it does have, and two of them - Boddies and Flowers IPA. We sampled both and rated them as being good. Monroes is a pub with hotel accommodation; two plush rooms, separated by the eccentrically shaped bar. The right room is used for meals and breakfasts, I believe, so all of the drinking takes place in the left room. This is decorated with great panache and a huge amount of material dedicated to the sixties sex symbol Marilyn Monroe. It's all very glitzy, over-the-top and ever so slightly camp, but it is all great fun; see if you can count the total references to Marilyn Monroe in the pub, send it to us and the correct entrant wins the chance to be the next Stagger writer!!

We continued up London Road, onto Piccadilly and left onto Gore Street, where lies the **Waldorf**. This was a former Pub of the Month winner some months ago and still exudes that Ale House style that won it that honour then. So you get the bare boards, plenty of wall décor recounting the beer trade of bygone years, wall panelling, bare brick in parts, but all in a restrained and smart fashion. A popular venue for watching big screen soccer and also popular on the ale scene as it serves four of them - Boddies, Hydes Jekylls Gold, Taylor Landlord and Caledonian Deuchar's IPA were tonight's offerings. Nobody opted for the Boddies, whilst the other three received varying levels of praise, all being very acceptable. The final part of our evening was at hand now as we traversed Portland Street omitting **Edwards, Huxters** and **Yates** (none of them sell cask beer) and the Village pubs (another Stagger) to get to the very edge of Chinatown.

First of our final three was Hydes' **Grey Horse**. A quite tiny two-roomer that tonight was fronted by the lovely Laura - always a good welcome assured from this smiling, bubbly blonde. Laura was not the only thing to delight us, the Hydes beers of mild and bitter did not disappoint, with the former taking the top marks of the night thus far. For those that wanted Jekylls Gold, it had sold out, unfortunately. The Grey Horse is rather homely in décor, it does tend to get quite full and can often be lively with characters.

A couple of doors down (corner of Princess Street) is Holt's **Old Monkey** - a pub only constructed some ten years ago. Done out in



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or johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com

fine style, with a good lounge with bar on the first floor, whilst another bar downstairs serves a more functional room with plenty of standing room for the busy weekend crowd. Decorated with an array of theatre and drinking ephemera, the Monkey is a cosy place to enjoy some fairly decent Holts beers. And, fairly decent to above average was how we found the beers on that busy night. Holt mild, bitter and the seasonal, Edwards were the offerings which were quickly downed as we had to make the last pub before time was called.

So, after a mere ten yard scamper we were at the bar of Tetley's **Circus Tavern** (grade II listed and a Tetley Heritage House) to order our foaming pints of some of the best Tetley bitter served from the wickets you will probably ever encounter. The place was packed to the gunwales and we were speedily ushered into the small rear room for a table by one of the two waitresses in order to keep the bar area and the narrow corridor free of the clutter of people. This is a great idea by landlord 'Greek' George as it ensures quick, hassle-free service, all of the rooms are utilised and everybody is happy at the very busy weekend times in this tiny, gem of a pub. The two waitresses were Claire and Emma, and a nicer pair of very efficient girls you couldn't hope to meet; I for one hope this practice catches on in other pubs. The Tetley was surely the beer of the night and one of our party even stated "I didn't know Tetley's could taste this good". A more fitting end to a stagger I could not have dreamt up. Of course these views are my own and the same stagger held on a different night may evoke an entirely dissimilar outcome.



TREASURE HUNT 2003

This year's North Manchester CAMRA Treasure Hunt took place on a nice sunny Saturday, 5th July. 16 teams turned up at the Marble Arch, 60 people altogether, between 12 noon and 1pm to collect their treasure hunt question papers. They then all set off for a good mooch round the City Centre.

The main theme centred around finding the eight required pubs by their 'Grid References'. Not your actual Ordnance Survey references but pictures of the grids outside each pub. This appeared to be a popular idea with a large group of real ale drinkers now entitled to claim their 'I-Spy Grid' certificates.

Unfortunately not as popular were the clues once you got inside the pubs, six of the twenty-four questions were not answered by any team at all. This led to a lot of entrants thinking that the organisers were an evil and sadistic bunch, and they could well be right! At least everyone was up against the same difficulties.

This did not deter anyone however and all the teams made it back in the evening to the Marble Arch for food, real ale and presentations to winners and losers. Despite the tough questions everyone we spoke to had a good time and were quite 'relaxed' by the end of the evening. The worthy winners were 'The Raving Mad Bastards'. However as they have set the quiz twice before they wished to relinquish the task of setting next year's Treasure Hunt. Fortunately another team 'Two Dead Goldfish' volunteered to step into the breach, an excellent and well-received gesture.

We would like to thank all the teams who took part for their endeavours and good spirits (especially those who travelled some distance to take part). Also thank you to all the landlords who allowed a bunch of 'grid spotting anoraks' to blunder around their pubs (particularly the Peveril of the Peak who opened all afternoon especially for this event). Special thanks to Paul (and his staff) at the Marble Arch who helped the event to be a success despite having only been in charge of the pub for a week. Here's to next year's event and its continuing success.

Cheers - The Castle Knights (last year's winners, this year's organisers and next year's competitors).

