

# All Change!

## New Management Takes Over at Crown, Heaton Ln

**A**FTER months of speculation and rumour the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport formally changed hands last month and the new team has revealed their plans for the pub.

The lease has been taken on by local businessmen and real ale lovers Steve Alexander and Ian Watts, who signed on the dotted line on 1 September. Former licensees Graham Mascord and Jeanette Walmsley left the pub on 25 September and a new management team is now in place.

Ian and Steve will be mainly sleeping partners in the business, although as keen real ale drinkers they will regularly be seen in the pub on the customers' side of the bar. Sarah Bergin has returned to the pub as bar and cellar manager, and Lesley and Lee Watts form the rest of the team. Lee looks after finance and Lesley, a keen cook, will be looking after the catering side of the operation once the kitchen has been refurbished.

Despite the ups and downs of the past year, Graham's legacy is one of absolute commitment to serving top quality cask beers and this will continue as everyone involved knows that the reputation of a pub such as the Crown lies in the quality and range of the beers sold. Indeed, Ian and Steve already plan a few trips round the country picking up some favourite beers – expect to see beer from the Blue Anchor in Helston, Cornwall, for example. The pub itself has been thoroughly cleaned up and was undergoing a refurbishment as we went to press – once the kitchen has been refurbished there will be



*Partly obscured by handpumps - the new team at the Crown*

home-cooked food at lunchtimes. The toilets, too, are in line for a major overhaul.

The beer garden has been cleared up and outside events in a marquee are expected to become something of a feature of the pub's operation.

The cellar is also undergoing renovation and this work may involve having to close the pub for a couple of days. The beer range, though, is coming from an expanded range of suppliers as all debts have been paid off and beer deliveries are paid for c.o.d. Some old names are already on the bar, including a welcome return of beers from Stockport's 3 Rivers Brewery.

By the time you read this, a specially commissioned 5.8% ABV ginger beer should be on sale – the launch was scheduled for the weekend of 29/30 September. Expect to see others special beers in the months to come, particularly once the on-site micro-brewery has been installed.

An expanded range of foreign bottled beers is planned, and there is a continued commitment to real cider. The formal launch of the pub will be towards the end of this month and will certainly be a cause for celebration.

**Win 36 pints of cider**  
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**Cider Circuit**  
 See page 21

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\* All beers subject to availability



# Pub OF THE Month AWARD




**T**HE STOCKPORT & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for October is the Lass O'Gowrie on Charles Street, Manchester City Centre, tucked away behind the BBC.

The Lass O'Gowrie has long been an institution on the local beer and pub scene, making its name by becoming the city's first brewpub in 1983. For many years both the pub and brewery were run by Joe Fylan, who made the place an essential watering hole for visitors, students and media types from the nearby BBC.

All good things usually come to an end, particularly in the beer and pub business. So it was with the Lass O'Gowrie. The pub was owned by Whitbread and so it became tied up in the convulsions that have affected much of the brewing industry over the past 15 years. Joe left, brewing ceased and after several changes of hands, the pub ended up in the ownership of Greene King.

