

No: 242

CAMRA NEWSLETTER OF THE YEAR 2003

# OPENING TIMES

Volume 20 Issue 6

JUNE 2004

20TH BIRTHDAY EDITION



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

## RECORD BREAKER! 18<sup>TH</sup> BEERFEST BIGGEST AND BEST YET

**A**LMOST EVERY RECORD was broken at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival as the crowds flocked to the new Edgeley Park venue in huge numbers. Visitor numbers were slightly down on the Thursday night but, as happened throughout the Festival, those who turned up stayed much longer and drank more beer! Despite the longer walk from the town centre, the Friday lunchtime crowd was on a par with last year and then came Friday night. The Festival then went bonkers – almost 1,500 people through the doors and at one stage 1,100 in the Festival itself – with record beer and cider sales for that session.

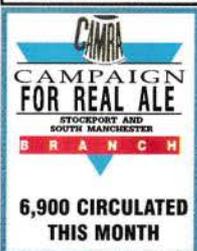


Festival goers enjoy a drink as trade starts to build up!

In total some 4,500 people visited the Festival, the highest ever turnout, and drank over 14,200 pints of beer plus over 2,200 pints of cider and perry. Beer sales were the highest ever and cider sales second highest. 71 new members were signed up, too – the highest number for some years. The weather held up, too. It wasn't too hot and this helped us with the beer keeping. Many customers commented on the high quality of the beer and by 10.00pm on the Saturday night we were drunk dry. The last two beers to go were the very strong Robinson's Old Tom and Thomas Sykes Ale. Many visitors said how much they liked the new venue, especially being able to sit outside on the stand, and also the fact that the entertainment was in a separate room. The atmosphere in the entertainment room was superb, especially during the performances of the Soul Bandits and the Blues Blasters on Friday and Saturday nights.

A gleeful Festival Organiser, Jim Flynn, told *Opening Times* "Last year I said we would have to make our 18<sup>th</sup> Festival a little bit special and I think we succeeded in that! Obviously there were some lessons to be learned in the first year at a new venue but all in all the Festival went off very well indeed." Jim also took the opportunity to thank not only the numerous Festival sponsors (the Stockport Express and Robinson's, Hydes', Beartown, Three Rivers and Leek breweries) but also the many CAMRA members who gave up their free time to help staff the event. So – where will next year's event be held? Jim was staying tight lipped but it was clear that with the success at Edgeley Park the organising committee will have a difficult decision to make when planning starts for the 2005 event.

Despite the long bars there were always customers wanting more!



### MIGHTY OAKS...? OPENING TIMES HITS 20

**A**part from Stockport Beer & Cider Festival coming of age this year, June 2004 also sees another notable landmark in the history of Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA. *Opening Times*, the branch's triple award-winning newsletter, celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

*Opening Times* was launched in June 1984 as a duplicated insert distributed with *What's Doing*, the North Manchester newsletter that in those days still had aspirations to be a regional pub newsletter for the Greater Manchester CAMRA branches. The driving force behind the launch of OT was long-serving CAMRA member Humphrey Higgins and the Branch remains grateful for all the hard work Humphrey put in to getting OT off the ground and seeing it through those difficult early days. The next major landmark came with issue 20 in December 1985 when OT moved to more professional printing and broke free from *What's Doing*. Circulation at that time was still less than 1,000 a month, though. Humphrey Higgins departed from the local CAMRA scene in 1988 and John Clarke (now known as Ed(1)) took over the helm with issue 49 in May 1988. John's first task was to lead the front page with an apology for the famous 'festival without a license' held at Stockport College. Talk about a baptism of fire.

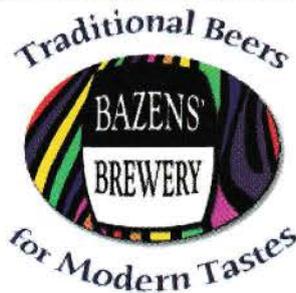
The next step-change came with issue 89 in September 1991. This saw Paul Hutchings join the team, initially as production editor and subsequently co-editor (and thus gaining the epithet Ed(2)). Paul's involvement saw an immediate improvement in the presentation and look of OT and in 1994 the magazine won the first ever CAMRA Newsletter of the Year Award. Since then it has



...continued on page 3

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20 Not Out 4.1% (to mark OT's 20th anniversary)  
 eXSB 5.5% Blue Bullet 4.5%  
 FlatbaC 4.2% (Beer of the Festival, Stockport, 2003  
 & Brewing Industry International Award winner 2004)  
 Black Pig Mild 3.6% (Bronze Award for  
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# PUB OF THE MONTH JUNE 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			



**T**HE STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA Pub of the Month for June 2004 is the Bakers Vaults in Stockport Market Place.

The Bakers is a classic market pub and had a place in the hearts of many local drinkers for years, majoring on food and music in a big way. Or rather, it did until it fell on hard times for a couple of years under the control of tenants who appeared to promise a lot but in actual fact delivered very little. The beer wasn't very good either. Luckily the cavalry came to the rescue in the shape of Sam and Lorraine Fraser who took on the Bakers as their first pub in April 2003. Since then improvements have been rapid and impressive.

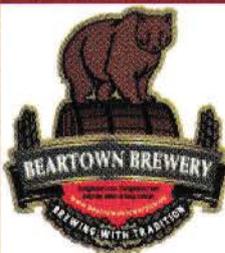
The fabric of the pub has been upgraded - windows have been unboarded to admit more light, an intrusive modern vestibule at a corner door has gone to make more room and the pub has been painted and cleaned so that it looks better now than it has done for years. Sam (who, along with Lorraine is delighted with the award) told us that the past 12 months have seen steady progress and what they set out to do has worked for the pub. What they set out to do was restore its reputation as a slightly bohemian centre for independent music and art. So there is a permanent exhibition by local artists on the pub's walls, changing every three months and an eclectic music policy which aims to combine the pub's R'n'B traditions with newer music and bands. "My aim was to stretch the boundaries" says Sam. There is entertainment on every Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday plus one Monday and two Sundays a month - some modernish jazz made for a mellow backdrop when this article was researched. Food is also set to return now that work has been finished on the Courts shopping development although this will initially be confined to market days between noon and 3pm, with simpler fare available on other days.

What about the beer then? Well, that's hugely improved too. Robinson's Hatters and Best Bitter are on electric pumps and the sole handpump is again going to feature the seasonal ales. Quality is invariably high, a fact which pleases Sam who runs the cellar and who has seen a welcome increase in cask ale volumes. The Bakers really is a success story - join us when we celebrate this with our Pub of the Month Award on Thursday, June 24<sup>th</sup>. JC

*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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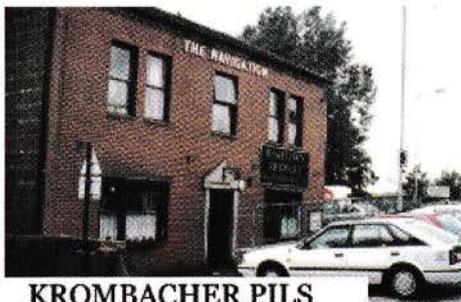


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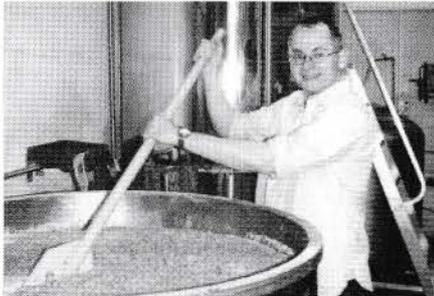
**COPY DATE FOR JULY ISSUE OF  
 OPENING TIMES IS JUNE 26**

**MIGHTY OAKS... OT AT 20** (from page 1)

been a story of steady progress. Circulation has increased to just under 7,000 a month and neighbouring CAMRA branches also both distribute and contribute to OT – our thanks to High Peak & North East Cheshire, Macclesfield & East Cheshire, and Trafford & Hulme branches for their continued efforts here. Perhaps the most remarkable year or so in *Opening Times'* entire history has been the 12 months from April 2003 to April 2004. This started off at the CAMRA AGM in Exeter where it picked up a Special Award marking 10 years of continuing excellence since the inaugural Newsletter of the Year Award was presented. October 1993 saw another production landmark with the move to colour printing and vastly increased paper quality and in April 2004 the year was rounded off with a second CAMRA Newsletter of the Year Award, making *Opening Times* the only newsletter to win twice.

**HAVE A DRINK WITH US**

Not 'on us' we're afraid! However to mark these 20 years of success, the production team has commissioned a special beer from Bazens' Brewery. 20 Not Out is a 4.1%, pale, aromatically hoppy beer commissioned as both a 'special' for Stockport Beer Festival but also to go into the local free trade. The beer is made purely from Maris Otter Pale Ale malt (reckoned to be the malt for brewing) and uses Mittelfruh and Saaz hops with a late addition of Green Bullet hops. What this means is you get a wonderfully refreshing, hoppy beer – just right for early summer drinking. We'll certainly be toasting both the past and the next 20 years – we hope you will do the same.



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**IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..**

I'm still recovering from Stockport Beer Festival so this month I'll be brief for once! Just to say hearty congratulations to all those involved with the Festival. Obviously there were one or two teething problems, as you might expect, but overall this really was the biggest and best Festival yet. Records fell like nine-pins and it is a real tribute to the hard work of all our volunteer staff and organisers. Here's looking forward to next year!

*John Clarke*

In the spirit of Year-of-OT 21, I have decided to run a competition. It will run for three months initially, as part of my war on errors and typos. Whosoever spots the most errors per issue (letter or email listing: issue, then page, line, and error(s) to the editor(s)) wins. A prize of (some) free beer for each issue, (deadline as per copy date) with the winner spotting the most over all three getting a gallon. In the unlikely event of a draw the prize will be shared. The editors' decision, is, of course final.

