

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

L-DAY ARRIVES LICENSING SHAKE-UP THIS MONTH

24 NOVEMBER sees the biggest licensing hours shake-up in history. After that fateful day the country will be engulfed in the chaos and violence that will follow the legalisation of all-day binge drinking. Well, so the Jeremiahs (and the *Daily Mail*) would have you believe. Unfortunately for them none of this is true.

The changes brought about by the 2003 Licensing Act will in practice amount to a very small revolution in pub hours. The act allows for flexibility for pubs to apply to open earlier and close later and transfer the responsibility for all this from magistrates to local authorities. Many pubs have applied for changes in their hours, and despite *The Times* finding this sensational in itself (such has been the desperation of the anti alcohol lobby), the changes applied for are generally very modest. Typically most pubs are applying for midnight extensions from Sunday to Thursday and 1.00am on Friday and Saturday. There are perhaps half hour variations either way but that's the general pattern.

This is in fact going to mean a smaller addition to overall opening hours than did the advent of afternoon opening in the 1980s. Older readers may recall that licensing reform was greeted with predictions of the streets being full of drunks by teatime. Needless to say, nothing happened. Pubs in England and Wales will in fact be mirroring their Scottish counterparts where midnight and 1am opening is commonplace, and has been for 10 or more years.

So, what has all the fuss been about? We have been subject to media-generated hysteria, cheer-led by the *Daily Mail*, which has seen a drip-feed of anti-pub and anti-drink propaganda and every special interest group around jumping on the bandwagon. And for what?

Twenty-four hour drinking? Forget it – at least as far as this area's pubs are concerned. A ring-round of the licensing departments of Stockport, Manchester, Trafford, Tameside and Macclesfield councils produced just one, that's it **one**, pub that has gained a 24-hour licence. That's the Ladysmith in Ashton. Over the border, the Crescent in Salford also has a 24-hour licence but has made it clear that this will **not** mean 24-hour opening. Elsewhere the Olde Vic in Stockport will be opening until 3am but will be controlling admissions after 10.30 or so. The Vic is in any event a tightly run

pub not known for causing any disturbances or undue noise. Holt's have put their applications in rather late in the day and seem to be going for 10am-2am opening across the board (with an additional hour at each end when the public can be on the premises). It remains to be seen what trade there is at pubs like the Griffin, Heald Green at 1.30am on a rainy Tuesday in February.

Thus as predicted we are faced with sensible reform rather than revolution, and that is as it should be. That's not to say that the whole process has been handled well – bureaucratic bungling seems to have dogged this exercise from day one. The latest absurdity was announced just as we went to press. The new regime will come into force at 12.01am on November 24. The Government has confirmed that pubs which have applied for, say, 1am closing, will have to close for half an hour after drinking up time finishes at 11.30pm on November 23 – and then be able to reopen again at midnight when the new legislation kicks in. You couldn't make it up.



CROWN & KETTLE

As we reported last month, one of Manchester's famous old pubs has made a welcome, if slightly unexpected return from the dead. Having been closed since 1989, the Crown & Kettle, on the corner of Oldham Road and Great Ancoats Street, reopened on Saturday 8 October. There was a preview the previous night and *Opening Times* went along.

The refurbishment is impressive to say the least. A separate lounge and vault sit under the famous Gothic ceiling with its plaster pendants, now resplendent with chandelier lighting. The ceiling over the vault is as before, a gilded multi-coloured glory, whereas over the lounge it displays a charred elegance, a reminder of the substantial fire damage that occurred during the long period of closure. This part of the pub has pastel green walls, setting off the dark wood of the bar and floor. The tall windows have been restored with blue glazing at the top and etched panels below with the image of a crown in the Victorian style. A particular feature of note is the mirrors in the vault, which give the appearance of bright-cut glass from another era.



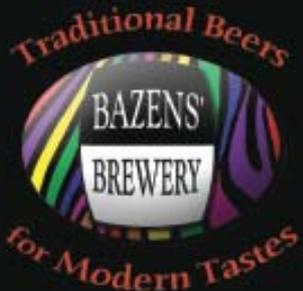
At the back is the snug, a smaller room with both a modern aspect and traditional feel. There's a living flame gas fire at the end and the sense of cosiness is enhanced by the salmon pink walls. On the beer front there was Bank Top Flat Cap, Taylor's (continued on page 3)

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7,000 CIRCULATED THIS MONTH



Pacific Bitter 3.8% Blue Bullet 4.5% Flatbac 4.2%
 (Beer of the Festival, Stockport, 2003)
 e BIA Bronze Medal Winner 2004) eXSB 5.5%
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 Black Pig Mild 3.6% (Bronze Award for Mild,
 Champion Beer of Britain, 2003)
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PUB OF THE MONTH NOVEMBER

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			



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for November is the Sun in September on Burnage lane in Burnage.

The former Milton Lodge Hotel reopened in 1984 as a very welcome Sam Smiths pub in an area which is generally poor for real ale. For almost 14 years now the pub has been run by Alan and Carole Taylor who have throughout maintained invariably high standards at this real ale oasis.

The pub itself (which you need to look for as trees hide it from the main road) is a traditional two-roomer with a small genuine vault and a much larger lounge. The lounge has less of the 'Indian Raj' theme to its décor than it did some years ago, and is a comfortable place to relax over a pint and enjoy the warm, friendly atmosphere that is characteristic of the whole pub.

The lounge also opens on to the large garden, one of the best in the city and making for an attractive outside drinking area well away from the main road. Indeed in the summer the Sun in September has more of the aspect of a country house than a pub, with its gardens a regular winner of 'best in bloom' competitions. Bar food is available every day and Sunday lunches are particularly popular as is the weekly quiz held on Tuesday night.

This being a Sam Smiths house there is just the one real ale available – Old Brewery Bitter on handpump. This is complemented by an excellent draught wheat beer and an interesting range of bottled beers.

This very well deserved award will be presented on Thursday 24th November from 8.00pm onwards. The Sun in September is well served by public transport. Buses 169, 1717 and 172 will drop you opposite; Buses 197 and 22 from Stockport will drop you at the Green End roundabout, from where it is a short walk, or you could take the lengthier walk up Burnage Lane from the 23, 23A and 42 stops on Didsbury Road. It's also a short walk from Kingsway and also Burnage railway station. DP

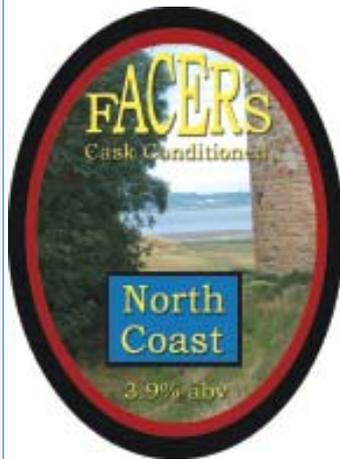
Pub of the Month certificates are framed for us by Picture This who offer the most competitively priced bespoke picture framing service in Greater Manchester. They specialise in framed breweriana and also offer a 10% discount for CAMRA members. Phone 0161 477 0009

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 Crabtree (4.3%) – Mid Range abv
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 – Dry-Hopped Mid Range Beer
 Landslide 1927 (4.9%) – Premium Strength

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IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

Licensing reform will be with us this month and I suspect that an awful lot of people are going to have egg in their faces once the dust has settled.

The virulence of the anti-change propaganda, which swiftly became anti-pub and anti-drink propaganda has been breathtaking – and for those of us with some knowledge of pubs and those who drink in them, hugely inaccurate and unfair.

The licensed trade was wrong-footed by all of this nonsense for far too long, thus surrendering the agenda to an unholy alliance of hysterical journalism, kill-joy prohibitionists and bandwagon-jumping politicians. When the trade hit back – for example a campaign by *The Publican* to get the *Daily Mail* boycotted by the nation's licensees that paper suddenly changed its campaign from 'Say No to 24-Hour Pubs' to 'Say No to 24-Hour Drinking'. As we demonstrate on our front page 24-hour drinking is simply not on the cards.

Indeed some of the so-called expert commentators are already looking very silly indeed – I recall one such reliably informing a television audience that all pubs would be applying for 24-hour opening to maintain the value of their leases. Complete twaddle as we have seen.

In fact our pubs are mirroring the 'continental hours' promoted by politicians. A quick look at the latest Good Beer Guide Belgium shows many bars closing at 1 or 2am. Even there only one bar famously opens all day – that's the Vaudree in Liege, which really does open 24 hours a day, 365days a year.

This reticence on the part of our pubs to fling open their doors all hours God sends seems to have taken some parts of the media by surprise. As a spokesman for the British Beer & Pubs Association told a radio journalist, this is a "we told you so moment". I look forward to rather more of those in the coming months.