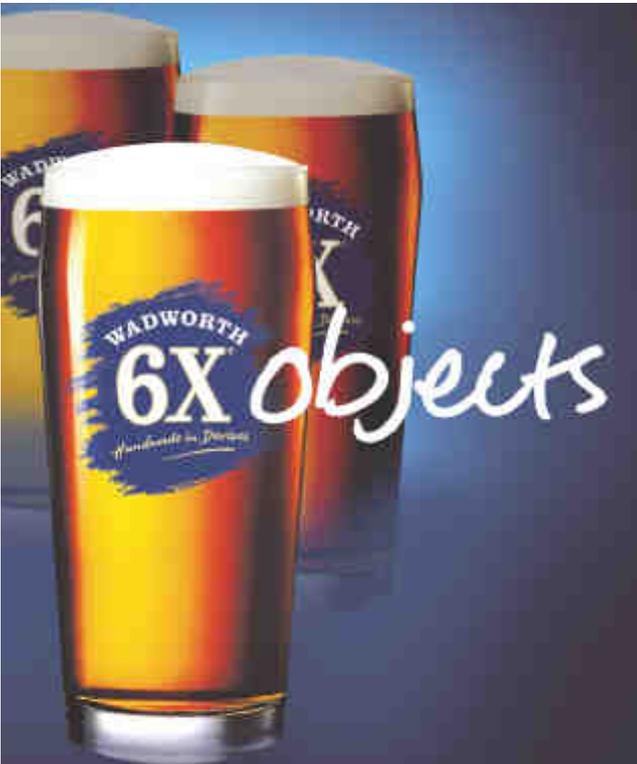
This could have been bad news but luckily the pub's tenancy has been taken on by beer and pub enthusiasts Gareth Kavanagh and Patrick Smith, who, along with their enthusiastic manager Jenny Delaney and her hard working staff, have re-established the Lass as a firm favourite for both beer and food.

The pub remains busy with its usual mixture of students, business people, and those who just want to enjoy good beer and food in comfortable, traditional surroundings. Despite the Greene King connection, the pub has the feel of a free house. Nine handpumps are in regular use – three dispense the regulars of Greene King's Old Speckled Hen and IPA plus Black Sheep Bitter. The others are ever-changing guests including recreations of the old LOG35 and LOG42 beers from Phil Little's Rosebridge Brewery in Wigan. The quality of the beers is uniformly high, gaining the pub and entry in the new 2007 Good Beer Guide.

The food, available lunchtimes and evenings, is high quality, imaginative and good value – see last month's *Pub Grub* feature for more on this.

Jenny is a hard working manager who supports many CAMRA initiatives such as the annual beer hunt, the Mild Challenge and the planned Stout, Porter & Old Ale Trail this winter (starts 17 December for six weeks – more details in future issues).

The Lass O'Gowrie has been a feature on the Manchester pub scene for over 23 years now and it is reassuring that today it's a good as ever. This well deserved presentation will be on Thursday 26 October from 8.00pm onwards. Make sure you get there. **MO'B/DP.**



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# OT – COMMENT...

In what has been a sad month for local cask ale fans, there have been two notable deaths.

Neil Richardson, whose obituary appears in these pages, had been the editor of the North Manchester newsletter, *What's Doing* for over 30 years. Not only was he the doyen of newsletter editors but also a ground-breaking local historian, with seminal works on the history of local pubs and breweries. My personal sympathies to his many friends in CAMRA and to his widow, Sue.

THE OTHER notable passing was that of Kath Smethurst, long-time licensee of the Castle on Oldham Street, the only Robinson's pub in central Manchester. Kath took pride in selling the full range of Robinson's beers, the only pub in the estate to do this. In the Good Beer Guide more often than not, Kath and the Castle were both Manchester institutions.

All of us here at *Opening Times* send our sympathies to Kath's family, notably son Damien who has now taken over the running of the pub.

THIS MONTH is CAMRA's Cider & Perry Month – you will find some cider related articles in this issue plus we are running our Cider Circuit again. This year it will be much easier to win a prize so I hope we get plenty of entries. Thanks to John Reek at Merrylegs for sponsoring our main prize and also to Wayne at the Cheshire Ring for hosting our prize giving afternoon this December.

# OT – INFORMATION

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**Trading Standards** – problems in pubs should normally be resolved by a quiet word with the licensee. However sometimes it may be necessary to take it further. These are the local contacts:

- **Stockport:** 0845 644 4301
- **Manchester:** 0161 234 1555
- **Tameside:** 0161 342 8355
- **Trafford:** 0161 912 2274
- **Derbyshire:** 08456 058 058
- **Cheshire:** 0845 11 32 500