*Paul Hutchings*

**OPENING TIMES ISSUE 242**

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](mailto:johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com) Adverts or photos should be "hard copy" or TIFF or EPS files (submit printed proofs for checking and ensure that any "include all fonts" options are on). All editorial items © CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged. All Advertising images are copyright the respective design sources (Largely CPPR, but all other copyrights and trademarks acknowledged).

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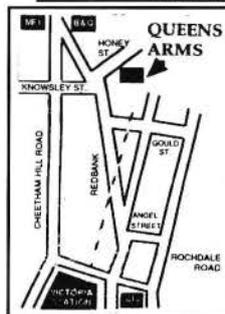
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# You Couldn't Make It Up

We thank BBC online for this astonishing item...

football's governing body, has decided that fans at the 2006 World Cup in Germany should not drink the local brew. A sponsorship deal between Fifa and US brewer Anheuser-Busch could bar German beers from World Cup venues. German politicians are beside themselves with patriotic fury. "A lot of breweries support sports... but the minute there's a little money to be earned, they're left out in the cold," fumed Hermann Winkler, president of the state of Saxony's sports federation.

Bavarian government officials have said they will request talks with Fifa to see if the contract with Anheuser-Busch leaves any room for manoeuvre, according to media reports. One strategy under consideration is to set up a series of "fan villages" around World Cup football stadiums where local products, including beer, could be sold. Germany is fiercely proud of its 1200-plus breweries, most of which use only natural ingredients in accordance with the centuries-old purity laws. A spokesman for Fifa's World Cup organising committee said a local sponsorship deal would have been problematic because of the huge number of brewers operating in Germany.

### LOCAL NEWS

A brand new beer from **Boddington's** appeared at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. 'Strangeways Bitter' was a tasty 5% premium brew, generally well received by those who tried it. Apart from this we have no more information but think it is unlikely it will appear in the general trade (although presumably far more than the 18 gallons supplied to the beer festival has been made). [Those will long memories will remember brews of 5% appearing at the time of previous football events - but not as hoppy as this one! Ed(2)]

The family brewers have new beers out next month. **Robinson's** new seasonal will be Sunny Jim a 3.8% ABV 'light, thirst quenching summer ale'. This will include some demerara sugar in the brew and as we went to press the brewery was still deciding at what stage this would be added to the brewing process. Should be a good 'un, though. Get it in Manchester's Castle (Oldham Street) and Stockport's Arden Arms, amongst others.

**Hydes'** next craft ale is Ticky Boo at 4.1% ABV. They say that "ultimate refreshment and flavour are the key qualities emanating from this light, crisp summer beer benefit-

ing from the subtle use of the Liberty hop". This is an American hop and does indeed impart a crisp tang when it is used - another one to look out for Should be in many Hydes' pubs such as the Nursery, Heaton Norris and the Victoria, Withington.

**Lees** enter the fray with **Scorcher** (4.2% ABV), a return of a favourite from previous years. "A light golden beer with a tantalising, fruity aroma and a wonderfully refreshing hop finish" says the brewery, and indeed it is. Look out for this one in outlets such as the Rain Bar in the City Centre and the Lloyds Hotel in Chorlton.

**Liverpool family brewer Cains**, who locally have the Gothic in Gately, also have a new seasonal it for July and August this it Triple Hop (4.5% ABV) described as "this aromatic ale is brewed using selected premium pale ale malts to produce body and flavour. The characteristic aroma is created by a blend of 3 hop varieties."

### MICRO MAGIC

As ever the local micros have a whole range of goodies out. As ever apologies to those brewers who we didn't manage to contact this time.

**Bank Top** - the new beer at the moment is the long awaited Port O'Call. This is 5% ABV version of the brewery's excellent dark Mild with the addition of port to the fermentation process. Launched at Stockport Beer Festival, this is a smooth, very dark, rich beer, although dangerously easy to drink. Expect to see it in the Crown, Heaton Lane.

**Bazens'** - Richard and Jude Bazen are celebrating winning a bronze medal for Flatbac in this year's International Brewing Awards. It was 'Beer of the Festival' at last year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival and also

went down a treat this year. New this month is '20 Not Out' to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday of *Opening Times*. A category winner at Stockport Beer Festival, this is a wonderfully refreshing, hoppy 4.1%.



**Beartown Brewery** - have launched a new range of pumpclips for their beer, and very impressive they look, too. The range now has a very professional appearance, matching the quality of the beers, themselves.

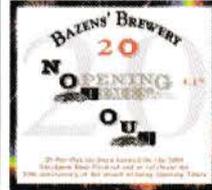
**Boggart Hole Clough** - Boggart Brown Ale (3.7% ABV) has been available and getting good reviews. Dark brown in colour with ruby hues, it has a lovely maltiness and a roasted flavour. This month's special is Arnhem Bridge (4.6% ABV).

**Facer's** - Both Chatterly and Northern County are selling very well with Northern County fulfilling its 'session' role very well and Chatterly proving a 'Booker Prize winner' in the Greats of English Literature series. Transit (dry hopped Crabtree) is now available and sold very well at Stockport Beer Festival.

**Khean** - the other Congleton micro is still going great guns. The regular range now comprises All Rounder (3.9% ABV - a quaffing bitter), Village Green (4% ABV - a good pale bitter beer using American Cascade hops), Caught Behind (4.2% ABV - a superb stout), Fine Leg (4.2% ABV - a traditional, copper-coloured bitter), Leg Spinner (4.4% ABV - a light coloured, premium brew) and Seamer (4.5% ABV - a malty premium bitter). A new beer is in the pipeline to celebrate the christening of the son of CAMRA National Executive member Marc Holmes. 'Peter's First Innings' is still being formulated as be light, quaffable and fairly hoppy. Look out too for the Khean beers in bottle conditioned form.

**Millstone** - the new beer is the 3.8% ABV Windy Miller, brewed to mark the local Saddleworth Band Contest. This is a pale, hoppy, refreshing beer and is ideal for the summer. Stockport's Olde Vic usually has a Millstone beer gisting so look out for it there.

**Phoenix** - another local brewery celebrating a bronze in the International Brewing Awards, this one for the fabulous Wob-bly Bob strong ale. Very well deserved in



# 3 Rivers

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BREWERY TOURS ARRANGED BY APPOINTMENT

deed and congratulations from us all. Still very busy, Phoenix have one or two new beers available. Look out for Midsummer Madness (4.5% ABV), Tennis Elbow (4.5% ABV) and Sticky Wicket (4.7% ABV)



**Pictish** – currently available is Ginger Ale (3.9% ABV) A pale amber coloured ale brewed with ginger for a powerful spicy flavour. And next month look out for Siren (4.1% ABV) a clear wheat beer drawing on both English and continental heritage. This naturally spicy beer is subtly augmented with coriander seeds and orange peel to give a refreshingly different flavour. The wonderful Blue Moon and Black Shiver (both at 6% ABV, one an incredibly hoppy IPA, the other a rich stout) were also available as we went to press.

**Shaws** – Dark Mild (3.3% ABV) sold very well and as we went to press the current seasonal was Golden Globe – another strong seller at Stockport Beer Festival. There was also a new beer in the pipeline but details hadn't been worked out when we called. Look out also for Mayfest Pale, brewed to mark Glossop's Mayfest and also Beltane, a 4.5% ABV light and very hoppy beer.



**Three Rivers** – several beers were at Stockport Beer Festival and all sold well. The Delta Dark Mild (4.8% ABV) was particularly well received. Very powerful for its style, this beer has a strong roast character with hints of treacle toffee and liquorice and a lingering dry bitter finish. Making a surprise appearance on Wednesday was Pilgrims Progress, a 4.2% clear (crystal) wheat beer – this went on sale on the Saturday night and flew out. With Three Rivers technical director/brewer away in Bali in July (setting up a brewery to produce a Wheat Beer!) they are well set up with excellent new beers until his return!

## FESTIVAL AWARDS

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



In the beer categories the winning beers were: **Mild** – Three Rivers Delta Dark Mild from Stockport  
**Bitter** – Bazens' 20 Not Out from Salford – a good result for the *Opening Times* birthday brew  
**Premium Bitter** – Ossett Silver Ghost, from Ossett near Dewsbury  
**Special** – Whim Snow White from Derbyshire  
**Stout/Porter** – Pictish Black Shiver (Rochdale)  
**Strong/Old Ales** – Abbeyle Original Sin from Sheffield – a superb chocolate imperial stout  
Total votes cast for each of the category winner were compared to establish the most popular beers. In third place was Whim Snow White, a refreshing Wheat beer. Second was the excellent Abbeyle Original Sin, a triumph for this very strong but highly quaffable beer. There can, though, be only one winner and this year the honours were taken by Pictish Black Shiver, a memorable strong stout. A worthy winner and both this and the high placing of Original Sin continue the Festival's semi-tradition of supporting and awarding dark beers. In the Cider and Perry competition there was a close race. The winning cider was Ralph's Berties Orchard from New Radnor in the Welsh Marches, with honourable mentions to Countryman and the Welsh Gwynt Y Ddraig Black Dragon. The Perry of the Festival award goes to a previous winner and one of the very best makers around. Kevin Minchew, based near Tewkesbury, wines with his Malvern Hills perry. An honourable mention also goes to Newton Court in Herefordshire (also last year's runners-up) for their Winnal Longdon perry. Congratulations to one and all.

## 201 TOUR OF DISCOVERY

12 months ago, *Opening Times* reported the purchase of the Cheshire Ring, Manchester Road, Hyde, by Beartown Brewery and featured tenants Duncan and Rachel Ward. Twelve months on, the pub will stage its first beer festival.