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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**Independent
&
Discerning**



(no angels involved)



There's still time to catch the current seasonal beers from our local family brewers. Robinson's has Northern Glory, a refreshing mid-brown beer that appeared last year as Stadium Bitter. Arguably one of the better seasonals from Robbies, it is well worth seeking out. Next month will see this replaced by Coopers Bell, a tasty 4% autumn ale back for another year.



HYDES Hydes currently have the 4.1% Rack 'n' Ruin out, the latest in their 'Fine Beers in the Making' range of craft ales. Described as a 'crisp; refreshing ale for summer' it certainly lives up to this billing and was on particularly fine form when recently sampled at the Nursery (Green Lane, Stockport). Next month comes Firkin Fruity at 4.5%, described as a 'classic berry red ale' for the autumn blending English malts and Fuggles hops. Last month we also reported on the release of the 4.7% bottle beer, Manchester's Finest, in cask form. Well it did go out to some of Hydes pubs; albeit in a low-key sort of way. Apparently the beer will be back in November and with a higher profile.

The current seasonal from Lees is the popular Scorcher, a 4.2% summer beer that Lees have been producing for some years now. It's an excellent summer ale - in fact there could be a case for making it a permanent addition to their portfolio of cask beers. There's a brand new beer next month, though. This is Razzmatazz, a 4.4% spicy, malty beer brewed with a combination of British and American hops.

Finally, Holt's still have Edwards out. This seasonal brewed with a touch of honey has been very well-received and is perhaps the most successful of Holt's new beers to date. The next beer will be Patterson, celebrating the brewery's connection with the Patterson Institute (associated with the Christie Hospital in Withington). We hold no other details at the moment.

Micro Magic

As ever we have contacted many of our local micros to get details of the latest beers and news. Here's our round-up this month:

Bazens' - celebrate their first anniversary on 15th of this month, the same day they are due to receive their Stockport 'Beer of the Festival' award for Flatbac. Look for a full report on this next time. The next beer in their astrological series will be Lionbrew, a 4.4%, light beer hopped with Styrian Goldings. They will also be brewing a beer for Salford Reds with a percentage of the sales income going to the team's fundraising. The 3.8% beer will be called Red Shed and will be similar to Pacific. Outlets haven't been determined yet although it is expected that the Black Lion at Blackfriars will have it on sale permanently.



Bank Top - the next new beer will be for the Bolton Beer Festival to be staged at the Howcroft Inn in October. The strength (4%) has been decided but no other details have been finalised yet. In common with most local micros, business is booming at Bank Top.

Beartown - As this is being written Beartown are finishing the move into their new premises and the first brew there has now taken place. The brewery will remain in Congleton and in actual fact will only be a stone's throw away from their pub The Beartown Tap. The building is quite substantial in size and will allow for any potential expansion. Despite the brewery moving, the head office at this point in time will remain at its present premises in Holmes Chapel. On the beer front, Pandamonium, the 4.5% blackcurrant porter is available again and selling well.



Boggart Hole Clough - this month there is just one special coming from Moston's Boggart Hole brewery. Sunset (3.7%) is billed as a pale and easy drinking beer. For the more hardened drinker, there is going to be another batch of Rocket Fuel, which last time reached 14% ABV! Not for the faint hearted, we think.

Facers - the other half of the Salford Brewing Syndicate goes from strength to strength, with the best sales ever recorded in July. Last month we reported that the current seasonal 'JAS' was named after the months of its availability, July, August, September. Well, not quite - it actually stands for 'July August Seasonal'. There will be a new beer out for September and October, although the launch probably won't be until 10th. Meanwhile, Landslide is to be formulated with an increase in gravity to 4.9% and a hoppier aroma. David Facer tells us it will be quite a different beer and so will be slightly renamed to Landslide 1927 (that's when the local landslide after which the beer is named actually took place).



Phoenix - extensive building work continues on the premises at Heywood but the brewery continues to produce a range of high quality beers while this is going on. New beers out this month include White Tornado a superb 4.3% clear wheat beer with a crisp hoppy finish - one of the best of its style, we think. Also out is the premium 4.7% Struggling Monkey.

Pictish - "you're drinking too much of my beer" says ever-busy brewer Richard Sutton. We think it's his own fault for making such good beer. This month's special is the 5% Corn Dolly described as "a dangerously drinkable strong pale ale", it is too, with clean crisp malt flavours leading to a dry bitter finish with a robust hop character.

Ramsbottom - two new beers from Paul Robinson this month. Haymaker is a 4.1% pale and fruity beer with a citrus nose, hopped with Challenger and Styrian Goldings. Also out is Holcombe, a 3.8% session beer, again pale and well-hopped with Challenger and Mount Hood varieties. The Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport, had taken delivery of both Haymaker and the brewery's award-winning mild just before we went to press.



THE CASTLE

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High Peak and North East Cheshire branch of THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE presents

GLOSSOP BEER FESTIVAL

CAMRA for VICTORIAN WEEKEND

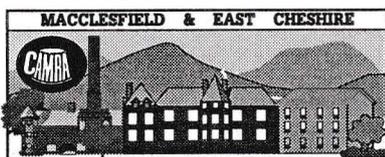
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PUB NEWS

with Steve Bray

Good news in Macclesfield - the awful keg only Amsterdam Bar is no more. It has been renamed to the Swan with Two Necks and is back to being a pub. It is owned by Mayvale and the beer currently on offer is Timothy Taylor's Landlord, Worthington 1744 and Bass (all on handpumps) with Black Sheep coming soon. There is no juke box, only piped music and the new licensees are determined to return the pub to being a traditional local - no bad language or unruly behaviour will be tolerated. Snacks and light meals are available lunchtime & evenings. Incidentally the pub was originally called the Swan with Two Necks back in the 1970s.

