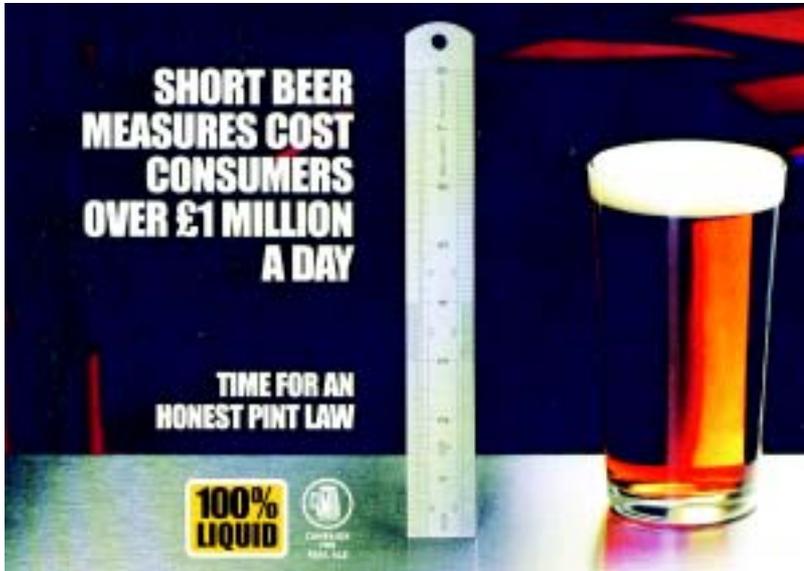


The FREE CAMRA Regional Magazine covering Central, East & South Manchester; Stockport; Tameside; Trafford; N.E. Cheshire & Macclesfield



It's Now or Never For Full Pints

CAMRA TO NAME AND SHAME 'SHORT MEASURE' MPs

It's make or break time in the fight for full pints, with new rules due this year that could see fair measure finally enshrined in law – or kicked into the long grass for years.

The Government is planning changes to the Weights & Measures Act that would allow licensees to serve pints of "not less than 95 per cent liquid."

The new law would end the limbo in which a pint is ill-defined and local councils are reluctant to prosecute. But CAMRA and its allies, the Trading Standards Institute and the Local Authority Co-ordination of Regulatory Services, believe it would be a change for the worse.

Courts would not convict on shortfalls of only two or three per cent, so the standard "pint" would be only 92 per cent liquid – or just over half a litre.

CAMRA and trading standards are lobbying the Department of Trade & Industry to go for a 100 per cent liquid pint, but CAMRA Public Affairs Manager Jonathan Mail said that in the face of intense industry lobbying, the DTI seemed set on implementing the 95 per cent option.

"If that happens, the issue will be off the agenda for the next 10 years, or even 15 years," he warned. The best hope for budging the DTI lies in Early Day Motion 331 sponsored by Labour MP Dennis Turner calling for a pint to mean a pint, which has gathered 212 signatures.

Even more hopeful is the fact that 160 of the signatories are labour, while most Conservatives who have been asked to sign have responded with a standard letter backing the DTI proposals. That could leave the Government relying on Conservative votes to push through an anti-consumer, pro-big business measure which is deeply unpopular with its own backbenchers.

Jonathan Mail said: "This EDM has proved a hit with MPs – 90 more signed it last month and it is still gathering momentum. It's absolutely vital that we keep up the pressure on the DTI y getting more MPs to sign. If you haven't written to your MP yet, do it now. It's our last chance to head off this measure – and once it gets into the Act, it'll be there for years."

He warned MPs who refused to sign: "If you want to be publicly seen standing up for the industry and against the consumer, now's your chance. We're keeping track of MPs who refuse to sign and we'll be naming and shaming them so, come the election, everyone will know who watches out for Joe Public, and who watches out for big business."

SWAN SAVED

LOCALS RESCUE VILLAGE PUB

The history of the Swan in Kettlethulme could have easily been the all too familiar one of well-loved village local closing and being turned into private housing for the well-heeled. However this is a story with a happy ending as the 600-year old pub has been rescued by a 21-strong consortium of locals who have reached deep into their pockets to raise the £425,000 asking price.



The sudden closure of the pub by landlord Ian Edmonds shocked the villagers but they seemed helpless to prevent it as the 15th century coaching inn had long had planning permission for change of use. Edmonds' aim was to convert the pub into a home for his family, and also build another property on the car park.

He did however indicate to the locals that he would sell the pub to them for its value as a private residence but when they came up with the money he suddenly changed his mind. What brought about his second volte face and decision to sell after all is unclear although *Opening Times* has heard that refusal of planning permission for that second house on the car park may have played a part. Whether that's the case or not, the good news is that the pub is now safely in the hands of the locals, following the exchange of contracts on St Valentines Day.

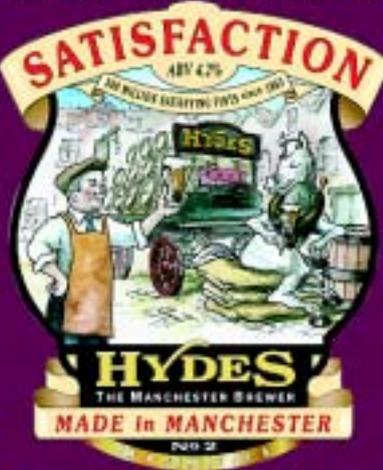
Local Matthew Barnes told *Opening Times*: "We had seen the Post office and the shop disappear from the village and when we heard about the pub the community decided to get together to try and save it. "It is a massive part of village life...and has been for centuries. We were determined that the owner, who had only been in the village for four years, shouldn't turn this well-respected pub into a house."

The group is now working hard to get the pub fit to reopen with a mid-March opening date pencilled in. John Adamson, who was landlord of the pub for 20 years until 2000, and who still lives locally, will initially take over the license. The consortium is however looking for a new permanent landlord to run this historic village pub.

Matthew told us: "John is looking forward to welcoming back all the regulars when the Swan reopens its doors, which should be sometime within the next fortnight."

It is expected that the Swan will aim to regain its reputation for selling a range of cask ales and home cooked food. Check out its progress and keep up to date with developments via the website at www.the-swan-in-kettlethulme.co.uk. When stories of rural pub closures are rife, what has happened at the Swan is good news indeed. We will bring you more news after the pub has opened. JC

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PUB OF THE MONTH
MARCH 2005

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		



The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for March is Ye Olde Vic, Chatham Street, Edgeley.

Situated about 200m from the Greek Street roundabout, on the corner of King Street West and Chatham Street, the pub has been in the expert hands of Steve Brannan and his partner Johanne Quinn, both huge fans of real ale, for the last 5½ years. On entering the pub gives the impression of being a converted house (although it has been a pub since about 1864) with the bar running down about half the left-hand wall. This has recently been refurbished with all new fonts and handpumps together with new beer lines. There are six handpumps in all, one is dedicated to Westons Vintage Cider and the other five dispense an ever-changing range of guest beers from all over the UK. Steve tells me that some 1,200 different ales have passed through the pumps since he took over, many supplied by Dave Ball ('The Major') of the Really Nice Beer Co.

While the interior is basically open-plan, it has a multi-room feel and the cosy atmosphere is enhanced by the open fire in the winter months. The pub is decorated in classic 1930s junk shop style with memorabilia from forgotten eras adorning the walls, shelves and any other available area – all tastefully done and providing interesting topics of conversation, with Steve being able to provide a history of most, if not all, of the items on view. To the rear of the pub is a stepped marquee covered area which may be available for private functions during the summer months. Steve and Johanne operate a strict no swearing policy throughout the pub, with persistent offenders being ejected and advised to clean up their act if they wish to be served on future visits. The upshot of this is that the pub is very 'female friendly', with no fear of intimidation by loutish group of males.

Alternate Fridays can be very busy during the rugby season due to the Sale Sharks fans often drinking pub almost dry. We'll be trying to do the same on the presentation night, Thursday 24th March. Get there early if you want a seat. PF

On Other Pages in MARCH's OPENING TIMES ...