The event, running from 22 to 24 July, is being staged in conjunction with the 'Guild of British Beer Samplers' (known as GOBBS) and includes the Smithfield in Swan St. Manchester and the Lowes Arms just up the road in Denton. The three pub event is titled the "201 Tour of Discovery", referring to the fact that all three pubs can be reached via the 201 bus service. Each pub features 30 beers alongside the normal range and the 'Ring will have their Beartown beers alongside the festival guests. The Lowes will feature 7 house beers with the 30 guests in a marquee. The beers available will include new beers, festival specials and tried and tested old favourites.

The Cheshire Ring itself goes from strength to strength. Duncan and Rachel have settled in and built a reputation for all-round excellence. The locals have perhaps been a little slow in recognising what a gem they have on their doorstep, but trade is now building nicely. The Beartown beers (always in good nick) are accompanied by guest beers, real cider and perry, and a range of foreign beers both bottled and draught. A beer garden had been created for the summer and promises to be an excellent spot for quaffing!



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## MORE CHOICE BETTER BEER

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1998  
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2002  
Navy  
Gold



2002  
Wobbly Bob  
Gold



2004  
Wobbly Bob  
Bronze



**Rumour denial first. For several weeks now, there have been stories circulating in the town that Angella Lindsay was leaving the Navigation on Lancashire Hill. Complete cobblers, I'm pleased to say. I asked Angella about these stories and she was as mystified as I was as to where they had come from. One theory is that Beartown Brewery used the Navigation to interview prospective licensees for new pubs they are acquiring causing someone put two and two together and make five.**

**OUT ON THE TOWN**

After leaving the Navigation I popped into the Kings Head on Tiviot Dale and chatted to landlady Debbie. She told me how the pub is being revamped inside and out, with a general redecoration, reupholstered seats and new flooring. The pub is certainly looking very good these days – the royal arms over the bar are a particularly striking feature. On the beer front, a monthly guest beer has joined the regular Worthington Cask. This was a very tasty pint of Marston's Old Empire when I called and this month will be Everard's Tiger, a somewhat underrated beer which is a personal favourite of mine. Across the road is the ever-reliable Tiviot, of course. The vault is the place to be at lunchtime, with a cracking atmosphere, but at night it's a quieter refuge with ever-reliable Robinson's Hatters and Unicorn, not forgetting the welcome sight of a cask of Old Tom on the bar in the winter months. Worth a call if you've not been there for a while.

**DOWN PORTWOOD WAY**

Dragging myself out of the Railway is always difficult – the Porters beers, guest ales, real cider and foreign beers make for an irresistible combination but duty calls and these were some pubs I'd not visited for some time.

The Old King is a long-standing cask ale outlet, although the beer on offer always seems to be different when I have called. This time it was Robinson's Unicorn, and not too bad a pint at that. The pub now seems to include a cyber café (!) and was also looking rather blue after what looked like a recent redecoration.

Pressing on, the Rifle Volunteer now seems permanently defunct, with all available trade going to the nearby Park, a lively well-run

pub with good Holt's Bitter. I finished up in the Midway. This has quite a rural aspect both inside and out, with a cosy feel and comfortable décor. On the beer front there was quite good Boddies Bitter and a rare sighting of Websters Green Label

**GAINS AND FALSE LEADS**

A fellow drinker who had been posting for Stockport Beer Festival, told me that he had spied cask ale for sale in two long-keg outlets in the area. So armed with this news, I hot-footed it out to Bredbury Green and a pub called the Winds, a pleasantly appointed estate-pub boasting a large lounge and large games area; also boasting a John Smiths handpull on the bar. I ordered some, only to be told that it was not sold. "Shame", I thought. Ah well, off to the Carousel in Reddish, a lively bustle was about the place when I arrived; many people were dining, many enjoying the sun outside. A fairly opened-out pub decorated in bold colours; all very civil, thought I. A Boddies pump was visible (with clip turned about), and again it was "not on, sorry". Two unfortunate outcomes, but who knows, they may try to sell cask beer again.

There was better news on Hillgate, where the Crown has returned to the cask ale fold. Ian Hazeldine has been there over seven months now and has set about restoring the pub's fortunes. The 'Corner Cupboard' was in quite a sorry state when Ian took over and has needed much attention to the fabric of the pub, with new windows, reupholstered seating and a thorough redecoration. It seems to be paying off as trade is increasing (the pub has a darts team again) and real ale has been introduced in the shape of cask Boddingtons Bitter and Theakstons Bitter. Ian tells me it's turning over nicely and the Boddies was certainly an enjoyable pint when I called.

Elsewhere, the Malt Shovels on Councillor Lane in Cheadle has cask ale again, in the shape of Greene King IPA and in Marple Bridge, a new and enthusiastic licensee (he's a Stockport Beer Festival regular, I'm told) should have reintroduced cask beer to the Norfolk by the time you read this. Boddingtons Cask will be the beer.

**KEG AND CLOSED**

After popping into the Crown, I had a quick look at some of the other nearby Hillgate pubs. Dear oh dear. With the notable exception of the Sun & Castle, which continues to sell cask Hols, and always strikes me as a good, well-run pub, the rest of the Middle Hillgate hostelries have little to offer the cask ale drinker. The former Pack Horse (Big Lamp, etc) is now a restaurant, of course. The Black Lion is keg (and when I passed the outside had been covered with unsightly advertising for a variety of products I would never want to drink) as is (at least at present) the Golden Lion. The 'Yellow Cat' is of course a Burtonwood house and still has a bank of disused handpumps on the bar. With a 'total refurbishment' promised for this month it is to be hoped that the rumours of at least cask Burtonwood Bitter, will come to fruition, as this is potentially a rather good pub.

In Edgeley, a 'to let' sign has now appeared on the Jolly Crofter, which remains closed. Also still closed and for sale is the nearby Blue Bell. Whether this has a future as a pub, I don't know, but I just wish someone would buy the place as it is rapidly becoming something of an eyesore.

The Railway in North Reddish also looks shut. There's a tatty sign on the side, posing the question, 'would you like to be landlord of this pub?' Err, no thanks. Finally, in Cale Green, Copperfields has been knocked down. It occupied a rear extension of the Southlands Hotel and it looks as though it is being replaced by a new building but whether this will function as a pub or not, I don't know.

**The 2004 Viaducts and Vaults Update will be available as a PDF file from the Branch Website when this issue goes to press. If demand is sufficient, we will print it within OT later this year.**



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## WITCHWOOD LATEST

**A**T THE WITCHWOOD, in Ashton-u-Lyne, they are still no further forward with establishing where they are up to with trying to save the pub. There have been meetings with both the council and the developers, but Paulline and her partners are still waiting to hear whether proposals they submitted to try to get an exclusion from the development have been accepted.

In the meantime, there is lots going on, as keeping support with the pub is really important for them. They have been notified that there is to be a public inquiry, though not told when yet, so they are working on a case to put forward for that, and business plans in case they succeed as well as keeping everything going day to day. They are all exhausted but hope it comes good in the end.

One bit of good news though, they have finally got the cellar cooling sorted out - its been an absolute nightmare apparently and they ended up having to go to the manufacturers of the compressor themselves to get it replaced again.... it's worth it though as the beers are back on form

Always keen on new initiatives the Witchwood crew are organising a town-wide beer festival of all the real ale pubs in Ashton on the August Bank Holiday weekend to celebrate local brewing. There are some really cracking little brewers around Ashton and the initial aim was to spotlight them. However, because the tied houses in the town are all really local brews as well, everyone can get involved, even lending a couple of handpumps and stillages out to a couple of pubs who are going to try cask out for the weekend. As well as profiling the brewers, the plan is also to raise money for local charities, with perhaps a specially badged ale across all the pubs with a donation made for each pint sold (if Pauline gets all the breweries to allow it for the event) so all in all it should be a productive weekend. Pauline told *Opening Times* " I think its important to get people interested in good beers, and we are trying to get those who can't commit to selling cask to at least stock some good bottled ales instead."

"We'll be wrapping it up at The Witchwood with a real ale themed quiz night on the Monday, having launched on the Thursday with a festival preview Cask Club, including displays of information about the brewers in the area and the brewing process itself, with some free tasting to encourage a bit of adventure"

This promises to be a major event for cask ale in Ashton - look out for more details in future issues of *Opening Times*, as well as updates on the plans for the area and the Witchwood itself.

## OPENING TIMES LETTERS

from David Hault (via e-mail):

*In his May column, Curmudgeon informs us that he has never come across a landlord who demands a forfeit from a customer if their mobile rings. Well, he need look no further than page 16 of the same edition. The landlord of the Packhorse, New Mills, featured in your Pub Grub column, is a noted mobile phone-phobe. The pub has signs warning that mobiles are banned, but this doesn't just mean that calls have to be taken and made outside. A friend of mine's phone rang in this pub, and as she walked to the door to take the call outside she was stopped by the landlord waving the pub's charity box, and demanding a £1 forfeit!*

*The effect of this, of course, is that our friend doesn't use the Packhorse any longer. It seems reasonable to many of us that we should be able to enjoy a drink without suffering the intrusion of other people's mobile conversations (especially, as Curmudgeon points out, as they are often so inane!). However, nowadays most of us feel happier when we go out for the evening leaving the kids at home if we can be contacted if necessary by the baby-sitter or anyone else who may need to do so, perhaps in an emergency. Overzealous pub landlords who try to insist that customers' mobiles are actually switched off could well find that they lose business as a result.*

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## A ROUND IN THE TOWN - 20 YEARS AGO

A regular feature of *Opening Times* has always been the *Stagger* (on page 9 in this issue...). It started life however as 'A Round In the Town' and here we reprint the very first such article from June 1984. The author was Rhys Jones and it covered a clutch of pubs in Stockport Town Centre. After wallowing in nostalgia, we've also brought you a 2004 update...