The refurbishment of the George & Dragon in Higher Hurdsfield continues while the pub stays open to sell three constantly changing real ales. There is also a nice little snug behind the bar, with it's own serving hatch which is a no smoking room (sounds ideal for a CAMRA meeting).

The Redway Tavern in Kerridge remains closed following the owner's application to convert it into 2 dwellings. However, Bollington Council have opposed the application and the owner has since withdrawn it! Rumours are that someone has approached them to buy it and continue to operate it as a pub - watch this space.

I'd also like to wish a very happy 60th birthday to Kevin at the George & Dragon, Macclesfield. He is a long time supporter of CAMRA and serves excellent Robinson's.

If you have any pub news in the East Cheshire area that you'd like to share with others then please drop me a line: Steve Bray, 9 Oak Lane, Kerridge, Cheshire, SK10 5BD

VIADUCTS AND VAULTS 3

A Celebration of Real Ale in Stockport's Pubs

IS OUT NOW! SEE PAGE 4 FOR DETAILS

PUB OF THE SEASON

The Macclesfield & East Cheshire CAMRA Summer Pub of the Season is the Ship Inn at Wincle.

The pub has gone from strength to strength under the energetic new management of Giles, Vicky and Chris and remains a popular destination with walkers and diners alike. The pub is set in stunning countryside and just inside the Peak District National Park near the meandering River Deane, Gritstone Trail and local trout fishery. The name come from Shackleton's Arctic expedition ship, the Nimrod, seen on the sign outside.

The 16th Century long, stone building has three small rooms - a flagged vault/family room (or for muddy booted rambles!) and two lounges. The far room houses a red sandstone fireplace with an unusual smiling stone face as well as hop-decorated beams. The pub's strong commitment to cask beer has continued under the new team and a major improvement has been the appearance of a permanent cask mild! Moorhouse's Black Cat, a former Champion Beer of Britain is the chosen ale. In addition, the real ale range boasts Moorhouse's Premier, one of Taylor's Landlord or Ruddles County, and a guest beer.

The pub will also be host a beer festival from Friday 22 to Monday 25 August, featuring over 25 beers and ciders, including beers from Storm, Weetwood, Leek, and, of course, Moorhouses, amongst others. There will be food available all day, including a hog roast, and live entertainment on the Friday and Saturday evenings (blues and jazz respectively). There will also be a CAMRA stand and it is expected that the Pub of the Season Award will be presented during the course of this event.

The Ship is nearly two miles south of the A54 Congleton to Buxton road, through the village and heading toward the River Deane. Telephone 01260 22721.

I'm sorry to report that Mrs Dorothy Dickens, licensee of the Bulls Head, Kerridge since the mid 1960's died suddenly on Monday 28th July. She was a tireless worker for Robinson's and a good friend to CAMRA. Last year she was presented with the Jim Bowden award for running a really good traditional pub with no juke box or other electronic machines. Our thoughts go to the family in this time of grief.



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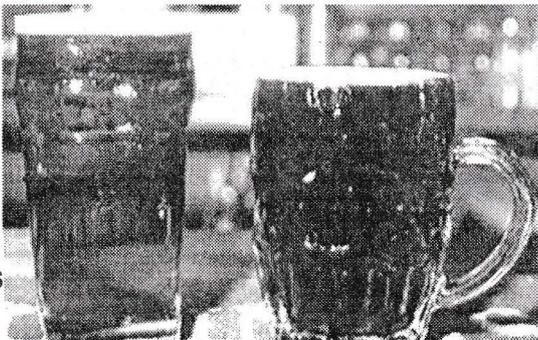
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It is always upsetting to see an old friend go off the rails, and it is cause for celebration when they get back on the strait and narrow. As it is with people, so it is with pubs, so it is particularly heartening to see the Bakers Vaults (Market Place, Stockport) return to form.

Opening Times reported in June how the pub had reopened under first-time licensees Sam and Loraine Fraser and since then they have set about restoring the pub's fortunes. Structurally, it's been made lighter by simply unboarding the windows on the 'brow' side and opening up the back of the central bar, although the dark colour scheme, posters and other artwork ensure it still has the bohemian, 'late night' feel that has served the pub so well over the years.

Sensibly, Sam and Loraine are playing to the pubs two traditional strengths - live music and good food. Sam in particular has a passion for live music and aims to play host to some well-known names as well as launching some new ones. Among the latest attractions are a regular Thursday evening singer-songwriter spot with the tempo picking up over the weekend when new and local bands take to the stage.

Another attraction is the reintroduced food. The new chef is Rachel Suranne who is concentrating on a small but perfectly formed menu comprising, home-made soups, sandwiches and salads, chips and dips, plus daily specials and desserts, and it seems to be paying off, with an increasing food trade building up.