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Letters 5 Mild Challenge 11 Mcr. Matters 18
Brewery News 6 CAMRA Calling 12 T & H Pub 19



Facer's Brewery

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IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

If you never wrote a letter in your life, do it now. If you never contacted your MP in your life, do it now. One of CAMRA's most cherished campaigns is on the line. For years we have fought and written and argued and done everything we could to get the simple truth acknowledged that a pint is a pint, not 19 fluid ounces and certainly not half a litre. Now it's crunch time. We're a few months away from getting what we want - or seeing it slip away for a generation. It's a source of huge frustration that we have to repeatedly nail the lies that buttress one of the biggest consumer rip-offs of all time. But if the facts need to be repeated, so be it. **FACT:** full pints won't mean higher prices. Prices are based on a range of factors, of which the cost of the beer is just one - and a pretty minor one at that. Pubs that serve full pints don't charge higher prices. **FACT:** full pint legislation won't hurt the little guy. The country publican and the back street tenant aren't the ones we've historically seen charged with short measure. It's the big boys, the vast managed house chains, which as a matter of course order mangers to get 76 'pints' out of a 72-pint cask. **FACT:** full pints won't mean the end of the big head. Publicans whose customers demand foam on the top of their ale can use over-sized lined glasses. **FACT:** full pints will help the brewing industry. Mysteriously, the pub trade sells 200 million pints a year more than it buys - that's 70,000 barrels - something like the entire output of Hydes' last year! **FACT:** full pints will benefit the Treasury. Those 70,000 missing barrels would yield around £3.5 million in excise duty and £7 million in VAT. This really is the last chance. Write to your MP (at House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA). Confront them with the facts and challenge them to say whose side they are on. Get them to sign EDM 331 and ask them to promise to vote against the new Weights & Measures regulations later this year. 10 minutes spent writing a letter and the cost of a stamp is all that it will take. Please - do it now. *John Clarke*

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Local CAMRA Pub of the Month, Feb 2004



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OF THE MONTH MARCH 2005

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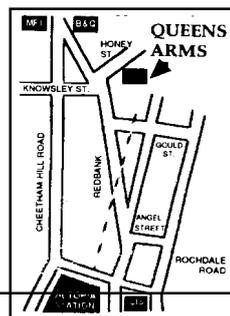
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PUB OF THE YEAR 2002-3

Bantam Bitter £1.50 a pint,
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9.30pm start

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Sunday Roast

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Loads of news for you this month....

First a bit of club news. **Heaton Moor Conservative Club** has recently added two extra real ales in the form of Three Rivers GMT and Marston's Pedigree, which will be sold at a very competitive £1.50 a pint. Their two existing real ales - Beartown Kodiak Gold and Boddingtons Bitter - are priced at £1.50 and £1.75 respectively. It is good to see a club supporting local micro-breweries in this way, and when I called the Kodiak Gold was on excellent form. While it is a private club new members are always welcome.

ON EDGELEY...

It looks like the **Gardeners Arms** on Northgate Road has abandoned real ale. I've been in twice recently and despite the array of handpumps, complete with pumpclips, for Boddingtons Bitter, only the smooth version has been available. On my last visit I was in fact informed that this was because cask was 'dying out'. It seems that InBev and Hydes have quite a job on their hands to make sure Boddingtons Cask has a viable future. As for the Gardeners, this is quite a sad loss as it is otherwise a pleasant, well-run pub. The people from the Gardeners have also taken over the nearby **Bow Garrett** on Brinksway, which has been very impressively refurbished with a winning combination of clean modern lines and traditional furnishings. Sadly there is again no real ale available.

There's better news at the **Jolly Crofter**, though. New licensee David Flint is a cask ale man and has introduced a weekly guest beer alongside the Boddies. I keep trying to have a word with him but have so far managed to call when he's been out - still, it's been a good chance to try some of the guests. A fine pint of Wadsworth's JCB was sampled at the end of February. Elsewhere in Edgeley, the **Greyhound** had just reopened after a major refurbishment as this was written. I'll make sure I call in before the next issue. The nearby **Olde Vic** on Chatham Street has had the bar refitted with new handpumps and low level keg taps. All six handpumps, one for Westons cider, the rest for guest beers, now all work at the same time! The Olde Vic has also been dabbling with mild of late. A Mauldons mild was sampled recently and found to be in very good nick. The Olde Vic will be included in this year's Mild Challenge.

TOWN CENTRE NEWS

Another Mild Challenge returnee will be the **Crown**, Heaton Lane. Graham at the Crown was showing customers the pumpclip for the 3.9% house beer that should now be on the bar. Brewed locally, possibly in Greater Manchester, it should be nicely hoppy, with a retail price of £1.75.

It looks as though **Abbey Bar's** experiment with cask ale has finally come to an end. The lonely, and barely used, handpump on the bar has finally been removed. I do think this is a lost opportunity - most of Manchester's successful and independently run bars try and offer an interesting range of beer, both cask and in bottle, yet Abbey seems content to settle for the bog standard.

In the Market area, there are interesting developments afoot at the **Thatched House** on Churchgate. The bar area is to be substantially refurbished and this will enable a fifth handpump to be installed. The handpumped range will then comprise Boddies Bitter, Worthington Bitter, two guest beers and Westons Old Rosie cider. I had a long chat with landlady Lisa, who told me that after the changes she would be joining the Punch guest beer scheme, which will enable the pub to sell a wider range of guest beers. She will also be looking to offer an additional real cider and/or perry (she's very keen on perry) and an expanded bottled beer range. The bottled range is already good with 16 available including Brakspear Organic, Shepherd Neame Bishops Finger, Young's Old Nick, Marston's Owd Rodger, Wells Banana Bread and a Wychwood range including the excellent Black Wych Stout. This aim is to increase this to 25, including Belgian trappist beers and bottled conditioned ales from local micro brewers. I must say I've always had a soft spot for this pub - it's well known for the music, of course, but if you want a quieter drink there try Tuesday nights or 'early doors' on Saturday and Sunday. Well worth a visit.

Across the road from the Thatched is the **Rectory** where landlord John Ditchburn is also a cask ale fan. The range on

handpump comprises Theakstons Bitter and a changing guest beer. When I last dropped in this was Charles Wells' John Bull, a very tasty pint. While a large part of the Rectory is given over to dining there are some very pleasant and comfortable public areas, too.

IN THE SUBURBS

Debbie Doran and her husband Peter took over the **Crown** (Hydes', High Street, Cheadle) in August 2003, and turned the pub around. The Crown was then struggling a little, having suffered a series of short-term managers: now, 18 months later, it's thriving. But Debbie likes a challenge, it seems: rather than rest on their laurels at the Crown, she and Pete are moving on (and changing breweries) to take over the tenancy of the **Royal Oak** (Robinson's, Stockport Road, Cheadle). For too many years the Oak has not lived up to its potential: it is (should be) a fine village pub, having four rooms and a good cellar. But, even for those with long memories, only intermittently could it be recommended as a welcoming place with good beer. With their track record at the Crown, we can look forward to Debbie and Pete ensuring consistently good ales and good lunchtime food, when they take over in early April. We wish them well; as we do the (as yet unknown) new managers of the Crown, who will be taking over a fine little pub.

I also managed to call in at the **Four Heatons** (Hydes', Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris) at the end of April. Chris and Zena Marlborough were just recovering from a huge charity event the night before when an amazing prize raffle and auction looks to have raised loads of money for the Stepping Hill Baby Unit. Chris told me how well things have gone in the four months since they took over with beer sales up something like 60 per cent (or more) and lots of this cask. Just two Hydes' beers are sold - Bitter and Light, and sales of Light are now a very impressive seven 18-gallon casks a week. There's a nice line in pub food available as well - simple home-made dished in the week (stew and dumplings, sausage casserole) is complemented by Sunday roasts, which Chris tells me have proved very popular.