We kicked off at the **Arden Arms** on Millgate, a well-known Good Beer Guide pub, where Robinson's Best Mild and Best Bitter were on sale at 62p and 67p respectively. As in all the pubs, members were asked to rate the beer on a scale from zero (undrinkable) to 4 (excellent). The Arden scored a very creditable 3.3 for Mild and 3.2 for Bitter. The pub must rank as one of the little-known gems among Britain's pubs - its best feature is probably the fine collection of grandfather clocks which confront you at every turn, but the most satisfying aspect is the way in which the classic layout and design of a small Victorian pub have been preserved for the best possible reason, namely that they still meet the customers' needs. Note especially the delightful small snug (our party of 10 was too large to sample it) which can only be reached by walking through the bar area.

From here we set off uphill to discover what is claimed to be the cheapest beer in the town centre - Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter at the **Boars Head** in the Market Place, which was selling at 59p. Scores for the quality averaged 2.5 (between average and good). By contrast to the Arden, the interior has been modernised in semi-plush style with piped music to match. However the big thing at the Boars is the live music - a rock group was setting up whilst we were there although it is the jazz nights that seem to enjoy the highest reputation. There are understood to be plans afoot for extensions to cater more for the lunchtime food trade.

Across the Market Place and Robinson's, at the **Bull's Head** (mild 60p, bitter 64p). Here, sad to say, there was a problem with the mild which, while not vinegary, was uncharacteristic of Robinson's and was changed for the bitter at the request of the member who'd ordered it. Bitter attracted a score of 2.4. The Bull's Head still retains much of its old multi-roomed layout, though there has been some knocking through, particularly from the corridor into the front bar. It is impossible to look at any flat surface in the pub without encountering some reminder of the landlord's USA origins - I gave up counting Stars & Stripes, but perhaps the most bizarre artefact is the framed can of Schlitz on one wall. Interestingly draught Old Tom was still on sale as late as April, but we thought it rather early in the evening!

Next call was the **Castlewood** on the Brow that drops down to Great Underbank for Wilson's Mild (60p) and Bitter (62p). Quality came at 3.0 mild and 3.4 bitter. This house now seems to be re-established after a period of closure, and it is distinguished by an unusual split-level layout made necessary by one of Stockport's steeper hills. It's been refurbished in a restrained and tasteful manner to produce an atmosphere that's restful and comfortable but emphatically still a pub rather than an upmarket cocktail bar or similar nonsense.

Now on to one that's more emphatic than most - the **Buck & Dog** on Bridge Street. And at last we've found one that undercuts the Boars Head. Boddington's Mild is 54p and Bitter 57p. Beer ratings are 2.7 mild and 3.0 bitter. This is the sort of pub usually described as 'ethnic northern' - bare light bulbs, outside toilets and nicotine stained woodwork, rounded off by a formica bar top. It still retains its corridor and side rooms in some of which lurk pool tables and loud juke boxes.

Finally we set our auto-pilots for Robinson's Brewery and straight for the front door of the **Royal Oak** on the sloping lane incongruously known as High Street. First the bare facts - Robinson's Mild 59p, Bitter 63p - cheapest Robbies of the night. Scores mild 3.3, bitter an incredible 3.9, which must be the beer drinking equivalent of the First Division Championship (*this was before the days of the Premier League - Ed(1)*). I should now say something about the pub - but what can you say about the Royal Oak? In the unlikely event you've not visited it, get there as soon as you can - and stay as long as you can. No better example could be found of the way in which all the best pubs develop their own character by a gradual process of evolution - it can't be "sprayed on". The Royal Oak has the usual features of a traditional local, but what gives it its special character is the stuff that's been brought in over the years by the cavers and potholers who form a fair proportion of the pub's customers - you could probably learn the geology of the Peak District from what's on display in the back room. Just one example to give an idea of the lovely lived-in down-to-earthiness of it all - the



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motto of one of the potholing clubs, stuck on the wall in the back room, reads "Semper in Excreta". Semper means 'always' - you can probably guess the rest!

## A ROUND IN THE TOWN - TODAY

Needless to say, there have been plenty of changes to the local pub scene since Rhys Jones wrote his review 20 years ago. All the pubs mentioned have changed in one way or another:

**Arden Arms** - structurally the old vault has been extended into the old kitchen to form the Millgate Room but apart from that the main loss has been all but one of the grandfather clocks. These 'disappeared' during a short-lived tenancy of licensees who were eventually evicted by the brewery. The pub is once again in safe hands and is current local CAMRA Pub of the Year and a Good Beer Guide regular. Robinson's Best Mild is now Hatters and Best Bitter has just been rechristened Unicorn. The Arden also sells the premium Double Hop and the Robbies seasonal beers - neither of which existed 20 years ago.

**Boars Head** - recently and successfully refurbished to reinstate several interior walls. Following Sam Smith's decision to ban live entertainment in all of the pubs, the former concert room has become a plush lounge with its own bar. Double doors lead to an outside decked area. The one cask beer remains as Old Brewery Bitter (at £1.24).

**Bulls Head** - major alterations saw the bar moved to the other side of the pub amidst some general opening out. Licensee Phil Sharples came here from the Boars Head bringing the live music with him and the Bulls Head is now one of the main pub music venues in the town centre. Robinson's Hatters and Unicorn remain available.

**Castlewood** - after numerous name changes and owners (including a period as a Vaux house - see this month's 'Five Years Ago') the pub is currently closed and boarded despite having apparently been sold at auction. Wilsons brewery and its beers have long since bitten the dust.



**Buck & Dog** - the former Boddington PubCo had plans to restore this pub but were offered a large pile of cash by Barclays Bank. Thus the pub has been demolished although some hint of past glories can be had from the former main entrance which is preserved round the side of the new building. Boddingtons Mild was discontinued several years ago. Bitter is now about £1.80.

**Royal Oak** - the old pub virtually fell down during a refurbishment by Robinson's and its replacement was fitted out in the characterless style favoured by the brewery in the 80's and early 90's. Still a well-used local but the cavers and potholers, and their artefacts, have long since gone.



Hatters and Unicorn are still available.

Opening Times issue 1 also recorded the closure of another three Stockport pubs - all ex-Wilsons houses - the Grove Inn, Norbury Street (now offices), the Beehive, St Petersgate (demolished) and the Warren Bulkeley, Bridge Street (largely demolished but the frontage was turned 90° and now forms part of Laura Ashley).

## OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING

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 vers 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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Not only is a trip to the Great British Beer Festival an enjoyable day out, if you book your tickets in advance you can save money. Book by 23rd July and receive a £1 discount on single session tickets. If you are a CAMRA member there is an additional discount. CAMRA welcomes families to the festival and provides a Family Room with entertainers and games open until 9pm every night. Children must be supervised by a family member at all times (under 18s must remain within the Family Room).

You can also bring along your work colleagues as we provide a number of corporate hospitality options including tutored beer tastings and a Corporate Lounge. For further information, please visit the festival website [www.gbbf.org](http://www.gbbf.org) or phone CAMRA on 01727 867201.

The Great British Beer Festival is open daily from Tues 3rd August to Sat 7th August and full details of opening times, prices and live music can be found at [www.gbbf.org](http://www.gbbf.org) or on our Information Line 0900 525 2525 (calls to this number cost 60p per minute). Tickets can be booked online or by telephoning 01727 867201; discounts are available for CAMRA members. Remember to leave your car at home as London Olympia is easily reached by public transport.



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# STAGGER

with Peter Edwardson

## HEATON NORRIS

**OUR APRIL stagger took us to the part of Heaton Norris lying on and east of the A6, kicking off at the Railway at the junction with Georges Road. This is an attractive pub with a large vault and comfortable lounge, but unfortunately on this night, although there were handpumps sporting Boddingtons and Theakstons clips, there was no real ale available. The licensee told us that he had only just taken over the pub and planned to put it on again in a few months once refurbishments were complete.**

After this disappointing start, we took a quick look in **Dillon's Whistlin' Jig** (once the Midland) a little further down the hill, to confirm that was still all-keg (it was) before finding succour in the **Magnet**. This former Wilson's pub has a busy vault and an oddly-shaped lounge that gives the appearance of having been extended into the neighbouring building in two separate stages. Equipment was being set up here for karaoke later in the evening. The pub seemed brighter and more welcoming than on previous Stagers, and had three real ales available – Boddingtons Bitter, John Smith's Bitter and the now rare Webster's Yorkshire Bitter, all of which were found to be above average.

We then headed north, missing out the **Hope** on the main road which we knew to be keg-only, and turning right along Belmont Way to reach the **Silver Jubilee** next door to the Belmont Shopping Centre. This Robinson's house is a 1960s estate-style pub with well-separated lounge and vault. It gave the impression of being smart, clean and well-kept, although we felt the twin Guinness and Carling fonts (one each for "standard" and "extra cold") on the bar in the lounge were a little overpowering. Again preparations were being made for live entertainment later on. The real ales available were Hatters Mild and Best Bitter, both of which were above average, with the Best Bitter just shading it.

We found a short cut through the maze of estate streets to bring us to the **Grapes**, at the junction of Old Road and Quantock Close, a former Victorian parsonage now standing out amongst modern

housing. This has been well-refurbished in recent years to provide a pleasant two-bar local. Live entertainment was in full swing in the lounge so our party made for the vault. Virtually everyone tried the Boddingtons Bitter, which was pleasant enough but not quite as good as some recent samples of the new-style brew in other outlets. The other real ale available is Robinson's Best Bitter, which was only sampled by one person who found it about average.

