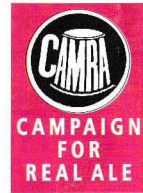


DECEMBER
2003
No:236

Volume 19
Issue 12

OPENING TIMES



The FREE CAMRA Regional Magazine covering Central, East & South Manchester; Stockport; Tameside; Trafford; N.E. Cheshire & Macclesfield

NEW BREWERY FOR STOCKPORT THREE RIVERS ON STREAM AT LAST

STOCKPORT'S long anticipated new brewery, Three Rivers in Reddish, finally brewed its first beer in mid-November.

Their current business commitments mean that we can't at present reveal the identity of two of the three men behind the brewery, including the award-winning head brewer, but the sales director is Stockport man John Tweats, who has been charged with getting the beer out into the local free trade. What we can, say, though, is that the project has been talked about for several years but only came together in August, since when progress has been rapid to say the least.



Not that it's been an easy ride – it was originally intended to locate the brewery in Offerton but those premises fell through. Luckily a new and more suitable location was found in Reddish and the brewery is now located on the Vauxhall Industrial Estate.

The brewing equipment was largely obtained from the new George Wright Brewery in Rainford and is currently capable of producing five barrels of beer at a time, although there are already plans to increase the brew length to 10 barrels.

Two beers have been produced to date. GMT (that's Goyt, Tame and Mersey, the three rivers in question) is a 3.8% easy drinking session beer with a good dry finish that makes for a very moreish pint. It's brewed with the classic Maris Otter pale ale malt together with a little carapils malt, and hopped with Styrian Goldings. Its big brother is Oxbow at 4.5%, a fuller-bodied beer with a good smack of hops. Here the Maris Otter malt is complemented by lager malt and the hops are Pilgrim, a new dwarf variety with a good bitterness.

There's a third beer in the pipeline, too. This is Old Disreputable, a 5.5% strong

Christmas beer that was bubbling away in the fermenting vessels when Opening Times visited. Here the Maris Otter is accompanied by chocolate and crystal malts and two hop varieties are used – Northdown for bittering and Whitbread Goldings for aroma. Other beers are planned and the aim is to have a new beer every other month. These are likely to include a wheat beer and a stout or porter. The stylish pumpclips are already finding their way on to the bars of local pubs such as the Crown, Heaton lane; Olde Woolpack, Brinksway; Olde Vic, Edgeley and the Railway, Portwood. Anyone wishing to sell these excellent new beers should contact the Three Rivers Brewery on 0161 477 3333.



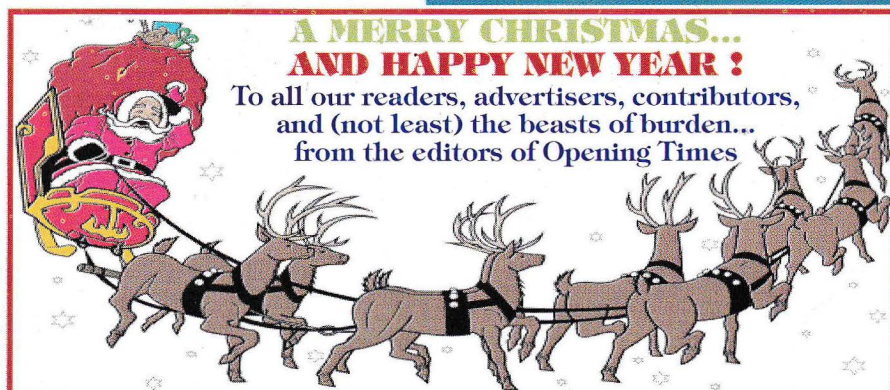
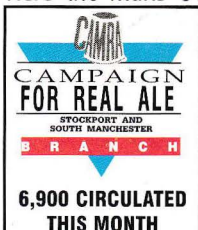
A NEW ONE FOR GLOSSOP, TOO

The new Glossop Brewery will be up and running soon into the New Year, based in an industrial unit in nearby Hadfield.

The man behind it is Don Pape, formerly long serving captain at Glossop Rugby Club and well known in the Glossop area. He was made redundant recently and has decided to do something he had formerly been involved in at UMIST. He left Manchester Poly with a BSc Hons in Biological Science, involving Microbiology & Biochemistry, then from 1978 at UMIST as a Post Graduate Research Assistant in Chemical Engineering. His work at this time involved studies of fermentation processes. The department had a Pilot Plant Brewery at Boddingtons Brewery for three years where his group used "novel biomass particles-pan scrubbers" to host yeast in the fermentation process and therefore reduce the use of finings in the brewing process. Here he came away with a MSc in Pollution and Environmental Control. More news on this venture as it takes shape.

December's OPENING TIMES

Editors' View	..... 2	CAMRA calling	..... 14
Pub & Cellar Awards	..... 3	Five Years Ago	..... 15
Pub of the Month	..... 4	Curmudgeon	..... 15
Witchwood	..... 5	Macc Pub News	..... 16
Brewery News	..... 6	Ramsbottom	..... 18
Millstone Brewery 7	Tasting Panel 19
Stagger 8	Ale in Hale 21
Pub Grub 9	Pub News 22
Letters 13	Mcr. Matters 23



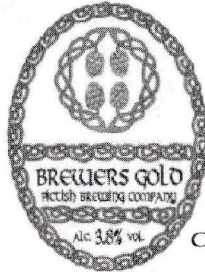


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Beers for December

Brewers gold

a.B.O. 3.8%



A refreshing thirst quenching pale golden session beer. Malty undertones and a powerful spicy hop aroma combine to produce a dangerously moreish beer.



celtic warrior

a.B.O. 4.2%

A full bodied mid brown premium ale. Malt flavours dominate the palate with delicate hop aromas in the well-balanced finish.

pictish porter

a.B.O. 4.4%



A marvellously complex black beer. A mellow bitterness and subtle hop aroma balance the robust amber and roast malt flavours.