A Saturday mid-afternoon visit found a pianist playing in the corner and the pub busy with diners and drinkers alike. And a word about the beer, Robinson's Hatters and Best - it's the better now than it's been here for many years. The Bakers was always one of those frustrating pubs with great food, music and atmosphere let down by at times terrible beer. No more, I'm pleased to say. On my few recent visits the beer has been on top form.

Returning to the food, the short menu comprised three mains, home-made chicken curry and rice, ditto chilli and rice plus vegetable pasta back, all at £3.50. Alongside were hotdogs with cheese/onions (£1.50), chilli dogs (£2.50), houmous and pitta bread (£2.50), chips with various dips (£2.00) and a range of sandwiches.

I'm told what can be home-made is home-made and that certainly proved to be the case with my pasta - a good bowlful of penne paste baked with peppers, onions and courgettes and cheese and topped with melted cheese. In short good simple food, well-made and served with the minimum fuss, and at £3.50 good value, too.

With good beer, a relaxing atmosphere, live music and good comfort food, it would be easy to lose a few hours in the Bakers. And an enjoyable experience it would be as well. The flyers say 'The Bakers is Back!.' It is indeed - give it a try. JC

You can order you food ahead if you're in a rush - and they also have a take away menu. Phone 0161 477 7312.



Licensee Sam Fraser underwent Robinson's cellar course and is seen here receiving his certificate from brewery chairman Peter Robinson. The value of the course is evident in the high quality beer now available in the Bakers.

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1st Week In September

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MARKET STREET, STALYBRIDGE**

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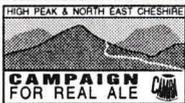


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FOR A CELEBRATION OF LOCAL BREWING TALENT

Guest Ales (at least 1 Mild) to include selections from
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Whim. Greenfield, Pictish, Marble, Storm, Facers

Plus Resident Hydes Beers
Free Admission



Glossop Ale Scene Update

With High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch of CAMRA holding the Victorian Weekend Beer Festival on 29th - 31st August, in a marquee at Glossop Labour Club, Chapel Street, Glossop, an update of the town seems appropriate this month for visitors who want to try a few of the other local town pubs. Frank Wood reports...

The Victorian Weekend began in Glossop in the 1970's and has traditionally been the busiest weekend of the year for visitors to come to the area. Shops put on window displays, shopkeepers dress up in appropriate Victorian dress, as do many of the local people. There is entertainment in the town's Norfolk Square and Victorian fairground rides, sideshows, traction engines, brewery drays and a transport parade of vehicles through the town. You are likely to see men riding penny farthings, women with enormous bustles (I said bustles!), men in top hats and the like as they try to win the prizes for best dressed Victorian.

With good transport links to the town, it is an ideal weekend to run a Beer Festival, especially in such a centrally located venue as the Labour Club. 25-plus beers will be on offer at the Festival, including event special brews from Shaws of Dukinfield and Kheanes of Congleton. Kheanes will also be sending some Village Green, a brew which has American Hops, mixed with hops grown in Pot Shrigley in Cheshire (an excellent hoppy ale). Beers will also be on sale from Upper Agbrigg Brewery at Holmfirth, including a cask conditioned lager called Kellerbier. Lowes Arms Brewery at Denton will be supplying two including their recent new I.P.A, and Ossett Brewery, Wye Valley, Storm (who will have two recent new brews on sale), Whim (Hartington), and Bazens' from Salford (who will include the winning beer from the Stockport Beer Festival, the popular Flatbac) will all be sending a choice of their range. Cider will also be on sale, with distributor John Reek bringing us some Herefordshire specialities.

Whilst in town, there are four pubs that have a good selection of guest beers. They are the Old Gloveworks, a regular Good Beer Guide entry in recent years, with six ever changing guest beers. Located just round the corner from the Festival, Russ & Sharon have an outdoor drinking area, a roof terrace overlooking Glossop Brook, bar snacks from 12-2pm, and run what is a true free house, in comfortable surroundings. The other proper free house is the Globe, at the bottom of High Street West. There are seven cask conditioned ales here, usually a range from Kelham Island, Abbeydale, JW Lees and Ossett (watch out for the Ossett Mild, on fairly regularly and rare for the area). One is usually a premium strength beer. There is an outside rear beer garden overlooking the brook and boasting an industrial view of Glossop's chimneys. A vegetarian restaurant and bar snacks are available.

The Star, opposite the station, has six hand pulled beers, which usually include Pictish and Phoenix beers in the line up.

In Old Glossop, the Queens has five handpulled beers, that often includes Marstons Pedigree, Black Sheep Bitter, Worthington Cask, and varying beers from the InnSpired pub company list, that has recently included beers from Batemans, Smiles, Ridleys and Youngs. The Queens recently won a Gold Award from the parent Pub Co. and is selected in the next edition of Good Beer Guide.

The Friendship on Arundel Street is a long-standing Good Beer Guide entry that has a selection of Robinson's ales. Run by a keen landlord, the beers are kept in excellent condition. The pub has an outdoor drinking area through the pub and is a real gem worth taking in, noting that it shuts on Sunday from 3pm-7pm.

The Prince of Wales in Milltown, just off High Street East, has appeared in the Good Beer Guide often over the years and has a selection of Marstons Ales, while the Crown on Victoria Street, has been a Good Beer Guide regular for some 17 years and has the cheapest pub price in the area at £1.17 for Sam Smiths OBB, their only cask ale.

