

MARCH
2004
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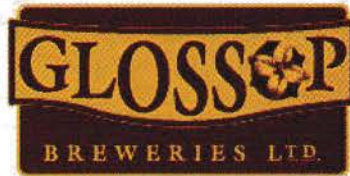
Volume 20
Issue 3

OPENING TIMES



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

NEW BREWERY FOR GLOSSOP



FIRST BREWERY IN TOWN FOR 90 YEARS

LATE JANUARY saw the first beer emerge from Don Pape's 'Glossop Breweries' (despite the name, there's only the one), seeing a welcome return of brewing to the Derbyshire town after a 90-year gap.

Don Pape was formerly long serving captain at Glossop Rugby Club and is well known in the area. Like many new-wave brewers, Don has always dabbled in home brew, and following recent redundancy decided brewing his own beer for a living might not make him a millionaire but would provide a reasonable income whilst developing beers he can be proud of, for sale to the great British beer drinker.



The brewery Don is using is one designed by Graham Moss of Moss Brew in Blackburn. Graham has designed over 40 breweries worldwide, from Finland and Norway to Andorra in Spain. He also brews his own beer at the Ministry of Ale Pub in Burnley. The plant at Glossop is capable of producing

four to five barrels of beer per brew and features seven major items: hot liquor tank, mash vessel, copper, two fermentation vessels, pump/pipe unit and refurbished chillier unit. It is constructed from previously used re-engineered equipment.

The first beer produced was Dexters Best Bitter. This is pale brown session beer 1037og and 3.8 per cent ABV This is based on Maris Otter Malt with good quality Crystal Malt and Black Malt as trace additions. The hops variety is Goldings. Dexter, by the way is Don's wire haired Jack Russell who appears on the pumpclip looking faintly inebriated (there's an interesting story about Dexter on the brewery website at www.glossopbreweries.com)



Just launched is Fletcher's Campaign Bitter. This is a dark smooth beer at 4.3 per cent ABV and using a different, but as yet unnamed, variety of hop. There's a story behind this beer as well (do we detect something of a theme here?). It's named after Don's wife's granddad, Jack Fletcher. Jack was born, bred and lived all his life in Smethwick (near Birmingham).

He was also a private in the Coldstream Guards, having signed up at 19, and also a skilled engineer. You can read more about him on the brewery website, too. The pumpclip features Jack's regimental photo.

Don tells us that so far every thing has been going to plan. The very cold weather caught him out and delayed a fermentation process or two. However he's resolved this and is now in the process of building up stock with a view to big sales in the order book towards the end of March and early April.

This is a very welcome new venture – look out for future updates in our Brewery News column.
Glossop Breweries Ltd., Unit 8, Waterside Industrial Estate, Hadfield, Glossop, SK13 1BR.
Telephone: 01457 868836. Mobile: 07904 039224

CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE
STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER BRANCH
6,900 CIRCULATED THIS MONTH

COMING UP...

STOCKPORT BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL is well and truly up and running – and at a brand new venue for 2004! Possible postal voting in the local and Euro elections has meant that the Town Hall is unavailable this year, so we're off the



Edgeley Park, home of Stockport County and Sale Sharks. Once again sponsored by the Stockport Express, arrangements are now well in hand. To bring you one of the biggest beer festivals we've held!

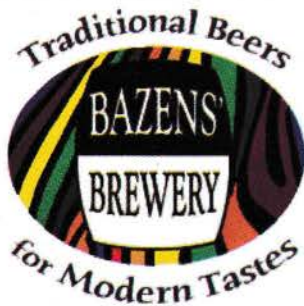
The increased fire limit should do away with queuing so our beer managers have been getting together to plan one of the best beer ranges ever, with some old favourites being joined by newcomers from all over the country. Hopefully we will be able to bring you more details next month although OT can confirm that the festival special beer will be coming from the highly regarded Bazens' Brewery in Salford, so expect something pale, golden and aromatically hoppy. Cider lovers shouldn't feel neglected, though – while we no longer host CAMRA's National Cider & Perry Championship, this does give our cider manager much more freedom with the order. This means there should be plenty of treats in store from both near and far. So, don't forget those important dates – Thursday 4 – Saturday 6 June. Get them in your diaries now!

STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER MILD CHALLENGE 2004

Following the success of last year's competition, we have once again teamed up with the Stockport Express to bring you another Mild Challenge, and again we have stretched our wings to include parts of Manchester and Salford along with a few other pubs further afield. In fact it's looking as though we again have over 80 pubs taking part. The previous Challenges have been a great success and if you haven't taken part before, try and have a go this time. It's fun and it's easy. It's also a chance to visit some new pubs, try new beers and, of course, to win some great prizes. Full Details on page 5,

In MARCH'S OPENING TIMES ...

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Riverside 4.5% (late February/March)
 eXSB 5.5% (new) Blue Bullet 4.5%
 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 4.3%

Regular outlets include
 The King's Arms, The Albert Vaults & The Crescent, Salford,
 The Trackside, Bury, Waters Green & The Sun Inn, Macclesfield,
 Corbieres, The Marble Arch, The Knott Bar, Bar Centro &
 The Smithfield, Manchester, Salybridge Station Buffet Bar,
 The Marble Beer House, Chorlton-cum-Hardy.

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

PUB OF THE MONTH MARCH 2004

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 pub of the month for March 2004 is the Royal Oak, Wilmslow Road, Didsbury, an almost legendary pub on the south Manchester drinking scene.

Readers may remember the mixed fortunes of the Royal Oak in recent years, beginning with the legendary Arthur Gosling, who for many years ran an extremely busy and very successful pub. Towards the end of Arthur's tenure there was the tragic arson attack on the pub which was then followed by a succession of licensees; some good and some rather less good. What the Royal Oak desperately needed was a period of consistency and stability. A committed licensee was needed that knew how to exploit the pubs many strengths and build on its weaknesses. Enter Hazel and Robert Long.

Rob told Opening Times that he intends to remain in the Royal Oak for the medium term. He said, "I intend to be here for a while yet" which is very good news as the pub's fortunes have turned around during Hazel and Rob's tenure. Beer quality has improved, the famous cheese and pate lunches are better than ever, regulars have returned and the pub is bustling. Doubling the wet trade in the first twelve months speaks volumes about Rob's cellar skills. Another new venture at the Royal Oak is the introduction of their annual cheese and pate festival held every August, which is now drawing in customers from further and further afield.

On the beer front the Royal Oak sells Marstons Bitter, Pedigree and a monthly guest beer from the Wolverhampton & Dudley brewery stable or from an independent brewery. In practice this usually means a beer brewed by Banks's, Marstons (some under the Mansfield name); on a recent visit this proved to be Marstons Resolution, a 4.7% ABV premium cask beer that is low in carbohydrates and whose subtle taste belied the beers strength. Rob takes pride in his cellar and as you would expect the beer quality at the Royal Oak is invariably second to none.

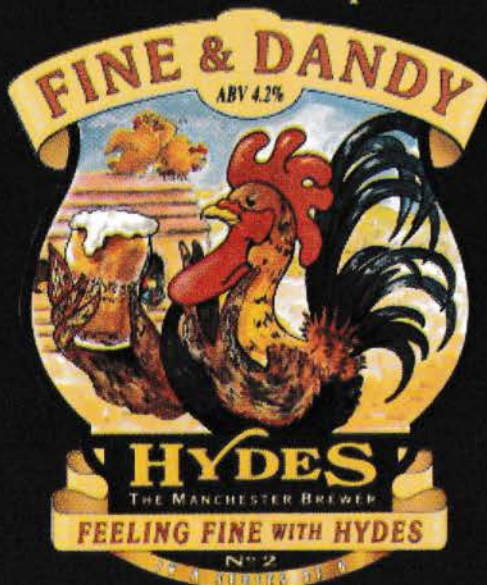
The Royal Oak is as good a pub now as it ever has been. So why not join the locals and the CAMRA group to celebrate this well deserved award which will be presented to Hazel and Robert Long on Thursday 25th March when a great night is in prospect. SB

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

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 Dave & Carol Sheldon



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IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

As you will have seen, this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival is on the move. This will present a challenge to the organising committee as they come to grips with the different logistics of a new venue.

What is certain, though, is that everyone involved is determined to make this one of the best beer festivals to date. There are few expected capacity restraints at Edgeley Park and so the Friday night queues should be a thing of the past. The beer order will be bigger than ever before. The entertainment (see next month) will be some of the best we have featured, ranging from a string quartet to top-rank R'n'B. Not only that but it will be in a separate room to the bar - something many festival regulars have mentioned they would like to see. Even the glasses promise to be some of the most stylish we have offered.

Despite all of this, the festival won't be a success without you, our loyal customers over many years. While Edgeley Park doesn't have the convenience of the Town Hall on the A6, it's just a short walk away and is well served by buses. From the railway station, it's not much further at all. So, please get those dates in your diary (3-5 June) and join us in making this year's Beer & Cider Festival an event to remember.

★★★★★

There seems to be no end to the stream of new breweries coming on line. This month we premiere Glossop Breweries - do look out for their beers in the free trade and give them a try. At some stage the market for new breweries and their beers may become saturated but luckily there seems little sign of that at the moment. And of course, the Progressive Beer Duty means that these tiny breweries pay little in the way of Excise Duty and so need to sell less beer than before to still make a profit. By the time you read this we will know whether the Chancellor has used the Budget as an opportunity to expend this sensible reform to cover more of the bigger family brewers, too. This would certainly be a welcome move. *John Clarke*

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 239

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

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.