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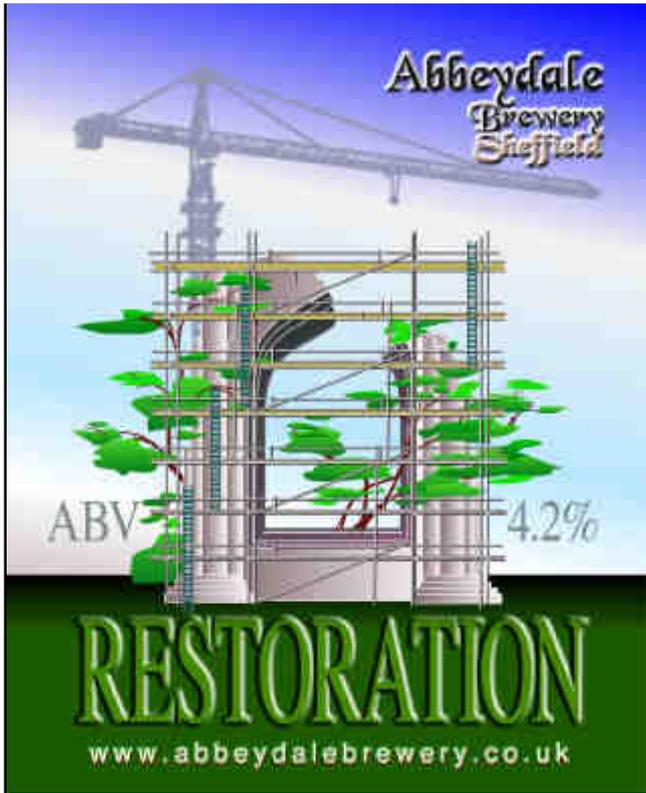
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## Beer of the Festival – 2005

One of the articles that fell into a black hole during our unscheduled gap in publication earlier this year was a report of our presentation of the award for the Beer of the Festival at the 2005 Stockport Beer Festival. We thought it was about time we put that right. We catch up next month with a report of the 2006 Beer of the Festival presentation.

### Focus on Abbeydale....

Who? If you read much of the licensed trade press, and indeed much of the CAMRA press, you might be forgiven for thinking that there is only one brewery in Sheffield – Kelham Island. You would be wrong.

While Kelham Island, who undoubtedly produce some fine beers, have been grabbing the headlines and even winning the Champion Beer of Britain Award, another concern has been quietly hoovering up the city's free trade. Go to almost any pub in Sheffield that can sell a guest beer and on the bar you will find a product of the Abbeydale Brewery, which this year celebrated its tenth anniversary.

The team at Abbeydale has expanded along with the brewery and now includes enthusiastic brewer (and former *Opening Times* contributor) Richard Hough who combines his brewing activities with that of an almost full-time ambassador for the brewery and its products. Every time *Opening Times* visits the city it is dragged, not exactly kicking and screaming, to the latest Abbeydale outlet and/or urged to try the latest beer. Not an onerous task. Abbeydale beers are generally pale and hoppy with a notably clean finish, and as such are hugely quaffable. Matins (3.6%), Moonshine (4.3%) and Absolution (5.3%) are the flagship beers that you will see everywhere although the new Brimstone (3.9%), is making a huge impression. The beers have also become something of a regular feature at Stockport Beer Festival and last year Absolution was voted Beer of the Festival – a party of branch members paid a visit to the brewery last autumn where we were treated to a tour and tasting courtesy of the irrepressible Mr Hough. A photo of the presentation follows:



The brewery now has its own tied house, too. Open since last December, the Rising Sun at Fulwood has established itself as a 'must do' for the real ale fan visiting Sheffield. Ten handpumps offer 4 or 5 Abbeydale beers plus a variety of guests from other independents. The forty-plus bottled beer list boasts such delights as Cantillon Gueuze.

Robert and Juia Nicholls, from the Good Beer Guide losuerd Rhos-yr-Hafod Inn in Ceredigion, should have taken over the pub by now. Food is available all day, too. Go to [www.risingsunsheffield.co.uk](http://www.risingsunsheffield.co.uk) for details. The brewery is also looking to expand...more on this soon.