RealAle is served also in the Oakwood on High Street West (Robinson's), the Bulls Head in Old Glossop (Robinson's), the Wheatsheaf in Old Glossop (Green King IPA & Boddingtons), the Commercial on Manor Park Road (Taylors Landlord, Marstons Pedigree, Abbott Ale & others) and the Manor Inn on High Street East. All in all, you are extremely likely, should you have the weekend and the inclination to do so, possibly drink up to 65 different beers (more as the free houses change their range over the weekend) but if you are only there for the day, then we look forward to seeing you at the CAMRA Beer Tent which is open throughout the three days from 12-11pm.

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

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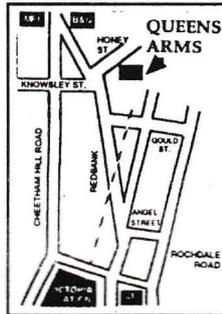
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LOCAL CAMRA PUB of the Month APRIL 2002

Fine Cask Ales including
Boddingtons and Ever Changing
Guest Beers

CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

Here are the monthly branch event diaries, starting with Stockport and South Manchester, followed by High Peak and Macclesfield

Diary

AUGUST 2003

Thursday 14th - Branch Meeting: Swan With Two Necks, Princes St, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm

Friday 15th - Trip to Bazens' Brewery for Beer of Festival presentation. Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton Lane at 7.15pm.

Friday 22nd - Stagger - Heaton Moor/Heaton Norris West: 7.30pm George & Dragon, Manchester Rd, Heaton Chapel; 8.30 Crown, Heaton Moor Road

Thursday 28th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Church, Cheadle Hulme.

Saturday 6th September - Trip to Eastwood & Sanders brewery. Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton Lane at 10.am. Book with Paul Formby on 0161 612 0759 (after 6.00pm)

Thursday 11th - Branch Meeting: Waldorf, Gore St, Manchester City Centre. Starts 8.00pm.

The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:

Monday 11th - Branch Meeting: The Sportsman, Mottram Road, Hyde. Starts 8.30pm.



AUGUST 2003

Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton. They have notified us of the following events:

Monday 11th - Campaigning Meeting: Sutton Hall Hotel, Sutton Lane Ends

Monday 25th - Bank Holiday Beer Walk, Rainow & Bollington

Tuesday 9th September: Congleton Pub Crawl: meet Counting House 8pm; Bull's Head 8.25; Leisure Centre Bar 9.30 and Beartown Tap 10.15.

The Trafford & Hulme Branch covers the Borough of Trafford, Manchester west of the M56/Princess Parkway and a large part of the City Centre.

They have advised us of the following events:

Thursday 14th - Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm.



Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA chairman John Clarke presenting the July Pub of the Month Award to Graham & Jeanette Mascord at the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner

14



CAINS

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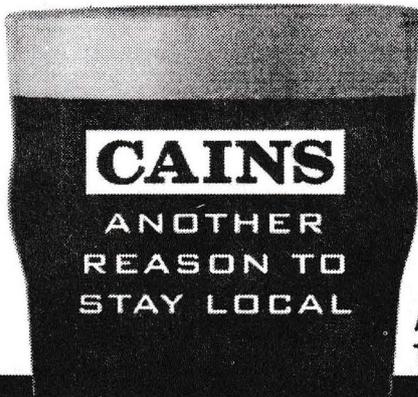
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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

AUGUST '98



Blowing off the Froth

Boddingtons Bitter is advertised as "the Cream of Manchester", and it's almost become an article of faith that Northern beer is served with a thick collar of foam. But, in reality, that's a surprisingly recent tradition. I suspect the idea that Northerners like a big head on their beer has its origins in the 60s when many outlets, particularly working men's clubs, switched over to metered dispense and 24oz oversized glasses, often associated with tank beer. Before then, it probably amounted to no more than the fact that pubs in the industrial North turned their beer over more quickly than those in the rural South, and so tended to serve it with more of a natural head.

Even in the mid-80s, the now ubiquitous swan neck pipes on handpumps were largely confined to Yorkshire. On this side of the Pennines, a short neck with an adjustable metal sparkler ring was normal, sometimes with the sparkler replaced by a plastic agitator crudely but descriptively referred to as a "dog's dick". Typical heads from handpumps were nowhere near as thick as they are now, and there were several country pubs in Cheshire featured in the Good Beer Guide still using gravity dispense.

But, in the late 80s and early 90s, brewers and pub companies seized on the idea of the swan-neck and tight sparkler as a way of ensuring that every pint of real ale looked the same in a way that appealed to casual drinkers, even if in the process much of the character had been knocked out of the beer. Swan neck dispense and thick, creamy heads can all too easily reduce real ale to a lowest common denominator by flattering the appearance of poor, tired beer while taking the edge off distinctive flavours.

Real ale in good condition should have something of a head, and if it comes out looking completely flat the odds are it's well past its best. But, in this part of the world, a move towards serving beer with a shallower, looser head would give drinkers more taste and more value for money, and also make it far more obvious in which pubs beer was being looked after properly.

Worst of Both Worlds

Regular followers of this column will know of my affection for metered electric pumps, which were once commonplace around here and the standard method of real ale dispense across large areas of the North and Midlands. They gave a guaranteed full measure while also ensuring a consistent pint by eliminating any variability in bar staff technique. Unfortunately, over the past twenty years, they have steadily been removed, generally in favour of handpumps. While these don't provide full measures at least they give a clear indication that the beer on offer is real.