Neil Chesworth has realised his longstanding ambition of running a pub by taking over as licensee of the **Robin Hood**, Hazel Grove. The new venture marks a return to the area for Neil who had lived in Marple for the past five years. "I grew up in Hazel Grove and attended

the High School, so it's great to be back in the community and among old friends again," Neil told me. In his new venture, which is a change from his previous career in logistics, Neil is joined by his wife Debra and his brother-in-law Mark



Spencer. "Debra and I have been planning this move for a long time, and with Mark on the team, who has worked in the licensed trade for the past ten years, we have all the skills and enthusiasm to deliver a first class service to our customers," he explained.

As well as some old friends from the area, Neil, Debra and Mark are enjoying the company of their richly varied clientele, such as the motorbike and scooter clubs that meet at the pub once a week, and they are now concentrating on building on their early success to attract more customers to the Robinson's house. Top priority has been to start serving home cooked food on a daily basis at the Robin Hood, which Neil and Debra prepare themselves from fresh ingredients. "We both love to cook so it's been a real pleasure working together and developing the menu. We are also putting a lot of effort into looking after the cask conditioned beer which the customers certainly seem to appreciate," he says.

Following my notes on Reddish last month, it seems I was somewhat over-optimistic about the prospects of the **Grey Horse**. The new licensee has now departed and I hear that the pub is again boarded up. On the other hand, the **Three Shires** in the town centre has re-opened following the fire. I managed a quick visit on opening night and was impressed with the redecoration together with the exceptionally fine Courage Directors on handpump.

Finally, I'm pleased to see that there is a new chef in place at the **Railway**, Portwood. I've not tried the food yet but the menu looks tempting. The food is available 12-3, Monday to Saturday.

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Ron Needham Hazel Grove:

I write with regard to your front page article in the February edition of Opening Times in which you list some of the local pubs which sell Old Tom.

My friends and I are regular drinkers of this fine brew which is kept in tip top condition throughout the year by Ronnie Barker, the landlord of our local, the Travellers Call, Great Moor, Stockport. Even during some summers when Robinson's do not brew it! "Customer service at its best".

It is because of this that we would welcome a well deserved mention of our pub in your most informative pub-lication. Please forgive the pun!

(Duly forgiven! Always good to hear of another outlet serving Old Tom in top form - I've not been to the Travellers for some time but everything I hear about it is always good. Ed(1))

From: Robin Pendragon, Manchester:

Cityman might like to know that those of us who wrote the 1975 Manchester Pub Guide were as much concerned about the history of the Coach & Horses on London Road as with the stuff being sold there. A Regency stopover for mail coach travellers it was known to pre-date Fairfield Station (later Piccadilly Station) opposite by a century or more, yet it was going to rack and ruin and seemed to have no listed building protection. CAMRA had started by 1975. I seem to remember first reports of it circulating around 1972 thought for a long time people thought it was a re-named SPBW or BPS.

Manchester has a deplorable reputation for failing to support threatened pubs. Coach & Horses is not the first and will not be the last ancient building to fall, like Tommy Duck's to a JCB. Does anyone else remember the Old Boar's Head, the Oxford, the Griffin, the Manchester Arms and the Queen's Hotel? I seem to remember we listed them all (in the Manchester Pub Guide) in 1975. All are now hardcore.

The subject of gas lights in pubs goes back to the late 18th century around Preston where the first supplies to pubs are said to have been laid. There are still a few pubs around with gas light. The Bee Hive in Bradford, Yorkshire, is one, though if memory serves I seem to remember that the gas only supplemented electric lighting at the Lass O'Gowrie? There are good reasons for the retention of gas lighting, one of which is that gas light is known to induce a calmer atmosphere so it is to be regretted that the Lass have done away with theirs. Maybe they will reconsider if they experience serious brawling in the near future?

From Neil Kellett, founder Hon. Treasurer of the Stockport & South Manchester Branc, January 1974:

Congratulations on the 250th issue of OT.

I read with great interest the Opening Times 1984-2005 article written by Phil Levison in issue 250. Phil asked what happened to Anna Greenhalgh, editor of the original OT in the mid-seventies.

Well, I am in regular drinking contact with Anna and husband Richard and am godfather to their second son James who is now 17 years old.

Anna and Richard live in North Yorkshire just outside Settle and are involved with the Keighley & Craven branch of CAMRA.

As well as being involved in CAMRA in South Manchester in the early days they have been members of the Star Investment Club (formed at the Star Inn in Cheadle) since its inception in 1982. The CAMRA Investment Club is based on the framework of the Star Investment Club.

Anna and Richard still share a love of mild real ale although the tasting of their favourite tippie has been interrupted by working sessions abroad in Papua New Guinea, Guyana, Uganda, and, currently, in Nigeria. In between the periods abroad I manage to share a pint with them at least a couple of times a year - usually mild for them and Timothy Taylor's Landlord for me! Long live OT for another 250+ editions.

(Many thanks for that Neil - Ed(1))

CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 251:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Butler, Paul Formby, Paul Moss, Ruth Andrew, Robin Wignall, Phil Levison, Peter Edwardson, Charlotte Bulmer, Tom Lord, Brian Taylor, Andy Jenkinson, Geoff Johnson, Jim Flynn, Frank Wood, Mark McConachie, Neil Worthington, Stuart Ballantyne.

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PLUS OUR USUAL DRAUGHT &
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(AND EVEN FOOD!)



WE MUST BE MAD!

BAAAH!





ROBBIES HELP PUBS WITH NEW LICENSES



Thorough preparation by Robinson's has placed its 408-strong estate of tenanted and managed houses in an envious position to take on the raft of challenges presented by the current changes in licensing law.

Under the pioneering scheme, spearheaded by director William Robinson, Robbies will drive forward the application process both for the premises, and the new personal licences, with a firm of solicitors having been appointed to co-ordinate the final submissions.

"Our tenants will be heavily involved in the process, so as part of our support package, we have delivered a series of road shows that clearly set out the facts behind licensing transition and how the Company is managing the change," explained William Robinson.

The good news for Robinson's tenants is that the Company has made the decision to look after every one of the premises licenses in the estate, and to pay for the associated conversion and ongoing annual fees. "Our district managers are now in the process of making individual appointments to visit each of our tenants to help guide them through the whole application process," added Mr Robinson.

Within the all encompassing package for Robinson's tenants and managers the company's solicitors will be checking each application for accuracy before making the submission, and they are also available to act on behalf of tenants if their applications are contested.

The series of eleven road shows, that has this year has reached out to every corner of Robinson's North West and North Wales estate, were presented by William Robinson and addressed the core issues of the Licensing Act. The take-up rate of the Company presentation has been in the region of 90 percent, and in many cases newly appointed Local Authority licensing offic-

ers also embraced the invitation to take advantage and find out more about how the process is being handled by Robinson's. It is now envisaged that all houses within Robinson's estate will have made their applications for new licences well ahead of the 6th August cut-off date.

FAMILY FAVOURITES

All of our family brewers have seasonal beers out this month.

Robinson's – the beer to look out for is England's Champion (3.9% ABV), a full-bodied, crisp, hoppy beer made with all English ingredients. You may be able to catch the last of Enigma (4.7% ABV), the popular January/February seasonal beer. Old Tom remains available in select outlets and although one or two will now be resting it until next winter, some twenty new outlets are coming on stream following its winning the CAMRA Supreme National Winter Ale Award in January, one being the excellent Hatters Arms in Marple.



Hydes' – again a new beer this month in the form of Satisfaction (4.2% ABV), a "smooth, satisfying and full flavoured" beer with "great balance and a well rounded finish". This



beer is brewed to mark 500 million pints from Hydes brewery since 1863. And of course, cask Boddingtons is now also coming from Hydes where five new fermenters have been installed.



JW Lees – as Icebreaker (4% ABV) comes to an end (and very tasty it was – perhaps one of the better Lees wheat beers) look out for Dragons Fire (4.5% ABV)

described as a rich amber ale. This will be available in outlets such as Rain Bar in the City Centre, the Lloyds in Chorlton and the Urmston in Urmston.

Holts – Thunderholt (4.5% ABV) is out this month. It's a dark-ish rich beer which is also very quaffable. Far better than last month's Nearly Holt Upright.