John Clarke

CROWN & KETTLE (...continued from page 1)

Landlord, Boddies, Flowers IPA, Boggart Bitter and Marble Festival, specially brewed for Manchester's Food & Drink Festival in October. The regular beers will be Boddies, Landlord and Flowers IPA, although Black Sheep Best Bitter may replace the Landlord. The guest beers may change every two weeks. There will also be a regular cask cider – Sam's Medium was available on opening night. The manager is the amiable Phil Mead, whose last pub was the Mulberry Tree in Stockton-on-Tees: his first was the Marc Addy in Salford in the late 1980's. Phil had known the pub for many years. "I always thought it should have my name over the door, and now it has", he told us. His aim is to ask customers for suggestions of real ales for the Crown & Kettle, as the pub is completely free of tie. "I want local real ale drinkers to make it their own" is Phil's declared aim. "We want them to tell us what they want". Food, both hot and cold is available 11 to 3 throughout the week and entertainment is planned. There are TVs in all rooms and caution needs to be exercised here as it would be unfortunate if they came to dominate the pub. However, with that minor caveat, this is a very welcome addition to the Northern Quarter's pub scene and looks set fair to become an essential port of call when visiting the area.

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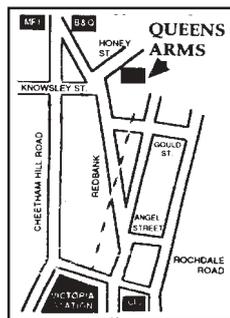
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One or two pieces for you this month although time has prevented one of my suburban tours.

HILLGATE HAPPENINGS

The big news is the re-opening of the **Golden Lion**. With real ale, too. The pub has been bought by a Manchester-based finance company and the man charged with managing the pub and restoring its fortunes is experienced licensee Ken Rothwell. Ken has just moved back up north from London but until 2000 he ran the Royal Oak at Kelsall, where he majored on cask beers, in particular those from the local Weetwood Brewery. He realises that reviving the Golden Lion will be something of a challenge but Ken has definite ideas as to how this will be achieved. The pub will be redecorated and generally refurbished (including some much-needed structural work to the back of the pub) and will major on entertainment – expect two 42-inch plasma screens and a 6-foot projection screen.

However cask beer, and cider, will also have a place - the pub is totally free of tie. Two cask beers will be on the bar to start with, one at session strength (possible Hydes' 1863) and one more of a premium strength, Weetwood Eastgate Ale for example. As trade builds the number of cask ales is planned to increase to four. Ken also knows that to get the cask to take off, quality at all times will need to be paramount.

Reviving the Golden Lion will be a challenge but I reckon that if Ken can't do it then no-one can. The pub will be opening at the end of this month and plans to have 11.30 closing in the week and 1am at the weekends. One to watch, I think.

Elsewhere on Hillgate, news isn't so good. I'm told that Ian Hazeldine has left the **Crown**, and certainly the pub has a Punch Taverns 'to let' banner outside. Nearby, Robinson's **Flying Dutchman** has the tenancy to let (according to the brewery website) and in the *Morning Advertiser* dated 20 October there was an advert for the freehold of the **Black Lion**, yours for £185,000.

OTHER NEWS

I managed to drop into the newly-opened **Midland** on Wellington Road North. It was only a flying visit so I didn't have time to chat with anyone. I have to say, though, that the pub has been

very nicely refurbished and still retains strong elements of its old multi-roomed interior, with some good tiling in the entrance corridor. The sole real ale is John Smiths Cask but my swift half was one of the best examples of this beer I've had for some time. I am told that as trade grows more cask beers will be introduced. Well worth the short walk up from Mersey Square.

The **Navigation** at the top of Lancashire Hill was in the throes of major redecoration as this was written. The end result is likely to be a brighter and fresher interior at this award-winning pub. The Beartown beers were, as ever, on top form. Just down the hill, though, the **Nicholsons Arms**, looked less than inviting with its windows newly boarded up. The pub is still trading although it also seems to be a fixture on the Robbie website as an available tenancy. Elsewhere the **Tom Thumbs** on King Street West is well boarded up. Has this place reached the end of its natural life? I don't know. What I do know is that I have never, ever, had a decent pint of beer in that pub so if it comes down I for one won't be chaining myself to the bulldozer.

At the other end of the spectrum is the **Cheshire Line** in Cheadle. It's had a quick but nevertheless effective refurbishment – the whole place looks smarter and brighter, with a cosy feel from the use of warm autumnal colours in the décor. There's more emphasis on the specials board rather than a pre-set menu and the beer is as good as ever. When I called again Jennings Snecklifter, Marston's Double Drop and Smiles Exhibition were guesting alongside Banks's Bitter – the Double Drop was spectacularly good. It is perhaps a little out of the way but well worth the journey.

NEW LICENSEE AT HARE & HOUNDS

The personal touch of Anne Downes as the new licensee of Robinson's **Hare & Hounds** at Mill Brow, Marple Bridge, has been well received as news of the changeover spreads and Anne offers a warm welcome to her new customers.

Originally from County Offaly in southern Ireland, Anne has lived in Compstall for the past nineteen years, the past four of which she has worked as bar manageress of the Andrew Arms, during which time she has got to know many people in the area.



Anne with brewery director David Robinson

"I love meeting customers and talking to them, and I know that I'm good

at the job, so I decided to take the next step in my career and take on a pub of my own," Anne told me. Not being one to let the grass grow under her feet, she has already made an impression at the Hare & Hounds having organised an authentic green curry night with the help of her Thai friend in the kitchen. "We had fifty eager customers packed into the pub. It is certainly something we will be doing again," she said.

GARDENERS ARMS, EDGELEY

After two months of being open as JW Lees' second tied house in Metro Stockport, I pooped in to see how the Gardeners Arms, Northgate Road, Edgeley, was bedding in.

After talking to licensees Steve and Andrea Richardson, I've got to say that they seem to be doing a great job. The young couple, and their new-born daughter, Millie, are former Wolves & Dudley licensees from the Ellesmere Port area where they ran a managed house for two years. Prior to that, they were W&D relief managers in the Midlands.

Andrea is an Edgeley local, whilst Steve hails from Cumbria, where he worked for Jennings. So, they wanted to come 'home' so to speak, when the tenancy of the Gardeners came up. You won't notice many changes inside the pub, apart from the installation of handpumps for Lees beers. The bitter is the only beer on sale at the moment, but the seasonal will be on sale come December, for a trial period. All beers are being sold in nine-gallon casks to maintain freshness and consistency. The locals appear to be enjoying it too, with cask outselling the smooth variant.

Given the area, the only food on sale is on match days and this is well received. Good news is that the pool and darts teams have all returned; they also have a darts team in the Super League (Tuesdays) which includes a renowned player. A log-end team has been formed, too. Fridays and Saturdays see karaoke being played, whilst Sundays have a quiz-variant called "Quiz-oke". Come the new hours at the end of November, the pub will be licensed until 1am. All in all, a splendid start; and by the way, the Lees Bitter was very good indeed.





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STAGGER

with Dave Hanson

ARDWICK & CITY CENTRE

WALKING PAST the Apollo Theatre and around the side I approached our first port of call on this pleasant sunny evening. I espied somebody coming out of the **Apsley Cottage** and thought "Good, it must be open." as there were concerns about its opening times. Having deposited a rubbish bag in a skip, the landlord(?) scurried back inside and locked the door. Close examination revealed there was little sign of activity inside and no indication of the opening hours posted outside. Is this lack of signage going to become even more problematic with the new licensing? "No!" you cry "Everywhere will be open twenty four hours a day!" Hummm! Collecting the group together we discussed our alternatives and decided to set off in search of the next pub.

Across Hyde Road and along Higher Ardwick we approached the **Union**. This stylish Burtonwood pub with its elegant dark blue tiled exterior has been spruced up recently. Unfortunately this didn't include the re-introduction of cask ale so we departed. Returning to Ardwick Green North we entered the **Church** with more confidence of a pint and were not disappointed. The sole beer on offer was Boddingtons, which was rated as good, even though there were reports of a bad batch leaving the brewery. Originally multi-roomed it has been opened out but retains enough walling to create several distinct drinking areas. Of particular note is the Guide Dogs for the Blind Wall of Fame on the right as you enter. Here are documented the careers of the dogs which the Church has funded. Even though outside drinking is available we sat inside and savoured our drinks before having to venture forth on our quest.

Around the corner on Cotter Street the **Park** sells no real ale so we wended our way along Downing Street to the 8:30pm meeting point.

On the corner of London Road and Fairfield Street stands the recently refurbished **Bulls Head**. Even though the pub was closed for several days while the outside was scaffolded up I could not detect what the alterations were. This is a Burtonwood establishment, but only one of the three ales on offer was their own! All three were tried but Marston's Ashes was not rated as good as the England team performance, more of a Fred Flintstone than a Freddy Flintoff! Unfortunately the Fruit Beer from Belhaven was rated even worse than this! The Burtonwood bitter was quite an acceptable pint and enjoyed by all those who tried it. Moving up the street to **Monroes** found one real ale on offer, Flowers IPA, which was duly ordered by all. The last couple of drinks served definitely were not 'fit for purpose'. They were returned to the bar, where the barman apologised that they were the end of a barrel. He had been drunk out of real ale by a previous party and would not have anymore available until tomorrow, so a refund was made without a quibble. This courteous service with a smile is pleasant to report when compared with the "Every one else is drinking it, so hard luck mate!" school of customer service seen in some pubs.