But a recent trend in several local Robinson's pubs is to replace metered dispense and oversize glasses with free-flow electric pumps and brim measures. Surely this is the worst of both worlds, losing the guarantee of full measure while not providing any sign that they are dispensing cask beer. Indeed many drinkers are likely to mistake them for keg dispensers. If metered pumps are to be chucked out, then handpumps are the only reasonable replacement for any pub with a commitment to cask beer.

Curmudgeon Online: www.curmudgeon.co.uk

VANDALS! was the front page banner headline – this time the culprit was Manchester City Council. Having already uprooted and destroyed the historic location of Manchester's Shambles pubs, they were now turning their attention to the suburbs with yet another historic pub in their sights. The Plough, situated on the junction of Wellington Street and Hyde Road in Gorton, was their target. One of the most historic buildings in the area, listed Grade II as being of historic and architectural importance, and Manchester City Council wanted to knock it down. They had referred to "unspecified developments" in the area, and rumours had suggested some form of retail development involving the Co-op. Luckily no such development occurred and the pub is now safe and about to undergo refurbishment and restoration by the Robinson's brewery.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

There was more bad news regarding the future of real cider, as Bulmers had announced the closure of their subsidiary Inch's, based at Winkleigh, North Devon. This would leave only a tiny amount of Bulmers Traditional coming from Hereford., as they had only recently withdrawn Old Hazy. Then Matthew Clark announced the closure of its Taunton Cider subsidiary, and the transfer of all production to their Shepton Mallet plant, which was the home of Babycham. It looked as if hundreds of pubs across the South West were going to lose their real cider at a stroke.

★ ★ ★

Most of the brewery news concerned the latest seasonal beers that had appeared. John Willie Lees had launched their Scorcher, which was thought to be inappropriately named because of the poor weather. Hydes had produced Maris Gold – a hoppy and refreshing summer ale. Joseph Holt's brewery was planning a special draught beer to mark their anniversary – 150 years old the next year (that's 1999). A pilot brew was available in their pubs – 5% and "dangerously drinkable", particularly at the bargain price of £1.26 a pint. It was being sold as Premium Bitter, and drinkers had been invited to suggest a more eye-catching name, and there was a gallon of Bitter to be won in every Holt's pub for the winning suggestion.

★ ★ ★ ★

In a surprise move, Liverpool brewer Robert Cain had bought their first pub away from their Merseyside base – a perhaps unlikely choice, Gatley Wine Bar. Small, detached and formerly keg only, "GWB" was to undergo a major refurbishment in the following year, emerging as The Dispensary, the name of Cain's Liverpool City Centre flagship, and obviously hoping to repeat that pub's success. There was a standard range of three Cain's beers, Dark Mild, Bitter and FA, plus three guests, Black Sheep, Spitfire and Young's Bitter. There was also a tub of Weston's Great Western Revival for the cider drinkers. The pub was of course renamed The Gothic rather than the Dispensary and still trades successfully today.

★ ★

There had been an addition to Chorton's drinking venues – the premises of the former Marble Arch World Beers off-license had been turned into an extremely stylish bar, thus becoming the Marble Brewery's fourth tied house. Five Marble beers would be regularly available, together with three rotating guest beers, Inch's cider, and a range of Belgian bottled beers.

★ ★ ★

Finally, 'Manchester Matters' had its usual comprehensive collection of pub changes in the area, but there was one bar which must qualify for the description of "something completely different". Fancy a drink with a Dalek? The Fab Café on Portland Street in the City Centre was tucked away beneath a Japanese restaurant. This inconspicuous but appropriately Tardis-like cellar bar was dedicated to filmed and televised science fiction. It was officially opened by actor Gareth Thomas (Blake of Blake's 7) and one of the croak voiced exterminators was in attendance. Hydes were supplying their seasonal beers on handpump – Mad Ferret at £1.90 a pint was not the dearest it had been outside the brewery's own estate. This was altogether a delightfully weird addition to the City Centre and is still going strong today, although the cask beer is now usually Greene King's Old Speckled Hen.



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Thanks to the legal process dragging somewhat, it looks like the Cheshire Ring, Hyde, will now be opening in August and anyone who has one of the 'Buy One Get One Free' offer leaflets can still redeem it up to one month after they actually open, despite the stated date of 31 July. Look for a full report in OT when this exciting new venture opens.

At the Pinnacle at Crown Point, Denton, painters were spotted painting the outside of the pub, which seems to suggest a re-opening on the cards. We will watch this one and update you.

Some of our travelling Branch members went to Mossley on a Saturday in July, kicking off at the Railway in Greenfield (just marginally out of our area), where the range of beers always includes Taylors Landlord which as ever in this pub, was on fine form. The King William IV had a choice of several handpumps, which included a beer from Greenfield Brewery, one from Skinners and Brains SA. Going back into our area, the Dysarts, on Micklehurst Road, had Robinson's Best Bitter and the seasonal beer on decent form. The Royal George, a short walk downhill, had the usual decent range of Lees beers on tap and heading towards Mossley centre now, Roaches Lock had one guest beer (Wells Bombadier on this visit). At the Tollemache, only Robinson's Best Bitter is now available and at the Woodend Tavern, Marstons Bitter and Pedigree was the range available on the night. The Britannia, mentioned in this column on a few occasions of late, had Marstons Bitter & Pedigree, Banks and Camerons Creamy on the night.