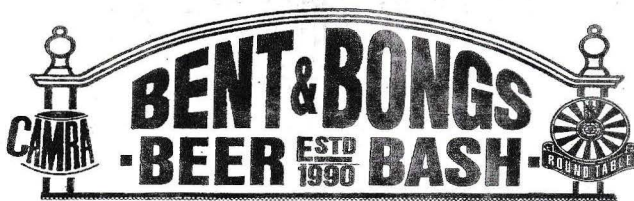
Available from November until end of March.

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IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

This month, I can do no better than quote the words of Ted Bruning, Editor of CAMRA's national paper, What's Brewing... "Guardian readers were treated last month to one of the ghastliest pieces of ignorance, snobbishness and condescension ever to disgrace the pages of that newspaper. We refer to the Guardian's wine columnist, Malcolm Gluck, of "Superplonk" fame.

One of Gluck's columns is his "Ten Quid Tipple" in which he is challenged to find three wines to accompany a dinner menu for under a tenner. A Ten Quid tipple column last month drew the entirely reasonable suggestion from the highly respected beer writer Martin Cornell that, given a limited budget, Gluck might care to opt for beer rather than wine.

Describing Mr Cornell as "a beautifully confused reader" (how patronising!), Gluck dismissed it as "a disgusting idea." "Beer does little for most food, especially spicy, complex dishes...and even less for the digestion," Gluck went on. "Perish the thought". Apart from revealing his own ignorance by describing Fuller's Golden Pride barley wine as "my favourite bitter", Gluck's hissy fit laid painfully bare the smug narrow-mindedness of the broadsheet wine-writing community as a whole.

Britain's brewers are knocking themselves out not only to produce better and more adventurous beer but also to devise new ways of enjoying them. There is now an amazing variety of beers of all style and strengths on the market; to dismiss them en bloc as unsuitable for the dining table is manifestly absurd and displays an intellectual poverty and a disregard of disagreeable truths unworthy of the Guardian"

Actually I think the Gluck drivel is absolutely typical of the Guardian, but I digress because I can report a small victory for common-sense, and the Scotch industry. Last month I described how Diageo were branding a blended whisky as Cardhu pure malt, the name of a long established and popular single-malt brand, so as to sell an ersatz blend to undiscerning Spaniards at premium prices. Well, in a very small victory they have agreed NEVER to do it to any other malt brand, and to change the 'Cardhu' labels to highlight its bastardised origin. The Islay brands are safe.... for the moment. Merry Christmas.

Paul Hutchings

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 236

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 IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Due to three major factors, our increasing circulation (again), the fact that we have upgraded the paper to a smoother high quality stock (to near universal approval) and the extra costs associated with higher quality photographs and the use of process colour, we have had to put some of our advertising costs up (for the first time this millennium). Existing advertisers on runs will be generally unaffected until 2005. NEW ADVERTISING RATES FROM JANUARY 2004: 1/8 page (60mm x 85mm): £30 (£60 colour); 1/4 page (120mm x 85mm): £55 (£90 colour); 1/2 page (horiz: 174mm x 120mm; vert: 250mm x 85mm): £90 (£150 colour); Full page (175mm x 240mm) £150 (£250 colour). Surcharges may apply for back page. Generous 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) *.jpg, *.eps, *.tiff or *.cdr (Corel Draw versions 3, 5 or 7 - please state which AND you MUST include hard copy back-up). For colour adverts please ring for details first.

ROBBIES' BEST KEPT BAR & CELLAR AWARDS

ALMOST CLEAN SWEEP FOR PUBS IN OT AREA
YE OLDE ADMIRAL RODNEY at Prestbury, near Macclesfield has secured first place in Robinson's annual Best Kept Bar and Cellar Competition. The award made by the Stockport's family brewer is now in its sixth year and involves a comprehensive, top-to-bottom, inspection of 330 public houses throughout the North West and North Wales.

"We are absolutely chuffed to have been awarded the first place in the competition," said licensee Pete Brady who runs the house with wife Gail. "We actually scored a perfect 100% for both our beer quality and the standards of our cellar, and dropped just one point for the presentation of our bar area. Overall we are extremely pleased and have to thank our staff for all their hard work."

Pete and Gail were presented with The Unicorn Shield as part of their prize which included a celebration evening, buffet and beer at the Admiral Rodney on Tuesday 2 December. The shield was engraved with their names and will be proudly displayed in their bar area for the coming year. At the presentation, Brewing Director David Robinson paid tribute to the Admiral Rodney as a 'barometer house' - if they get a complaint about the beer from Peter then they know they have a problem! The competition was organised by director Oliver Robinson and head brewer Chris Hellin, who also made the final judging by paying surprise visits to the sixteen top scoring houses, which were selected by four district managers.

"Since we started the competition in 1998 the standards have consistently risen, this year there was just one point between the winner and runner up which made the judging extremely difficult," said Oliver. Second place went to the Lawton Arms, Church Lawton, were Neville, Maureen and Martin Brereton lost out by the narrowest of margins. "This is not the kind of competition that can be won without putting in the hard work all year round. We didn't know when the judges would be coming or what they would be looking for, so it really does reward the licensees who deliver consistently good results," said Neville. Competition veterans Billy and Denise Parkin of the King William, Wilmslow picked up third place. The couple won the competition in its first year and have rarely been outside the top three since. "It is important to remember that it is not just the judges who appreciate good beer and a well kept bar and cellar, the biggest reward comes from loyal customers who come back to us time and again," commented Billy.

A special award has also been made to the Bay Horse at Newton, where Roy and Betty Williams have been rewarded for having achieved the greatest improvement since last year. "We have made a significant investment this year and renewed much of our cellar equipment, as a result our beer sales are up 33% so we have no doubt that our excellent beer quality is bringing in the rewards," said Roy.