We were disappointed to find no cask beer on sale in the **Grey Horse** on Old Road, which had always been good for a drop of the real stuff in the past, but this gave us more time to enjoy the **Navigation** on the roundabout at the top of Lancashire Hill. This Beartown tied house will be very familiar to most "Opening Times" readers, and as usual both the atmosphere and the beer matched our expectations. One of the party bought some pork scratchings and was amused to read on the packet that they were "only recommended for people with strong teeth". Between us we tried the full Beartown range that was available – Bearskinful, Black Bear, Bruin's Ruin, Kodiak Gold, Pandamonium, Polar Eclipse and Wheat Bear. All were on good form with the Wheat Bear narrowly coming out on top and qualifying as the beer of the night.

Indeed the **Navigation** proved so enjoyable that some of the party decided to stay there rather than completing the stagger, but a group of committed souls were determined to carry on and pressed on down Lancashire Hill to the **Nicholson's Arms**, which we found to be closed, although we believe it is expected to reopen again.

Then, crossing the M60, we came to the **King's Head** on Tiviot Dale. This pub has been given a fairly impressive refurbishment (the outside being finished a few days ago! Ed(2)), with a high ceiling, long bar and extensive wood panelling, and we found it fairly busy tonight with music perhaps a little on the loud side. The only real ale on sale was **Worthington Bitter**, which sadly tends to be an intrinsically bland beer. (Fortunately a *monthly guest beer* now features, too, and has been excellent on recent visits by both Ed(1) & Ed(2)).

Almost opposite was the final port of call, the **Tiviot**. This is an excellent traditional multi-roomed Robinson's pub, that gets busy at lunchtimes and early evenings but tends to be quieter later on, as we found tonight. Nonetheless, we found both the **Hatters Mild** and **Best Bitter** – dispensed here into oversize glasses from metered pumps to ensure full measures – to be on good form. This rounded off the evening very well for those of us who could be bothered to tear themselves away from the **Navigation**.

As ever, these are only the impressions of a particular group of people on one specific night. Why not try the pubs for yourself?



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# PUB NEWS

**Sad to report that the Vale in Bollington is now closed. Trade has been disappointing and the owners have had enough. The pub remains for sale, let's just hope we don't have to wait seven years for it to reopen like the last time it was closed.** Also in Bollington, the leasehold of the Church House is for sale - Enterprise Inns have recently put the pub on the market. I popped in recently and was appalled at being charged £2.30 for a pint of Taylor's Landlord.

**Nearby, in Kerridge, the Bulls Head refurbishment continues and a new landlord is due to arrive any time now.**

In Macclesfield, the Bull and Gate is to be converted into offices while the Durham Ox & White Swan (which have been closed) have been sold as pubs so should reopen soon.

**The George & Dragon in Higher Hurdfield now belongs to a finance company who have installed relief staff while they look to sell it on - more news as we hear it.**

The Swettenham arms is the latest pub in our area to be awarded Cask Marque Accreditation - congratulations to them.

**The Evening Star on James Street, Macclefield, has a 'pub to let' sign on it by Pyramid Pub Management, I have no further details at the moment. The Sun on Mill Lane has changed licensee and on a recent visit was very good, the new licensee is very keen on real ale and wants to introduce as many different ones as possible, and is doing a good job at the moment**

James Russell, 29, is gradually taking over the reigns of the Kings Arms, Wilmslow, from his father, Bob who is preparing for retirement. James has already done the necessary training to achieve the status of licensee and is keen to develop the well established Robinson's house further.

"I've been taking on more responsibility as time goes on, and regularly call on my experience as restaurant manager to develop the business," James told *Opening Times*.

As well as overseeing the restaurant, 'Chilli Banana', at present, James is keen to promote the real ale at the Kings Arms and is heavily involved in ensuring that the bar and cellar is well looked after to provide a good pint of beer in the perfect setting. The decision to take on the pub seemed a natural career progression for the graduate in hotel and catering management, who was vying for a challenge that could test his skills and abilities in the trade. Not only that, to be able to carry on the family business is also an honour much appreciated by James.

With James having so much passion and enthusiasm for his expanding role, his father can be sure that the Kings Arms is in a safe pair of hands so that he can look forward to enjoying his retirement to the full. So it's good news for locals and new visitors alike who can be confident that the excellent reputation of the Kings Arms looks set to continue.

**The George & Dragon, Higher Hurdfield is now closed, on the last day a white van appeared and drove away with all the handpumps, optics, and other fittings. The pub had been offered at a rent of about £750 per week (totally out of reach) as there have been no takers they have pulled the plug.**

Finally, I would just like to apologise to Tony at the Cotton Tree and all of the other people who were upset and annoyed by the pub news about Bollington in the last issue. The comments made were one individual's opinions and were not intended to go to press - CAMRA's policy is to promote real ale pubs, not to run them down.

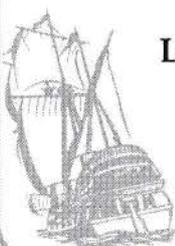
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# CAMRA CALLING!

## Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

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

Diary

### JUNE 2004

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup>** - Shaw Heath/King Street West Stagger: meet 7.30pm Florist, Shaw Heath; 8.30 Armoury, Shaw Heath.

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>** - Pub of the Month presentation to the Bakers Vaults, Market Place, Stockport. From 8.00pm.

**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> July** - Branch Meeting: Cheadle Hulme, Station Road, Cheadle Hulme. Start 8.00pm.

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>** - Stockport Beer Festival Staff Party: Ye Olde Vic, Chatham St, Edgeley. Early evening onwards.

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

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>** - Annual Sponsored Branch Walk. Meet at Kinder Lodge, Hayfield start at 11.00am finish at Star Glossop

**Monday 5<sup>th</sup> July** - Committee Meeting Oddfellows, Hurst, Ashton. Starts 8.30pm

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July** - High Peak Branch hosting the Regional Branches Meeting at the Stalybridge Buffet Bar. Starts 12 noon.

### REGIONAL EVENT

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> June - BEERIENTEERING** 1-2pm Start at the Knott Bar, Deansgate, opp. Deansgate/GMEX stations, Manchester City Centre. Meet by the CAMRA sign.

### JUNE 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:*

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup>** - Branch Pub of the Year Award to Beartown Tap, Congleton. From 3.00pm.

**Monday 21<sup>st</sup>** - Solstice Beer Walk from Rainow to Bollington. Meet 8.00pm in the car park of the Robin Hood, Rainow and on to the Highwayman, Poachers and Rising Sun, returning to the Robin Hood.

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July** - "Independents Day" Treasure Hunt: Duke Street car park next to the Prince of Wales, Macclesfield at noon.

*The Trafford & Hulme Branch covers the Borough of Trafford, Manchester west of the M56/Princess Parkway and a large part of the City Centre. They have advised us of the following events:*

**Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July** - Branch Meeting at the Wheatsheaf, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm.

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup>** - visit to Chester by train. Details at Branch Meeting.

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>** - Stretford Visit - Melville (Holts) at 7.30pm; Trafford Social Club 9.00pm.

### REGIONAL EVENT

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> July - TREASUE HUNT** Registration 12.15 - 1pm, Marble Arch, Rochdale Road Manchester. £4 per team. Excellent fun annual event organised by North Manchester CAMRA.

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA Planner



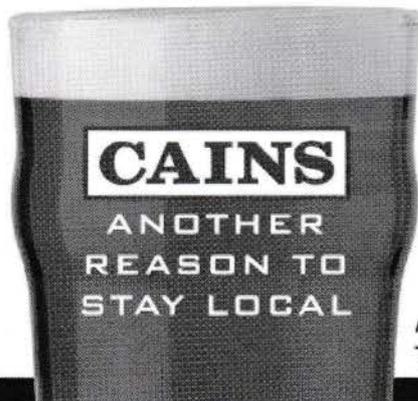
## CAINS

# BREWERY TOURS

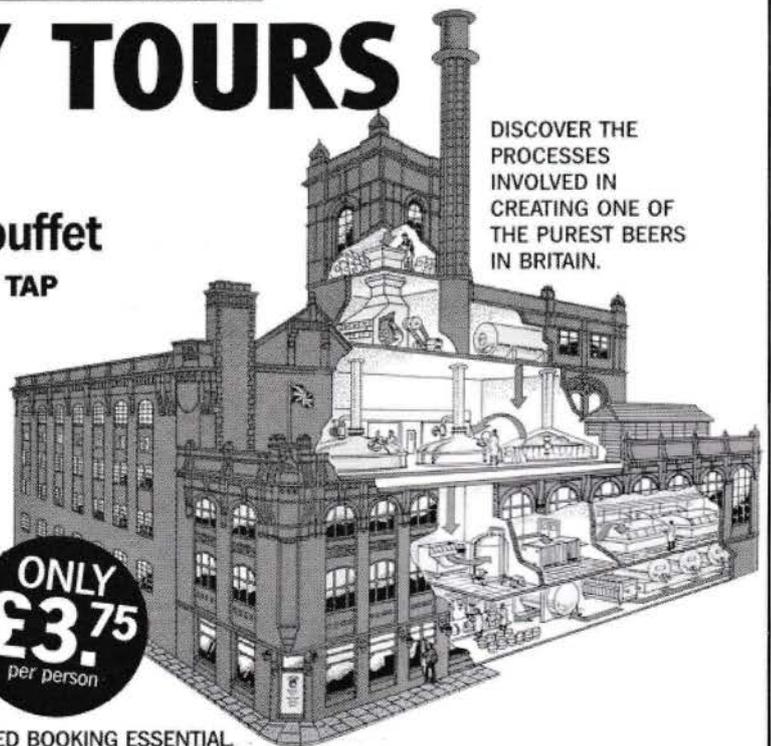
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**BLOWN OFF COURSE**

**T**HE LICENSING ACT that was expected to usher in liberalised pub opening hours is now on the statute book, and full implementation is scheduled for next year, once local authorities have put the necessary arrangements in place. But, on the way, it has sailed into unexpectedly turbulent waters.