Our next port of call was the **Waldorf** just off Piccadilly on Gore Street. This well-established real ale pub did not let us down with Caledonian Deuchars IPA, Taylor's Landlord and Boddingtons being available. The pub is a single, wooden floored, room imaginatively broken up by screening into nooks and crannies with much bric-a-brac in evidence. The clientele presented an interesting cross section, ranging from business suits through to Goths! On the beer front the Deuchars was rated as alright, the Landlord as good and the Boddingtons was untried.

Leaving the Waldorf and cutting through the back streets led us to **Paddys Goose** (apostrophe missing!) on Bloom Street opposite Chorlton Street Bus Station. A single large room has been created from several smaller ones, dividing up the space, with the bar to the left as you enter. Some of the mixed clientele were enjoying watching the telly; some were perusing the interesting old Guinness posters; while some were engaged in vivacious conversations (*vivacious? Ed(1)*). Real ale drinkers were enjoying either Marston's Pedigree or Robinson's Unicorn, both of which were rated as very good.

Passing through Chinatown on Nicholas Street we approached the **Seven Oaks**. On entering two pumps greeted us, with Boddingtons and Deuchers IPA clips, but enquiries solicited

"Sorry it's not on". We all about turned and were heading towards the door when we were called back. "Are you CAMRA on a stagger, then the beer is on". The explanation was they were trying to preserve stocks for the football fans next day as it was the Manchester Derby. Both sets of fans are segregated, one in the upstairs bar, the others in the downstairs bar. Any real ale fans would not have been disappointed as we rated the Deuchers IPA as very good.

Rounding the corner to the junction of Portland Street and Princess Street took us to the **Old Monkey**. This Holt's house has recently been refurbished with a change in decor but without changing the pub structurally. From street level you enter the public bar, while upstairs takes you to the lounge. Two people tried the bitter (rated good), while the majority of us plumped for the mild which turned out to be the best beer of the evening. Two doors along Portland Street and we entered the **Circus**. This classic pub, the smallest in town, was its usual bustling self. Despite the crowds we were able to squeeze into some seats in the front room and duly ordered our Tetley Bitter from one of the waitresses (table service here avoids undue congestion at the bar). As ever it was on top form – if only it always tasted like this.

However time was now pressing and we had one final pub to visit. A few more doors along Portland Street took us to our last port of call, Hydes' **Grey Horse**. Of similar external appearance to the Circus, the Grey Horse differs in having been opened out and is thus one not very big room, although like the Circus with a bustling and lively atmosphere. The Hydes' beers were generally very acceptable, as is usually the case with their pubs. However, the mild was very marginal but when it was returned a replacement was refused. The decision to return it was borderline but good customer service should dictate a more flexible attitude, I think. Certainly with Hydes' general emphasis on quality throughout their estate I'd have expected the beer to be changed without comment. Compare and contrast this with the reaction in Monroe's.

So ended a very varied Stagger. It can only be a snapshot of what we found on one particular night – some pubs might have been having an off night, some might have been performing better than usual. Why not try some and see what you think?

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Local CAMRA Pub of the Month, Feb 2004

5

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BIG BOOST FOR LOCAL BEERS



The UK's biggest pub company, Enterprise Inns, has announced a major shot in the arm for local brewers who should now be able to supply many more of the company's pubs.

Enterprise is adopting the Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA) direct delivery scheme across its estate. This initiative allows pubs to source some of their beers from local brewers – from regional to micro – direct from the brewer rather than via what can be the complex pub company distribution chains.

Enterprise has been using the scheme across part of its estate for 12 months following the purchase of the Unique pub company last year. Impressed by what it has seen, the scheme is now being extended across the rest of its estate, meaning a further 5,000 pubs in the UK will potentially have access to locally brewed beers.

FAMILY FAVOURITES

Robinson's - Old Tom has just secured the brewing industry's top accolade having been awarded a gold medal at the Brewing Industry International Awards – the most prestigious competition of its kind in the world. (As reported by the BeerMonster last month).

Old Tom (8.5% ABV) was entered into the dark beer category of the strong beer competition for beers with an alcohol content between 7.0% and 11.5%. The strong ale which is available both as a draught and bottled product was singled out by the judges for their top award among stiff international competition.

"The timing couldn't be better," says Oliver Robinson, Robbies commercial director. "Old Tom has been brewed almost continually since 1899 and we have just re-branded the beer as the first stage of a major national launch. It was purely by chance that the news of the gold medal came as we were filling the first of the re-branded bottles and is very encouraging for everybody at the company."

This latest recognition builds on a string of awards for Old Tom which was named earlier this year as 'Supreme Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2005' at the National Winter Ales festival in Manchester.

The seasonal for November and December is Robin Bitter (4.5% ABV) making a welcome return. This is described as: "a unique cask ale brewed specially for the long, dark months of the festive season. This rich, dark, full-bodied bitter has a distinctive roasted malt character, complemented by a vague hint of liquorice culminating in a deeply satisfying finish"

Hydes – this enterprising family brewer has lots of festive treats in store. The scheduled craft ale for November/December is usually something dark and delicious and this year will be no exception. Insulation (5% ABV) is described as "dark, delicious and winter warming with just a hint of fruit and spice, this full flavoured robust ale has been created from a blend of rich malts and choice Fuggle hops." In addition there will be a Christmas special "Yule Be back", a 4.6% ABV beer described as "generously hopped and full of warming malt flavours". As if that wasn't enough, we understand that the 6.8% ABV 4X may also be back in a limited number of outlets.



JW Lees – it's welcome back to Plum Pudding for November/December. This 5% ABV beer has long been a favourite amongst the wide range of seasonal specials that Lees have produced over the years. Rich but quaffable with just a hint of plum fruit in the background, it is one to look out for – try Rain Bar (City Centre), Lloyds (Chorlton) or the Urmston (Urmston).

Holts – have also been winning medals at the International Brewing Awards. 1849 won a gold medal and Maple Moon a silver in the Class 2 (4.4%-5.1%) packaged beers. It is possible that some of Holt's recent bottled beers may be offered in the pubs as a seasonal beer, in traditional form.



Cains - Judges have named Cains FA the best alcoholic drink in the North West of England.

The historic ale, known as "FA" (Formidable Ale) and made to a special recipe at the Liverpool site, beat dozens of other entries in the Booths Supermarkets and North West Fine Foods Producer of the Year competition. It means that a pint of FA joins a select group of other food and drink products which can lay claim to being the best in the region as the winners are announced during British Food Fortnight (18 September to 3 October). Sudarghara and Ajmail Dusanj, the entrepreneurial owners of Cains Brewery, are no strangers to awards.

Ajmail Dusanj said: "We have always believed that out brands are fantastic, but it is excellent to receive this recognition and out of 320 entrants into the competition". A spokesperson for North West Fine Foods and Booths Supermarkets (sponsors) said: "We would like to pass on our congratulations to Cains for being one of the best products in the region".

MICRO MAGIC

As ever the local micro-brewers have a host of tasty treats in store.

Bank Top – the Knights of the Round Table series continues this month with Sir Tristram, a 4.2% ABV bitter. There has also been a new permanent addition to the Bank Top range. This is Bad to T' Bone (4% ABV) described as a rustic, tan-coloured beer with floral qualities and delicate citrus notes. This was launched at the recent beer festival held at Bolton's Howcroft pub.



Bazens – the Salford Festival Ale (4% ABV) has sold well and is to be rebrewed. A promotional bottled version of the beer was so well-received that

it has prompted Bazens' to invest in a small bottling line and so enable the brewery to enter the bottle-conditioned ale market. Likely beers to be bottled are Blue Bullet, XSB and Knoll Street Porter.

Boggart Hole Clough – recent beers have been Cauldron (3.9% ABV), a dark hoppy ale described as 'devilishly good'. Mast Ale (4.5% ABV) was brewed to mark the Battle of Trafalgar celebrations – this was a dark, very bitter old ale, very well hopped with chocolate and roast aftertones. At the end of October a new 4.5% ABV beer was in the course of preparation but other details had not been finalised.



Facer's - news on the move front is that Dave Facer has finally signed the lease for the new premises, though at time of writing he hadn't actually got the keys yet - any day now, as he has been saying for the last two months! So for now he is still brewing at the Syndicate, the latest special being North Coast, a golden coloured brew at 3.9% late hopped with huge buckets full of Czech Saaz hops. Trade in Wales continues to grow nicely. There seems to be a demand for a fairly low alcohol bitter with a darkish ruby colour in the Welsh market, so once Dave finally gets moved, watch out for a new brew.

Greenfield – a new beer in early October was Indian's Head (4.4% ABV) a mid-amber bitter. November will see Guy's Cracker (4% ABV) a dark amber full-bodied beer brewed to mark Guy Fawkes Night. Greenfield have also re-brewed Black Five (4% ABV) a jet-black beer in the style of a strong mild with a liquorice aftertaste.

Howard Town – see our separate report in 'Opening Times Abroad'.

Marble - Festival Bitter (4.4% ABV) has been a huge success, and rightly so as this pale wonderfully hopped beer was immensely quaffable. The final batch was released in mid-October. Maybe there'll be more to follow next year, when the Manchester Food and Drink Festival hits town again; Chocolate Heavy (5.5% ABV) is another popular brew and should be making a reappearance on the 7th November; Port Stout (4.7%) will be returning on Xmas Eve.