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OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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International Brewing Awards



1998
Wobbly Bob
Silver Medal



2002
Wobbly Bob
Gold Medal

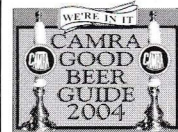
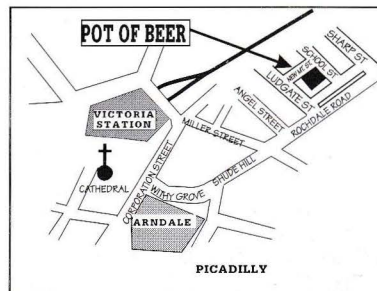


2002
Navy
Gold Medal

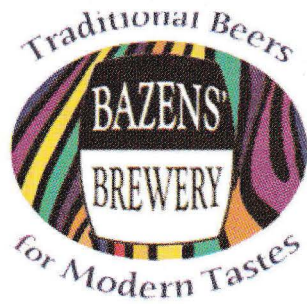
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FlatbaC 4.2% (Beer of the Festival, Stockport, 2003)
Knoll St Porter 5.2% **Black Pig Mild** 3.6%
 (Bronze Award for Mild, Champion Beer of Britain, 2003)
Pacific Bitter 3.8% **Best Bitter** (new recipe) 4.3%
Freshers' Special 5.5% (October-January)

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PUB OF THE MONTH DECEMBER 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 for December is the Grove Inn on Ashton New Rd, Clayton.

Being the nearest pub to the Eastlands, City of Manchester Stadium where the real stuff is available is just really a matter of location, as the pub under the experienced hands of manager Patricia Heathcote, who took over the pub in summer 2002. Pat is a very experienced licensee over many years in pubs around East Manchester. Under Pat's leadership the pub, always known for a good pint of Holt's Bitter, has brought back the handpumped mild and introduced the seasonals, Paterson's being the latest. What is unusual is the vault is far larger and far busier than the lounge and is one of the best in the area. It is a shrine to Manchester City FC, now a short distance away and is always lively and busy. Also of note is the war memorial to regulars who fell in the First World War. The quieter lounge is ideal for the punters checking the racing form in the national daily or to have a quiet chat, though it can be just as lively at weekends when the vault is full. It goes without saying that the beers are on top form and service is good and friendly.

The Grove is very much an East Manchester pub for locals. Stockport & South Manchester branch has always had a soft spot for the furthest outposts in the branch area - Beswick, Clayton, Openshaw and Gorton. Every visit on a Stagger to this much improved and well-supported pub has always been memorable and highly enjoyable. So, come along to enjoy another memorable evening on **Monday 15 December**. Kick off 8pm.

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

PLEASE NOTE EARLY DATE - AND DIFFERENT WEEKDAY OF THIS EVENT!

CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 236:
 John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Butler, Paul Moss, Robin Wignall, Andy Jenkinson, Dave Hallows, Phil Levison, Mark McConachie, Stuart Ballantyne, Peter Edwardson, Jim Flynn, Steve Bray, Dave Platt, John Hutchinson, Tom Lord, Brian Taylor, Ken Birch.



How would you feel...

...if all your favourite pubs closed, or your favourite beer disappeared

from the bar? You could accept it and find another pub or move on to a different beer. Or you could do something about it...

You may not have heard of CAMRA. Or you may have heard the stories of beards, woolly jumpers and sandals. The reality is that we are the biggest single-issue campaigning group in Britain today. All our members are drinkers and pub-goers just like you. We've had many campaigning successes over the last thirty years which benefit you every time you visit the pub or order a pint.

www.camra.org.uk Tel: 01727 867201
 or use the membership form on page 22

COPY DATE FOR JANUARY ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS DECEMBER 31

WITCHWOOD

NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR ASHTON FREEHOUSE

THE WITCHWOOD in Ashton has a reputation as a live music venue. It was also one of the earliest multi-beer free houses in Greater Manchester, and if Pauline Town gets her way its reputation for cask beer will be in the headlines.

Until August, the pub was owned by Inventive Leisure, the company better known for its chain of Revolution vodka bars. A dedicated cask beer outlet sat uneasily in this environment and, as Pauline admits, the company focus was on the 'venue' side of the Witchwood's business with the cask ale operation being somewhat neglected and tied to deals with the bigger suppliers. Pauline arrived at the pub in 1988, working as a glass collector to give the pub a lift for a couple of weeks. She stayed on and became manager in 1990 and three years ago she struck a deal with Inventive whereby in return for her staying on as manager, they would sell her the pub in three years time. All credit to them they kept their word and so in August Pauline and her two assistants Ben and Dan Marshall bought the Witchwood.

Thus the pub is once again completely free of tie, which suits Pauline, a self-confessed cask ale fan, just right. "I'm in my element now I've got the freedom to buy what I want", she told OT. There are eight or nine handpumps in regular use, with the permanent beers being John Smith's Bitter ("I know," says Pauline, "but it's a cheap house beer"), Holts Mild and Bitter (introduced at the locals' request) and Moorhouses Pendle Witches Brew. When OT called, Pauline had just ordered 60 beers for the pub's month-long beer festival, kicking off on 4 December.

The response has been "brilliant" with customers who had missed the cask ale range returning to the pub and an impressive increase in volumes since the changeover. All the beer is ordered in nine-gallon containers, thus ensuring turnover and on Thursdays there is the Cask Club with all the cask beers retailing at £1 a pint in rotation over the night. Regulars can pick up a Collectors Card - five stamps will get you a free pint of cask ale and entry into a prize draw.

The pub side of the operation opens 12 noon-11pm but the music side of things remains as good as ever, too. Not only that but the venue bar is open until midnight on Wednesday and Thursday, and 1.00am Friday and Saturday. Well worth a visit. JC



Dave and Sue Welcome You To THE QUEENS ARMS

HONEY STREET, CHEETHAM

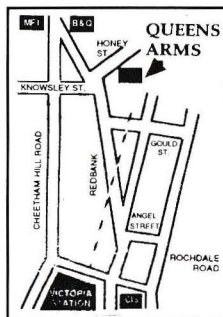
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PUB OF THE YEAR 2002-3

**Bantam Bitter £1.40 a pint,
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6 Ever Changing Cask Ales**

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9.30pm start

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Children's Play Area

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☆ Entertainment Every
Thursday & Friday night

☆ Licensed Friday & Saturday
till midnight

☆ Singles night - Sunday - over 25s - Late Bar
till midnight

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LICENSEES

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I DID IT... MILD WAY
Due to demand, a limit of 86 pubs has been
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The prizes have been changed, too.