There has been a mounting wave of hysteria about the problems caused by "binge drinking", which Tony Blair has just described as "the new British disease". The Association of Chief Police Officers have expressed serious concerns that longer hours will lead to more violence and disorder on the streets. Obviously the root causes of these problems lie in the drinking culture of town-centre circuits, rather than the hours as such, but until the nature of that culture changes, it must be admitted that the police may have a point.

In this climate there is a real risk that the reform will be blown off course. It is not difficult to see the guidance issued by local authorities saying that very few licensed premises will be permitted to open for much longer than they can at present. The vision of local pubs staying open until one or two in the morning to allow the evening session to wind down gently will remain just a pipe-dream. What we are likely to end up with is a much more costly, intrusive and bureaucratic system of regulation that delivers no real benefits for traditional pubs and their customers, even though they bear little or no responsibility for our current alcohol-related problems.

**DRINK TOO CHEAP SHOCK**

The current "binge-drinking" epidemic is usually blamed on irresponsible pub operators, but a factor that many licensees have commented on is that young drinkers are often getting tanked up at home on cheap supermarket booze before heading out for the night. The gap between off- and on-trade prices is growing all the time, and, if you're not too fussy about brands, or take maximum advantage of special offers, you can get drunk remarkably cheaply.

It's generally reckoned that a bottle of whisky, which contains 28 "units" of alcohol, is, if consumed in one session, enough to provide a lethal dose to anyone but a very hardened drinker. You can easily buy a bottle of full-strength economy-brand Scotch for £7.99. For about the same price, you can get three bottles of cheap wine, or eight cans of super-strength lager, both of which would have the same effect.

While this would undoubtedly fall foul of European competition law, might it not be a good idea to impose a minimum price - say 35p - per unit (10 ml) of alcohol? That would make the cheapest bottle of full-strength whisky £10, a 12% bottle of cheapo vino £3.15, and a 500 ml can of 8% lager £1.40. It wouldn't harm any pub (even Holts and Sam Smiths are well over 50p a unit), but it would make a serious difference to those who are after the cheapest drink they can find, and would make it less worthwhile to produce poor-quality products that sell on "bangs per buck".

Curmudgeon Online: <http://members.lycos.co.uk/curmudgeon>



**B**loodbath! was the eye-catching front page headline, warning that local drinkers were likely to feel the effect of the latest round of brewery closures announced the previous month, with popular beers axed or brewed at different sites.

In addition, many local pubs could find themselves with new owners and the possible loss of their guest beers. Vaux had announced that their breweries in both Sunderland and Sheffield were to close, and their entire tenanted estate was to be sold. Furthermore, 300 years of brewing tradition was to be ended by Courage with the closure of their Bristol brewery. CAMRA had claimed that the decline in Courage sales was due to lack of promotion, even though Scottish Courage said this was absolute nonsense. On top of all this was the proposed Whitbread-Allied Domecq deal - Whitbread were to buy the Allied pub estate, and float off its remaining breweries.

If Whitbread succeeded, they would have become the country's biggest pub retailer with an estate of more than 7,000 outlets, but to comply with the (now defunct) Beer Orders it would almost certainly have had to sell its breweries. This would have enabled it to cancel the guest beer rights enjoyed by Whitbread's tenants and Allied's lessees.

★☆☆★★

The month's 'Stagger' was a minibus trip round the pubs of Bramhall, and as so often happens there was little change as far as the tied houses were concerned. But this time there were two notable exceptions to the general rule, concerning the two Boddingtons pubs in the area. The alterations have, however, taken place since the Stagger.

The Ladybrook has for some time been selling quite a wide range of rotating guest beers, as well as the ubiquitous Boddingtons. These have included Cain's Doctor Duncans, Deuchars IPA, Gales and, unusually, beers from Hydes' and Robinson's seasonal ranges. A blackboard lists the current guests, also the ones to follow.

The other Boddington's pub in the centre of Bramhall has now gone forever. After extensive reconstruction, the Orange Tree has emerged, described as a pub with dining rooms, and part of the Noble House Group. Handpumped Boddington's Bitter is still available, accompanied by one or two guest beers, but the main emphasis is now on the restaurant side of the business.

★★★☆☆

On Wilbraham Road, Chorlton, in an obvious move, the next door neighbours, Bar and Bar 2, had been knocked together to form... The Bar. It hadn't been just a simple knock-through, as the opportunity had been taken to create a whole new bar with a clean, modern appearance. Four beers from the Marble Brewery were available on the opening night, complemented by the usual range of German and Belgian bottled beers.



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# THE SPORTSMAN

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**PUB OF THE YEAR 1998 & 1999**



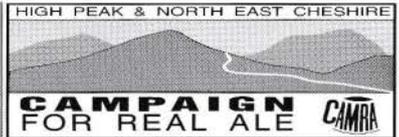
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In Hyde, the Bike & Hounds has some interesting happenings on the beer front. The choice is currently Hancocks HB, Wells Bombadier (£1.30 per pint or £4.00 for a 4 pint pitcher) and Everards Tiger Bitter (£1.50 per pint or £5.00 for a 4 pint pitcher). One theory for these remarkable prices is that it could be to lure some of the customers from the Cotton Bale (Wetherspoons) round the corner. In Godley, the Godley Hall Inn currently has Boddingtons Bitter, Robinson's Best Bitter and one guest beer on offer. Again in Hyde, the Bankfield, opposite Grange Road South (Robinson's) has shut down. A sign outside states that it is up for lease, then another sign says it is for sale. We will keep an eye on this one.

The Tollemache on Huddersfield Road, going out of Mossley, is also shut and maybe significantly, the pub sign has been taken down. Any further information about this former Good Beer Guide pub will be welcomed.

For new licensees Matthew Jones and Alan Roebuck, The Pineapple is the jewel in the crown of Stalybridge. "We have been searching for a pub to build as our own business for some time and were quick to realise the value of the Robinson's pub," said Matthew.

"It's got a great beer garden, its situated in an up and coming area and the kitchen is ideal - perfect for catering. We are already offering more to our new and regular customers by opening all day, and the menu we are planning should be a real draw to the pub," he explained.

Alan previously had the Crown on Hillgate, Stockport from 1997 to 1999 when it was a Vaux pub and managed a Stockport & South Manchester Branch Pub of the Month award in his time there. Matt was previously a bar manager in Houston, Texas (though was born in Ashton). Previous licensees Mark & Pam Mitchell have gone out of the pub trade after a 2003 Good Beer Guide entry, having previously been at the White Hart, Mottram. The Pineapple will keep their range of Hatters, Unicorn Best Bitter & the seasonal guest and will shortly be reopening the kitchen after a three-year gap without food. They particularly want to publicly thank Mark & Pam for good advice and help in getting set up. We wish them the best of luck in their venture.

With such a friendly atmosphere and exciting ideas in the pipeline, Matthew and Alan look set to make the most of Stalybridge's burgeoning popularity, as well as contributing to the area and its community.

At the White Hart in Mottram, Boddingtons Bitter has appeared as a regular beer alongside a fair selection of seven others.

Greg Banks takes over as tenant at the Sportsman in Hyde next month. This will be the first venture into the pub trade for ex-civil servant Greg who tells us that it will be very much a case of 'business as usual'. Greg is a real ale fan and rejoined CAMRA at this year's Stockport Beer Festival. He tells us that food will be reinstated at the Sportsman and will be Chinese, prepared by a Chinese chef.

# The Waters Green Tavern

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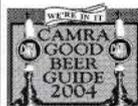
Swale, Millstone, Roosters, Phoenix,

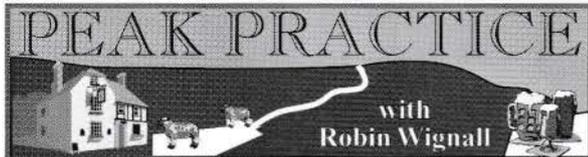
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Your Hosts, Brian and Tracey

Bar Meals Served Mon to Sat Lunch

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**Most drinkers of cask-conditioned beer would be glad to have one pub in their locality listed in the Good Beer Guide.**

Kettleshulme lies on the eastern boundary of Cheshire, in the Peak District foothills, on the main road from Macclesfield to Whaley Bridge, just a couple of miles from the latter. Here drinkers are doubly fortunate, as both pubs in the village are listed in the 2004 Good Beer Guide.

The Bulls Head fronts on to the main road, and is part of a terrace of houses. The 1982 *Real Ale in Cheshire* by CAMRA Cheshire Branches listed it as selling Robinson's Best Bitter and Best Mild. By the 1987 *Cheshire Ale* beers were Tetley Walker Mild and Bitter, but by the 1998 *Out Inn Cheshire*, George Symes' and Simon Scott's excellent publication for the Cheshire Branches, beers were seen as Boddington's Bitter and Castle Eden Ale. When I called recently Boddington's Bitter and Marston's Pedigree looked like fixtures, whilst it was good to see Silk of Amnesia (4.7% ABV) from Storm Brewing, down the road in Macclesfield, also available. The pub has a rural quaintness. There has been some opening out in recent years, but a separate bar room remains, along with a larger through room. Furnishing includes sofas and 1940s/1950 dining chairs with upholstered seats. Darts and table football are available. The Bulls Head is a locals' local, but also welcomes walkers and others enjoying the local countryside.