Millstone - Things at the moment are very busy; Millstone are currently brewing three times a week to keep up! True

Grit (5% ABV) continues to sell well, and is now the house beer at the Station in Ashton re-badged as Off The Rails. Look out for a 4.0% version aimed at session beer drinkers in the New Year. Same recipe as its big brother, name not yet decided upon. Things look set to get busier in the New Year as they have been selected to be one of the ten permanently featured breweries of the Brewers Wholesale beer agency in the West Midlands. Millstone bottled beers featured at the 'Beer with Food' dinner held at the White Hart in Lydgate on the 28th of October. Demand for bottled beers currently outstrips supply.

Owl - continues to make slow but steady progress which, owner Gordon Potts tells us, is the way he likes it. Albion's Glory (4.5% ABV) was brewed for the Trafalgar celebrations and another new beer is Lancashire Hop Pot (5.3% ABV), deep amber, malty and with slight citrus aftertastes. Apart from that Gordon needs to replenish his standard lines so nothing new is in the pipeline at the moment, although there will certainly be a Christmas special.

Phoenix - Rip-Rap and Flash Flood were still available at the end of October and in November lots of new beers were in the offing as Phoenix gears up for the festive season. Firefly (4.7% ABV), Last Leaf (4.5%) and Snowbound will make up the bitter contingent, while the wonderful Phoenix Porter (5% ABV) will also be back. This is one of the best so do look out for it - Stockport's Crown (Heaton Lane) should have some. Festival brews out at the end of the month include Christmas Kiss (4.5% ABV), Golden Glow (6.5%) and Humbug (7%).

Pictish - the November special will be Z-Rod (4.8% ABV), a strong, pale golden coloured ale with full malt flavours and a well balanced hoppy finish. There will be some Mistral (5.2% ABV) appearing in early November and Samhain Stout (5.0% ABV) should be available as you read this. Pictish Porter (4.4% ABV) should be reappearing in mid November (if brewer Richard Sutton ever gets the chance to brew it). Last month

Brewers Gold was joint winner of Keighley Beer Festival and Blue Moon reportedly won Todmorden.

Three Rivers - a new beer, Murphy's Law (4.5% ABV) is an amber-coloured bitter brewed for the Wetherspoon's Beer Festival. A number of dark beers are also being produced - Black Moon, the 'Balinese stout' will be out and will Suitably Irish, a 5.6% ABV stout primarily brewed for Liverpool's Ship & Mitre free house. Three Threads (5.9% ABV) a 'proper, blended porter' will also be back soon. Three Rivers are also planning a string (7.5% ABV) Christmas beer. The bar area at the new brewery is nearing completion and the plan is then to license it as a members club. It sounds an impressive set-up - the bar counter comprises laminated Scottish beech specially brought down from Scotland.

And finally... we hear reliable rumours of a new brewery in the Tideswell area of Derbyshire. More news when we have it.



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OPENING TIMES ABROAD

GLOSSOP

This is the latest in an occasional series featuring the pub scene in one of the further flung or less visited parts of the Opening Times circulation area. This article does not however cover perhaps quite as many pubs as intended as we were waylaid at a brewery. More of that anon.

THE TOWN

Lying at the end of the famous Snake Pass, Glossop is a town of two characters. The newer Glossop, also known as Howard Town, after the family who owned, and partially built, it sprang up in the industrial revolution. Witness the numerous old cotton mills still standing. Old Glossop, with its narrow streets and market cross is to the north east.

Deeply rooted in English history (the name itself means Glott's Valley), this was the most northerly Roman fort in Derbyshire, called Ardotalia, occupying an important position at the west end of the Snake Pass. Away to the east is the wilderness of the Dark Peak and the appropriately named Bleaklow and indeed the surrounding hills do tend to dominate the town.

THE PUBS

One thing you notice about Glossop is the number of pubs – they seem to be on every street corner and among their number are more than a few crackers.

The easiest way to get to Glossop is via the regular train service from Piccadilly to Hadfield. Arriving at Glossop Station, turn left outside and facing you is the **Star Inn Ale House** (2 Howard Street). One of several multi-beer free houses in the town, although the Star is in the hands of a pub company and licensee Paul Hurditch told us that he was currently having a spot of bother with them over his beer range – a crunch meeting was in the offing and hopefully the situation will now have been resolved.



The Star is the first pub for Paul and his wife Vivien and they have been there two years now. During this time they have put the pub back on the map and it has made a welcome return to the 2006 Good Beer Guide. As you would expect the beer quality was accordingly high when we dropped in. There was a choice of six cask beers, the regular Black Sheep Best Bitter and five guests – Cottage Smooth Hound, Titanic Last Porter Call, Eastwood & Sanders Best Bitter, Pictish Aztec Gold and the local Howard Town Bitter. Monday night is a good time to visit when the Cask Ale Club sees one cask beer sold at £1.50 all night.

There followed a walk down to the **Old Gloveworks** (Unit 1, Riverside Mill, George Street). This is a long-established entertainment-driven venue that nevertheless does a nice line in both beer and food. We ate here and were impressed by the quality of a choice from both the set menu and the specials board.

There are four cask beers available here. There is always one from Shaws (Autumn Daze this time) and Copper Dragon (Challenger IPA today) along with two changing guests. These were Anglo Dutch Yorkshire Relish and another local beer – Howard Town Wren's Nest. Again quality was spot on. While we called on a pretty gloomy autumn day, there is a good outdoor area providing for some riverside drinking in the summer months.

It was the brewery next (see below) but after we left there we headed back towards the station and the **Friendship** (3 Arundel Street). The first thing you notice about this Robinson's house is the wonderful old lamp above the door. In times gone past all pubs used to boast these but today they are rare survivors indeed. Inside it's sort of open plan with a partitioned snug area at the front and a separate pool room at the back.

8

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What sets the pub apart though, is the superb wooden paneling, which gives the Friendship a warm, cosy feeling. If you visit look out, too, for the carved panel over the fireplace. There is also a cricketing theme to the décor with a fascinating display of memorabilia and pictures. The cask beers are Unicorn and Hatters on handpump. Again, the quality was first class – this is another entry in the 2006 Good Beer Guide.

Last port of call – for an early evening bite to eat and more beer, was the **Globe** (144 High Street). A plain exterior leads to a multi-roomed Victorian-style extravaganza within. Dark wood, old fireplaces and many old mirrors all add to the effect. This is a pub that majors on virtually everything. We were disappointed to learn that the vegetarian dining room had closed but there is still a good all-veggie bar food operation – the mixed bean chilli with sun dried tomatoes went down a treat. There's a full programme of entertainment too, and not your usual karaoke or DJ fodder either, with a monthly programme of events available from the pub. Consequently the pub has a late license most nights, although you won't get in after 10.45pm. Needless to say, there's also a good range of beers. Beers from Shaws and Howard Town are regulars but today neither were available. Instead there was a Sheffield theme to the beers with three from Abbeydale in the form of Black Mass, Moonshine and Invocation plus two from Kelham Island – Harvest Gold and Easy Rider. Those we tried were on good form to say the least. There is also cider and perry available with Hereford Orchard, Cheddar Valley and Broadoak Perry available when we called.

THE BREWERY

The launch to the new **Howard Town Brewery** featured on the front page of the July/August issue of *Opening Times*. Since we were in the area it seemed rude not to call in.



Howard Town's Les Dove took us round and explained that there had been steady expansion since the launch. There are now five regular accounts bin Glossop itself, so the brewery is really putting down roots in the local community. You will find Howard Town beers in the Beehive (Whitfield Hill), Star, Old Gloveworks, Globe and the Grapes (High Street West). The latter was a keg pub for some time but is now a cask convert with Howard Town. Les did say that the memories of the short-lived Glossop Breweries has put one or two potential outlets off trying the beers, the local Labour Club being one example, although some of the doubters are being won over by the brewery's growing reputation.

The aim is steady expansion to ensure that the beers remain consistent. They certainly have no wish to be a "ticker's brewery" with new beers appearing every week. Instead the core range will be about four beers with specials brewed from time to time. Having said that, some of the specials have proved so popular that rebrews have been commissioned. The first beer was meant to be one of the standards, Wrens Nest (4.2%), but came out wrong and was marketed, to general acclaim, as Howard Town Bitter (4.7%). Wren's Nest itself has now been joined by Bleaklow (3.8%) and Glots Hop (5%). The fourth addition to the range, Dinting Arches (4.5%) also went slightly askew first time round when fermentation stopped at 4%. This was marketed as Snake Ale and proved so popular that it had to be brewed again.

Ten barrels a week are currently produced and the aim is to increase this to 16. Certainly, the quality of the beers we were able to sample at the brewery was very impressive. The house style seems to be one of a quite crisp bitterness leading to long, dry, tasty finishes. Look out for Howard Town beers – they should appear more regularly in local pubs and one thing's for sure, they will be around for many years to come.