Challenge Extra (T-shirt) for 12 pubs, in 12 areas

Challenge Super (Sweatshirt) for 36 pubs, in 12 areas

Challenge Ultra (Pewter Tankard) for all of the pubs

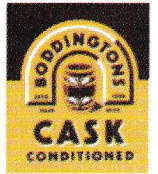
Contact Mark McConachie

0161 429 9356 for details.





NEW BODDIES CASK LAUNCHED IN THE PUBS



THE NEW BODDINGTON'S BITTER was going out into the trade as this edition of Opening Times was being put together. Initial impressions seem favourable. Next month we'll be running a feature on the new beer to see how it has been received. The push now, of course, will be to get into those outlets that have gone keg in recent years.

FAMILY FAVOURITES

Lots of news this month from our family brewers with new beers in the pipeline.

Robinson's – have plenty of changes afoot. The premium Frederics is relegated to the seasonal programme as from the end of December. It is being replaced by Double Hop, also 5%, which will now become a permanent beer. Snowdon has sadly failed to replicate the success of Cumbria Way and has been axed. Next year's seasonal programme has been announced and this includes several new beers.

The full list is: Jan/Feb: **Enigma** 4.7% ABV "A new beer for a New Year. Traditionally brewed using only the finest of raw materials this chestnut brown premium cask ale has a distinctive citrus hop character perfectly balanced by a strong crisp bitterness."

Then two very popular beers repeated - March/April: **Young Tom** 4.0% ABV; May/June: **Northern Glory** 4.4% ABV; July/August: **Sunny Jim** 3.8% ABV "A light, thirst quenching summer ale specially designed to refresh and relax. Brewed from a recipe incorporating and interesting blend of pale and light roasted malts, this perfectly round and smooth light golden beer has a subtle but distinctive tang of caramelised demerara."

September/October: **Kick-Off** 4.2% ABV "Specially brewed to celebrate our national game of football, this full bodied, light mahogany coloured beer has a perfectly balanced line up of award winning flavours. An all malt recipe for added fullness and flavour; matched by a generous addition of hops for bitterness and aroma. This beer also has added spice late fire power and a grandstand finish."

November/December (currently the case this year): **Robin Bitter** 4.5% ABV.



Hydes have also announced next year's programme. This is based on the theme "Feeling Fine with Hydes Beers in 2004". The beers are: Jan/Feb: **Hunky Dory** 4.8% ABV "This highly moreish premium ale is brewed using choicest bittering and aroma hops providing a peasant warming after palate" March/April: **Fine & Dandy** 4.2% ABV "Featuring a luxury blend of the finest malts this distinctive Spring beer is full flavoured and enticingly aromatic"

May/June: **Cloud Nine** 4.4% ABV "Carefully selected best malts & hops combine to provide a classic beer with a silky smooth finish" July/August: **Tickety Boo** 4.1% ABV "Ultimate refreshment and flavour are the key qualities emanating from this light, crisp Summer beer benefiting from the subtle use of the Liberty hop"

September/October: **Over the Moon** 4.5% ABV "Mellow Autumnal flavours characterise this rather special warming seasonal ale, brewed with just a hint of natural berry juice" November/December: **Seventh Heaven** 5.0% ABV "This delicious fruity flavoured Winter ale is crafted from rich roasted malts blended with a hint of seasonal spice"

We will bring you news of the **Lees** range next month although we understand the first beer is 'Vulcan'.



MIGHTY MICROS

The region's micros continue to supply a range of new and interesting beers. Here is our monthly round-up—as usual apologies to those we couldn't contact this time.

Bank Top – John Feeney's Bolton brewery has just brought out its first bottled beer. A batch of **Smoke Stack Lightning** (5%) has been bottled by the Sulwath brewery and will be available in two local off licenses as well as some pubs. The powerful (5%) **Santa's Claws** is now available, too.



Bazens' - New beers available in December are **Centaur** - 4.2% (The Sagittarius beer), a traditional pale bitter using only UK produced Northdown Hops. **Santa's Reinbeer** returns for the festive season and this year it has been strengthened from 4.3 to 4.6%. **Knoll's Porter** 5.2% returns for the winter months. The name has been slightly modified to **Knoll St Porter**. This year they have been able to replace the small amount of smoked malt missing from last year's version with malt smoked locally for the Salford Brewery Syndicate. **Wass Ale** 4.5% returns as the new year special and January sees the launch of the new strong bitter, **XSB** at 5.2%. This will be a permanent addition to the range.

Greenfield – several new beers are currently available. **Dovestones Bitter** is a 4% mid-amber beer while **Uppermill Ale** is a 4.2% golden brew. Seasonal beers include **Rudolf's Tipple**, a 5% porter, and **Icebreaker** a 4.2% light, golden hoppy beer. Also look out for **Celebration** at 4%. This is not only to mark the seasonal festivities but also brewer Peter Percival's wedding at Christmas. It's a light bitter and very, very hoppy with lots of Cascade hops in it. The brewery also has a good outlet in Oldham where the Ashton Arms always sells two Greenfield beers and takes the entire range.

Leyden – the seasonal beer is **Rudolf** a 3.7% bitter beer using a brand new hop variety, 'Pam'. Also out is **Sinister** a 3.8% mid-brown beer.

Facers – this new brewery is going great guns and David Facer tells us that October and November were the best months since he started. Look out for **Smoked Ale** (4.1%), a less smoked version of **Smoky Guy** – when sampled in Stockport's Crown this was on superb form. The Christmas seasonal is **Scrooge** at 4.1%. The Dickens reference continues the literary theme of Facers seasonal beers and this has cinna



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mon and cloves in the copper to add a spiciness to the palate. David is also considering a limited edition of something quite strong (5-5.5%) for the New Year.