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Local CAMRA Pub of the Month, Feb 2004

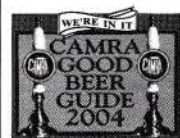
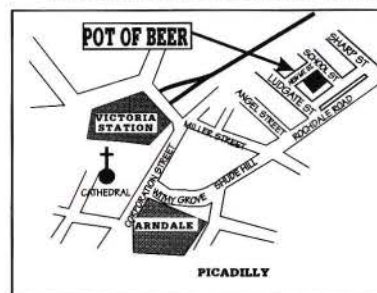
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I sometimes bump into people in pubs who have tried my recipes and usually have mutually beneficial exchanges about ingredients, techniques and the merits of this or that beer. One point which hadn't sunk in until recently was that many recipes need a lot of time to either shop for ingredients, do pre-cooking preparations (marinating, for instance) or, of course, simply in the actual cooking. To try and redress this, and get a few more of you to try beer cookery, I intend to offer simplified or modified versions of some past favourites. To kick off...

SIMPLE BEER SOUP

This will serve four as a main course or eight as a starter

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium (400g) can chick peas
- 1 medium can red kidney beans
- 1 medium can cannellini beans
- 3-4 cloves garlic, chopped (or 3 squeezes garlic paste)
- 1 lemon
- 4oz Lancashire cheese
- 1 medium onion
- A little cooking oil
- 1 pint bitter or any pale beer (de-gassed)
- salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

1. Finely chop the onion and gently sweat in a little oil until golden.
2. Drain off the liquid from the canned peas and beans and set this aside. Add the peas and beans to the pan.
3. Stir in the chopped garlic or paste, salt and pepper.
4. Chop the lemon in half and add the juice of one half to the pan.
5. Now add 1/4 pint of the beer and stir in over a gentle heat
6. Then add 1/4 of the cheese, a further 1/4 pint of beer and another 1/4 of the cheese.
7. Either whizz everything up in blender, or mash with a potato masher or even a large fork and return to the heat.
8. Add further cheese to thicken and flavour and the juice from the other half of the lemon (tasting as you go). If the consistency is too thick, add more beer to thin. To thin further if required slowly add some of the liquid from the cans.

I make these instructions about thinning because cooking pans vary enormously in the surface area offered to the heat; similarly cookers vary in the way they deliver heat to the pans. I hope I have covered all eventualities and that this will tempt you to try a quick, simply yet different spring soup.

ACCOMPANYING BEERS

Since a thickish soup may cling to the ribs or, as I heard in Leigh once, "clack t't' xylophone bones", a refreshing wheat beer, or perhaps a good Czech lager may well wash it down a treat. My own choice would be a thin mild, let's say Hydes' Light or Thwaites Best. Let me know what you think. Cheers, Ken.



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STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER MILD CHALLENGE 2004

FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS of last year's competition, we have once again teamed up with the Stockport Express to bring you another Mild Challenge, and again we have stretched our wings to include parts of Manchester and Salford along with a few other pubs further afield. In fact it's looking as though we again have over 80 pubs taking part. The previous Challenges have been a great success and if you haven't taken part before, try and have a go this time. It's fun and it's easy. It's also a chance to visit some new pubs, try new beers and, of course, to win some great prizes.



I DID IT... MILD WAY

The Challenge runs from Saturday 3 April to Sunday 9 May and offers everyone taking part the chance to win something. All completed entries will receive either a free entry ticket for the 2004 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival or, if you're a member of CAMRA, a voucher for two free pints of mild at the Festival. We are also again featuring the Mild Challenge Ultra - visit a participating pub in 12 different areas, using the headings shown on the card, and you will win a special Mild Challenge T-shirt; visit all participating pubs and you will win a specially engraved pewter tankard. There's a new Mild Challenge Extra this year, too. Visit 36 participating pubs in 12 different areas, again using the card headings, and you will win one of our special Mild Challenge Sweat Shirts. Full details including a list of all participating pubs and an entry card will appear in next month's Opening Times.



BEYOND THE FRINGE

As we went to press, work on the refurbishment of the Fringe (Swan St., Mcr.) was half complete. To whiten the interior has been spruced up with the green going brown and the 'umber' becoming warmer. The floor looks a picture and the various pictures and breweriana have changed. Due to the New Labour Spring Conference work on the outside has been postponed but may well be happening as we hit the streets. What is definite are the dates for the Beer Festival (St. George's weekend - 22 to 25th April) with a number of micro-brewery treats (specials from Boggart and Bank Top among others) and some pretty unusual Belgian bottles ranging from Vichtenaar Red and Girarden Black Label Gueze through the Contreraj Marzenbier and the honey and pear (yes!) Bink Bloejembint. Can't be missed. Oh and the nearby Centro which seems to have more-or-less solved the cask temperature problems now sells draught Paulaner (Munchener Original Helles) alongside, in place of the Lowenbrau. Mmmmm. In passing I must mention that Idy & Sals February fest at the Crescent was simply awesome, a worthy follow-up to Terry & Jenny's January do at the Smithfield. There was a masterly mix of dark, wintery and pale hoppy delights, one of which was stand-out brilliant...

CASK ALE OF THE MONTH - GLENTWORTH FROSTBITE (5% ABV)

So good that after trying two more I went back to it, and stayed there (on the Thursday) then started up on it on Saturday when it was still as good. Really hoppy without being harsh or overwhelming, nice underlying dry malt, drying still further into a superbly smooth and bitter finish. Truly the nectar of the Gods! What's more it had a pleasant, subtle hop aroma to boot, despite being a tad cold (direct from the cellar).... While bombinating around the environs of Bamberg in Franconia the other week (as is my wont) in search of Doppelbocks new, I encountered something quite extraordinary. Raucherator, yes, smoked doppelbock. I have an insufficiency of estate to do it justice, so be prepared for my eulogy next month. You will read it and weep. And so it should be.

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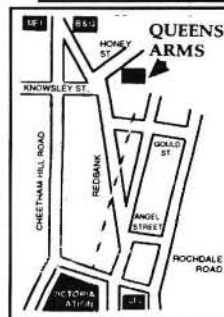
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CAMRA CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE



S&N SNAPS UP CALEY

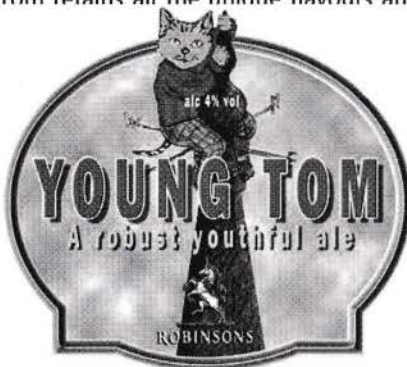
Scottish & Newcastle is to close its Fountain Brewery in Edinburgh, bringing to an end over 250 years of brewing tradition.

It has also formed a joint venture with the well-known Caledonian Brewery, brewers of the well-known and well-regarded Deuchars IPA. Under the deal, S&N's brewing arm, Scottish Courage takes a 30% stake in the newly formed Caledonian Brewing Company, and at the same time purchases the entire premises and plant of the current Caledonian Brewery. To complicate matters further, the rights to the Caledonian beers are being retained by the current Caledonian management. Clear as mud, isn't it? The new firm will brew McEwan's 80/- and sell Caledonian ales including Deuchars. ScotCo also takes over Caledonian's off-trade and export sales. Although distribution and marketing of Caledonian ale in the on-trade is unaffected, CAMRA has voiced concerns over the possible long-term effects and has called for a top-level meeting with S&N.

FAMILY FAVOURITES

Meanwhile, our local family brewers have new beers out this month.

Robinson's – the latest seasonal from the Stockport family brewer is Young Tom (4%), described as "brewed at a strength to savour and enjoy, Young Tom retains all the unique flavours and



brewed for Lees by Garrett Oliver of the Brooklyn Brewery of New York and when launched had the pronounced bitterness characteristic of many new-wave American beers. Last year though, the bitterness seemed to have been toned down a bit (more Middleton Junction than New York, perhaps?) so it will be interesting to see what this year's brew is like. Find out at outlets like the Lloyds in Chorlton and rain Bar in the City Centre.



Holt's – look out for the return of Thunderholt (4.5%), a well-received seasonal last year is back for another run.

Also congratulations to Holt's for winning a contract to supply a new bottled beer to around 200 Tesco stores throughout the UK. The 'Tesco Challenge' for spring/summer 2004 attracted entries from 80 breweries with winners decided at a 'taste off' in London.

The brief was to create "an easy drinking, refreshing beer crafted from traditional and conventional ingredients, at an ABV of 3.5%, to be served at 12°C". Holt's won the larger brewers class with a brew described as "a refreshing summer drink brewed with a combination of quality English malt, Mexican aroma honey and citrus flavoured traditional whole hops to provide a rounded, tongue-tingling taste with an exciting aroma" The beer hasn't yet been named and will be exclusively available to Tesco for 13 weeks, starting in June, after which it will be sold in the Holt's estate. Let's hope we see it in cask form too. The winner of the smaller brewers class, by the way, was Randall's of Guernsey with a dark mild brewed with chocolate malt.