L-DAY

So L-Day is upon us. The battle is won (or lost, depending on your point of view). The largest reform of pubs since.... etc., etc. Clearly most pubs managed to file applications in time, and whilst OT was being prepared the Tory attempt to 'pray' against the Act coming into force failed by 73 votes on the 24th October. So we're stuck with it, at least for the moment.

As our front page and editorial makes clear, in most cases it is just an hour or two at the end of the day, and in many cases even this will usually only be used at weekends. How is it all going to affect my life? Well probably not a lot. Like most responsible citizens of advancing years (ie over 25) I have largely abandoned town and city centres after 9pm in any case, and whilst the delights of local neighbourhood pubs are many and varied, I tend to have had enough of their charms before midnight. My occasional habit (in southern Germany) of beer with breakfast might be indulged as an occasional treat, but I'm getting too old for a 24-hour drinking session (I did it, legally, in licensed premises in Manchester more than 20 years ago, anyway).

AND SO TO THE NEXT BATTLE

As one issue rumbles away, the government manages to get egg on its face with inept handling of the smoking ban. And such it will be. Scotland and now Northern Ireland have fallen, Wales is next so any fudged compromise along the lines of their manifesto commitment (if it survives the inevitable Commons' revolt) is destined to last a year or two at most. One (very) junior spokesman said the ban in Northern Ireland had proved very popular - though its only just been declared and is yet to come into force - maybe he thought the Irish Republic was still part of Britain. And talking of the Republic, everyone cites Dublin as 'how successful' it can be. Well yes, up to a point. The smoke-free atmosphere (for a non-smoker like myself) IS better. The 12 - 15% drop in trade and 3,000 job losses in the hospitality industry is not (ask a student how much harder jobs are to find). And outside Dublin, even in 'touristy' towns and cities like Wexford, Cork and Galway the number of pubs converted to other use or closed and waiting is ominous. In the smaller towns the situation is often worse. The older drinkers (who will not give up the weed) simply take supermarket beer home and light up there. New York (total ban) is still nearly 20% down on wet-trade sales.

TO EAT OR NOT TO EAT

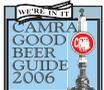
If the current proposals, announced as OT printed, go forward, there are arguments still to come, because food-pubs must be smoke-free, but what actually consists food is still to be clarified. 'All local pubs in working-class areas will stop serving food' they cry. Er... no. The little pubs that can't make a go of a food operation will carry on as before (their clientele can't afford to eat out anyway), the city centre pubs that do food, and the suburban pubs that major on it will evolve steadily from pub restaurant to restaurant with bar, and there, quality and range of real ale WILL suffer, so the few gains of recent times may well be reversed. (Obviously they will offer instead the two best lagers in the world, heh heh! - see *previous month's column, ed.*) The pubs I worry about are the bog-standard locals in intermediate areas. The sort of pub belonging to pubco's who have tenanted/leased them and which are already marginal. If they were to lose 5-10% of their customer base (the smokers who CAN'T manage to drink without a cigarette) and in face of upward-only rent increases they will face immediate closure or immediate price-hikes and - as their other customers desert - quick closure. The health-police of course cite the huge numbers of customers (especially women) who will return to pubs when they are smoke free. Er... again, no. Most of these people (the non pub-smoker) either don't drink, or don't like to be SEEN drinking. They wouldn't go to a pub if the world was about to end. They MIGHT go to a kindergarten-coffee-shop-restaurant-healthclub, but this would not BE a pub. The vast majority of women who like pubs already go, perhaps choosing the ones with ventilation, OR they smoke. A very few might return. Make no mistake, whilst passive smoking is a real issue, but an exaggerated one, talk of protecting bar staff (most of whom seem to be smokers) and children (what are they DOING in pubs anyway) is a 'smoke' screen. The Tessa Jowells of this world (and her equivalents in the industry itself) see the pub as the last bastion of unreformed male-chauvenism (sometimes true, sometimes not), and they want it stopped. This is the start of an all-out assault on the pub and all it stands for, in all its forms. You will drink in a trendy woman-child-friendly-salad-serving-smoke-free-wine-bar or at home, alone. Be warned, you read it here first.



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THE VALE COTTAGE, KIRK STREET, GORTON

The words "country pub in the heart of town" are a much used cliché. However from time to time you encounter a pub where no other words will do. One such is the Vale Cottage. Set back from Hyde Road, (you can't see it from the road), the aspect from the pub is a wooded conservation area. Inside its traditional with subdued lighting, comfortable furnishings and horse brasses adding to the effect. Parts of the pub date from the 17th Century. It's been like this for years but dropped off what might be called the 'real ale map' when a sense of drift set in with indifferent beer quality and John Smiths Cask being the sole real ale.

All that changed in February when John and Maureen Smith took over. One of John's first actions was to replace the beer that bore his name with Wells' Bombardier, which has found great favour with the pub's more mature clientele. Taylor's Landlord has joined the line up and a recent addition is Hoegaarden wheat beer. There are plans for a third cask ale, of session strength, and given this is an Enterprise Inns pub, John may make use of the recently introduced scheme enabling Enterprise licensees to source beer directly from local craft brewers. There are no pool tables and only recorded background music – usually reflecting John's Northern Soul interests.

Maureen runs the kitchen and the pub has gained an increasing reputation for its food. When we called late one Friday lunchtime, trade had been such that several of the blackboard specials had already sold out. This included the home-made cheese and onion pie – Maureen is keen to offer proper vegetarian options.

Apart from the specials there is a set menu ranging from starters (soup, pate, garlic mushrooms, mini spring rolls), salads, main courses, and sandwiches both toasted and not.

When I called the specials included the likes of home-made leek and potato soup, home-made hot-pot, and steak and chicken dishes. I chose pork loin and stuffing with salad (£3.25) – tender pork, generous stuffing, crispy baguette and ample salad made or a filling dish, with the pork notably juicy and succulent. There are proper puddings as well. There was apple pie and the irresistible toffee apple crumble, both at £2. The crumble was a good bowl full of apple in a toffee sauce topped by sponge and crumble. A good old-fashioned pudding, with proper custard, too.

This is great value food and is highly recommended. The Vale Cottage should be a easy lunchtime destination as it is served by all Hyde Road buses (then follow the track to the right of the Lord Nelson). Food is served 12-2.30 Monday-Friday and also on Sundays when traditional Sunday lunches are available.

LASS O'GOWRIE

There has been a new team in place at the Lass O'Gowrie (Charles Street) since 1 July. Business partners Gareth Cavanagh and Patrick Thomas now have the pub on lease from Greene King, with pub manager Jenny Delaney completing the team. Gareth and Patrick have a background in leisure consultancy and used to be regulars at the Lass. When the lease became available they decided to get some hands on experience with the licensed trade rather than just talking about it. Jenny also has plenty of trade experience, having previously worked for Wetherspoons and the Laurel pubco.

Since they took over the operation has been revamped, with some changes still to come. The menu, while still good value, has abandoned the cheap and cheerful approach to allow for better quality food. Alongside paninis (£4.25) and jacket potatoes (£3.95) is a range from the traditional – steak pie £5.50 – to the unusual, for example Moroccan-style Chicken Arrabiatta (£5.50). Daily specials also feature including a range of 'door-stop' sandwiches at £4.25. The menu is available from 12-6.30 every day and breakfasts are served from 10-11.30.

There's a good wine list and collection of single malts but cask beer is very much to the fore. "Cask is our selling point" Patrick says, "the bread and butter of the pub". A refurbishment of the bar area is planned to put all 10 handpumps at the centre, so customers can see the whole cask ale offering in one place. Six handpumps are tied to Greene King, but this includes the full Inbev list (Black Sheep, for example). One handpump features Titanic-brewed Lass Ale, a reminder of the days when the Lass O'Gowrie was a brew-pub. Three pumps are free of tie and often Gareth and Patrick will go and collect the beer themselves. Thus the pub has recently been a free trade outlet for Porter Brewery beers. Reflecting Gareth and Patrick's welsh roots (from the Llandudno area), beers from Conwy Brewery feature on a semi-regular basis.

It all looks very promising – when *Opening Times* called the beer was on top form. And yes, another change in the pipeline is the restoration of the gas lamps to working order. Well worth a visit. *The new hours at the Lass after 24 November will be 10am-12 midnight Sun-Wed and 10am-1am Thurs-Sat.*



How would you feel...

...if all your favourite pubs closed, or your favourite beer disappeared from the bar?

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

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MORE CLOUT FOR CAMRA

NEW STATUS GIVES FAST TRACK ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT

CAMRA has joined the super-elite of consumer groups that have been granted fast-track access to the Government.

The award of super-complainant status under the 2000 Enterprise Act means CAMRA can complain to the Office of Fair Trading about aspects of the beer market which work against the interests of consumers, and the OFT won't be able to let the Campaign's submissions gather dust, for the Act gives it 90 days to respond to a super-complaint, decide whether there is sufficient evidence to support it, and say what it plans to do about it.

The Consumers Association, the National Consumer Council, and Citizens Advice were the first to be designated super-complainants in July last year. In January Energywatch and Watervoiced were added to the list, and as of 1 October they are joined by the General Consumer Council of Northern Ireland, Postwatch... and CAMRA. It has taken the Department of Trade & Industry 18 months to approve CAMRA's designation, recognising nearly 35 years' experience of representing the interests of consumers.