Cains - Liverpool brewery Cains has achieved what its owners Ajmail and Sudarghara describe as "the biggest ever win for Cains"

- by scooping the CAMRA Liverpool Beer of the Festival award for its premium British lager. It's thought to be the first time ever that a lager has won a CAMRA festival best beer award (what about Schiehallion - Ed(2))- a major achievement given that the organisation is dedicated to championing real ale in the face of the growing popularity of mass produced lager. But the Dusanj brothers have won round real ale fans by



Poynton Easter Beer Festival

March 25th , 26th , 27th

20 Real Ales from all over Britain

Free Admission

Ploughman's Lunches, Curry, Hot Pot.

Pinball, Darts, Skittles

At Poynton Royal British Legion Club

George's Road West. Poynton

Ring 01625 873120 for details.

brewing a cask-conditioned lager that is packed full of flavour and has a creamy head. The cask lager has been in development for over six months. It's brewed using Maris Otter barley malt from Norfolk, widely considered by brewers to be the best quality in the world. Cains is the first brewery to use Maris Otter in a lager. Sudarghara Dusanj said: "We've proved that lager can be taken seriously and enjoyed by real ale fans. All the way along, from the first time we tasted the lager, we knew we were on to a winner. The feedback from beer experts has been amazing and we've even got the support of Roger Protz, Britain's top beer writer. "We thought that we should try to brew a lager that had the same level of flavour as real ale, rather than the thin and mass-produced gassy lagers sold under the big brands. Now we've achieved this and won the backing of CAMRA members."

MICRO MAGIC

As usual the local micro brewers have lots of tasty treats in store. As usual, apologies to those we were unable to contact this time around.

Bank Top – the big news from Bank Top is the departure of founder John Feeney who retires in three years time. He is selling up to travel in the United States. It doesn't mean the end of Bank Top Brewery, though. Senior manager David Sweeney will be taking over and it will be very much business as usual. There is a new beer out this month – Sir Galahad is 4.2% ABV and described as a ruby red bitter beer. There will be a fresh 'Knights of the Round Table' beer every month from now on.



Bazens' – business is so busy that there hasn't been much time for new or special beers. However early April will see the launch of Spring Surprise (4.3% ABV) a pale and hoppy beer.

Facer's - has a new beer for spring; Lenctern, available during March and April. The beer will be 3.9% ABV (as usual for Facer's seasonal/literary specials). It is very pale, quite bitter and, has a very refreshing pine/citrus nose and palate.



The literary reference is a slight deviation from Facer's normal "Classics of English Literature" series in that it is not a widely known work. Nor can it be read by the average reader of English. "Lenctern" is old English for spring, and the reference is to a 14th Century poem (of unknown authorship) called "Now Springs the Spray". The first verse will be on the pump clip and it goes like this:

Now springes the spray / All for love ich am so seek / That slepen I ne may
It means: *Now that the twig is in leaf / I am so sick with love / That I cannot sleep*

OPENING TIMES are happy to offer our Congratulations to IDY and SAL of The Crescent, Salford, who have announced that after 14 years together, they will be getting married in Liverpool on July 16th. Cheers!

Greenfield – expansion is the name of the game here. Look out also for a proposed Greenfield Weekend at the Ashton Arms, Oldham. New beers out include Castleshaw, a light bitter at 4.2% ABV and How Dare Ewe, a traditional, amber-coloured English-style bitter, again at 4.2% ABV.

Leyden – another brewery expanding with a new fermenter being installed, bringing the total to five. A new port stout is being produced at 4% ABV. It has no name as such but will have a connection with the local 'Pace Eggers'. The dark mild, Leyden Egg (3.8% ANV) will be out for Easter.

Millstone - Sales are goods and as such all the regulars are being brewed in rotation along with the two non-seasonal occasionals (i.e. A Miller's Ale and True Grit). They're slotting in bottling too. True Grit (5%ABV) has been a huge success with repeat orders coming in and the third batch now brewed. It's just picked up an award, too, winning both its category and overall Beer of the Festival at the recent Bradford Beer Festival.



Phoenix – as ever the reliable Phoenix Brewery has new beers out. Resurrection will be out for Easter and also look out for Shamrock, a 4.3% ABV pale bitter. The popular West Coast IPA (4.6% ABV) has now been made a permanent beer, due to its popularity.

Pictish - is brewing a new one off beer called Quetzalcoatl. It's basically a wheat beer version of Summer Solstice, i.e. very pale and fairly hoppy. The reason behind the name: Quetzalcoatl was a Maya god and is just about the most



unpronounceable word brewer Richard Sutton has ever found. He thought it would be fun to try and get people to pronounce it after they've had a few. It will be available to the pubs from the 7th March so you should start seeing it soon after that.

The monthly special for March is Dolmen (4% ABV) an amber coloured ale with a delicate hop aroma, biscuity malt flavours and a lingering bitter finish. This will be followed in April by Maelstrom (5% ABV), a strong pale golden beer with intense hoppy bitterness.

Ramsbottom – very much business as usual here with the beers proving very popular, particularly the new Tomfoolery (4.4% ABV) which brewer Paul Robinson tells us is selling like hot cakes. The Ramsbottom range of pump clips has also been redesigned and now looks very smart indeed.

Shaws – still going strong at Dukinfield. Golden Globe continues to be a best seller and recently two 9-gallon casks were sold in five hours at the Stalybridge Buffet Bar. Brewers Gold (4.2% ABV) is out now and in the pipeline is a 4% ABV with a complex hop grist but featuring the Willamette variety in the late hopping.



Three Rivers – Stockport's very own micro has a new beer out. This is Harry Jack's, a ruby coloured bitter beer at 4.1%. Sales continue to boom and the brewery is now supplying the Stockport Wetherspoon's, the Calverts Court on St Petersgate. Future plans include the return of Delta Dark and another new mild for May, and a new summer beer, Straw Boater.





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STAGGER

with Mark McConachie

UNIVERSITY STAGGER

Our crawl of Manchester's University area, ie. the pubs on and around Oxford Road, to the north of Moss Lane East, began in inauspicious style.

The night also coincided with the festival of Eid al-Adah, the pilgrimage to Mecca made by millions of Muslims each year. There appeared to be many pilgrims heading for Rusholme (a Mecca for some, I suppose) as I entered the first pub, the **Whitworth**, opposite the park of the same name. Refurbished of late, it was deathly quiet tonight and lacking in any cask ale too (they have dabbled with Lees in the past, so perhaps this was an off-night). So, across the busy road I trotted to the corner of Hathersage Road where I entered the newish **Varsity**. When first opened, this had had Pedigree and Boddies on handpull, tonight though these pumps lay dormant. Something of an unfortunate start I thought. A brisk walk past the MRI and the queue of vehicles heading for Rusholme got me to the **Oxford** (formerly the Hogshead) near Grafton Street. My expectations were not high as the pub had been on only keg beer since its conversion. However, I was pleased to see Taylor Landlord and Fullers London Pride on the bar; a most welcome addition. The prices of £2.30 and £2.40 were unwelcome, but both beers were very good. The Oxford is on two levels, with a mid-stair mezzanine too for those that cannot decide. The pub retains some of its former alehouse image downstairs, whilst upstairs now sports a pool table, sofas, drapes and mixed furniture. It all seemed to work well and the place was quite busy.

Our mid-crawl timing point was Holt's **Grafton** - a 80's two-roomer of spartan vault and large L-shaped lounge. It was reasonably busy as we entered, with a female artiste/DJ setting up in the lounge. A function must have been on earlier as some pies and bread were freely available on the bar. Holt's mild and

bitter were the liquid offerings; we didn't rate the mild as highly as the bitter, but both were reasonable. The lounge had an interesting set of monochrome contemporary photos of modern Manchester - shot in wide-angle; they went unnoticed by the lively locals however.