Cains - Cains Fine Raisin Beer was voted Beer of the Festival at the recent Liverpool Beer Festival - just days after the Merseyside family brewery announced that

it had signed to distribute a new cask version of the ale to 450 pubs owned by Punch Pub Company.

Cains Fine Raisin Beer has been a huge bottled seller for the Stanhope Street brewery since it was named as Tesco's Autumn Beer Challenge winner last year and the cask version was officially unveiled at the CAMRA event.

Cains joint managing director Ajmail Dusanj said: "This brewery's roots are firmly in Liverpool but Fine Raisin Beer is a drink which has helped to spread the name of Cains far further afield than Merseyside. The fact that Punch Taverns is taking the cask version of the beer is as significant to the brewery as the original deal which saw the bottled version sold on the shelves of Tesco" Hopefully it will also appear in Cain's local tied house, Gothic Bar in Gatley.

MICRO MAGIC

As usual we present our monthly round up of the local micro brewers. Again, as usual, apologies to those we didn't manage to contact this month.



Three Rivers – the new Stockport micro goes from strength to strength. The latest beer is Manchester IPA, a refreshing 4.2 per cent bitter brewed with a proportion of Manchester hops in the recipe. Look for it in the Crown, Heaton lane, which functions as the brewery's tap, and other local free trade outlets. Three Rivers have had many repeat orders for their beers and have already had to expand capacity. New beers in the pipeline include a wheat beer and a mild. Thanks also to all at Three Rivers for their hospitality when Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA visited the brewery on 6 February.

Phoenix – work continues on the brewery. Meanwhile a range of beers continues to be



aromas associated with its famous elder. This dark, oak coloured, cask ale has a palate with a good balance of ripe malt and peppery hops and an aroma of rich, dark fruit", Young Tom has been one of the best selling of the Robbies' seasonals in the past.

Hydes this month introduce the second in their 'Feeling Fine With Hydes' range of craft ales. The beer for March and April is 'Fine & Dandy' a 4.2% brew described by the brewery as 'featuring a luxury blend of the finest malts, this distinctive Spring beer is full-flavoured and enticingly aromatic'. Look out for this pubs such as the Nursery, Heaton Norris and the Victoria, Withington.

JW Lees new offering is in fact a welcome return of Brooklyn Best at 5%. This beer was first



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FOOD SERVED ALL DAY



produced. Look out for the Easter beer, Resurrection (4.7%) and, in April, St George's Flag (4.3%), a pale gold beer with a full rounded palate.

Shaws – the Dukinfield micro still produces a new beer every two weeks. In early March Pure Gold was the beer, a 4% brew described as 'pale, hoppy and refreshing'. A new beer was due to go in the fermenters on Saturday 13 March and was scheduled to be a .5% pale beer. Shaw's Golden Globe (4.3%) continues to be a best seller too.

Boggart Hole Clough – two new beers to report here. Barking is a 4.5% tawny beer with a citrus flavour and a floral aftertaste. There's a new permanent addition to the range, too. This is Boggart Mild at 3.8%. Described as a 'mild mild', this will be a traditional not-too-dark 'classic malty mild with a bitter edge'.

Pictish - Richard Sutton's Rochdale brewery continues to produce a great range of beers. The 4.3% Honey Ale has now been brewed, Blue Moon (6%) has been and gone (but will surely return) and there has been a fresh brew of Troglodyte, the 4.5% additional beer brewed for Christmas. April's seasonal is the 5% Maelstrom. This is powerfully bitter and hoppy with a full body, too. One of the best out of the already very impressive Pictish range.



Bazens' - The new beer is Riverside (4.5%) which we mentioned last month. This was a bit late being brewed but it is now available and flying out the brewery. The expansion work has now been completed and has made a big difference. They are now able to brew a great deal more beer per brewing day, which gives more time for delivering. Bazens' are also making enquiries at the moment about the possibility of sponsoring a mini beer and music festival around May Day (which will hopefully become an annual event). This year the beers will come from micros in the West Midlands. Details to be confirmed as soon as we know more.

Facer's - the next 'Greats of English Literature' special (to follow Prancing Pony and the one-off special Balcony Scene) will be a tribute to Wordsworth, inspired by hosts of golden daffodils. It will, with David Facer's usual fiendish subtlety, be called Wordsworth and will be available from the second week in March. The pump clip will feature (oh, you guessed!) daffodils. David is also working on making Landslide (4.9% abv) available in bottle conditioned form. A trial batch has been bottled for evaluation, and assuming he is happy with it will make this available as soon as possible. More news on this next month.



brewed. Well, that's a matter of opinion, Paul tells us, but what's not open for debate is the speed it left the brewery with many outlets on the phone for more the morning after the first firkin went on service. So, needless to say he's brewed it again and the second brew was due to be on sale by 15 March. Tower Bitter is also available but this has been tweaked, making the citrus bitterness a lot more subtle and possible a better beer. It's still bitter but nowhere near as sharp and as a consequence it's selling better.

HITTING THE BOTTLE

Following references to bottle conditioned beer on January's OT, it is worth noting that Leek Brewery is now selling its beers as Real Ale in a Bottle. The range includes Staffordshire Bitter 4.2%, Black Grouse 4.4%, St Edwards 4.7%, Rudyard Ruby 4.8%, Double Sunset 5.2%, Tittesworth Tiple 6.5%, Leek Pale 4.3% and Abbey Ale 5.8%.

Khean's at Congleton have also gone into the bottled beer market with Caught Behind at 4.2%. They are apparently using the same bottling plant as Leek, and Storm are understood to have similar intentions. All of these beers are available from specialist off-licenses including Goyt Wines in Whaley Bridge.



The Beer Monster returns next month with a look at the Stark (strong) beer season in Franconia and Munich.



Ramsbottom - Paul Robinson is still doing the business up in Ramsbottom. The 'orse's 'ead 'andle was by far the best seller he's had, with many people suggesting it's the best beer he's

Don't miss our Front Page Article on the new Glossop Breweries and turn to page 10 for our in-depth look at Marble Brewing!



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STAGGER

with John Clarke

CALE GREEN, HEAVILEY & SOUTH HILLGATE

This is perhaps an unusual route for a pub crawl, but is nevertheless easy to do and with a huge variety of pubs on the way.

The starting point was the Adswood Hotel on Adswood Lane West. This large red-brick pub is set back from the road behind a cobbled frontage and always presents a welcoming sight. There has been some opening out over the years but the pub still retains its multi-roomed aspect. A particular feature is the large, enclosed beer garden at the back – one of the best in the area and perfect for outdoor drinking in the summer months. We grouped in the small vault at the back and were treated to sandwiches by departing licensee Deborah Torkington – an unexpected and welcome start to the evening. Like many others to come this night, the Adswood is a Robbinson's house with Hatters and Best Bitter on electric pump. Both were enjoyable with the Best just having the edge.

From the Adswood it's just a short walk to the Blossoms on Buxton Road (that's the main A6) – the Plough on Shaw Heath sadly remaining all-keg. Much has already been written about this award-winning multi-roomed gem of a pub. The internal layout remains intact with three rooms radiating off a central lobby (and with an excellent meeting room upstairs, too), with the rear smoke-room the real star turn. Traditionally run in the best sense of the word the beer quality is such that the pub is a regular entry in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide and we weren't disappointed tonight. Robbinson's again, with Best Bitter and Hatters on handpump plus the added bonus of a cask of Old Tom on the bar. The Best and Hatters were both on good form and it was difficult to separate the two. One brave individual tried the Old Tom and declared this equally good.

Across the road the Wheatsheaf has now dispensed with real ale. You do have to wonder why as the previous licensee had no difficulty selling the stuff so it can't be down to lack of demand. Presumably whoever is running it now just can't be bothered, which is a pity as it's a pleasant enough pub.

So, it was down Hillgate to the Royal Mortar, recently having changed hands. It's been opened out considerably over the years and is now a bright, basic but nevertheless very comfortable pub with a lively atmosphere. There's a big screen TV but this isn't too intrusive. Again Robbinson's and again Best Bitter and Hatters on handpump. The Best was fine but the Hatters was poor – this was however the end of the cask and after a new one had been put on and sufficiently pulled through, the replacements were perfectly OK.

Just across the road is the Bowling Green on Charles Street. This is a pub which has had more than its fair share of ups and downs over the years with periods of closure and even semi-dereliction. The availability of real ale has been something of a lottery, too. There was major investment a few years ago and the pub is now a comfortable two-roomer with lounge and vault. Real ale is now back, too, in the shape of 'new' Boddingtons Cask. Very good it was as well.

Back to Hillgate and Robbinson's now at the Flying Dutchman. Many years ago this place was a complete dump and then Robbies knocked it down and rebuilt it. Since then it's had good times and bad but now seems to be steadily improving with a good lively atmosphere and a generally open-plan layout. There's usually a disco on at weekends, often with a Northern Soul slant although tonight the music was (unfortunately for your author) more mainstream. Best Bitter and Hatters were on electric pumps, and while the Best was enjoyed, the Hatters was only average

Moving on, next up was the Star & Garter. Another Robbies house, this, too, was modernised some years ago but is still split up into different areas and rooms. The lighting is a bit too bright, here but even more over-powering was the karaoke with a variety of songs being thoroughly murdered, the low point being a version of 'Mustang Sally' which, if Wilson Pickett was dead would have had him spinning in his grave (luckily the great man is still with us). Beer? Surprise, surprise – Best Bitter and Hatters, and this time both were only average, which gave the Star & Garter the distinction of selling the most disappointing beer of the night. A shame, as this is generally a pleasant and clearly well-run pub.