And Chief Executive Mike Benner said the move was a huge boost to CAMRA's standing, a tribute to its competence as a lobbying organisation, and a spur to renewed campaigning activity.

"CAMRA has a long tradition of responding to competition enquiries, and the Office of Fair Trading, the Competition Commission and Parliamentary select committees actively seek our views". But he warned that super-complaints could not be made about individual takeovers or the activities of particular companies. Instead, they concerned wider issues and structural aspects of the market that worked against consumers such as concentration of pub ownership.

"Being granted official super-complainant status by the DTI recognises the crucial role CAMRA plays in highlighting where the beer and pub markets are failing to operate in the consumer interest. We will now step up our commitment to this activity, as the move gives us the confidence and ability to be far more proactive in our campaigning. We are now able to commit resources on behalf of beer drinkers knowing that the OFT will have to give us a detailed response in 90 days."



KRIEK ICE CREAM

The idea of beer and ice cream may sound like inviting Osama Bin Laden to a barmitzva, but trust me the mixture works - Believe me! Not only cherries and cherry beer but peaches and peach beer, raspberries and raspberry beer etc: I've even heard of Guinness so why not try it?

INGREDIENTS (FOR TWO)

- 1 330cl bottle of Lindemans Kriek (Or any other not too sweet Kriek beer)
- ½ pint double cream
- 2-3 teaspoon icing sugar
- 10 - 12 cherries

METHOD

Pour the cream into a mixing bowl and whip, (Does this term give emanation to the phrase 'lashings of cream'), until semi-stiff (no tittering boys). Gently fold into the icing sugar, then fold it into about tablespoons of Kriek; Taste as you add it to get the right amount of taste of cherry. De - stone and halve the cherries and fold into the cream.

Freeze until set and eat, making sure to churn the ice cream every half hour or so. Use the remaining beer to accompany.

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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Albion, Burnage Lane, Burnage
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Wye Bridge Inn, Fairfield Road, Buxton
Bamford Arms, Buxton Road, Stockport
Pack Horse, 3-5 Market Street, Hayfield
Farmers Arms, 209 Stockport Road, Stockport
Four Heaton, 63 Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris
Nursery Inn, Green Lane, Heaton Norris
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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

November 2005

Thursday 10th – Branch Meeting: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.00pm. **NB – guest speaker Paul Jefferies, Hydes' Production Director**

Friday 18th – Burnage & Heaton Mersey Stagger: meet Rising Sun, Burnage Ln (near Crossley Rd) 7.30pm; Farmers Arms, Burnage Ln 8.30pm.

Saturday 19th – Informal social at Bury Beer Festival – meet at festival from 12 noon.

Monday 21st – Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 2006 planning meeting: Armoury, Shaw Heath, Stockport. Starts 8.15pm.

Thursday 24th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Sun in September, Burnage Lane. From 8.00pm

Friday 2nd December – New members trip to Three Rivers Brewery. Details from Chris of Karen on 0161 456 7345.

Thursday 8th - Advance Notice – Branch Meeting: Arden Arms, Stockport. Will include Xmas Quiz and free mince pies. Starts 8.00pm.

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

Thursday 3rd – Branch Meeting: Orange Tree, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm

November 2005

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

Monday 14th – Branch Meeting: Sportsman, Mottram Road, Hyde. Starts 8.30pm

Saturday 19th – Hyde Pub Crawl: starts Lowes Arms, 7.45pm.

Saturday 3rd December – Branch 30th Anniversary Celebration/Xmas Do: Poynton Royal British Legion

From 7.30pm onwards. Would all founder members and ex-Branch members please contact Tom Lord or Rod Oliver if they intend to come along. Phone 0161 427 7099.

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

Monday 7th – Campaigning Meeting: Admiral Rodney, Prestbury. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 21st – Social Meeting: Dolphin, Macclesfield. Starts 8.00pm.

Saturday 3rd – Thai Meal: Old Ship, Beech lane, Macclesfield. From 8.00pm

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

NOVEMBER '00

Waters Green Punched” was the somewhat odd-looking headline – in an act of what could only be termed breathtaking stupidity, Punch Taverns had taken steps to restrict the beer range at the Waters Green Tavern, one of the best pubs for cask beer in Macclesfield.

The ever-changing range of guest beers had made the pub a magnet, not just for “real ale buffs” but ordinary drinkers who had come to appreciate the range of quality beers, served in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere. Landlord Brian McDermott was to be restricted to one guest beer, sourced by him, at any one time. However, there would still be a good range available, as the “regulars” would include classics like Taylor’s Landlord. But inevitably, prices would rise due to Punch’s policy of buying beer cheaply and selling it on at a high profit. However things didn’t turn out like that and a good range of guest beers remains available at the Waters Green.

★★★★★

There was still room on the front page for another story which served to show how much the pub trade was changing, and the headline was “Whitbread Quits the Pub Trade”. One of Britain’s oldest brewers was to turn its back on 250 years of history with the sale of its 3,000 pubs. It was the previous year that Whitbread had sold its beer brands and breweries to Interbrew for over £400 million, and now it was to concentrate on leisure and restaurant interests, such as Pizza hut and hotel chains Marriott and Travel Inns.

★★★★★

This theme of changes in the licensed trade was carried forward into the Editorial, which referred to a “truly unwholesome number of pubs” having been put on the market. Bass had about 800 out of their 2,000 being immediately on offer, whilst Wolverhampton & Dudley had 585 tenanted pubs for sale. Then finally, the last remaining British brewer of any size ScotCo (Scottish & Newcastle/Courage) had sold 600-plus tenancies to a Scottish bank, and the plan was to sell them on almost at once.

★★★★★

Amidst all this upheaval, involving mainly the huge national brewers, the small local brewers seemed to be going from strength to strength. The Marble Brewery’s new range of wholly organic and vegan beers had been launched officially at the Bar in Chorlton, as part of the Manchester Food & Drink Festival.

The family brewers were well into their ranges of seasonal beers, Lees with Plum Pudding, Hydes’ with Rocket Fuel, and Robinson’s with Robin Bitter, all of which warranted the description of rich and dark, and eminently suitable for the festive season. The local micros continues to produce a stream of one-offs and specials of the highest quality. Pictish had Golden Gauntlet, and their ever-popular Porter was back in production, whilst Phoenix were producing Rip Rap, a hoppy bitter, and Navy had become a permanent addition to the range.



OUT OF THE WOODWORK

IT’S DEPRESSING how the prospect of even a modest relaxation of licensing law has produced such a frenzy of blatantly anti-drink and anti-pub sentiment in the media. If organs like the “Daily Mail” are to be believed, letting pubs open an hour or two later will lead to town centres resembling the aftermath of the Battle of the Somme, and everyone drinking themselves into an early grave.

Now, it can’t be denied that the abuse of alcohol does cause problems in society, but that has far more to do with the general culture of weekly bingeing as opposed to regular moderate consumption, than with the hours as such. Longer hours won’t give people any more money to spend, or any more evenings when they don’t have to go to work next day. And these problems are occurring even with the present hours – there is nothing uniquely beneficial about closing at 11pm.

When all-day opening was introduced in the 1980s, there were dire predictions that it would lead to the streets being full of drunks by seven in the evening, and in the early days many urban police forces had large numbers of officers on standby. However, it simply didn’t happen, and in general the end of afternoon closing has led to a more civilised drinking atmosphere during the day. There is no inherent reason why closing a little later at night will not have the same result.

If you accept the argument that longer opening hours are inevitably going to lead to more alcohol being consumed, and more social problems, then the logical conclusion must be that to improve the situation we should be reducing hours. Surely things would be much better if all pubs and restaurants had to stop serving at 10pm, or 9pm. So you have to wonder why the anti-drink zealots don’t openly campaign for that. Perhaps they realise that it would destroy all their credibility with the general public and expose their arguments as founded on nothing more than a mean-minded, killjoy spirit.

BEYOND THE PALE

A recent trend in refurbishing pubs seems to be to paint the exterior woodwork in a very pale, wishy-washy green, which gives the impression that it is still waiting for a final coat. Personally I much prefer pubs to be done out in robust browns, blues, reds and golds, and I totally fail to see what the attraction of such an insipid colour scheme could be. I can only conclude the intention is to suggest that people who want to nibble lettuce leaves are more welcome than those who want to down pints of ale. Certainly my experience is that the interiors of these pubs can rarely be described as remotely cosy or welcoming to the casual drinker.

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Williams Free house is again shut and boarded up in Ashton Under Lyne.

A former Robinson's Good Beer Guide pub also in Ashton Under Lyne, the Buck & Hawthorn has now lost its signage, got new doors and is well on the way to conversion to flats. In fact, there is little sign that it used to be a pub.

The Hatters on Church Lane, Marple, another Robinson's pub, was in the national papers last month when customer Ernie Cross's ashes were scattered in the pubs window boxes.