Virtually the whole of the front page was taken up by a reproduction of the cover of the 2002 Good Beer Guide, and the headline "Biggest & Best Good Beer Guide". This was the 29<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by long-standing CAMRA stalwart and beer expert Roger Protz. The price was £12.99 from bookshops or direct from CAMRA – surprisingly, the 2006 edition only cost £1 more.

\* \* \* \* \*

There was an update on the leading article in the August *Opening Times*, which highlighted local pubs falsely claiming to sell real ale. This had sparked a huge amount of interest, and media coverage included GMR, the Manchester Evening News, Metro News, and South Manchester Reporter. In both Stockport and Manchester, local Trading Standards had visited all the pubs concerned, and verbal and written warnings were issued, resulting in prompt action to correct many of the offending signs.

\* \* \* \* \*

The big news on the national scene was the great Bass sell-off, with Interbrew preparing to sell half its UK business, following Trade Secretary Patricia Hewitt's ruling on the take-over of Bass Brewers. Something called the "Carling Brewing Company" was to be floated off by the end of February the following year, and the purchaser had to be approved by the Government. Many people were unclear as to just what comprised "Carling Brewing", which turned out to be everything in Bass, apart from brands beginning with the words Bass or Tennents, plus two breweries in Belfast and Glasgow. Everything else was to be sold off, including four English breweries – Alton, Hants; Cape Hill, Birmingham; Tadcaster, Yorks; and the giant Bass brewery in Burton itself.

\* \* \* \* \*

Cask Ale Week was a new initiative organised by the Independent Family Brewers of Britain to promote cask conditioned ale with special brews, tutored tastings, "try before you buy" schemes, and beer related competitions and quizzes. In an unprecedented show of unity, Greater Manchester's four major independent brewers got together at the Rain Bar to host a special beer tasting event. Each head brewer introduced the beer selected for the occasion. Robinson's horse drawn dray made symbolic visits to nearby pubs, and the sight of the four Manchester breweries' pumpclips on the bar was a reminder of how lucky we were to have these long-established breweries supplying their excellent beers to the area.

\* \* \* \* \*

Manchester Matters reported that the Beer House remained in a state of flux as there was still no news of the new tenants that Inspired were putting in – in fact the latest rumour had been that there might even be a period of closure. Moving across to the Pot of Beer, there were new(ish) faces behind the bar, and it was encouraging to hear that no major changes were planned. But despite reassuring talk in terms of the pub's future and stability, the site has now been earmarked for redevelopment, and the Pot of Beer is now just a memory. The Beer House is also now closed, again seemingly for good with its site, too, lined up for redevelopment.



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2002  
Wobbly Bob



2004  
Wobbly Bob

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 Beehive, Moss Side  
 Osborne House, Rusholme  
 Great Central, Fallowfield  
 Friendship Inn, Fallowfield  
 The Hillary Step, Whalley Range  
 Pineapple, Gorton  
 Albion, Burnage  
 Sam's Chop House, Manchester  
 City Arms, Manchester  
 The Waterhouse, Manchester  
 All Bar One, Manchester  
 Rising Sun, Manchester  
 Fletcher Moss, Didsbury  
 Victoria Hotel, Withington  
 Dog & Partridge, Didsbury  
 Gateway, East Didsbury  
 Sedge Lynn, Chorlton  
 Old Wellington, Manchester  
 Moon Under Water, Manchester  
 The Bishop Blaze, Stretford  
 King's Ransom, Sale  
 J P Jule, Sale  
 Old Plough Hotel, Sale  
 Bank at Sale, Sale  
 Lowes Arms, Denton  
 Red Lion, Denton  
 English Lounge, Manchester  
 Lloyds No 1, Manchester  
 Tim Bobbin, Urmston  
 Ash Tree, Ashton U Lyne  
 Calverts Court, Stockport  
 Poachers Inn, Bollington  
 Hanqing Gate, Macclesfield