Swiftly passing the Golden Lion and Crown (both keg) and the Big Lamp (now a restaurant), we came to the Sun & Castle. This previously unspoilt 1930s pub now boasts a fake, but nonetheless quite impressive, Victorian interior with the bar fittings being particularly noteworthy. For many years a Tetley house, Holt's bought it some years back and it now sells their Mild and Bitter on handpump. It's a big pub with large front snug, and even larger lounge and vault. It was good to see large black-board signs describing the cask beers but sadly the mild ran out and the two pints tried were 'end of barrel' and so only average. No problem with the bitter though as this was on top form and one of the best beers of the night.

Across the road the Black Lion is again keg only so we finished round the corner at the Waterloo, on Waterloo Road. This Robbies house is an interesting mix of old and new and has a well-furnished, comfortable lounge, vault/games room and snug. Despite the large-screen TV, this is always a pleasant pub with a relaxing atmosphere and clearly works as a good local. The cask ales are (you guessed) Best Bitter and Hatters, this time on electric pumps and both were on good form, making an enjoyable end to the night.

So – how to sum up? For one thing we had no really bad beer at all and to some extent this reflects the efforts Robbinson's are putting in to get beer quality right in their pubs. But, knowing the quite extensive range of beers that Robbies now have in their portfolio, you do have to ask why all of their pubs visited stuck to just Best and Hatters. Is it really too much to ask for at least a couple of these pubs to try something else as well?



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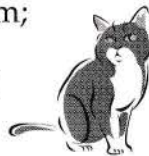
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VIADUCTS AND VAULTS 3 - OUT NOW!

A Celebration of Real Ale in Stockport's Pubs

DETAILS ON PAGE 17



ORGANIC BOTTLED BEERS

This month's Tasting Panel beers were kindly donated by the Unicorn in Chorlton. The Unicorn must by now be one of the country's, and certainly the north west's, largest purveyors of all things organic. Naturally this has always included a good selection of wines, beers and ciders – and since Unicorn was able to expand its premises last year, the range has expanded hugely. What follows is just a small taster – look out for our feature on Unicorn next month.

A mild winter evening in early February saw the Tasting Panel convene to sample six organic bottled beers. Apart from the person collecting them, the beers sampled by the panel were sampled 'blind', that is, we did not know the beer's name or the style of beer that it was until we had all sampled it and made our deliberations. Organic food and drink is very much in vogue at present with the British market being one of the largest in Europe. Certainly amongst fruit and vegetables, eggs, and meats you can see that the taste of the ecologically-minded individual is well catered for these days. On the beer front, few breweries seem to have been bothered to work within the confines of the parameters which define whether or not a product can be labelled organic (a notable local exception being Marble Brewery.) Thus, there was some level of expectation amongst the panel members as to the tastes that would be encountered. All beers were brewery-conditioned unless otherwise stated.

1 – BATEMAN'S, YELLA BELLY 4.2% ABV (£1.45)

Pale golden in colour and, given it was brewery-conditioned, not much discernible carbonation; it remained slightly thin with no head forthcoming from the pour. Little aroma was found at first, then fruit, a hoppiness, and even a tangerine element in there. After a while a hoppy, dryness was detected in what we thought was a Pale Ale of about the mid-four percent mark. None of us guessed its heritage, so we were quite surprised when it was finally revealed. Fairly indifferent – quaffable, but forgettable.

2 – SHEPHERD NEAME, WHITSTABLE BAY ORGANIC 4.5% ABV (£1.35)

The first things that struck us were the fruity and malty notes about this beer, plus the carbonation level also had an impact. A more robust beer than number one, it was a dark amber in hue which, with having had time to settle and warm slightly, gave up a dryish-maltiness together with notes of marmalade or Seville oranges, perhaps. Our guess on strength of mid-four to 4.8% proved to be pretty accurate, whilst on the finish, it was thought a slight burnt-toffee taste was detectable.

3 – PITFIELD, ECO WARRIOR PREMIUM PALE ALE 4.5% ABV (£2.15)

This was the first bottle-conditioned beer sampled of the night. Its colour was somewhat in between the first two beers sampled. As to aroma, initially a sourness was detected, the sort of burnt-candy sourness one associates with that of Belgian Tripels. Its condition seemed to be somewhat lacking, well certainly in the visual sense, as it appeared to be still in the glass. On tasting, there was some sourness there with a noted tinge of fruit in the finish; when swallowed a touch of yeastiness was apparent. When allowed to warm to the environment, we thought it wasn't at all bad, it was quite hoppy too, and even the tang of bitter oranges was there.

4 – BLACK ISLE, ORGANIC PORTER 4.5% ABV (£1.85)

Impenetrably dark, almost black in colour set this bottle-conditioned beer apart from the others that we would sample. We could perceive a roasted and burnt aroma with even a slight hint of sulphur; some of us thought it a stout, others argued it to be a porter, whatever, there was little to hint of in the hop department. We thought the beer was a tad one-dimensional in taste, with a leaning to being far more roasty than being nicely balanced by a bittering element. We considered it to be quite pleasant tasting to lovers of this particular category of the style, although some of us found the aftertaste of a heavy roastiness to be vaguely disagreeable. We are sorry to say, that we did not think this Scottish porter was indicative of its style.

5 – SAMUEL SMITH, ORGANIC BEST 5% ABV (£1.78)

A good deal of carbonation was first to hit the nostrils, then a sweetish and malty waft with a dry malt complexity in the background. To the taste, we discerned a high level of warming, citrus roundness to it, though little in the way of recognisable hop character. That said, it was judged to be quite well balanced, and there was not a cloyingness on the part of the malt either. With its well-rounded dryish aftertaste, some of the panel thought it the best beer sampled thus far. Most (if not, all) of the beers, were suitable for Vegetarians, but this one mentioned that it used seaweed to fine the beer, making it suitable to Vegans too.

6 – BROUGHTON, BORDER GOLD 6% ABV (£1.95)

Another beer that evinced a very strong carbonation element when first nosed. On tasting, a lot of juicy malt and fruit were detected, and although full in body, it was not considered as good as beer five. The colour was fairly pale and we thought the beer to be of quite a strength. Not much to say about this one really; a plea from the panel though, to all Scottish beer producers 'please use a few sacks more of hops!'

An interesting selection of beers kindly provided by Unicorn's Graham Patient. The so-called 'Beer of the Night' was judged to be Beer Five (the Samuel Smith's) with Beer Two (the Whitstable Bay) coming in a good second. In conclusion, we thought that although a beer is made to organic standards, it does not guarantee that the product will be tastier nor any better than a non-organic equivalent. These were unquestionably well-crafted beers from well-established producers. The problem they face is, that the limitation on the variety of raw ingredients that can be used to make an organic beer, often results in what appears to be a fairly run-of-the-mill bottled product. One should remain steadfast though, as organic products and ingredients become more available and mainstream, the quality and tastiness of products available will without doubt provide a far wider range of flavours, styles and tastes. Throughout the tasting we were 'treated' to the accompaniment of some light folksy-type music. All of the foregoing is, of course, merely the opinion upon the night of a party of interested, and entirely amateur, individuals. MMC



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FOCUS ON ... MARBLE BREWERY



MARBLE BREWERY is one of the few breweries in the country to have its entire tied estate listed in the current edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide. It may be the only one (apart that is from those tiny micros with just the one tied house – you have to be so careful with pedants about). Last month the local CAMRA branches presented the brewery with a special award to mark this achievement. So, what's so special about Marble Brewery and its pubs?

The driving forces behind the company are Jan Whitehead and Vance de Becheval, keen pub and beer enthusiasts both. They bought the Marble Arch freehouse back in 1988 and while Vance had always hankered after being a brewer, a week working for Phoenix's Tony Allen brought home what a slog it could be. Plans to brew therefore went on the back burner until Mark Dade arrived as manager of the pub. He was keen to brew and they took the plunge. Brewmaster Brendan Dobbin installed the 5-barrel plant and the first beers came on line in 1997.

The decision to go organic came from a request to brew an organic bottled beer for the Chorlton 'fringe' of the Manchester Food & Drink Festival. It soon became apparent that this would have to be an 'all or nothing' move and so in 2000 the brewery became entirely organic, one of the first in the country to do so. Mark Dade of course, went on to found the Boggart Hole Clough Brewery and his replacement in December 2000 was James Cambell, the current head brewer.



James came with a wealth of brewing experience, having previously worked at Firkin brewpubs in the UK and also two respected Irish micros, Dwan and Messrs Maguire. James was enthusiastic about the organic operation from the start and made an early impact by making the previous hazy organic beers crystal clear. His philosophy is simple – "I like good beer so I just make it". Since his arrival the beer range has been tweaked, improved and expanded, helped in no small part by the much greater range of organic ingredients that are now available. A large variety of malt and hops is used, with the hops coming from New Zealand, England, Belgium and Germany (although these days English hops are mainly used). Demand for the beer is such that James is now assisted by second brewer Phil Little, an impressive brewer in his own right these days.