Boggart Hole Clough – the festive seasonals are North Star (4.6%) and Bog Sleigh (5.3%). No brand new beers are planned although Rocket Fuel, living up to its name at 14%(!) will be available at Christmas.

Shaws – another new-ish micro which is brewing full tilt. They also have several new beers out and these include Santa's 80/-, a 4.2% dark beer brewed with chocolate malt; Hartshead Pike Ale a light 4.3% beer generously hopped with Northdown hops and look out too for Golden Globe a 4.3% beer brewed using Challenger hops and to mark the brewery's good customer, the Globe in Glossop. The brewery now produces a new beer every two weeks so there's always something new out.

Marble – the wonderful Chocolate Heavy (5.5%) is now back and on top form. Generous quantities of chocolate malt and a hint of roast barley make it smooth, stouty, and dangerously drinkable with huge depth of flavour. Another classic.

Pictish – you might be lucky to see this year's brew of Winter Solstice but only one brew length has been made as brewer Richard Sutton has run out of all the ingredients and doesn't have time to get some more. So there's going to be an extra, as yet unnamed beer, a 4.5% pale and hoppy brew. Also out this month is Rudolf's Rocket Fuel, the Pictish winter warmer at 7.3%.

Phoenix – not many brand new beers from this respected micro but still enough to keep everyone happy. Look out for Pictish Porter (5%), Snowbound (4.3%), Christmas Kiss (4.5%), Golden Glow (6.5%) and the powerful Humbug at 7%. The end of January will see the return of Jovian (4.2%) and Massacre.

Khean – at Congleton's 'other' brewery, Ken Newsome tells us that he has bottled his first beer. This is the stout, Caught Behind, and it is also bottle conditioned. Anyone interested in stocking this should contact the brewery on 01260 272144. The Christmas seasonal Jungle Bails back this year. A 5.2% dark, heay beer with a good biter-sweet finish.

Coverage of Ramsbottom Brewery is on page 18

MILLSTONE BREWERY



MOSSLEY'S new Millstone Brewery is the 15th micro-brewery in Greater Manchester and brings the county's total number of operating breweries up to 21, of which all bar one produce real ale. Thus it could be said that with this new venture, our local brewing industry has come of age.

The names behind the brewery are Nick Boughton and Jon Hunt, and speaking to them the first thing that strikes you is that they are anything but local lads. CAMRA members both, Nick and Jon hail from the West Midlands, Nick from Dudley and Jon from Birmingham itself.

So, how did they come to set up a brewery in the north west? It was Nick who moved north first, with a job at Liverpool University but living in Mossley. Jon still 'commutes' to the north during the week, returning to Brum at the weekends, although he too plans to relocate here. Both were old friends and also 'keen imbibers and home brewers' and it was while they were holidaying in France two years ago that the idea of actually brewing commercially was born. They followed this up with a brewing day at Mark Dade's Boggart Hole Clough Brewery to see if they actually enjoyed brewing on a larger scale and the fact that they did was a real turning point for them.

By this time Jon had been in the same job for 18 years and was looking for a change while Nick was tiring of the daily commute to Liverpool; throw in the Chancellor's duty cut for small brewers and the die was really cast. They trained with Jim Wonders at the Cannon Royall Brewery near Droitwich, who has in many ways been their mentor, and also worked with Sara Barton of the Brewster's Brewery near Melton Mowbray. At the same time the search for premises was underway and at one stage they were looking at a unit in the same building as the nearby Greenfield Brewery. However



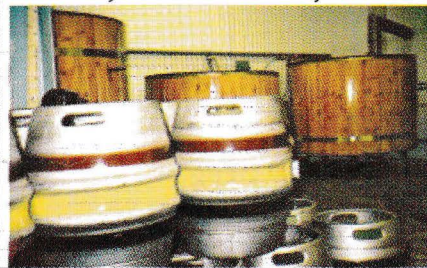
Nick Boughton & Jon Hunt of Millstone

the current premises became available and were obviously suited to their needs. The plant was installed by Dave Porter of Porter Brewing Co and is 8-barrel capacity although the installation of a second fermenter will give a maximum output of 16 barrels a week if necessary. The brewery is spacious, well laid out and has a real feeling of permanence about it.

The aim has been to produce full-bodied, bitter beers, with perhaps some residual sweetness to underpin the bitterness. Three Shires is a 4% pale, hoppy beer with fruity aromas derived from three hop varieties, First Gold, Goldings and at the end of the boil, 'loads' of Liberty, an American variety. Malt is Maris Otter pale ale malt. It made an early appearance at Stockport's Railway and proved to be a superb, full-bodied bitter beer with a lingering dry finish.

The second beer is Millstone Edge at 4.4%, a more copper coloured best bitter, again with three hop varieties – First Gold and Goldings as before, but this time with Fuggles as the third, "it's loaded with Fuggles" say Jon and Nick. Again Maris Otter is the malt, supplemented by some crystal malt for extra colour and depth. Both beers have sold well and the third brew of Three Shires was in the fermenter as we went to press. The third beer, out as you read this, is the seasonal brew, Christmas Ruby a 4.7% ruby/copper coloured beer but generously hopped to give a fruity taste and aroma. This should be a very hoppy beer that is also dry hopped (with Willamette hops) for good measure.

Future plans include beers at 3.8% and 4.2% along with some specials, although these won't appear on a regular basis. Deliveries will be kept local but expect to see Millstone beers in the local free trade and at festivals. The level of commitment and enthusiasm displayed by both Jon and Nick is impressive. They have clearly thought this through and hopefully Millstone Brewery will be a feature of the local brewing scene for many years to come. Millstone Brewery is at Unit 4, Vale Mill, Micklehurst Road, Mossley, OL5 9JL. Phone 01457 835835.