The **Bowling Green** is on the same street, but this once bustling former Greenalls house was down to three customers and none of the real stuff. So, on it was to the **Mawson** on Francis Street, just across the busy Upper Brook Street. Set behind the Tai Pan Chinese supermarket and restaurant, this is a most traditional house in every sense. You enter to a wonderful drinking lobby, which has benefited from a recent re-paint; just admire that ceiling! At front of house are the comfortable and well-appointed library and snug, each occupying their own rooms. With respect to these two plush rooms, the rear vault room (with TV) could be described as austere, but that would be harsh - it's a fine space in a very well-run pub. The beers are, usually, Tetley bitter and something from Coach House of Warrington, but tonight the Tetley was on its own. It didn't disappoint though, scoring as joint beer of the evening.



Re-crossing the A34 we went into **Jabez Clegg** on Portsmouth Street, a large student haunt with a beer hall-type atmosphere. Five handpulls adorned the bar, but all with their clips turned around. When we asked the staff, they said the beers were not ready. Amazing, this was the start of a weekend for goodness sake! Bad planning I think as this place is usually to be relied upon. Shame too, I couldn't have a game on The Shadow pinball machine.

So, disappointed, it was on to the former Temperance Society Rooms that now house the **Kro Bar** on Oxford Road (opposite the Student Refectory). The Kro company now has quite an estate of pubs, this being the first of their Danish-inspired bars; a Victorian building set on two floors. Many of the original features are incorporated in a contemporary design. Added drinking areas include a covered, indoor yard with refectory-style tables, and heated outside drinking, fore and aft. A reduced range of cask beers were on offer - just Everards Original (£2.30) in fact. That



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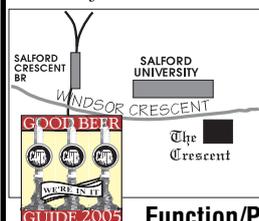
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said, without exception it was thoroughly enjoyed by all of our party to be the other joint beer of the evening. With the evening drawing to a conclusion, we headed for that other independent free-house, the Sand Bar on Grosvenor Street. Two cask beers were on offer - Cottage Mallard IPA, which scored very well, whilst Heywood's own Phoenix Navy was judged to be better still. Add to those a fine range of foreign bottles and draught beers including Dentergems, Budvar, Frueli, Paulaner Dortmund and Frueh Kolsch. As is often the case, the place was abuzz with life in the two former Georgian houses that comprise Sand Bar. These are joined by a drinking yard which has been converted from a former loading dock. The left of the two houses is now mostly non-smoking, whilst the other house was exhibiting some moody photos by artist David Panny that caught my eye - they were of Alexandra Park, Whalley Range. So that was that. Give it a go yourself, and perhaps you will find some ale again in the Jabez Clegg.



whilst the other house was exhibiting some moody photos by artist David Panny that caught my eye - they were of Alexandra Park, Whalley Range. So that was that. Give it a go yourself, and perhaps you will find some ale again in the Jabez Clegg.

ARDEN ARMS IS NATIONAL RUNNER-UP

DESPITE hopes that lightning would strike twice in the same place, Stockport's Arden Arms didn't make CAMRA's National Pub of the Year. It made runner-up position, though (and a very close one at that, we hear), which is something of a victory in itself - both for Robinson's, Stockport's pub scene, and licensees Joe Quinn and Steve King.



The merits of the Arden Arms are well-known to local drinkers, with its historic interior, superb Robinson's beers (the pub is a fixture in the national Good Beer Guide) and the excellent food, this is a pub which scores on all levels.

Despite a degree of disappointment at missing the top spot, Joe and Steve are delighted at the pub's success on the national stage. "We're just so pleased to have done so well", they told *Opening Times*. "When you consider the competition even to come second is a real achievement." They also pointed to a notable increase in trade since the results were announced. Stockport Beer Festival Organiser Jim Flynn added CAMRA's congratulations. "Steve and Joe run an award winning pub where attention to details and focus on quality throughout every aspect of their operation has really paid dividends. When you consider the troubled history of this pub before they took over, this is a terrific achievement."

The win is also yet another remarkable tribute to the quality and diversity of the Stockport pub scene. Over the past four years the town has produced one national Pub of the Year winner (the Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris) and two runners-up, the other being the Railway, Portwood.

While Stockport cannot claim to have the most beers on sale at any one time, it can boast perhaps the best pub crawl in the country with an unrivalled collection of freehouses, heritage pubs, family brewer-owned pubs and micro-brewery tied houses. And all trading in an environment which is remarkably free from the trouble that seems to dog other town centres.

The Arden will be presented with its national runner-up certificate on Saturday 7 May, when local CAMRA members and the pub's many regulars and friends will be able to congratulate Steve and Joe for their superb achievement and continuing efforts.

The national winner was the Fat Cat in Norwich, a previous winner in 1998. The other two finalists were the New In at Halse, Somerset and the Olde Swan in Netherton.

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Barsh, 65 High Street, Cheadle
Barton Arms, 2 Stableford, Worsley
Bishop Blaze, 708 Chester Road, Stretford
Boathouse, Ferry Road, Irlam
Bollin Fee, 6 Swan Street, Wilmslow
Bulls Head, 155-157 Broken Cross, Macclesfield
Bulls Head Hotel, 28 Buxton Road, High Lane
Calverts Court, St. Petersgate, Stockport
Church House Inn, Church Street, Bollington
Coach and Four, 69-71 Alderley Road, Wilmslow
Cotton Bale, 21 Market Street, Hyde
Cross Keys, Adswold Road, Cheadle Hulme
Crown, 81 High Street, Cheadle
Dog & Partridge, 665-7 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury
Duke of York, Stockport Road, Romiley
Eccles Cross, 13 Regent Road, Eccles
Farmers Arms, 209 Stockport Road, Stockport
Farmers Arms, Manchester Road, Swinton
Fletcher Moss, 1 Williams Street, Didsbury
Football, 35 Swinton Hall Road, Swinton
Four Heaton's, 63 Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris
Friendship Inn, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield
Gateway, 882 Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury
Gothic Bar, 61 Church Road, Gatley
Governor's House, 43 Ravenoak Rd, Ch'dle Hulme
Great Central, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield
Hanging Gate, Higher Sutton, Macclesfield
Harbord Harbord, 17-21 Long Street, Middleton

Hare & Hounds, Dooley Lane, Marple
Harrys Bar, UMIST, Sackville St Manchester
High Grove, Silverdale Road, Gatley
J P Joule, Northenden Road, Sale
Jar Bar, SilkHouse, 4 Park Green, Macclesfield
John Gilbert, Worsley Brow, Worsley
Kings Hall, 13 Station Road, Cheadle Hulme
King's Ransom, Britannia Road, Sale
Lloyds No 1, The Printworks, Manchester
Loves Arms, 301 Hyde Road, Denton
Moon Under Water, Deansgate, Manchester
Oddfellows Arms, 73 Moor End Road, Stockport
Old Plough Hotel, 56 Green Lane, Sale
Old Wellington, 4 Cathedral Gates, Rusholme
Osborne House, 32 Victory Street, Rusholme
Paramount, 33 Oxford Street, Manchester
Poachers Inn, 95 Ingersley Road, Bollington
Porters Ale House, Prince Roe Street, Macclesfield
Q Bar, 3-5 Market Street, Stalybridge
Rising Sun, 22 Queen Street, Manchester
Ryecroft, Turves Road, Cheadle Hulme
Sam's Chop House, Black Pool Fold, Manchester
Sedge Lynn, 21a Manchester Road, Chorlton
Society Rooms, Macclesfield Park La, Macclesfield
Society Rooms, Grosvenor Street, Stalybridge
Stalybridge Buffet Bar, Stalybridge Rail Station
Star Inn, 13 High Street, Cheadle
Tim Bobbin, 41 Flixton Road, Urmston
Victoria Hotel, 438 Wilmslow Road, Withington
Waterhouse, 67 Princess Street, Manchester
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White House, 1 Water Lane, Stalybridge
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LUSCIOUS LAMBIC

RUTH ANDREW REPORTS ON A CELEBRATION OF
LAMBIC AT THE LLOYDS

It just gets better. The Belgian Belly beer shop and deli pulled out all the stops to produce another fine evening of beer and food. The Lambic celebration was held on Sunday 5 December at The Lloyds Hotel in Chorlton. The guest speaker was Tim Webb, famous beer writer and enthusiast

The boardroom at The Lloyds is proving to be a useful and stylish venue. It is opposite the Belgian Belly and has an elegant room for the twenty-five Lambic enthusiasts. Everyone attending had some experience of this style of beer and we were welcomed by the Belgian Belly staff with a choice of beers, including De Cam Oude Gueuze, Beersel Blond and Beersel Tarwe. The buffet included speciality pates, cheeses and chocolates with an authentic Belgium Liegeois bean salad. Yummy!