The success of the Marble Group is down to Vance and Jan's simple but effective philosophy. We caught up with Vance in March and he summed it up as "Good honest products. Good service and giving people proper choice and not thrusting corporate choice on them". He gives as an example, offering Belgian fruit beers instead of alcopops – something he has seen work in practice.

He and Jan see Marble Brewery as producing traditional beer to fit a modern need. And hand in hand with good beer goes good food. While the Marble Beer House may be a special case, they very much see food becoming a major part of the operation in the other Marble pubs as they seek to adapt to the changes that will be brought about by the new licensing regime that will soon be upon us.

It is clear that Marble Group, both the pubs and the brewery, is staffed by an impressive collection of innovative, forward thinking people. That they are an asset to the Manchester drinking scene is without question. Long may they prosper.

MARBLE BEERS

Chorlton-cum-Hazy (ABV 3.8%) – also sold as N/4, this golden amber beer has a shy nose with some hops and fruit, a fresh hoppy palate and short dry aftertaste. Excellent lunchtime pint.
Cloudy Marble (ABV 4%) – amber in colour, with a hoppy/fruity nose. Hops, fruit and bitterness in the mouth with quite a strong bitter finish. Despite its name, this beer is crystal clear.
Manchester Bitter (ABV 4.2%) – a classic Manchester bitter, pale, dry and very bitter with a lingering bitterness on the palate. Exceptionally drinkable.
Ginger Marble (ABV 4.5%) – the imperial standard ginger beer. Bar none. Mid-brown, an initial bitterness soon gives way to a warm spiciness followed by a real smack of ginger. No namby-pamby 'hint of ginger' here but a real smack around the chops – and hugely enjoyable for it.
Uncut Amber (ABV 4.7%) – an occasional brew, this red/brown beer has malt, coffee and fruit in the aroma. It has dark chocolate, malt and fruit on the palate, with a dry roast finish.
Lagonda IPA (ABV 5%) – a classic pale ale, immense citrus and floral hop notes balanced against a dry bitter finish. Dangerously drinkable for its strength.
Chocolate Heavy (ABV 5.5%) – black in colour; chocolate, roast malt and fruit nose. A smooth chocolatey, roasty bitter taste with hops and fruit also in evidence. Very dry finish with roast and hoppy notes. Brewed for the winter only.

10

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or use the membership form on page 18

MARBLE PUBS

There are four pubs in the Marble estate, all very different but all well worth a visit.

The Marble Arch (73 Rochdale Road, Manchester. 0161 832 5914). The original Marble pub famous for its spectacular tiled interior with frieze showing names of various drinks and sloping mosaic floor. The brewery can be viewed from the rear lounge. Up to five Marble beers are complemented by a range of guest beers. Food is served 12-2.30 and 4.30-8 Monday-Friday and 12-2.30 Saturday. Curry night on the second Wednesday of each month



The Knott (374 Deansgate, Manchester, 0161 839 9229). Managed by Warren McCoubrey, assisted by the redoubtable Emma, this popular modern bar features an eclectic array of furniture and background music. There is also a good range of Belgian and German beers, too. The four cask beers usually comprise two from Marble (often Ginger and Manchester Bitter) and two guests

from micros, both local and further afield. Two guest real ciders also feature. Food is served 12-8. The Knott opens until midnight on Thursdays and 1am Fridays and Saturdays.

The Bar (533 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton. 0161 861 7576). Managed by Sam(antha) Platt, this is a continental-style café bar with pavement seating and sells a notable range of continental beers alongside



the Marble brews. The bar section opens into a raised seating area and the back room is no-smoking when food is served. The Bar is now double its original size and remains an institution on the Chorlton drinking scene. Food is served 12-8.



Marble Beer House (57 Manchester Road, Chorlton. 0161 881 9206). Managed by Karen Weldon, this is a successful conversion of the old Marble Arch World Beers off-license into a continental-style bar with a pavement drinking area and a bohemian clientele. Guest beers and continental bottles complement the Marble cask beers. No full meals are sold, but snack supplied by a local health food shop are available all day at the bar.

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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

MARCH 2004

Friday 19th - Stagger: Didsbury 2 - meet Gateway, Kingsway, E Didsbury, 7.30; Olde Cock, Wilmslow Rd, 8.30.

Thursday 25th - Pub of the Month: presentation to the Royal Oak, Wilmslow Rd, Didsbury. From 8.00pm.

Friday 2nd April - Brewery Visit Millstone Brewery, Mossley. Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton Lane 7.15pm. Trip full.

Saturday 3rd - Mild Challenge Starts - get those cards stamped!

Thursday 8th - Branch Meeting and AGM: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm. Will all members please attend this important meeting.

Friday 16th - Stagger: Heaton Norris East - meet Railway, Wellington Rd North 7.30pm; Silver Jubilee, Belmont Way 8.30.

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 15th - Branch Meeting: Cheshire Ring, Manchester Road Hyde. Starts 8.30pm.

Tuesday 23rd - March Quiz Night High Peak Branch versus The Caledonia, Warrington Street, Ashton.

Monday 5th April - Committee Meeting: Pack Horse, Mellor Road, New Mills. Starts 8.30pm

Monday 19th - Branch Meeting: Crown, Victoria Street, Glossop. Starts 8.30pm.

MARCH 2004

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 22nd - Social: Plough, Macclesfield Rd. Eaton. Starts 8.00pm.

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:

Sunday 28th - Branch Spring Curry - details at Branch Meeting or contact Dave Ward on 980 1170.

Thursday 1st April - Branch Meeting; Orange Tree, Altrincham.

Thursday 22nd - Timperley Social/Survey: meet Moss Trooper 8.00pm; Quarry Bank 9.00pm.

REGIONAL EVENTS

Regional CAMRA under 26 Social Group for the 18 to 30ish. Friday 2 April @ 8pm: Social in the Rising Sun in Queens St (off Deansgate), Manchester City Centre. Meet by the CAMRA sign.

Regional Meeting - Saturday 17 April: Hare & Hounds, Shude Hill, Manchester. Starts 12.30pm.

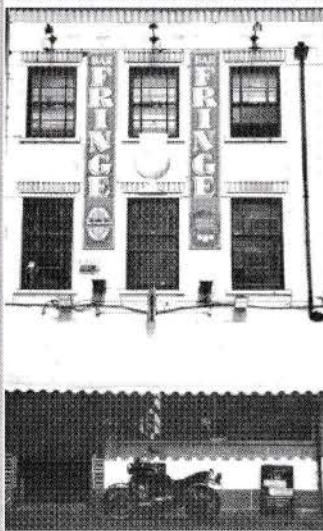
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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

MARCH '99

Top Award For Buffet Bar" was the front page headline – the acclaimed Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar had won a major award in the CAMRA/English Heritage Pub Design Awards, scooping the top spot in the Pub Refurbishment Category. The award was for work completed in 1997, and the sensitive refurbishment was described as "a lesson which many other pub owners would do well to heed". The Buffet Bar was one of the very few to escape conversion to an identikit Travellers Fare box during the 1970s and 80s, and the ongoing campaign to save it was ultimately successful when John Hesketh, owner of the Station freehouse in Ashton, secured the lease and re-opened it with Railtrack's blessing. There were now even on-site toilets – in the old days, after the station toilet had been locked at 5pm, desperate customers had no choice but to utilise the adjacent track bed while nervously scanning the horizon for approaching expresses.



★ ★ ★ ☆ ★

The Campaign for Real Ale had launched a powerful appeal for a progressive duty system to be included in the forthcoming Budget – this would help microbrewers and other small independents to compete with the big discounters in the vital pub chain market. CAMRA was supporting the Small Independent Brewers Association (SIBA), in calling for a sliding scale of beer duty, which was rapidly becoming standard in other European Union countries.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In the Brewery News column, it had been reported that Simon Buckley of the Tomos Watkin Brewery of Llandeilo had launched a £60 million-plus bid for Brains of Cardiff. In a nutshell, a microbrewer was bidding for a regional brewer about to move into the premises of a national brewer. The bid was later withdrawn and in 2002 the Tomos Watkin Brewery was bought by the Hurns drinks wholesaling group.

★ ★ ★ ☆ ★

The Sun & Castle on Hillgate, Stockport, opened as the latest Holt's tied house – the pub looked better than it had done for many years. Although dating back to Victorian times, the Sun & Castle was virtually rebuilt in the 1930s, remaining largely unchanged until a mock Victorian refurbishment earned it's then owners a Pub Vandalism Award. The Sun & Castle had suffered its fair share of ups and downs in the past, but it looked set fair for a long period of popularity – it was expected to give most of the nearby pubs a run for their money, and in the long term one or two casualties were predicted.

★ ★ ☆ ★ ★

A final item of pub news. In Didsbury, the Railway on Lapwing Lane was closed and boarded up, and although there was no news on the fate of "this characterful little pub", it would have been a great shame if it disappeared from the south Manchester drinking scene. It had later transpired that the Railway was Holt's latest acquisition, and was to have a complete makeover and extension into adjoining premises before it reopened.

**COPY DATE FOR APRIL ISSUE - MARCH 27
- AVAILABLE FROM THURSDAY APRIL 8 -**

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

Advert Column Widths, single 84mm, double 172mm. Image height 26cm. NB Advertisers who supply camera ready artwork designed for another publication that cannot be resized to our standard sizes will be charged the equivalent column/centimetre rate plus a surcharge of at least 30%. Adverts that require unusually large amounts of design work will have the extra work carried out by a studio at full commercial rate.