Ye Olde Admiral Rodney Prestbury

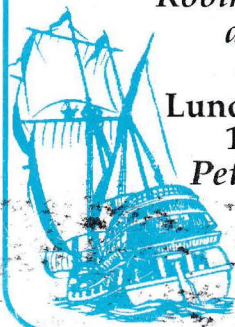
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STAGGER

with John Clarke

CLAYTON & HIGHER OPENSHAW

THIS STAGGER took place several months ago, when daylight hours were longer and the nights rather warmer. Just as well when you consider the amount of walking involved...

East Manchester has suffered grievously from pub losses over the past 10-15 years and of those pubs that remain, few offer cask ale. Having said that, though, the cask ale outlets that survive tend on the whole to be pretty good pubs.

The first one up was the **Grove** on Ashton New Road, the only surviving cask ale outlet on that road between the City Centre and city boundary. A Holt's house, this was redecorated in the not-too-distant past in that brewery's traditional style and both lounge and vault were both very busy when we called - much busier, in fact, than a previous visit when the lack of trade had made some of us fear for the pub's long term future. The lively vault is the true heart of this pub and of particular note is the war memorial commemorating those regulars who fell in WW1. Mild and Bitter were both available on handpump and both were in good condition - a fine start to the night.

On leaving the Grove it was the first of several long walks, this one to Crabtree Lane and the **Strawberry Duck** on the banks of the Ashton Canal. This free house has had a great deal of money invested in it over recent years, with a spectacular new extension complete with exposed roof trusses and comfortable sofa-type chairs. Old photographs of the area show the pub in its former Wilsons ownership. Outside there's a brand new beer garden, well laid-out and landscaped, it overlooks the canal at lock 13 and our drink was accompanied by the sound of the weir stream. There's an interesting menu with a good kids' option. The one cask beer is Holts Bitter, and again this was on good form.

Now came an even longer walk as we made our way down to Ashton Old Road and the **Legh Arms**, just across the road from Openshaw College. This is a rare survivor as most other pubs in the area have long-since closed. Even more remarkably the pub still sells cask beer in the form of two changing guests, of which one is usually a mild. Again, it's a pub that has benefited from some investment and now has a split-level, open-plan interior, and gives the impression of being busy and well-run. The two cask beers tonight were Tetley Imperial and Mansfield Dark Mild, both of which were more than acceptable with the mild just having the edge. There were bottles of Moorhouses Black Cat in the chiller and a promotional sign for Westons Old Rosie cider, so this certainly seems to be a pub that's not afraid to experiment..

We hopped on a bus to travel out to the next pub, the **Pack Horse**, again on Ashton Old Road. The pub was formerly a Greenalls house subsequently purchased by Holts and ultimately closing down. Bucking the trend in the area, though, it has now re-opened. When we called it was pretty basic and noisy and would certainly have benefited from a lick of paint. Having said that we'd all been in worse and the licensees seem to be doing their best in perhaps difficult circumstances. Holts Bitter remains on handpump and it was pretty good - the best we'd had so far in fact.

Closer to Openshaw crossroads is a Robinson's pub, the **Forresters**. It's basically open-plan but it always has a good lively atmosphere and is clearly both a well-run and well-liked boozier. Of some note is the tiled exterior promoting the long-gone Kays Atlas Ales. The beer on sale these days is Robinson's Best Bitter and tonight it was on very enjoyable form.

Heading out of town, the next real ale pub is the **Oddfellows** on Abbey Hey Lane. This is the last survivor of what was once a good collection of Boddingtons pubs in and around Openshaw. Of the rest some have been demolished (Locomotive, Wrexham) while others only sell keg beer (Concert, Hare & Hounds). The 'Oddies' remains though as a good old-fashioned boozier with vault, lounge and separate snug. There's a good atmosphere and some nice old etched glass remains, too. Boddies Bitter is the one cask beer and again was enjoyed by all of us.

The last real ale outlet on the main road before the city boundary is the **Albion**, a good lively two-roomer with lounge and vault. A karaoke was in full swing and both sides of the pub were very busy - as often seems to be the case when we call here. Two cask beers were on handpump - Holts Bitter and Boddingtons Bitter. We didn't try the Boddies and all went for the Holts. This again was above average but perhaps marginally the least good example we had had all night.

It was Holt's again for the very last pub - the **Railway** on Manshaw Road. Complete with huge decorative lamp outside, this is a classic Holts house with a large lobby and three rooms off. Again it has had a thorough redecoration is recent times and really does look a treat. Both Mild and Bitter were on handpump and despite jaded palates by this stage, were easily the best beers of the night.

Believe it or not, this Stagger encompasses every cask ale pub in Openshaw and Clayton, an area formerly awash with both pubs and cask beer. There are still quite a few pubs remaining but none of the others offer cask beer. It was interesting to see that while the real ale outlets were almost all very busy, the keg outlets seemed deserted by comparison. There's clearly a moral there, I think.



Steve, Johanne, Molly & sometimes Jess welcome you to
Ye Olde Vic

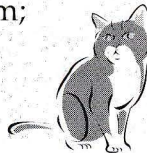
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IDAHO, 99 MANCHESTER ROAD, CHORLTON

THE BEER scene in Chorlton has improved out of all recognition in recent years with innumerable new, and very good, places to drink opening up. The food scene is good, too, with establishments like the Bar and the Lloyds Hotel combining great beer and top notch food. Idaho is another such place, although it sells no cask conditioned beer. Why then is it featuring in Opening Times?

The answer is still beer. There may be no cask, but Idaho boasts a list of about 80 bottled beers from around the world, together with half a dozen draught, the latter including German, Belgian Czech and often, American specialities.

It's been open five years this month and is one of the smaller bars in the area with perhaps no more than a dozen tables. The bright airy décor and the large shop-style windows mean that this is anything but claustrophobic, though..