Lambic is one of the few surviving ancient beer styles. Jason Barker, the owner of Belgium Belly, along with sisters Sandra and Sue, began by saying that tonight was indeed a celebration of Lambic. It is a small brewery style beer which is exceptionally food friendly. Jason was honoured that Tim Webb had come up from Cambridge to speak to us. So we didn't have to listen just to him ramble on about some wonderful beers for a change!

Tim Webb gave a brief outline of his links with CAMRA that started in 1974 when he was on the National Executive Committee. In 1990 he was commissioned to write the Good Beer Guide to Belgium and Holland, which is now in its fourth edition.

The first tasting of the evening was Gueuze Girardin 1882, black label. It was a fine example of the blur between beer, wine and cider. This is a very traditional Lambic from a brewery that has its own fields of the small grained, reddish coloured Brabant wheat. The Lambic is clean and soft, with a pleasant bitter-fruit character. Tim described in detail the brewing process of Lambic and Gueuze beers of the Payottenland area around Brussels, which depends on wild microflora (yeast) 'spontaneous fermentation'. This natural process occurs as the magic micro-organisms enter the wort in an open cooling vessel.

Once fermentation has been completed, the beer is then transferred to wooden casks and aged for one to three years. The resulting beer is known as Lambic. Because each batch is different, the blender is able to carefully match up different casks of different ages to produce a beer of a more consistent flavour. This blended brew is known as Gueuze and is bottled unfiltered with a small amount of unfermented wort to enable a final bottle fermentation to take place.

We then sampled De Cam Lambic. The Lambic here has been refermented from Lindemans and is one of only two straight Lambics. Lambic is generally not sold 'straight' but in a variety of blended forms. There is a distinct analogy with malt whisky. Lambic is a wheat beer which comprises 30-40% of the mash and is unmalted. The milky-white wort may have to be boiled between three and six hours. Thirdly we tried Drie



Fonteinens Oude Gueuze. This brewery matures its own beer, in Beersel where there are several cafes serving Lambic. Well worth a visiting - the town is popular with many Belgian folk on a Sunday afternoon.

The servings were generous and served with style. Mort Subite's (meaning 'sudden death') Oude Gueuze was our next sup. This has only become more widely available, now available in Belgian supermarkets, having previously only been available at the café of the same name in Brussels (most of the Mort Subite beers are sweet and commercial)

A Lambic blend may be given a further fermentation by the addition of cherries. The Flemish word for cherries is Kriek. In Britain we have a similar tradition of steeping sloes in Gin. The next tasting of Kriek Lambic from the Cantillon brewery, run by the Van Roy family since 1900 in the back streets of Brussels, gave us the opportunity to taste a fine example of this traditional method of using the whole fruit.

Drie Fonteinens Oude Kriek was another fine, very traditional beer made at the beer café of the same name in Beersel.

For our final gem we were not to be disappointed. The Grand-dad, Loupepe from Cantillon is a raspberry 'Framboise' Lambic. This is not a recent invention, as many thought. Jean-Pierre Van Roy, brewer, has been able to produce documents from 1909 showing that his brewery had stock of Kriek and Framboise at that time.

The evening was a success and many thanks must go to Tim Webb, our guest speaker and Jason Barker, Sandra Crowe, Susan Rothwell, Peter Rothwell and Matthew Rothwell for all their hard work and hospitality. We look forward with anticipation to visiting their Belgian Belly web site to be opened in January 2005.

**PLEASE NOTE - COPY DATE FOR
APRIL ISSUE IS MARCH 30**

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.



The Challenge runs from Saturday 2 April to Sunday 8 May and offers everyone taking part the chance to win something. All you have to do is pick up a card from a participating pub and drink a half or a pint of mild in 15 participating pubs. All completed entries will receive either a free entry ticket for the 2005 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival or, if you're a member of CAMRA, a voucher for two free pints of mild at the Festival, plus entry into a grand prize draw to be held at the Festival. Once again a brewery trip for 10 lucky winners and guests will be among the prizes on offer. We are also again featuring the Mild Challenge Ultra - visit a participating pub in 15 different areas, using the headings shown on the card, and you will win a special Mild Challenge polo shirt; visit all participating pubs and you will win a specially embroidered polo shirt.

In a new departure this year, we will also be asking participants to vote for their favourite pint of mild and we will present the winning pub with a 'Mild Champion' award. Full details and a list of participating pubs will appear in the next *Opening Times*.

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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

March 2005

Friday 18th – Gatley & Cheadle Stagger: 7.30pm Prince of Wales, Gatley Green; 8.30pm White Hart, High St, Cheadle.

Thursday 24th – Pub of the Month presentation to Ye Olde Vic, Chatham St, Edgeley. From 8.00pm.

Saturday 2nd April – Informal Social at Oldham Beer Festival. From 12 noon.

Sunday 3rd – Curry Crawl: meet Kro Bar, Oxford Rd, Chorlton-on-Medlock 12 noon. Curry in Rusholme to finish.

Thursday 14th – Branch AGM: Blossoms, Buxton Rd, Heaviley. Starts 8.00pm. Will all members please try and attend this important meeting.

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

Wednesday 9th – Branch Trip to Millstone Brewery, Mossley.

Monday 21st – Branch Meeting: Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 4th April – Committee Meeting: Lamp, Hadfield, Glossop. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 18th – Branch Meeting: Crown, Victoria St, Glossop. Starts 8.30pm.

REGIONAL EVENT

Saturday 9th April: Regional Meeting & AGM: Hare & Hounds, Shudehill. From 12.30pm.

March 2005

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:

Wednesday 9th – Saturday 12th – CAMRA presence at Beer Festival, Congelton Leisure Centre.

Monday 21st – Campaigning Meeting: Lord Eldon, Tatton St, Knutsford. Starts 8.00pm

Monday 11th April – Joint social evening with South Cheshire CAMRA: Horseshoe, Lawton Heath. From 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:

Wednesday 9th – Sale social: meet at The Brook, Brooklands Road Sale (adjacent to Metrolink station)

Saturday 2nd April – Social gathering at the Oldham Beer Festival, from noon onwards.

Thursday 7th Branch meeting: the Orange Tree, Altrincham. Starts 8.00m

Thursday 14th – Dunham Massey social, meet at The Rope and Anchor, 8.00pm

REGIONAL EVENT

Saturday 16th – Winter Ales Festival Staff 'Thank you' party: Crescent, Salford. From 4.00pm.

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DON'T KNOCK IT TILL YOU TRY IT

As I predicted, the wave of hysteria over "binge-drinking" has led to calls from many quarters for the government's planned liberalisation of licensing hours to be postponed or scrapped entirely.

But it must be remembered that we are getting these problems while the old system is in operation, and the reforms were at least partially designed to address the issue of people drinking to beat the clock and then all being turfed out onto the streets within a quarter of an hour of each other. If they are able to drink until the small hours, they will be able to pace themselves better and also will have to make their own decision on when to go home rather than being chucked out. Some may go a bit wild in the early days, but after a few months it's likely to breed a more responsible attitude. After all, despite dire predictions from the anti-drink lobby, letting pubs open during the afternoon didn't lead to the streets being full of drunks by seven in the evening.

The current level of alcohol-related disorder has far more to do with the design of premises rather than with the hours themselves. It doesn't take a genius to realise that encouraging the spread of big, noisy, stand-up bottle bars appealing to a youth market was going to be a recipe for trouble. If the more irresponsible drink promotions are curbed, and the obvious trouble-spots made to clean up their act, there's every chance that the new régime will actually bring about a major improvement.

LIES, DAMN LIES...