ALL GASTRO, NO PUB

You have no doubt read approving pieces in the colour supplements about how Giles and Tabitha have transformed the old Red Lion, removing the dingy, nicotine-stained wallpaper (and probably the dingy, nicotine-stained customers), stripping everything back to the bare wood, and introducing an imaginative menu of modern Southern European cooking with the odd Thai and Caribbean twist. Two can eat (with wine) for a very reasonable £60, and it's drawing diners from miles around. Thus you have that modern phenomenon, the "Gastro-Pub". The trouble is, such establishments have effectively ceased to be pubs, and it's unlikely they have retained any of their former customers either. However much food it serves, a pub is a social meeting place and welcomes non-diners who just want a drink, whereas the typical "gastro-pub" has become to all intents and purposes a restaurant. It may still look like a pub, but in terms of its function it no longer is. You might as well call a trendy restaurant that has been converted from an old bank a "gastro-bank".

A TASTY EXAMPLE

Of course, we have in this area a pub that shows how it is possible to combine good food with a genuinely pubby atmosphere, in the shape of Stockport's Arden Arms, the deserved winner of the 2004 Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year Award. The Arden is an excellent pub in many respects, but in this context its food really stands out. The licensees formerly ran a well-regarded restaurant, and they have put together a menu that is imaginative and uses high-quality, fresh, ingredients, but never loses sight of the fact that it is in a pub, not a restaurant, with a wide choice of interesting snacks, and a small but varied selection of specials which rarely rise above the £7 mark. The food is extremely popular, and at lunchtimes it can often be difficult to find a seat after 12.15, but the Arden remains a social meeting place with a wide mix of customers calling in just for a drink and a chat. It sets an example that other pubs would do well to follow.

GRABBING ATTENTION

When keg beers were first introduced, their garish light-up fonts drew adverse comment in comparison with the unassuming, traditional shape of handpulls. After a while, the brewers seemed to learn a lesson and brought in more restrained bar mountings. Recently this trend has gone into reverse, with more fonts appearing that not only look unpleasant but are also overpoweringly large. That appalling Carling font in the shape of a giant illuminated "C" must win the prize, with the enormous black Guinness excrescence a close second. Others seem to be competing for the tallest font award, Kronenbourg currently leading the pack. It doesn't say much for the ability of these beers to sell on their reputation that their makers feel the need to grab drinkers' attention in such a blatant manner. Ideally it would be good to walk into a pub and see nothing but handpumps on the bar. In the real world that is unlikely to happen. But surely, recognising that pubs have no choice but to sell keg beers, it make sense to dispense them – as some still do – from a row of standard taps fronted by small oval badges, rather than littering the bar with a forest of illuminated monstrosities. Curmudgeon Online: <http://members.lycos.co.uk/curmudgeon>



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It is with much sadness that we report the news that Arthur Byatt, landlord of the Swan, near Buxton Market Place, died on the premises in early February. He was formerly landlord of the Ashwood Park Hotel (now the Wye Bridge House), moving to the Swan some 8 years ago. He was well known to the Buxton members of our Branch and indeed, the Swan got in the Good Beer Guide several times whilst he was there. We send condolences at this time to his family.

At the Oddfellows in Mellor, Phoenix Arizona has become a regular beer on the bar, alongside the established Adnams Bitter, Marstons Pedigree, Best Bitter and a changing guest beer.

At the Star in Glossop Paul & Vivienne Hilditch are building up trade well. Beers from the Pubmaster list such as Black Sheep, Caledonian Deuchars and Adnams are joined by local beers from Shaws, Phoenix, Pictich, Abbeydale, Glossop and Kelham Island, giving a good choice, which former customers are responding to with enthusiasm to put it firmly back on the map on the Glossop scene.

Customers at the Horseshoe, High Lane, Stockport have welcomed the arrival of new licensees Lucinda and David Rowbotham, who have taken over the tenancy. The couple from Marple Bridge bring a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to the Robinson's house and have already started to develop the popular pub.

"I started out as hair-dresser and Dave was a roofer," said Lu. "But for the past 18 years I have always had bar jobs and recently I have also worked as the cook at The George in Compstall, which I have thoroughly enjoyed."



"The couple started

to seriously consider taking on a pub of their own last year and were given the opportunity to run the Royal Scott in Marple Bridge for a month. "It was a great opportunity for us to work together and for Dave to learn more about the business," explained Lu. The couple are now delighted to have taken over at the Horseshoe where they find the combination of Lu's experience and Dave's practical skills complement each other well. Lu has already put her culinary skills to good use at the Horseshoe by introducing bar snacks and Sunday lunches, while a full time chef will soon be providing a full menu of fresh, home cooked food on a daily basis.

Meanwhile Dave's attention has turned to the exterior of the Buxton Road pub where he plans to develop the extensive garden. "He has more than enough enthusiasm and all the skills," says Lu. "We are in such a good location, and close to the canal, so we want all our customers to be able to enjoy it."

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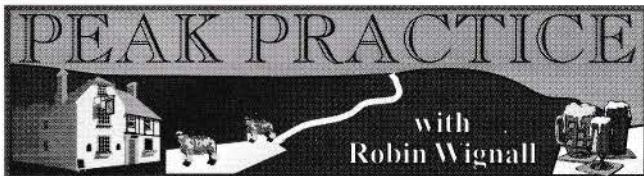
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Pub groups or pubcos were rarely seen before the famous Beer Orders restricting the large breweries' pub ownership. They became a means of side-stepping the Beer Orders as beer supply agreements continued to restrict choice, and guest beers could be ignored. More recently pubcos have expanded as accountants have argued against a vertically integrated industry which both brews beer and sells it from pubs which it owns. The big national breweries went down the road of selling off pubs to establish pubcos, and finance houses and Japanese bankers became pub owners. In the early days few pubcos badged their pubs so for years after Boddingtons and Greenalls, for example, ceased to be pub owners, many of their former pubs remained with original badging. This has produced some now historical signs, lanterns, etched windows etc, but can very easily mislead the customer. Another problem with pubcos is the way in which tranches of pubs seem to change hands with the tide. Who owns what becomes difficult to follow.

Out into Cheshire and Derbyshire, Pubmaster had badged its pubs, as signs at the Albert and the Ploughboy in Disley, the Navigation, the White Horse and the Goyt Inn in Whaley Bridge illustrate, for example. Whether these now that Punch has bought out Pubmaster? In Whaley Bridge Punch now own four out of nine pubs in the village, as the three above join the White Hart, which of course raises another issue.

The Dog & Partridge at Bridgemont is part of Enterprise Inns, as the sign shows. The Enterprise beer list is wide ranging which allows this fine local to provide customers with a varied and interesting choice of well kept beer. A good range of beer is available through Pubmaster, now Punch, and whilst the Goyt Inn has no trouble marketing four beers, Tetleys seems to be the single cask ale available in some pubs. At the White Horse 'new' Boddingtons accompanies Tetley Bitter. Obviously pub management know what works for them, but wider customer choice would be welcome. Meanwhile over the hill in Buxton is a good example of a different sort of pubco, Wetherspoons. The Wye Bridge House epitomises Tim Martin's aim of establishing a chain of pubs where a good range of well kept beer is sold at affordable prices.



The Leathers Smithy, Langley has been closed for 6 weeks for a major refurbishment, which includes extending the pub into the cottage next door - it should be re-open for business any time now.

The Meridian, Bollington is now a free house, (opening hours are 5-11 except Monday which is 7-11). Black Sheep is usually on sale along with another cask ale.

I can recommend a trip to the Plough, Prestbury Road, Macclesfield - it is now being run by Mark Broomhead and is a much improved pub. Mark has extended the range of beers from merely Greenalls to add Tetleys, Boddingtons and a guest ale from the Pubmaster range, which includes the likes of Archers and Skinners - well worth a visit.

The accommodation at the Robin Hood, Rainow is now ready (it is even being advertised on Silk FM). The pub is conveniently placed for access to the Peak District and is only a few miles outside of Macclesfield. The accommodation is en suite and would suit either business people or ramblers while the pub sells 3 different cask ales and has an extensive menu - food available all day.

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Good Beer Guide listed.

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

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

Shopping in Ashton? Why not pop in for lunch and a pint at The Cally. We're just near the market!

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Alan Taylor, Burnage:

In your January 2004 edition, it was pleasing to note how much Jerry Wicken and his party enjoyed their visit to Burnage and Heaton Mersey. 10 different styles of pub, with 80% cask from 6 different breweries only goes to show what can be had if one looks all on one street and a half.

Please however let me correct a couple of inaccuracies, the Sun In September was opened as a pub, by Samuel Smith, in 1984. Immediately prior to that it had been a privately run 'hotel' and drinking club, known by the name of Milton Lodge, as roomer has it, it was popular with hard drinking footballers in the 1960s/1970s. If you would like any further information on the history of the actual building, erected in 1847, you are welcome to talk to Carole, landlady for the past 10 years, who has carried out a lot of research into it.

The price of a pint of Old Brewery Bitter is in fact £1.21, all day everyday we believe this to be the cheapest pint of cask ale within the City of Manchester.

Please do come back to Burnage & Heaton Mersey soon.