Anyone wondering what the house beer is in the Station in Ashton? It is brewed by Phoenix and re-badged as "Park Parade", the name of the former railway station in Ashton that was near the pub. We suspect it is the same beer as is named "Smithfield Bitter" in the Smithfield in Manchester. Personally, it tastes like the Bantam Bitter I try on occasion in the White Hart at Mottram.

Elsewhere, I had occasion with a couple of friends to walk over Black Hill from the Longdendale Valley on Sunday 13 July, to Holmfirth. Being the really hot day that it was, it was an early pint at the Huntsman, on the road from Greenfield to Holmfirth (Isle of Sky road), three miles short of Holmfirth. Their normal choice of Taylors Landlord and Tetleys Bitter is joined by a guest beer, being Jennings Cocker Hoop on the day. The beers are never a problem here. A mile or so down the road, we came to the Ford Inn. This pub was closed for a few years but seemed quite busy at 1.30pm on this particular day, with what looked very generous portions of food being given to diners. The beers here were Marstons Pedigree, Courage Directors, Ruddles Best and Theakstons Bitter. We all tried the Ruddles Best which was good enough given the temperatures. Taking the lane behind, we walked into Uppertong and the village pub the Royal Oak. Black Sheep Bitter, Tetley Bitter and the popular Taylors Landlord were all on, the latter being chosen all round and was OK, without raving about the quality too much.

However, in Holmfirth, the Old Bridge Inn is a favourite of mine since Batemans bought it 2 years ago and the XXXB was much more my cup of tea. My colleagues tried the other choices, Batemans XB, Black Sheep Bitter and Taylors Best Bitter and all were more than happy. None of us tried the Batemans DM, perhaps because of the heat on the day. Finally at the Nook, after being invited to put up 2 small posters for the Glossop Beer Festival, I tried a pint of Anglo Dutch, the best pint of the day (I cannot remember what it was called). We were all unanimous in this choice and as the 4.25pm bus arrived to take us back over into Longdendale, we reflected on what was a great walk and a good selection of beers.

Note, a Summer Sunday bus departs from Glossop bus station at 10am on a Sunday and if you get off at Holme Moss TV mast, to make the walk mainly level and downhill, a 3 hour maximum walk will get you into Holmfirth.

16

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The Queens in Old Glossop have clinched a Gold InnSpired award for 2003. Alan & Carole Osborne were rewarded for "exceptional beer and cellar standards" at a presentation at the pub after earlier winning regionally and going through to the national finals. InnSpired own 1,160 pubs nationally. Last month, the Queens opened their new venture on the 2nd floor, titled the New Queens, which will be a function room with separate kitchen and a la carte restaurant. The special opening night was on July 17th and bookings were taken, for a multi-course meal, cooked by an award winning chef.

At Marple Golf Club, Thwaites Bitter has been spotted on handpumps (this could be ancient news, our members in the area do not venture there on a regular basis!)

The Stamford Arms in Stalybridge has started taking the Burtonwood seasonal brews as well as the regular Burtonwood Bitter.

The Ring O'Bells in Marple has changed hands with new tenants Davis and Susan Gichero taking over at this popular pub. It's good to report that apart from a new name over the door there is no change at all. It is still a clean and well presented house serving good beer and excellent food (the chef remains). Beers on handpump were Robinson's Hatters, Best Bitter and Northern Glory.

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British Meat Steak Pie of the Year 2001 – second place.

British Meat Steak Pie of the Year 2002 – runner up.



MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

This month I hoped to bring you the first of a series of reports from East Manchester but time was against me. There are one or two snippets, though. In Openshaw, the former Smithfield (ex-Locomotive) was in an advanced state of demolition as I passed – another fine pub lost to this part of the city. Luckily the nearby Legh Arms still comes up trumps with both Tetley Imperial and Mansfield Dark Mild on handpump when I called recently. Both in good nick, too. It's amazing to see real mild still selling well in this part of town. Further up the road, the Pack Horse has reopened. It's now a free house, I suppose, but still has Holts Bitter on handpump and while the pub was brash and noisy, and distinctly fraying round the edges, the beer was fine. With luck I'll have a lot more from this part of town next month.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

It's been pretty quiet in the City Centre as well, so I thought I'd have a good nosy around what can best be called the 'Greater Castlefield' area. Walking down Deansgate out of the City the first (ex) pub you hit is the Wheatshaf which used to occupy the ornate building on the right, now part of the Alliance & Leicester block. A former Bass pub (with good Cornbrook Brewery windows), I only called in once and got food poisoning after eating there. Oh, the good old days when we had all those fantastic pubs!

Further down is the Pig & Porcupine on the corner of Tonman Street, a new-build which seems to have lost its way a little in recent years. It's still a cask ale outlet, though, with Boddies Bitter and Greene King's Old Speckled Hen on two of the four handpumps. The sign says it's open from 11-11 but on my recent experience it's been closed early evening. It seems to do a decent lunchtime trade but looks as though a good refurbishment wouldn't go amiss.