In the current debate about alcohol problems, you often hear commentators saying that, compared with incomes, drink is a lot cheaper than it used to be. Superficially, it may seem a convincing point. But, if you think about it, over the years, living standards have risen, so that, compared with average incomes, pretty much everything is cheaper than it used to be. This, surely, is a good thing. When comparing the costs of goods and services, it is normal to do it in comparison with the retail prices index. You only link it with with incomes if you have an axe to grind.

The incomes argument also ignores the fact that many people, pensioners in particular, only see their incomes uprated each year in line with prices, and therefore a policy of deliberately increasing drink prices would make even a modest tipple increasingly unaffordable.

It's also questionable whether drink prices really have fallen anyway, at least in the on-trade. In the twenty years since 1985, the retail prices index has just about doubled. However, the average price of a pint of bitter in the pub has increased about threefold, from 60p then to around £1.80 now.

So in future, if you ever hear or read any pundit linking alcohol prices to incomes, you will know that they are using statistics in a dishonest and misleading way to put across an anti-drink message.

Curmudgeon Online: www.pubcurmudgeon.org.uk

5 Years Ago
 MARCH '00
 by Phil Levison

What A Con" was the main front page headline, with a sub-heading "We name and shame pubs with misleading signs". Two Stockport pubs had been singled out for criticism – neither sold any cask beer but both displayed signs outside which said the opposite. In the Bow Garret, there was no sign of the cask beer inside the pub, and at the King's Head there were handpumps with pumpclips, but the staff confirmed to *Opening Times* that cask beer was no longer sold. Stockport Trading Standards had become involved, and they had visited both pubs, but as the licensees were tenants, they had no responsibility for the outside signs. Today the misleading signs are gone and while the Bow Garret still sells no real ale, it has made a welcome return to the Kings Head.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

It had been announced that pub chains were to come under the microscope in a review of the Beer Orders by the Office of Fair Trading. The Orders had introduced the 'guest beer rule' for tenants of national brewers' pubs, and a limit had been put on the number of pubs those breweries could tie for beer. But there had been huge changes in the pub trade, including the emergence of the new style pub companies, and the review was to look at whether the axeing of guest ales by the non-brewing pub companies, which owned 40 per cent of Britain's pubs, was freezing small brewers out of the market.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Wetherspoons were still trying to break into Stockport. Plans for an outlet in Hazel Grove had fallen through following protests over the proposed conversion of the Gateway Food Market into a pub. Then it looked as if they might be making their predicted breakthrough into Stockport town centre. They had apparently given up on finding a suitable building to convert, and it now looked as if they were to embark on a rare, for them, new build on a site next to Underbank Hall.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Budget time had come around again, and the predictable chorus of calls for a cut in beer duty was already echoing round the impassive, unhearing walls of Whitehall – this was written by Ted Bruning. CAMRA had presented its argument for a 2p cut in duty, which would help solve the problems caused by the absurd tax differential between Dover and Calais. The case had also been presented for the introduction of progressive beer tax, which would allow the growing independent brewing sector to compete with the enormous discounts that the big brewers could offer to the pub companies.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

As part of her preparations to leave the Crown, Heaton Lane, Lorraine James was preparing to sell/auction off the huge number of pump clips that the pub has accumulated over the years since she and her late husband Steve had taken over. Originally, there were about 3,000, but 250 had already been sold in a preliminary auction, and the remainder was to be sold in the main event. The variety was remarkable, ranging from upmarket metal and ceramic clips to the more down to earth 'stick ons' used by many micro brewers in the free trade. Apart from the dedicated collectors of pub memorabilia, it was thought that present and previous regulars of the pub might bid for one or two for sentimental reasons.



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NEW LICENSEE PUTS DOWN ROOTS AT THE PEACOCK

Mossley man John Cox has given up 20 years on the road as an HGV driver to take on the tenancy of The Peacock, Stalybridge.

With the help of his girlfriend Tracey Skeer, the couple have entered into their new venture with great enthusiasm and have plans to build on the popular appeal of the Robinson's house. Happy that he has finally put down his roots in Stalybridge, John said: "I



wanted to spend less time away from home and more time with Tracey, so we looked at the options and realised that we both wanted a pub because it would be the ideal way for us to be together and earn our living at the same time. So when The Peacock became available we took the decision to invest. We've definitely made the right decision though because we love the work and the customers are a great bunch to be with."

Now settled in their new home, the couple are concentrating on keeping their regulars happy, while they are also looking at attracting more customers to the area. At The Peacock there is already a ladies darts team but in addition to this, John and Tracey want to add to the pub's appeal with a pool team, karaoke and a regular disco. "We want to find out what the customers want and then make every effort to ensure that we provide it," said John.

Already the couple are winning new customers, and put their success down to setting high standards in a comfortable environment. "Everybody is welcome here and it's good to know that our customers can come in to share the company, a good pint of beer and be part of their community," John added.

NO REST AT THE HARE & HOUNDS

There is no chance of an easy life and early retirement for Lorraine Ruffell, a mother of three, following her move to take over as licensee of the Hare and Hounds, New Mills.



Although Lorraine has taken on the lion's share of responsibility at the Robinson's house, she has the full support of her husband James and the couple have also retained the services of five part-time staff since taking over.

Customers of the pub meanwhile are already well acquainted with Lorraine, for she and James have been responsible for organising their weekend karaoke and disco for the past six years. "I've enjoyed working here so much that I've given up my job in a retirement home to take on the pub on a full time basis," she enthused. "Of course this is a huge career change and there is a lot more to running the pub than providing good entertainment, but feedback so far is very encouraging, and we are already winning new customers," she added.

"We regularly hold quizzes, which always bring people together, and we are also recruiting darts and dominoes players to represent the pub in local leagues. It's important to me that the Hare and Hounds is seen as being central to the community and acts as a melting pot for people from all walks of life," she said.

OTHER NEWS

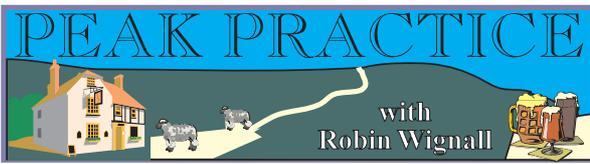
The Tollemache Arms on Manchester Road, Mossley was a continuous Good Beer Guide entry for some 25 years before changes of management sent it on a downward spiral. Happily this trend has been reversed with the new managers. A recent visit found excellent Unicorn Bitter, Hatters Mild and Double Hop on handpump accompanied by Old Tom on stillage at a reasonable £1.20 per half. Certainly worth a visit.

Sadly in Stalybridge town centre the CAMRA Inventory-listed Grosvenor appears to have gone into decline. This

pub has always sold excellent hand-pulled Robinson's to its 'colourful' customers. On one recent Saturday we were confronted by handpumps for Old Stockport bitter only to be told that "We don't sell handpumped beer anymore - but we do have Smooth which is real ale"!!!

The Bankfield Hotel in Hyde, that we reported recently as having closed down, has put up new signage, becoming the Spread Eagle. The signs went up late in February but no more details are known apart from the presumption that it is re-opening fairly soon.

Suzy Turner and Andy Williams have been in touch. New to the area (but not the trade) they took over the Pack Horse, Hayfield, last July with a major refurbishment immediately following. They have just gained the Cask Marque Award and want everyone to know that "there is a new real ale high spot in the High Peak". They currently stock three cask conditioned ales - Greene King IPA, Fullers London Pride and one regularly changing guest ale - recent guests include Black Sheep, Tim Taylor's Landlord, and Bateman's Rosey Nosey. They also stock Hoegarden on draught and will soon be introducing Leffe.



Updates on pubs with real fires include the Lamb at Chinley Head, between Hayfield and Chinley. Three of us called in here one foggy lunchtime after running on the hills for a couple of hours in cloud and cold. The blazing fire was just what we needed to warm through. The Over-60s menu (available Mon-Fri lunchtime) provided good value quality food, the carrot and coriander soup being superb. Food is washed down with Marston's Pedigree. At the Board Inn in Whaley Bridge, landlord Martin Wharam took out s two-bar electric fire when he moved in last autumn and replaced it with a real fire to warm customers enjoying Robinson's Hatters and Unicorn.