Good news however over the hill in Glossop, where there is another real ale gain (Grapes last month). The Moon & Sixpence is selling cask ale again after a lengthy period without. On my visit on 15 October, Deuchars IPA was sat alongside the John Smiths Cask. The new licensees who have been there around 11 weeks, have also introduced live music at weekends, or alternatively at some sessions, local DJ's (some of the local Lift Music Club members) playing alternative music. Hopefully another regular live music venue that will work well.

A new Branch pub in the CAMRA National Inventory is the March Hare at Waterloo, not far off Smokies Night club off the Ashton to Oldham Road, built in 1959/60 as an estate pub.

If you can remember back to around twelve months ago, the Snipe in Dukinfield hit the national news when the landlord purchased a Vulcan Bomber which he finally gave up on trying to transport across Cheshire after a few months of great effort. Well, he has gone out there and now bought a Falklands veteran Sea Harrier, which is now installed in the back garden of the pub.

Reports from a Hadfield that the Video Vault on Railway Street has reopened after around 18 months of closure and under new ownership. Formerly a snooker hall down in the basement, with ten pin bowling and an upstairs function room, it is not known what the new format is like, but what we have found out, is that there is no surprise with the beer choice - as before it is smooth flow.

The former Angel pub at the top of Old Street, Ashton, that has traded as Chaplins for some time in recent years (formerly a Shaws pub) has had its boards taken down and plans are to reopen it as a Heritage style pub, highlighting the old Shaws livery outside and keeping the green mosaic tiling. Apparently the new owners are in discussions with Shaws Brewery to sell their beers, though it is not known at this stage whether they will be exclusively sold or not. We will keep you posted on this significant bit of news in future editions.



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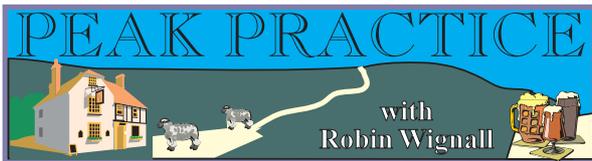
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THE WORK going on at the **Soldier Dick** at Furness Vale, reported a few months ago, turned out to be a big six-figure refurbishment by owners Punch. Since reopening new management team Steve and Janice Scoop have been keen to develop the food and accommodation side of the business, but Steve has also worked at introducing cask conditioned beer to a pub where keg has been the only offering for a number of years.

From a background in Marston's and Robinson's pubs, he is keen to push real ale. He has so far been trying with known brands, Flowers, Pedigree, Boddington's, Old Speckled Hen, with Bombardier in the cellar waiting to come on when I called. It has been a slowish start, but Steve is optimistic about having real ale all the time in the near future. We certainly wish him well with his efforts.

Furness Vale is easily reached by bus or train from Stockport. Buses 199 and TP stop outside the Soldier Dick, whilst the railway station is just round the corner next to the Crossings (see below).

Offsetting the good news comes the disappointment of the loss of mild (Banks's Original) from the Good Beer Guide listed **Shepherd's Arms** in Whaley Bridge. This distinctive mild just wasn't selling and landlord Paul Robinson had no choice but to drop it. This is a pity as the Shepherd's has been a Mild Challenge regular since the 1990s. An extra guest beer is now on sale, Titanic White Star recently.

MILD CHECKLIST

With this in mind I checked on mild availability in the Whaley Bridge area and in Chapel-en-le-Frith.

At the **Dog & Partridge** in Bridgemont, Cain's Dark Mild has recently been replaced by M&B Mild (brewed at Highgate for Coors). This is also a pity as the Cain's Mild was favourite for a number of drinkers in this year's Mild Challenge. Apparently Enterprise Inns had difficulty supplying Cain's. Hopefully the M&B Mild will be a more than reasonable replacement.

The **Crossings** at Furness Vale continues to sell Robinson's Hatters, alongside Unicorn and sometimes one of the seasonal beers. In Whaley Bridge, on form pints of Hatters can be had at both the **Cock** and the **Board**, both pubs in the year's Mild Challenge and both well worth a visit.

For a different mild brew in the area, you really cannot do better than sample the Tetley's Dark Mild at the **Goyt** in Whaley Bridge. And of course the Royal Oak at Fernilee offers the rare end enjoyable Jennings Dark Mild.

Across in Chapel-en-le-Frith, there are no changes in mild availability in the last year or so. Robinson's **Old Pack Horse** had Dark Mild on the bar when I called, though this was badged as Hatters. The **Roebuck** still has Tetley's Mild, in decent nick.

An unfortunate aside at the Roebuck is the disappearance of a wonderful Tetley's huntsman stained glass window in the course of a refurbishment earlier this year. This was one of those features that really ought to have been preserved. Too much of our pub and brewing heritage seems to vanish overnight.

Finally, Robinson's Hatters at the **New Inn** completes the mild picture in Chapel. Its quality was good enough to suggest obvious steady turnover, though the pub wasn't packed when I called, even on darts and dominoes match night.

Chapel-en-le-Frith can be reached on the 199 bus, whilst the remaining railway station is about a mile from the town centre (uphill on the way back!).

The decline in mild sales is a problem afflicting not just the Peak District. If your local sells cask conditioned mild then try some. If you are out in the Peak District then give our pubs a try.

AND FINALLY...

A 'heard at the bar' during a conversation about local worthies, in the Dog & Partridge at Bridgemont: "Wilfred Pickles still owes my cousin's husband his fish bill."

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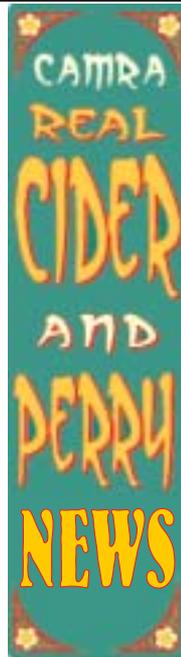
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WETHERSPOON SEES POTENTIAL

Traditional still cider is to take centre stage with national pub chain JD Wetherspoon, which is boosting its permanent range from two to nine.

In addition to the usual suspects (Strongbow and Magners), Wetherspoon is introducing Thatcher's carbonated perry, Weston's Oak-Conditioned, and a flavoured cider from Sweden (hmm...), all in bottle, and three draught Weston's brands, Organic Vintage, Organic and Old Rosie, on draught or as bag-in-box. There is also Sheppy's Oakwood in flagons. All nine are must-stocks across the 650-strong estate, and JD's Paul Hine said pubs could also choose from an optional list including Weston's Traditional and Bound's Brand.

"These are permanent additions to the range and the reason is simple," he said. "Cider is now clearly in growth and when we started introducing new brands they did incredibly well."

He said natural still ciders had demonstrated their potential at the company's last beer festival, when Sheppy's Oakwood quickly sold out.

Another addition to the range – although not so far a permanent one – is Breton La Bole^{3/4} des Korrigans, which will be available during the company's festival this month.

TOP AWARD FOR IVOR AND SUZIE

Herefordshire cider makers Ivor and Suzie Dunkerton, who have supplied all 19 Stockport Beer & Cider Festivals, are celebrating 25 years in the cider business. And to round off a good year, they have been named as winners of this year's Pomona Award, the top award presented by CAMRA's APPLE sub-committee.

Ivor, a former TV producer, and Suzie, who worked in the theatre, retreated to an 18-acre smallholding at Luntley near Pembridge in 1979 and started making cider to pay their way. Over the years they have gone all-organic, winning Soil Association certification in 1988, and have planted several acres of orchard including the first new commercial plantation of perry pears in living memory.

"We could sell five times more perry than we can make and people are not happy when we can't supply them," said Ivor. "Anyway, the pear trees should start bearing in about 20 years."

The Pomona Award cites the Dunkertons tireless work in establishing cider and perry as a premium product, their promotion of organic products, and their extensive plantations.



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Local CAMRA AWARD



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MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

EAST MANCHESTER WANDERINGS

I took a wander through Openshaw down to Manchester to check out on the local pub scene. It was a mixed night.

First port of call was that fine Holt's establishment the **Railway** on Manshaw Road where I had a short chat with Paul Robson, the licensee. Paul told me he is starting regular karaoke evenings soon. On the sporting front the pub won the summer darts league, I wish them all the luck for the winter season.

Next stops were the **Grove** and its close neighbour the **Crown** sadly both keg so I didn't loiter and carried on to the **Albion** where I found Holt's yet again.

All being well there I thought change of brew was on the cards so I walked over to the **Oddfellows** on Abbey Hey Lane which is clearly signed as selling cask ales, unfortunately it wasn't. When I enquired if this was a temporary state of affairs was advised it was permanent so I felt obliged to mention the erroneous advertising on the wall outside. This is a serious loss to real ale – the 'Oddies' was always a reliable outlet for a good pint of Boddington's Bitter, even when other pubs were struggling to hit the mark with it. I understand that the pub is owned by the Dorbieri pub company – so if anyone from that outfit is reading this – can we have our real ale back please?

Feeling slightly miffed I continued my sojourn onto Ogden Lane where the **Royal Oak** (keg), the **High Bank** (closed down) and the **Tower** (keg again) did little to lighten the mood. Fortunately Paul at the **Lord Raglan** brightened things up with a welcome half of Holt's. Next stop at the cask ale oasis was at the **Forresters** where a drop of Robbie's went down well whilst I waited to chat to licensee Dennis.