Round the corner is the site of another lost pub, the St Matthews Tavern, another pub I only visited once – a tall, thin and fairly desolate keg Whitbread pub. Oh, the good old days...

On Liverpool Road the first pub is the excellent White Lion, a good looking, well-run pub. It's a very professional operation all round with good food and plenty of cask beer – Bass, Deuchars IPA and two Phoenix beers, Best Bitter and Bantam, were on four of the five handpumps. From there it's a short walk to the Ox (formerly the Oxnoble, the only pub in the world named after a potato). Billed as a

gastro-pub, it does a very impressive line in food, although there's no problem if you just want a drink. There was a good range on when I last called but not this time. Of the five handpumps (one of which was one of the new bright yellow ones for cask Boddies), only one was in use but at least it was selling a quality beer – Phoenix Arizona.

Further down is the Commercial, another externally attractive pub with floral displays, good etched windows and a fading Wilsons sign. 'Open All Day' it says, although it was shut on the Friday lunchtime when I called. In any event I gather it now only sells keg beer – the presence across the road of the Science Museum's Gas Gallery seems strangely appropriate. It's a long time, too, since the Castlefield Hotel's Barge Bar sold cask Boddies and the next cask outlet is the ever-excellent Duke's 92, on Castle Street. The stylish, galleried bar has a clean, modern interior on an old canalside building. Bright and spacious with modern furniture and artworks, this is in many ways just what a new bar should be. There's a good food operation with legendary cheese and pate lunches but more than that, there's a commendable commitment to cask beer. Three handpumps dispense a changing range of real ales although when I called two had the clips reversed leaving just the 4.9% Crouch Vale Anchor Street Porter as the sole offering. Not surprisingly, this had few takers on a hot afternoon.

The handpumps in the nearby Jacksons Wharf now appear to be disused, the once excellent Quay Bar isn't any more (and looked almost disused when I peered into the gloom through the firmly locked doors), and Box Bar is shut. On the tail end of Deansgate, the former Pack Horse, an ex-Greenalls pub of which my abiding memory is poor beer and an strong smell of disinfectant (Oh, the good old days...), is being converted into flats.

Back on Deansgate proper, Atlas is now a garish shadow of its former self and no longer sells real ale. Luckily, across the road, the ever-excellent Knott does everything right. Four real ales (two changing guests plus Marble Ginger and Manchester Bitter), good continental beer in bottle and on draught, real cider and perry (often both) and top-class food, all in a modern, stylish bar complete with first floor balcony for people/traffic watching. One of the best.

Finally, heading back into town, there's Galvin's Irish Bar, formerly the Crown. It's long time since this was a Wilson's pub with Holt's Bitter as a permanent guest. It's quite a long time since it was a Vaux pub with good Samson on handpump. It's still a good pub, though, and still offers real ale – Lees Bitter on handpump when I called.

So, there you go – Castlefield. Something for everyone – give it a go.



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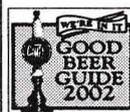
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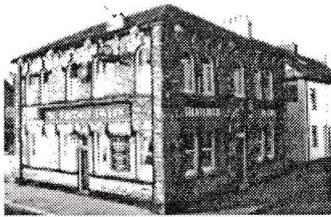


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IT TAKES ALL SORTS TO CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

The Campaign for Real Ale, CAMRA, is launching its biggest ever membership campaign at the Great British Beer Festival in August 2003.

The colourful new campaign, supported by new imagery, reflects the diversity of CAMRA members joined by a common cause – to promote good beer, pubs and consumer rights. If CAMRA is to grow then it is important to highlight that CAMRA is not just a consumer group for middle aged men with bellies and beards! A stereotype that can be easily dispelled when you realise that in April 2003 CAMRA appointed its first ever woman chairman and that 30% of the membership is female. This is a message that needs to be promoted to Britain's real ale drinkers and pub goers.

☆☆☆☆

John Cottrell, CAMRA's Membership Marketing Officer said – "CAMRA is a not-for-profit consumer group that supports all pub goers and real ale drinkers. Increasing membership is a key part of our continued growth as an organisation, both in terms of funding and in terms of our campaigning "voice". It is important that we highlight to the pub goer and real ale drinker that CAMRA serves a different purpose for different people – some enjoy being active campaigners while others are happy to support CAMRA through their membership subscription and remaining an inactive member. At the end of the day CAMRA membership helps save British beer and pubs and therefore this appeals to many different groups of society including young and old, male and female, different religions and races".

Mr Cottrell continues Our current membership has now reached over 68,000 and we have some serious work to do to reach our target of 100,000 members in three years, but if CAMRA is to achieve more campaigning power and raise finances to continue with successful campaigns, such as Hale Ninkasi and National Pubs Week, then more members have to be attracted. Whilst the new membership promotion will be eye catching and humorous it does promote a very important message that CAMRA membership is available and relevant to all pub goers and real ale drinkers and by growing our membership we will achieve more consumer beer and pub campaigning victories".

☆☆☆☆

So if you are interested in real ale and want to support the campaign for greater consumer choice as well as helping to safeguard the future of British beer and pubs then look no further – join CAMRA today. How do I join? Fill in the CAMRA membership application form and send it to 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW, to make a postal application. Alternatively join online at www.camra.org.uk

Cheers.

JOIN CAMRA - HELP PRESERVE REAL ALE

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