The menus is short but well thought out, with six starters, seven mains and seven puddings. Starters range in price from £2.50 to £4.25 and include soup, nachos, bean burrito, ribs, and mussels in red chili broth. Mains run from £6.50 to £12.50, starting with pasta with pesto and ricotta, via sausage with lentils & chili butter (£7.25), blackened tuna (£8.25) right up to New York steak with roquefort sauce.

The sausages come in both meat or veggie options and made for a filling dish, served with lentils, tomatoes and cream, all topped with chili butter and served with mashed potatoes and salad. A modern and successful take on an old favourite. The pasta dish was excellent, too. Al dente tagliatelle was dressed with a white wine, pesto, capers, sweet red peppers and ricotta cheese. This was topped with tomato and a generous serving of parmesan and set off by a small dressed salad. A substantial plateful – so much so that to have a pudding as well wouldn't have left much room for the beer. That's not to say that the likes of oreo cookie bash (£2.95) and chocolate lovin' spooncake (£3.40) weren't tempting. Oh, they were, but then again, so was the beer.



Idaho is run by Ruth and Matt Taylor, and Matt is something of a beer nut. He started off with 10-15 beers and the list has just grown and grown. As he told me, his rolling programme of sourcing more different beers can get out of control at times but what you do get is some very interesting beers indeed, with an increasing emphasis on American craft beers – there are 20 or so of these available. I accompanied my meal with a bottle of Rogue Hefe Weizen (4.5%) from Oregon, and followed up with East India Pale Ale (6.9%) from the Brooklyn Brewing Co. There are a sprinkling of Belgian and German beers, and other beers from just about everywhere – Morocco, Uganda, Vietnam, Cuba,

BOTTLED BEER THERE ARE OVER 100 BOTTLED BEERS AND COGS PLEASE CHECK MENU

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LAGER STOUT (SUN LAGER)	2.40	5.0	WITCHAMER MAPPING COGS (60)
MADRIDER (GERMANY)	2.25	5.0	VICTORY HOP PALE (50)
MANUEL'S WELSH (GERMANY)	2.45	5.5	VICTORY SPECIAL IMPROVED COGS (50)
BROOKLYN LAGER (USA)	2.45	5.5	WILSON'S WELSH IMPROVED (24)
MODELO ESPECIAL (MEXICO)	2.45	5.5	WINNERS (THOUGHT)
SMITH'S (FINLAND)	2.25	5.0	GOBLON (FRANCE)
STOUT (IRISH)	2.25	5.0	LAFFE BLUTE (GERMANY)
ST. PETER'S (GERMANY)	2.45	5.5	ROSE (FRANCE)
BRABMIA (BRAZIL)	2.45	5.5	RED SAUC (GERMANY)
COLUMBIAN (COLOMBIA)	2.25	5.0	OS (USA)
ZWISCH (POLAND)	2.25	5.0	ST. PETER'S (GERMANY)
ANCHOR LIGHT (USA)	2.25	5.0	ST. PETER'S (GERMANY)
PILSENER (GERMANY)	2.25	5.0	ST. PETER'S (GERMANY)
SOMERSET (ENGLAND)	2.25	5.0	ST. PETER'S (GERMANY)
THUNDERBOLT (ENGLAND)	2.25	5.0	ST. PETER'S (GERMANY)
FRANKIE (USA)	2.25	5.0	ST. PETER'S (GERMANY)

Argentine, the list just goes on. OK, some of these are only pilsner variants, but some sound pretty interesting such as Pietra from Corsica, a 6% beer with chestnuts. There is also cider, both French and British, wines from around the world, coffees, teas, juices etc etc, together with a small range of nibbles. Something for everyone and well worth a visit. JC

Idaho is open for food, drinks or both every day from 6.00pm. Last orders for food are 9.15pm (9.45 Friday and Saturday). They can't cater for parties of six or more. Check out the website at www.idahobar.co.uk.

PEAK PRACTICE

THE PEAK DISTRICT PUB GUIDE first published in 2002 has fairly recently been reprinted, and so is again available. At the time of its publishing OT's reviewer commented very positively on this valuable volume, and it is certainly one for the bookshelf, or for the pocket when out and about (Johnson Publishing, £4.99)

Three of Whaley Bridge's ten pubs feature in the Guide, one of which is the Goyt Inn, in the village centre on Bridge Street, across the main road from the railway station. A former Wilson's house, and more recently Vaux owned, the Goyt is currently a Pubmaster pub, but with the recent Punch buyout of Pubmaster this situation will change.

The Goyt is a fine local's local. Once multi-roomed but now multi-alcoved, there seems to be numerous nooks and corners. Darts and dominoes are played and the pub is one of those supporting the local cricket club. Local pictures, photographs and memorabilia provide interest, the canal history theme dominating.

One of the pubs on the 2003 Stockport and Manchester Mild Challenge, the Goyt was recognised as selling a good pint of Tetley Dark Mild. The Tetley Bitter is also consistently good. Alongside these are Greene King IPA, with its malt bitterness, and premium beer Greene King Abbot, both well kept. Readers who missed the Goyt on the Mild Challenge will certainly find a visit worthwhile. RW.



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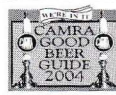


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CAMRA's second National Pubs Week kicks off on 21 February and tens of thousands of pubs are set to support this important event.

The objectives of National Pubs Week are simple; to encourage people to visit pubs more often.

The event is in response to a number of factors affecting the pub trade such as the alarming number of local pub closures and changing patterns of pub-going. It's important that pubs across the land take the opportunity National Pubs Week offers to remind people just how great pubs are and overcome common objections such as 'pubs are too smoky', 'too full of leary blokes' and 'serve poor food' all myths which threaten to keep today's consumers out of pubs.

CAMRA is keen to stress that Pubs Week is not just about real ale pubs. Mike Benner, CAMRA's Campaigns Head says, "CAMRA is well-known for campaigning for beer and for real ale pubs, but National Pubs Week goes much further than that. It's a partnership with the pub trade to attract people back into pubs by creating a week of special attractions and events."