From Karen Lawrence, The Crown, Bollington:

Please allow me to introduce myself - my name is Karen Lawrence and I am the new landlady of The Crown in Bollington. Alan Heath (ex landlord) gave me the January copy of Opening Times & pointed out to me the article about the pub on page 16, so I thought I ought to get in touch with you asap.

I have moved in on a temporary tenancy agreement but with a refurbishment plan under discussion with Avebury. I'm hoping that this will come to fruition later this year and I will have not only persuaded Avebury to part with their precious money but have a quality pub in to the bargain!

In the mean I will continue in the same vein as Alan & Annette - darts & pool teams, Crown Bikers on Tuesday night, occasional Karaoke evenings, live music, real fire, juke box, etc. and you or your members will be more than welcome to pop in anytime to see how I'm getting on and sample my "Boddies". How about making a slight detour from the Poachers during your Bollington Pub Crawl on 23rd Feb?

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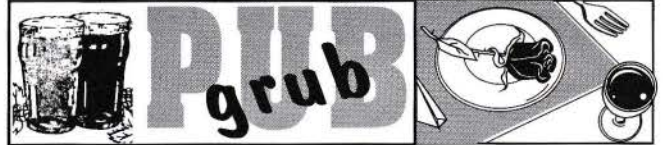
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THE PRINCE OF ORANGE, WARRINGTON STREET / WELLINGTON ROAD, ASHTON-U-LYNE

The Prince of Orange is a large Robinson's house handily situated between Ashton bus station and the town's BR station, so there is no excuse for not being able to get a bus to the door! It is very close to the shopping heart of Ashton, being close to the Arcades precinct and the popular markets just the other side of the octagonal civic complex opposite.

The pub appears to have been built around the 1930's of brick and masonry, and occupies a very prominent position on a busy junction. Internally the layout consists of three, mostly wood-panelled, rooms - a large lounge bar, a good-sized snug to the side of the main entrance, and the Restaurant room (non-smoking too) which is accessible through the lounge. This latter room lacks the panelling, but has plenty of chintzy things to grab the eye whilst you dine.

The Prince is usually bustling at lunchtimes with a good mix of customers, but the day I visited it was strangely quiet, perhaps the icy conditions underfoot had deterred its usual audience - mostly shoppers, pensioners and a more mature type of person. I remember introducing Ed.1 to this pub some years ago and he was very pleasantly surprised by the homeliness of the place and the quality of the ale. Well, since those days the ale range has expanded to be Robinson's Hatters, Best Bitter and seasonal ale - Enigma, on my visit.

Lunchtime food must make up a substantial part of the pub's trade as the Restaurant room looks as though it can cater for about thirty people at one sitting; there is no surcharge for dining in the fine surroundings of this room, or you can eat in the lounge too. Printed menus are set on almost every table boasting a wealth of choice, and added to this are a small number of blackboard specials. The menu and prices are most definitely to cater for people with a taste and budget for the hearty and the traditional, you might even describe the fare as being 'Old School'. Well, that'll do for me, and if you seek something exotic, you may have to plump for the Rabbit Pie.

Beginning with the range of Starters - from Soup of the day, Garlic bread and such through to Prawn Cocktail; with prices from £1.50 to £2.95. Then the Main Courses really show their value - Homemade Steak & Kidney Pie (£3.80); Mince & Onion Pie, Rag Pudding or Chilli (all £3.25); Braised Steak, Roast Chicken, Roast Pork, Roast Beef (all £3.75); and that special Rabbit Pie at £4.25. Then add to those the Grills - Steaks at £5.95 and £6.95; Mixed Grill (£6.95); and Gammon (£5.25). Top that off with two fish dishes - Cod (£4.50) or Scampi (£4.75); all of the above are served with potatoes or chips (or rice if approp.) and two vegetables.

Sundays sees a choice of two roasts on offer for £3.75. Other menu items include Snacks - Toasties, burgers, jacket potatoes, and muffins from £1.50 upwards; Sandwiches from £1.95 up to £2.25 for a hot pork or beef baguette, and £2.50 for the Steak variant. To warm the stomach of Ed.1, all Desserts are just £1.95 and include such timeless favourites as Apple Pie, Jam Roly-Poly, and Spotted Dick.

I was more than tempted by the lure of the Rabbit Pie, but in the end I chose the Rag Pudding. The last Rag Pudding I had sampled was in a pub in Waterhead, Oldham many years back when I worked in that locale. For those unfamiliar with the dish, it consists of a steamed suet envelope filled with tasty morsels of meat and offal (I think) in a delicious gravy. My pudding was served with boiled potatoes, carrots and cabbage; all very good, with the pudding being moist and its contents succulent. They do not skimp on quantity here either, despite the low price. My verdict was that it was an excellent meal served in very convivial surroundings (the Restaurant has naped tables with waitress service too). It is a shame I had nobody else with me to enjoy and confirm this, but on my next visit, I will most certainly have that Rabbit Pie! So, don't overlook the Prince if you want good food and ale on a visit to Ashton.

MMC
Food is served at the following times: 11-3, Mon-Fri; 11-4, Sat; 12-4, Sun. You can contact the Prince of Orange on 0161 330 3846.



John Downe at the Alexandra in Edgeley continues to improve the pub and has now added Hatters to complement the existing Robinson's Best Bitter. It was on very good form when OT called, and sales of the mild were holding up, he told us. Also in Edgeley, the Greyhound was to lose its current licensee on Feb 23rd, so it could be quite some months before the new tenant gets to grips with the place.



Good things come to those who wait according to Steve Brown who has taken over as licensee of the Royal Mortar on Hillgate, Stockport. "I didn't just want to run any pub. I wanted a place at the centre of its community and that fitted in with my ideal of what a traditional pub should be like," said Steve, who had been on the lookout for four years, before deciding on the Royal Mortar. "This is such a friendly place and a real melting pot for people of all ages and backgrounds. The majority of customers are local people so know each other, but newcomers are always welcome and will find the Royal Mortar to be lively with a lot to offer and plenty of opportunity to join in with the crowd," he says. Among the activities that Steve has on offer is a karaoke each Thursday and Saturday evening, a live artist on Friday nights and a big screen for the live football action. "We also have a darts team that is top of the Stockport and District Super League and I'm now looking for players to recruit to a pool team. At the Royal Mortar it's good to see that people make the effort to get out of the house and get to know their neighbours," said Steve who has given up his profession as a builder to take on the pub. **It's a belated welcome to Barry Riley who took over as licensee of the Boars Head, Market Place, Stockport on 12 January. Barry has a wealth of experience, having been in the licensed trade for some 30 years and is also a member of the British Institute of Innkeeping. It is good to see such a sure hand at the helm of this traditional local. Despite hailing from Manchester, Barry has spent the last 13 years running the Coach & Horses in Berkeley Square, Mayfair. This was originally a Bass house (where Robbies appeared as a guest beer until Barry was told to remove it as it was selling so well!) latterly owned by Kent family brewer Shepherd Neame. He and his wife decided to move back north to be near their grandchildren and Barry finds the Boars quite a contrast to his previous pub. Not only were the customers rather different, consisting of bankers and other city office workers, but the beer was a touch more expensive. While the price of a pint of Old Brewery Bitter at the Boars will set you back just £1.18, the average price of a pint in the Coach & Horses was £2.50. As Barry told us, "I still have to look twice when I sell four pints for less than a fiver!"**

Across town in Portwood, the Railway is envisaging putting on a permanent guest mild to complement the Porters Dark Mild. A new beer from Porter should be on the bar very soon at the pub, it is a Brown Ale - as yet, OT does not know the name that will be given to the beer.

The Cheadle Hulme is currently undergoing a refit which costing up to a third of a million pounds, we hear. This will include opening the pub through to the restaurant. There is an eight week contract for the work which is being done in two phases. The first phase was scheduled to begin on 26 January and the second (and current) phase on 20 February, and this has meant the closure of the pub. The Cheadle Hulme is due to re-open is due to re-open on 22 March so look for a report next time. Not far away at Hydes conversion of the Millington Hall, the breeze block inner walls have been erected and the pub is due to reopen as the John Millington later in the summer.

Hydes' conversion of the Conway (Turves Road, Cheadle Hulme) into the Ryecroft Arms was unveiled to the public on Tuesday 9 March. And very impressive it is too. The pub only dates from the 1960s and Hydes have commendably refrained from installing a

mock 'traditional' interior but have instead gone for modern clean lines that better reflect the age and style of the building. Light paintwork and wood abound, both



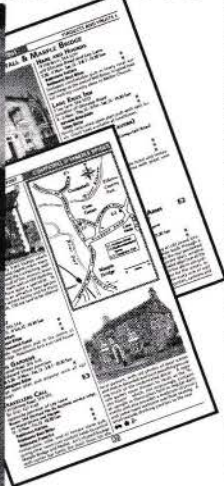
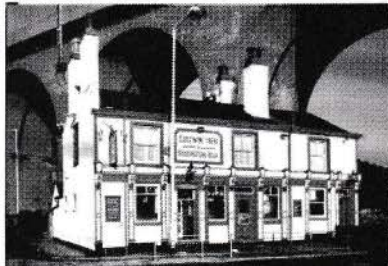
inside and out, together with plenty of contemporary glasswork. In a welcome nod to tradition, though, there are two main rooms - on the right a large airy vault-cum-games room (complete with its separate entrance) and on the left a lounge area, split up into various areas and levels by the use of chunky modern shelving decorated with a variety of vases. The furniture is equally contemporary mix and match with a variety of chairs, stools and sofas. Modern artwork adorns the walls. Towards the back is a designated no-smoking area, although OT isn't sure how effective this will in fact be. We're not sure about the floor to ceiling shelves stacked with what might be fake logs either but others will no doubt consider this an interesting feature. There's a food offering too, available 12-3 and 5.30-8 Monday to Saturday and 12-4 Sunday. The choice is reasonably standard with one or two surprises to add interest. On the beer front, three cask beers were available on Opening night - Bitter, Jekylls Gold and the seasonal, Hunkey Dory, and all were on very good form. All in all, the Ryecroft Arms is a huge improvement on its predecessor and is well worth visiting. It's on the 130 and 369 bus routes with stops in both directions almost outside the door. Try it soon.