Mentions of bottle conditioned beers in February's OT bring a couple of thoughts to mind. *What's Brewing* (CAMRA's monthly newspapers sent free to members) has contained mixed correspondence on the Morrison takeover of Safeway. In our local Safeway-Morrisons at Chapel-en-le-frith and Buxton, I detect a positive impact on the bottled beer front. There seems to be a wider choice of both BC and non-BC beers. As 'Curmudgeon' noted in February's OT, "there are many brewery conditioned bottled beers produced by independent breweries that are of considerable merit." The prices quoted in 'The Tasting Panel' (February OT) for Fuller's 1845, apply at the moment to a whole range of bottled beers at Safeway-Morrisons ie £1.59 each (cheaper than a lot of other supermarkets) but an even better bargain at four for £5. Some branches of some supermarkets do seem to be making an effort at the moment, which is to be applauded. And there is always your local specialist off-licence selling BC beers, such as Goyt Wines at Whaley Bridge. Some of these appear in CAMRA's *Good Bottled Beer Guide*, the latest autumn 2004 edition being an essential guide to an ever-changing scene.

Some good news appeared on BBC Television's North West News in mid-February, with a feature of the close Swan at Kettleshulme. A local partnership of Kettleshulme residents has bought the premises and re-opening is anticipated some time this month. This is a smashing pub which deserves to thrive when it is back in business.

Just days after this news, there appeared in the property section of a Saturday broadsheet newspaper, an article about the demise of local pubs. The article coincided with the imminent launch of a CAMRA publication on pub viability, to be called unsurprisingly, *Public House Viability*. Sadly many pubs, especially rural gems, do have a greater financial value as domestic premises. The viability of a pub depends on use and support, in the first place by locals. In the case of the Swan this is obviously going to be in place. Other visitors then become a valuable bonus. As the days begin to lengthen, get out and call in a rural pub. The Swan at Kettleshulme would make a good start.



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Guest beers

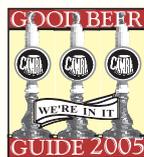
April – Young's Waggle Dance 5%
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CONVERSION TO CASK



MACCLESFIELD CAMRA made a prestigious award last month, honouring one of the best new pubs to emerge on the town's real ale scene for a long time. Graham and Michelle Emery have turned a former keg-only Brewers Arms on Bridge Street into a thriving real ale outlet. Three handpumps dispense Caledonian Deuchars IPA as a permanent beer and two changing guests, all of a permanently high quality. It's very much a community pub as well, with many teams based there. CAMRA's David Hasler presented the award to Graham and Michelle, praising their dedication and commitment in turning the pub around. Graham, along time cask ale fan, in turn thanks CAMRA for their support and encouragement.

UP AND RUNNING

Stockport Beer & Cider Festival is up and running – and returning to last year's popular new venue, Edgeley Park, home of Stockport County and Sale Sharks – which means we remain the only beer festival in the country with more seating than CAMRA's national Great British Beer Festival! Feedback from our customers last year was so favourable we had no option but to go back.

The increased fire limit last time did away with queuing but did put some strains on the beer supply, forcing us to run dry at about 9.30pm on the Saturday night. Our beer managers have therefore been getting together to plan one of the best, and certainly the biggest, beer ranges we have ever sold, 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 again be coming from the highly regarded Bazens' Brewery in Salford, so expect something pale, golden and aromatically hoppy – Richard Bazen will be using some American hops in this year's brew. We are also ordering 25 per cent more of the special, to make sure there is some available at every session.. 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. We are also grateful to the Stockport Express for acting as the main festival sponsor once again – their continued support is much appreciated. So, don't forget those important dates – Thursday 2 – Saturday 4 June. Get them in your diaries now!



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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

Not much at all this month, I'm sorry to say. I know I promised normal service would be restored this month but I have failed miserably. Next month though will be different. I do have one or two snippets, though.

From 4 April the Fletcher Moss in Didbury will be joining the Hydes Craft Ale programme. So far the pub has stuck mainly the Mild and Bitter so this is a welcome development. Nearby the Royal Oak continues with its monthly guest beers and has also added a new permanent beer in the very welcome form of Mansfield Dark Mild. This pub really does go from strength to strength and will be a new entrant in this year's Mild Challenge. Staying in Didsbury there has been a change of licensee at the Nelson. On 23 February Peter and Julie Sweeny took over from Andy Black. I wish them well.

Music-Ale

The manager of the bar at the Royal Northern College of Music has contacted our colleagues in the Trafford & Hulme Branch. They called in there on their last social and found the beer range much reduced - just Tetleys and bottles, in fact, but they have had a useful conversation with the manager/cellarman. His advice is always to go by what's on in the concert halls - if it's brass bands, trumpets or jazz, there'll be a good range of ales, but if it's string quartets or madrigals, he only seems to sell white wines and ginger ale, so he doesn't bother putting much ale on, it would only go to waste.

However - he's rung up to say that the last weekend in February featured the heaviest drinking session of the year, to wit the Welsh Male Voice Choirs, who set out to sing more and drink more than anyone else in town. To keep them happy he put on Wadworth's 6X, Fuller's London Pride, Brains' Reverend James, Bateman's XXXB and, inevitably, Tetley Bitter.

OUT & ABOUT

A visit to Bruins in Fallowfield lately found it to be a rather spartan, pared-down space now. Now decorated in butterscotch throughout, the big TV has been moved, the pinball game has gone, a pool table has been installed, and the ale range is down to Wheat Bear and Grizzly Bear from Beartown, plus a guest of Nethergate Old Growler. Handpulled Moonshine cider (8.4%) completes the high-octane drinking picture. This is the new range being trialled under the present manager, so we shall see if some session beers come into the picture.

Up the road at Hydes' Friendship, I found Hydes' Light, Bitter, Jekylls and seasonal beer; this was supplemented by Ringwood Fortyniner as a guest. The recently completed extension was looking well and was in demand from the number of customers in the place. Very busy, but well staffed on my visit.

Two attempts of late to get into the Bulls Head on London Road in the City Centre, have proven fruitless as the place is closed. A notice on the window does not explain the situation either. Across town to New Cross, where the former DHSS and lately, Commonwealth House building on Ancoats Lane has become a Travel Lodge hotel. A ground floor bar is in evidence, no real ale of course, but the point is that this is another sign of businesses having increased faith in the Northern Quarter. This will attract visitors and further investment; more bars will crop up and some will serve real beer.

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THE BEECH, BEECH ROAD, CHORLTON

Another very popular pub has been chosen by members of the Trafford & Hulme Branch as their Pub of the Season. The choice for Spring 2005 is the Beech Inn in Chorlton-cum-Hardy.

For those who don't know its whereabouts, it is situated less than 10 minutes walk from the bus station on busy Barlow Moor Road. Turn right into Beech Road just after the bus station and walk briskly to the end where you will find the pub on the right hand side.

The beer selection is of a very high standard and excellent quality with Taylor's Landlord and Best Bitter and also Deuchars IPA always on handpump, with three other guest beers usually available. You can be sure of a very warm welcome from Joanne, John, Barry and the staff.

The pub itself is of the old-fashioned parlour-type house opened as a public house in the 1920s with an excellent double-sided bar serving the front room and also the vault area at the rear. There is also another room on the right as you enter. The pub has been run by the same family since 1990 when Joanne's mother started trading there, and took on the duties of 'mine hostesses'.

The pub has had an entry in the Good Beer Guide continuously for 12 years, the first one being in 1994 and very worthy of it too. Entertainment wise there is Irish music on Monday evenings and a popular quiz night on Thursdays when the back room often has an overflow. Also the top sporting events are shown on a large TV screen in the back room.

If you can possibly come to the presentation you can be assured of an excellent pint in pleasant surroundings and good company. If not make a note to visit the pub in the near future - you won't be disappointed. The date of the presentation has yet to be confirmed, probably in April, but will be published in the Branch Diary Sections in *What's Brewing*, *What's Doing* and *Opening Times*. BT



Blue Bullet 4.5%
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