Just along the road, set at right angles to the main road is the Swan, which asserts itself to be a 15<sup>th</sup> Century coaching inn. The interior is wonderful, with stone floors, genuine beams and low ceilings, and comfortable furnishings in separate rooms, alcoves, nooks and crannies. Thwaites Bitter is a permanent beer, whilst a Khean's beer from Congleton is usually to be found - Village Green (4% ABV) on my visit. The brewer drinks in the Swan! RCH Pitchfork (4.3% ABV) and Slater's Supreme (4.7% ABV) were current guest beers, part of a rolling programme. Lunchtime food is popular. Rural gem is an overused expression in pub descriptions, but the Swan at Kettleshulme certainly deserves the epithet.

Kettleshulme can be reached with public transport. A roughly 2 hourly bus service links Macclesfield and New Mills via Whaley Bridge, during the day only, Monday to Saturday only. You can more easily walk in from Whaley Bridge Station, not a long walk. Enjoying a stroll will enhance the thirst for the Bulls Head and the Swan. Share with the locals of Kettleshulme their two Good Beer Guide pubs!

**LOCAL CAMRA EVENTS  
TREASURE HUNT 2004**

The Annual North Manchester organised 'CAMRA' Independents Day Treasure Hunt will take place on Saturday 3rd July 2004 starting from the Marble Arch public house, Manchester (corner of Rochdale Road and Gould Street).

If you fancy a fun day out with some good friends in pubs selling excellent beers from independent breweries, then why not join in? £4 entry per team. Teams of up to five members welcome.

Registration will take place in the Marble Arch between 12:15 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. Teams to return before 8:00 p.m. (to be confirmed on day) where quiz sheets will be marked and winners announced. Food will be provided and is included in the entry fee. This year's event is organised by last year's volunteers 'Two Dead Goldfish'. Contact Peter on 0161-797-5102 if you have any queries.

**HIGH PEAK BRANCH WALK**

**F**ollowing the success of last year's event, when 48 walkers took part in a walk from Buxton to Hayfield, for local Mountain Rescue teams and raising around £1,600, the Branch walk this year has been planned with a 10.30am meet up at the Kinder Lodge, Hayfield on Saturday 19 June 2004, and ending at the Star in Glossop.

This year's theme is Hospices in the Branch area, currently being chosen by the organisers. There are likely to be three that share the proceeds, to try and cover the Branch area as a whole.

The walk takes the entrants down the Sett Valley Trail, calling at the Pack Horse on Mellor Road, then crossing various trails and fields to Mellor, to visit the Oddfellows, before heading across country past Robin Hoods Picking Roads, to call at the Hare & Hounds in Simmondley, the Beehive at Whitfield, the Queens in Old Glossop and finishing at the Star Inn, convenient for trains home. We welcome anyone from the Opening Times circulation area to ring up for a walking pack, which includes the route and a sponsor form. Anyone wishing to take part, please contact Frank Wood on 01457 865426 or 07960074996 (evenings).



**The Caledonia Hotel**

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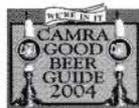
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**OF RICE AND MEN**

Before I depart on a report of my bombinations around nether Bamberg a few months ago, the antics of Anheuser-Busch cannot be allowed to pass entirely without comment. As you may discover from Brewery News (via the BBC), Budweiser, the \*\*\*\* of Beers - so good its largely made from rice rather than barley to prevent anything bad like flavour developing, is matured in the brewery for - well - whole minutes rather than the six week minimum of a proper lager, and actually makes a marketing virtue of being so 'fresh' (ie. green - or immature and before flavour can develop) that the eventual aim is for it to be consumed on the very day its born! (Saves a colossal amount on warehousing, I suppose). Where was I, oh yes, the (imho) tasteless rice-garbage (Budweiser) of this (imho) loathsome mega-chemical-combine, (imho) far more evil than the military-industrial-complex I was brought up to hate, is going to be the only beer available at stadia for the 2006 World Cup - in GERMANY! I think the Bavarian State Government should pass an ordinance reinstating the Reinheitsgebot (Beer Purity Law) as being a minimum health requirement, since rice is not on the permitted ingredient list (malted barley, water and latterly hops and wheat malt - only for wheat beers). As health matters are still (prior to the EU constitution) a local competence, it would annoy FIFA AND the EU, but in the short term they could win. Talking of the rice-beer makers, they are currently having a spat with SABMiller (19% of the US beer market) over the merits of Miller-Lite & Bud-Lite. I kid you not, these people actually believe their products have merit. Taste - no, indeed Bud-lite (even less taste than Budweiser) is rumoured to have patented anti-taste, so that it actually removes taste sensation from drinkers. It all comes down to the Atkins diet and low-carb levels. Bud-Lite has rather too many carbs (more indeed than most Brit-fizz) and Miller have been crowing. Bud has retaliated by calling Miller the 'Queen of Carbs' - and Miller are now suing for the 'homosexual slur'. Obviously they've never heard of her majesty Queen Elizabeth II. AB have also just beaten SAB to buy out a big regional Chinese Brewery. MORE rice beer. Ugh!

**RAUCH BITTE, KEIN REIS!**

No rice beer in Bamberg, fortunately, though there was rather a lot of Rauch (smoked) bier! Due to rather more snow than I was expecting (this being March) plans to trek off into the Aischgrund and Stiegerwald were put off until the autumn and I did the rounds of Bamberg and the environs, staying at the excellent Fassla in Oberkonigstrasse. We were just into the



doppelbock season, but I still failed to spot the small cask of Bambergator that makes (or so legend has it) an annual appearance. I think it may be on St Joseph's day. Oh well, next year. Bottles WERE available, and interesting they were too. Of the nine breweries (and taps) in Bamberg itself, this time I made the set.

All are worthwhile but I still think Keesman (for the Herren Pils and pale Bock in winter), Spezial (Lager - but it IS smoked [though not overpoweringly]) and an unfiltered kellerbeer that can be the cloudiest thing you ever see that is still drinkable) and Mahrs who in 2002 produced my favourite-ever beer - Heinrichbier, and have now reformulated their lager to a similar though more robust flavour, and produce a number of delightful draught and bottled beers - plus really excellent food - remain my personal favourites. You inevitably end up drinking more Fassla than anything else, purely for the convenience, and I think their Gold-pils is winning my heart from the lager.

Two non-tied outlets that are very worthy of note, Tambosi in the ZOB (bus station) serves Schmitt-Brau from nearby Schesslitz and is a good place to allay the aftereffects of last night in the morning before setting off for the day's business. (Beer!). Cafe Abseits (Podeldorfer Str.) a studenty bar, was a revelation though. Informed, intelligent and friendly staff (unafraid to use English) and a GUEST BEER policy. Rather like the excellent Cask on Liverpool Road, Manchester they have a month's residency of a guest brewery, running through their draught

**OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS**

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gentle beer. And at little over £1 a pint for 5%ABV...

A little further afield are the villages of Memmelsdorf, Drosendorf (both bus 7) and Merkendorf(27), with two, one and two breweries respectively. Sadly Leicht in Memmelsdorf recently closed, but Drei Kronen (great food and a superb kellerrauchbier called Stoffla - plus THE cutest waitress!), and Hohn (a fine Spezialbier) are still going strong, as is the excellent Goller in Drosendorf, at the bus terminus, but the discovery of the visit was in the Hummel brew pub in Merkendorf. Fully prepared for their excellent Rauchla, a mid-strength (5.5%) lightly smoked brown lager not dissimilar to that of Bamberg's Spezial, I found they had on draught - a smoked doppelbock at just over 9%. Well I tried a half (litre) and was amazed, rich, malty and with a heady but in no way overpowering smokiness, roast, chocolate and slightly raisiny, but as it went down it warmed and gently overpowered you, so I had another, and another... and went back two days later for more. If you like Old Tom or Moonraker, you'd love this. If I was to drown in a butt of beer, this would be my choice. I'd certainly die with a smile. Still leading as my beer of the year but only available on draught in March. The other Merkendorf micro (Wagner) does a very creditable ungespundete lagerbier. If you're going to Franconia BUY John Conen's book (Bamberg & Franconia, Germany's Brewing Heartland) £9.99 from CAMRA HQ. Up to date and indispensable. Next month - Recent Festivals

range and stocking all the bottled beers. Helpfully they give details on the web as well! (www.abseits.de). It seems they specialise in stuff from inaccessible Franconian breweries too. Just out of town in Biscberg, (Bus No 6) is the excellent Zu Sonne (whose beers will come to Manchester if we ever get the Winter Ales Festival back!) Their draught pale and hazy Vollbier is a quite exquisite subtle and



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# MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

## BEER HOUSE RE-OPENS

**T**his bastion of real ale in the Northern Quarter reopened its doors to the public on Saturday, May 15. Now in the experienced hands of ex-Pot of Beer couple, Paul and Sue, the first night's opening was, in Paul's words "an incredible success". Despite only word-of-mouth knowledge, trade was said to be up tenfold! When I called in the following afternoon it was to be greeted by an understandably depleted bar offering of St Austell Tribute, Highgate Mild, Wadworth 6X and Black Sheep bitter. Half a dozen or so beers being on should be the norm in future. At present, Sue and Paul are managers on behalf of a company leasing the pub from InnSpired, but all being well six months hence, they should have the freedom of a tenancy; allowing them to source a greater range of beers. The food menu at lunchtimes is being revamped to allow for speedier service but still satisfying in quantity. All in all, a very worthy start to what could be the re-birth of the Beer House.

Meanwhile, the **Pot of Beer** remains closed and forlorn, awaiting its fate. I did however manage to call in on the very last night and get one of the very last pints. The photo showing Paul pulling that very pint.