Finally a brief word about Ye Olde Vic, one of Stockport's few free houses. Apart from four eve-changing guest beers and real cider, the pub has many other attractions, on of which is the blazing fire - a very welcome sight indeed during the recent cold snap when the pub really was a cosy haven from the wintry weather outside. The Vic has also become a firm favourite with Sale Sharks fans who crowd the pub before and after home games at Edgeley Park - it's not unusual for the pub to be almost drunk dry twice over!



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MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

First out to Chorlton and another visit to the **Lloyds** on Wilbraham Road. I got a chance to speak to manager Nick Baynes who told me how the pub was now steadily growing its trade after an admittedly slow start. The supposedly 'quiet' post-Christmas period has seen sales comfortably exceed those on the autumn and to be honest it's a surprise to me how long it has taken local drinkers to catch on to this place.

It's difficult to see what more could be done to make the Lloyds an attractive 'offer'. The JW Lees beer is always on good form with both the regular Bitter and the seasonals selling well. Bitter sales are now up to five 18-gallon casks a week and even the strong Moonraker is shifting three 4½-gallon casks (impressive when you know that the mild it replaced was only selling something like nine pints a week). Add in good food, decent live music and a modern, light, comfortable interior and you really do have something for everyone. It seems that the locals are finally getting the message, and about time too, say I.

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WHAT'S DOING IN THE CITY

Chatting to Sean Piatt at Manchester's City Arms, he told me that mild will be making a permanent appearance on the bar of the Kennedy Street hostelry soon. It will be in the form of Tetley Dark or Ansell's. Folk who participate in the annual Mild Challenge will be gladdened to know that the City is taking part in this year's campaign. Sean told me that he recently sold his 400th guest beer since he took over the pub last August; this is well beyond his initial expectations - trade is buoyant and improving. Also of note, is that the pub opens all day Sunday - good news if you find yourself in the area of Albert Square, as there few pubs open around there. The City is now serving beers according, generally, to their regional style, ie. no sparkler / no tight-head for 'southern' beers; sparkler / tight-head for 'northern' and micro beers. Sean uses his extensive cellar knowledge to decide which serving style is appropriate; individual preferences will happily be catered for and borne in mind, of course. Hilton Street's **Crown & Anchor** was due to reopen its doors on March 17th. This followed much renovation work in the aftermath of a serious first floor fire. New management is in control, with the lady in charge hailing from the Beehive in Charlestown, Salford, I'm told.

AND OUT IN THE SUBURBS

The **Friendship** (Hydes) in Fallowfield has added Hydes Light to its range of Bitter, Jekylls and seasonal. It's a bargain at £1.29 too. **Hardy's** (ex Birch Villa) in Rusholme has re-opened again; it still continues to sell no cask ale however.

A visit to the splendid **Mawson** in Chorlton on Medlock found the bar lobby area in the midst of a re-decor. The walls will be of a lighter hue to make the space seem more airy, the wonderful age-mellowed oak panelling will provide a counterpoint to this, while the magnificent embossed green and gilt ceiling will be re-painted. The Mawson currently sells Tetley bitter and a guest - Coach House, Coachmans, this is to be supplemented from March with another guest, probably another micro beer. No doubt the quality will be remain as excellent as ever.

Apparently, a new bar called **Varsity** (the themed student bar concept, that Wolverhampton & Dudley jettisoned some years ago to raise cash for various takeover dealings), has opened on Oxford Road in one of the new units opposite Whitworth Park, by the junction of Hathersage Road. Not visited yet, but apparently there is no cask ale available, unlike the one in Bolton.

Despite my prediction last month, in late February the **Sir Humphrey Chetham** was still boarded up with no signs of any action. It also still has the board saying "For Sale Without Licence." Has anyone got more information on the future of the pub?

Another pub firmly closed and boarded last month was the **Grants Arms** in Hulme. I must confess it's one of the few pubs in the area I had never visited but given the extent of the new development in the area, I am surprised to see it shut. Still open but also for sale is the **A6** (previously the Ceilidh House) in Levenshulme. I can't help thinking this is a missed opportunity here - given the generally dire state of the real ale scene in Levenshulme, you would think there would be demand for at least one of the main road pubs to sell a small, well-kept range of cask beers.

In Didsbury the **Woodstock** was closed for extensive refurbishment as this piece went to press. It's part of the Mitchells & Butlers 'Ember Inns' chain, which is their 'traditional pub' brand. I'll try and call in if it opens in time for the next issue. Finally, I hear that the **Nelson** (formerly the Lord Clyde), Claremont Road, Rusholme has re-opened as a pub. It serves no cask beer though.

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Local CAMRA Awards



Joe Quinn and Steve King of the Arden Arms, Stockport, with their newly awarded local CAMRA Pub of the Year award. A great evening saw the presentation made on Saturday February 28. Pictured below are Duncan and Lynnette Shenton of the Thatched

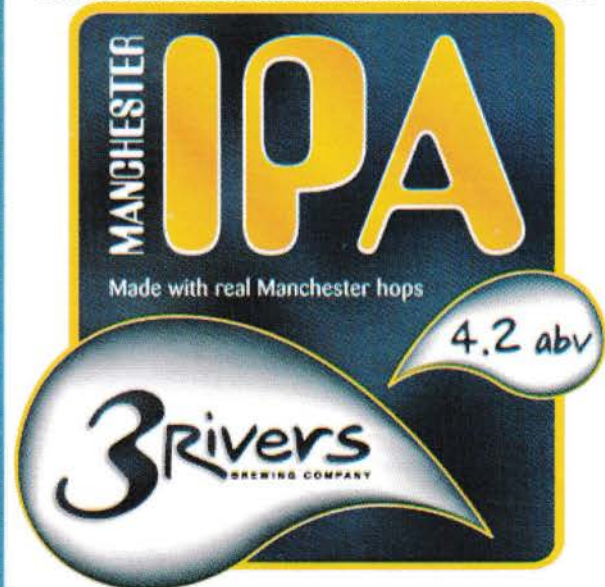


Tavern in Reddish ((being presented with the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month (February) Award by local CAMRA stalwart Jim Flynn (right) and below with their tremendous pub staff. A great night in a smashing true community local. And just above this caption, staff at the recent Poynton Beer Festival held with the British legion, dispensing the ten micro-brewery ales to thirsty customers. Nine at least were apparently excellent! (the problematic one being a brewery problem, apparently)



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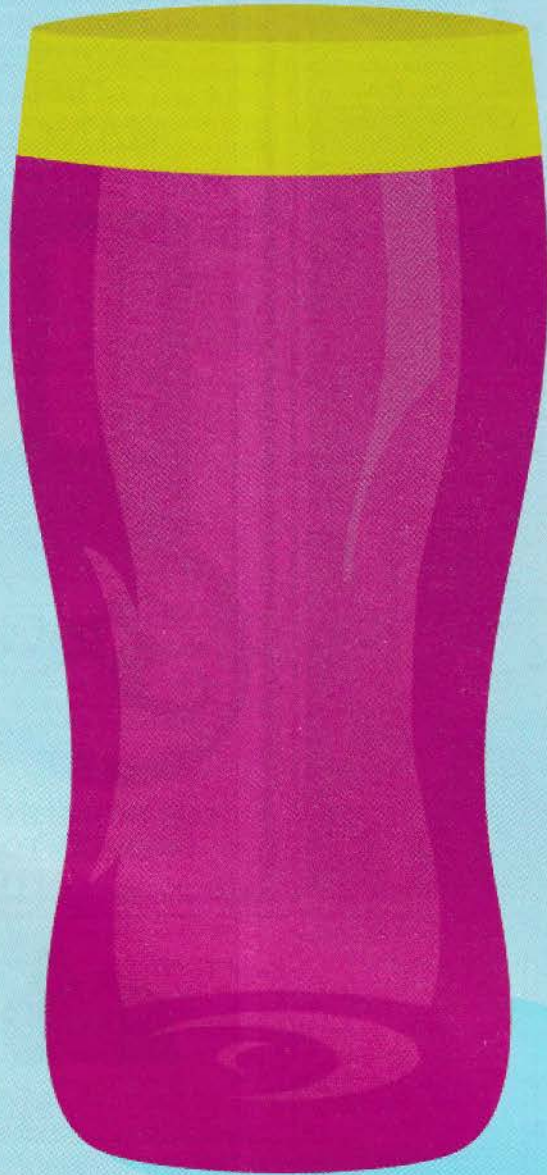


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