A short bus ride downhill past the now closed **Pack Horse**, the long gone **Locomotive**, **Staff of Life**, **Drovers**, as well as another, the name of which escapes me, brought me to the **Queen Ann** (keg) then to my holy of holies, the **Legh Arms**.

What more can I say? The beer was as always on top form, the welcome was warm and the conversation interesting. Before departing for my final hostelry Dave told me that the newly formed ladies darts team finished a creditable 7th in the summer league while the men finished 6th in theirs. So to my final stop at the newly-refurbished **Seven Stars** and yes, another drop of Holt's. Unfortunately I couldn't speak to Ang and Paul as they'd gone on a well-deserved holiday so I chose to wend my weary way home to plan the next trip. Which was...

WILMSLOW ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

Well, some of them...

The first couple of stops weren't on Wilmslow Road in fact. I started at **Font Bar** on New Wakefield Street, next to Oxford Road Station. Dominic Driscoll is the licensee here and is responsible for Font going from strength to strength on the beer front. Two ever-changing guests are usually available and tonight these were York Brewery Wheat and Hopstar Vicars 25K. Real cider is sold, too – Sam's Medium tonight. The growing pumpclip collection behind the bar is testimony to the commitment here.

Nearby, under the railway arch, is the **Thirsty Scholar**. Usually a cask beer outlet, there was none available tonight, with all the pumpclips turned round. Hopefully this was just a glitch – it might be the case that cask beer is only sold at the weekends (and see later comments re Jabez Clegg and Joshua Brooks and details of thei Scholar's November Beer Festival below).

Down past the BBC is **Kro 2**, essentially a glass box built into the ground floor of the National Computing Centre. Despite the high-tech design, cask beer features with four on handpump tonight – Theakstons XB and Cool Cask plus Copper Dragon IPA and Golden Pippin. As ever, Kro 2 was very busy with much use being made of the outdoor drinking area.

Further down, on Grosvenor Street is the excellent **Sand Bar**. The mixed, is 'bohemian' the right word?, clientele combined with the ever-changing artworks on the walls and the touch of 'shabby chic' in the décor, make this a very comfortable place to have a drink, or two. Three cask beers are sold, tonight Ginger Marble, Moorhouses Blond Witch and Phoenix Navy, and a new departure has seen the introduction of real cider. Burrow Hill Farmhouse was available on a handpump atop an intricately painted mounting. Look out for improvements in the Belgian

Beer range here, courtesy of the Belgian Belly's Jason Barker. Hopping on a bus down to the University, **Kro Bar**, the original of the chain, is as reliable as ever. I was hoping to spot some traditional cider from Westons as understood that Kro shifted a fair amount of this but I couldn't see any tonight. Three of the five handpumps were in use with beers from Derwent and Cottage breweries available.

Round the corner on Dover Street is **Jabez Clegg**, the church hall conversion that was the first outlet of the Hale Leisure empire. I had heard good reports about an enhanced cask beer range here and despite the presence of many handpumps on the bar, all the pumpclips were reversed. I later encountered the same at **Joshua Brooks**, on the corner of Charles Street near the Lass O'Gowrie, and of course I've already mentioned the Hale Leisure-owned **Thirsty Scholar**. It seems to be the policy at these bars that cask beer is only available later in the week.

Down in Fallowfield, the Beartown Brewery-owned **Bruins Bar** still seems to be struggling to find a role. It was fairly quiet on an admittedly wet Tuesday and of the four cask beers, Bearly Literate and Grizzly Bear from Beartown plus two guests, Hop Back Summer Lightning and Hardy Hansons' Guzzling Goose, I only had time to try the Bearly Literate. It wasn't very good, I'm sorry to say.

Nearby, Hydes' **Friendship** was going great guns with 1863, Bitter, HPA, Jekyll's Gold and Inspiration all on handpump. There's often a non-Hydes' guest here, too. Down the road in Withington, I just had time to call at the **Victoria**. Excellent as ever, the Inspiration here was top notch and my Jekyll's Gold was about the best beer I'd had all night. I had time for a chat with landlord Edgar Ambrose who had just won the Hydes' Best Kept Cellar competition – the award was mounted on the wall for all to see. He told me that he sees himself staying in the pub for a good few years yet – good news indeed as he has transformed the Victoria into a superb community local with invariably good beer.

FESTIVAL AT THE FONT

The Font, Thirsty Scholar and Pure Space will be holding a beer festival on the 7th and 8th of November (Monday and Tuesday). 10 beers each, 3 ciders each, so 30 and 9 respectively. The Font's not big enough to do it on its own, so Dominic Driscoll dragged the two bars closest and got them interested. The theme will be Northern, so Cumbrian, Mancunian, Yorkshire, Merseyside and Lancashire beers only – the provisional list includes many mouth-watering brews. Cider will be all traditional from the west country and Herefordshire. The food will be of excellent quality, as Dominic will personally be cooking Scouse and Lancashire Hot Pot, amongst a full menu – plus some home-made cheese scones to nibble on as you imbibe. It will obviously be free to get in and there will only be one firkin of each beer so they are expecting a sell out. If this goes well, perhaps we will see something bigger in the future.

KNOTT BAR CHANGES ALL FOR 'OZ'

Subtle, but not major changes to the bar's layout are taking place at the Knott Bar on Deansgate. The small and open kitchen is being moved to an enlarged separate kitchen at other end. This makes more room and a more extensive menu for the amiable and excellent chef Oz. There will be more seating in the main room and the changes are planned for completion sometime in November. In the meantime the pub continues to serve four real ales, real cider and genuine continental beers on draught & in bottle, plus excellent food.

SWINTON BEER FESTIVAL

The Swinton Supporters Trust is holding a beer festival at the Folly Club, Station Road, Swinton (right next to the railway station). The dates are 11 and 12 November, opening at 7.30pm on 11th and from 12 noon to 11pm on 12th. Many new beers are likely to be previewed including ales from Bazens', Mayflower, Greenfield and Saddleworth, with a surprise from Robinson's.

LAST MINUTE ROUND-UP

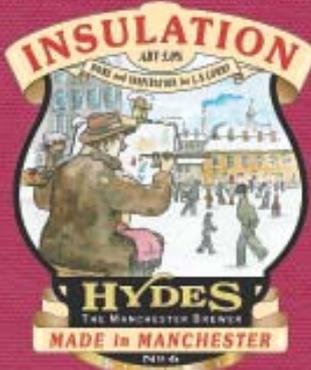
One or two last minute bits of news. The **Hat & Feathers** on Mason Street is closed, or is about to close. Apparently the site is to be redeveloped. Not a million miles away, the **Edinburgh Castle** in Ancoats has been advertised for sale in the trade press – the pub is currently closed and boarded and, as far as we know, subject to a CPO. Very strange.

Finally, late news of a welcome real ale gain. Natalie Bailey has been at the **Polygon** in Levenshulme for a year now and has just reintroduced cask beer to the pub that has been keg for some years. Tetley Bitter is now on handpump.

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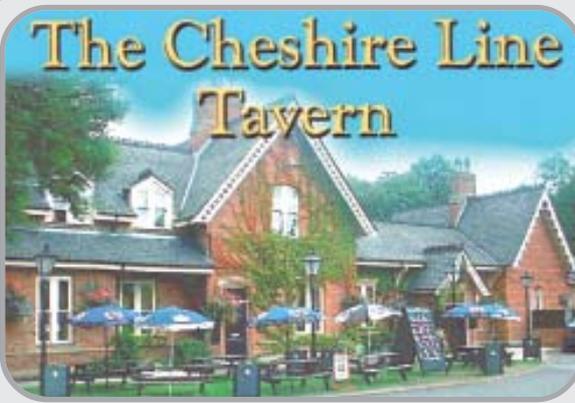
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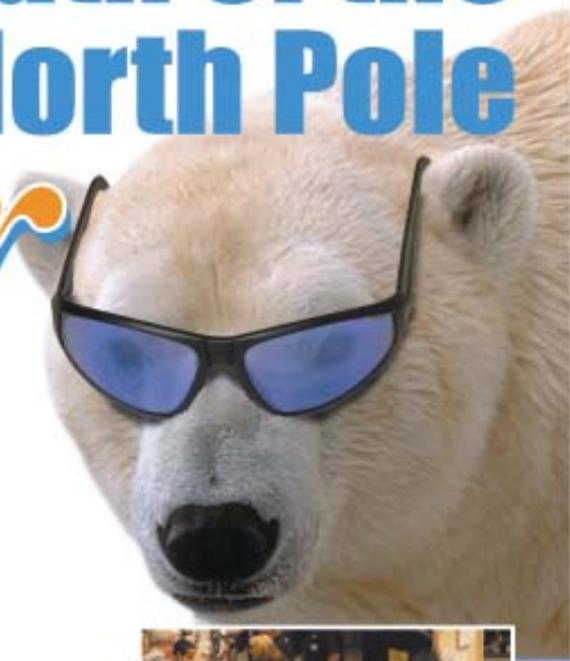
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