### ONE YEAR AT THE LLOYDS

Nick Baynes celebrates 12 months at the helm of the Lloyds Hotel in Chorlton on 27<sup>th</sup> of this month and tells me he is looking back on a year of steady progress at this popular JW Lees house. The aim has been to achieve consistency across the board and this has resulted in a pleasing increase in cask ale sales, so much so that the pub is now principally wet led rather than food led (although the food trade is still good and the pub offers a wide and varied menu). The range comprises Lees Bitter,



Moonraker and the current seasonal – the Moonraker took the place of Mild and has been a definite success, selling 2½ pints (that's about 10 or so gallons) a week, compared to the average gallon a week sold of the mild.

Live music has now been established every Thursday, alternating with jazz and blues, and this is proving very popular. Plans for the future includes more support for the bowling club that makes use of the well-tended green to the rear of the pub and 100 new named shirts for the club members are already on order.

I have been a supported of Nick's efforts here since he moved in and I have been encouraged to see the slow but sure development of this pub – better a slow fuse than an overnight flash in the pan, I think. And of course, across the road is the excellent **Belgian Belly**, always an essential stop when in Chorlton. It would only take a slight leap of imagination of the part of Lees' management to engineer some sort of synergy between the Lloyds and the Belly – using the pub to showcase the unusual Belgian beers sourced by Jason Barker (who only has an off license) could create a real selling point for the Lloyds. What about it folks?

### WHAT'S DOING IN THE CITY

Not a lot to report this time. There has however been a new opening in the Northern Quarter, this time on Thomas Street, near the Craft Market. Part of the Fat Cat Group, it's part of a small chain all going by the name of **Bluu**. To my surprise, I see that it sells cask beer (although as you might expect, it's not cheap). Both Theakstons XB and Marston's Pedigree are on handpump, both at £2.30 a pint, and there's also Budvar available in bottle. I'm told the manager is a real ale drinker (always a good sign) and as a bonus, Bluu has quite extensive

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opening house – until midnight Sunday-Tuesday, 1.00am Wednesday and Thursday and 2.00am Friday and Saturday. They'll feed you from noon 'til 6.00pm Monday to Saturday plus Sunday lunches. I'm also pleased to say that after several months of false starts, the exterior of Bar Fringe has finally been renovated to match the spruced-up interior. Whilst the Hoegaarden branding may not be quite to everyone's taste (it is part of Interbrew after all - albeit usually quite a decent beer) the blue/silver/off-white colours are undeniably very smart.

**AND OUT IN THE SUBURBS**

The Chorlton/Southern Cemetery part of Princess Road/Barlow Moor Road is to get a brand new pub. Part of a motel development on the site of the former Oaks pub, this is to be one of those dining-pubs next to a Travel Inn type affair. Cask ale might be on the menu, but who knows.

Rolls-Royce and company's founders have been in the news of late, the centenary of the partnership or some such. Whatever it is, the area around Hulme that once housed their early production facilities is becoming a desert as far as pubs go. The **Sir Henry Royce** (ex Whitbread) was demolished in late May; the **Grants Arms** became something other than a pub; the **Unicorn** and the **Mancunian** have been demolished, whilst a former Burtonwood house (I can't recall the name) off Boundary Lane is now the site of much housing construction. Just about the only pubs now left in Hulme appear to be **Robinson's Arch Bar**; **Hydes' Junction Inn**; the **Three Legs of Man** and **Platford Hotel** on Stretford Road. No doubt the 'new' Hulme will see new pubs and bars spring to life.

A visit to Gorton was pretty dispiriting, too. The **Coach & Horses** on the corner of Hyde Road and BelleVue Street has been closed by Robinson's. It just wasn't doing any business, it seems. This is a sad end to what was a fine pub in the days when Beryl Lavelle had it.



Nearby, well...The **Midland** is now a vacant site, the **Cheshire Hunt** has long since been converted to other uses, the **Nags Head** is keg as is the **Imperial** (which is due to be auctioned off on 25 June). The Imperial was of course the tap of the long-closed Stopford's Imperial Brewery, which has now vanished without trace – well almost. Here's a quiz for you – which pub in the *Opening Times* area still bears a reference to this old company?

Back to Gorton, the **Dolphin** is also closed and to let for other uses and next door the **Junction** is a vacant site hidden by billboards. Thank God for the **Travellers Call** and the **Pineapple**, two Hydes houses still offering good cask beer. I popped into the Travellers and was very impressed by the Bitter. The pub's walls are covered in photographs of all the vanished pubs in the area – study them and weep.

But some good news, too. Two real ale gains, in fact with both the **Derby Arms** in Ladybarn and the **Hardy's Well** in Rusholme both returning to the cask ale fold with Boddingtons Bitter. Finally, I am told that 'Kro 3' has in fact been open for three months! A full report next time.

**LOCAL CAMRA AWARD**

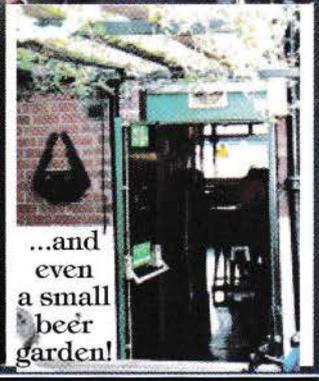


Ellie Owen, Licensee of the Lass 'O Gowrie, Manchester, with her delightful staff and (holding the award) Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA committee member Mark McConachie, at the very successful night to celebrate the Lass being the branch's May 2004 Pub of the Month.

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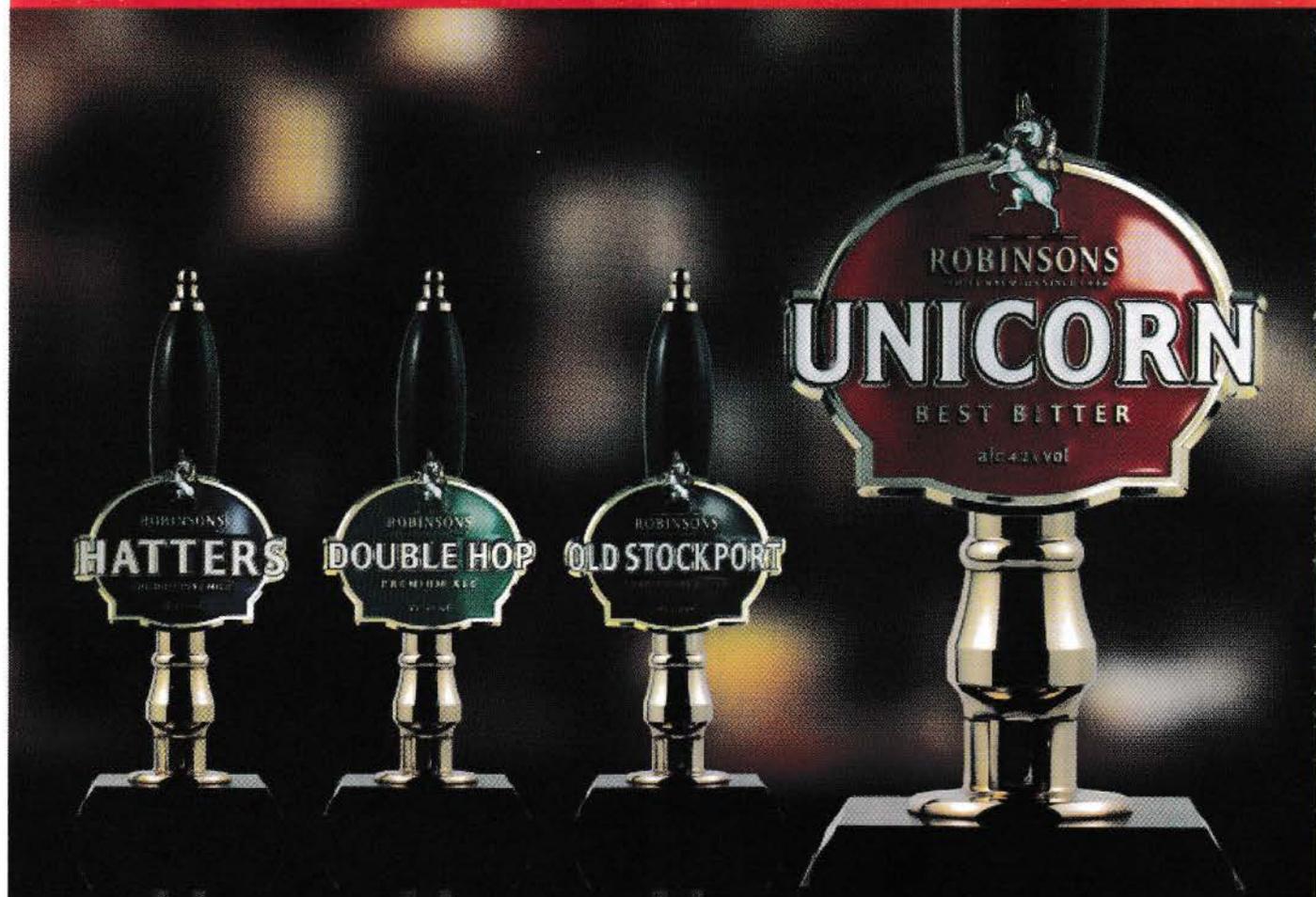


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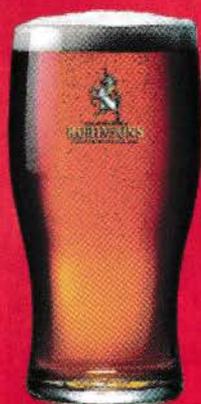


...and even a small beer garden!

# What's brewing at Robinsons?



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