10,000 pubs got involved in the last National Pubs Week in February 2003. Participating pubs ran a range of promotions and events during the week such as themed party nights, food and beer promos, quizzes and charity darts matches.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

If you are a publican you should get involved. NPW is all about increasing footfall in your pub. Call CAMRA on 01727 867201 or visit us at www.camra.org.uk/pubsweek to order a support pack. If you are a pub-goer, you can encourage pubs in your area to get involved. If you are not a pub-goer, why not make a date in your diary to do something special and visit a few pubs in your area. If you don't use your local, you risk losing it forever.

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BEER FESTIVALS

Bury Festival was interesting, if as much for the conversation and gossip as the beer, but it was good to try a few brews from the local Manchester/Lancashire micros, some new, some I'd simply missed. It gave me another chance to sample the 'new' Boddingtons. Here though it had clearly not been stillaged long enough, and the 'dry bitter finish' I'd previously sampled was missing in action. So, landlords, Lesson 1 is: leave it for three days after its been dropped. Lesson 2: maybe a few more late hops... It is, nevertheless, a BIG improvement. Dudley has moved fairly successfully into the main town hall (rather than the Netherton one), and I gather Old Tom was joint winter/old ale winner. Sadly I got it into my head to obliterate most of the remaining Oktoberfest Bier so recollections are a tad hazy (apart from a desperate trip back on Branson-rail). A week before, a rare visit to Cumbria saw me at the Prince of Wales, Foxfield for its estimable Winter Ales Festival. A long chat with the wise and humane Rev Bracegirdle (the male one, probably not quite so wise as his wife), was further enlivened by some delicious black beers. A very good pub indeed, the only slightly sad thing being that I knew two thirds of the people in there...

And on to London, to Pig's Ear, which was so over-staffed I was largely unnecessary, and was forced to relieve the tedium by drinking most of a tub of my other beer of the month. As always, excellent, though I fear I may well be rather busier at Battersea in mid-February. The main thing going locally this month is probably the Witchwood's Winter Festival (throughout December) in Ashton.

BEERS OF THE MONTH

Again one of each this time. For once I've had a lot of stouts/porters/old ales, and the pick this year by a large margin has been Fullers London Porter. Now at 5.4% you'd expect some body, but this has more body than Arnold Schwarzenegger. The best pint I had was at Foxfield but I did track some down in London (the Fullers houses there are all selling the blackberry infused Jack Frost - which while very good, isn't in the same class) and so was able to compare it to the magnificent Dublin Plain Porter at the Porterhouse in Covent Garden (yes I know its not cask). The result is probably even. The Plain is a better session drink, but Fullers is a better 'drink' in the sense of one or two. Ok, foreign beer time. There was some (I think) truly amazing Dutch stuff at Pigs Ear, but as I was too blotto to appreciate it my vote goes to that all-time perennial favourite, Keesman Bock (a pale strong winter brew) from the Bamberg (Franconia) brew-pub. It still says 6.9 % on the (large) tub, but this was certainly about 7.5% to 8%. It does vary a lot, brew to brew. Magnificent, golden, dry, malty and hopply aromatic at start and finish. It reminded me (as if I needed reminding) why I like Franconian beers.

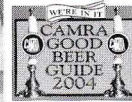
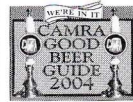
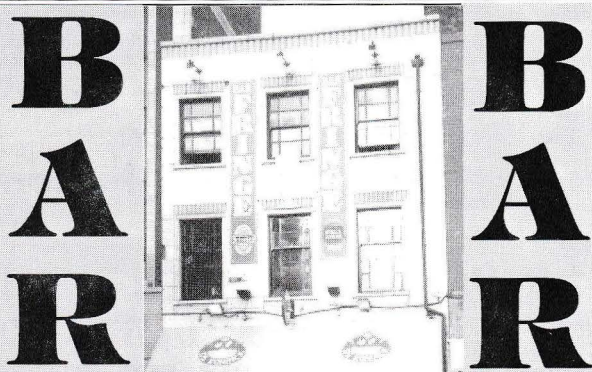
SEASONAL BOCK, NO, SORRY, BOOK!

Further to the above - 'Bamberg and Franconia - Germany's Brewing Heartland a guide to beers, breweries and pubs by John Conen' - self-published at £9.99. Based on his small pamphlet of (several) years ago but completely expanded and updated into a V&V3 sized book (with slightly more pages). Two nice sets of colour photographs, listing of the major Bamberg beers, the main breweries of the immediate region - and all of Bamberg - and where to drink the stuff (and very importantly WHEN!). Good extra sections on brewing history, Bavarian/Franconian menus, and a fairly useful section on public transport. Sadly there are no proper maps (well one of the city) but I think copyright issues play a big part. This one moan apart is is not merely excellent but indispensable if you ever think you might go there, and an interesting read even if not. John is to be congratulated for putting it together then taking the risk of publishing a fairly substantial piece of work. CAMRA HQ in St Albans will sell you a copy by mail. Go on buy it! Given the exquisite prejudices (actually bigotry) of some members of a certain Festival Committee, I don't think it will be on the shelves at Stockport next year!

BEER BELLIES & THE (BOUNCING) CZECH'S

An article that escaped much scrutiny some weeks ago in the Times, reported that a team led by Martin Bobak of UCL have decided - based on a study of 891 men and 1098 women who were either abstainers or beer drinkers that (comparing body mass index and waist/hip ratio) women who drink beer are thinner than those who don't and with men there's no difference, so the beer belly is a myth. Other lifestyle factors are involved. I'm putting a piece together for OT that will seek to explain this. Yes, heavy (sic) sience in OT. Whatever next... oh, here we are...!

Next Month - the review of cask ale week has been spiked by the officious editors, and I'm giving my kidneys a break, so, for a month, and largely to stop him whinging, I'm being removed to make way for a big agony column by the Arbiter. So if you need guidance on any pub or beery issue write to OT before the end of December! See you in February.



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