Porters Ale House, Macclesfield  
 Jar Bar, Macclesfield  
 Society Rooms, Macclesfield  
 Cotton Bale, Hyde  
 Society Rooms, Stalybridge  
 Stalybridge Buffet Bar, Stalybridge  
 White House, Stalybridge  
 Q Bar, Stalybridge  
 Angel Inn, Dukinfield  
 Wye Bridge Inn, Buxton  
 Bamford Arms, Stockport  
 Pack Horse, Hayfield  
 Farmers Arms, Stockport  
 Four Heaton, Heaton Norris  
 Nursery Inn, Heaton Norris  
 Duke of York, Romiley  
 Hare & Hounds, Marple  
 Bulls Head Hotel, High Lane  
 Crown, Cheadle  
 Old Star Inn, Cheadle  
 Prince of Wales, Gatley  
 High Grove, Gatley  
 Kings Hall, Cheadle Hulme  
 Cross Keys, Cheadle Hulme  
 Ryecroft, Cheadle Hulme  
 John Millington, Cheadle Hulme  
 Horse & Farrier, Gatley  
 Governor's House, Cheadle H'lme  
 Bollin Fee, Wilmslow  
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### Offerton with Mark McConachie

*For those not in the know, Offerton is a district of Stockport. It lies to the east of the town where it is shielded by Great Moor and Marple. It has its own "village" centre on Hall Street, but stretches east for a couple of miles beyond the Offerton and Bosden Farm Estates.*

**W**e began our fact-finding mission at the latter-mentioned point at the history-filled **Wrights Arms** on Marple Road (alight bus at Bean Leach Road). Under all of the current décor, there is apparently a building of some 250 years of age. Formerly the Fogg Brook Inn, where once the cellar housed its own brewery. One room upstairs is said to be boarded-off, with any view of it externally being marked only by a now 'blind' window - spooky. The pub came eventually into the hands of Wilson's (of Newton Heath) for most of the last century. When that business was broken up, it became a Greene King house under their "Magic" banner. This led to a period of the interior being heavily cloaked in mirrors and fishing ephemera. The fishing nets and such have gone, but a good many of the mirrors remain, and to good effect I feel. The Wrights is a multi-roomed house which has two large rooms that front the bar, it also shows off well a neat snug and a tidy non-smoking room. Supplementing these is a walled beer yard.

This evening it was enjoying a healthy custom of folk taking in the warm weather and a number of young folk watching TV or playing darts. Two cask beers are the norm here – Flowers IPA is the standard (which went untried by our party) and a guest beer. This latter was Okells Wheat Beer, which we all thought was very good.

As it is a fair walk to the next pub, we got the 384 bus to the **White House** on Hemphshaw Lane. There was talk of it now serving no real ale (it had dabbled with Boddies bitter), this proved itself true when we entered to have a look-see. It was noisy and busy however. Two other pubs were omitted (because they do not serve cask beer) that were on the way here, the **Golden Hind** (ex Hungry Horse), and **Strawberry Gardens**. Both of these are on Marple Road.

Thus, a short walk took us to Robinson's **Fingerpost** (junction of Hemphshaw Lane and Dialstone Road). The Fingerpost is a multi-roomed landmark, a former Bells house (the former brewery still stands on Hemphshaw Lane – the name can even now be made out in the upper brickwork). It is a large pub on a corner site that offers its users a vault, Billiard Room, two snugs, a large front lounge and the "County Room" where supporters of Stockport County FC meet (presumably to wallow in woe...). What is the car park was once a renowned bowling green. Much of the décor is made up of brass plates and interesting monochrome photos of local views. Some good etched windows are extant too. Beer-wise, the cask offerings were Robbies Hatters and Unicorn (interestingly, served via gas-driven, freeflow dispensers – you do not see too many of these around now in the Robbies estate). Beer quality was thought of as very good for Hatters, whilst the Unicorn drinkers were content with only a good rating.

Go out of the pub, then along Banks Lane and after a short walk you get to the **Gardeners Arms** by the junction of Hall Street. If I recall correctly, this was once a Boddingtons tied-house? Well today, whomsoever is the pub-owner, they still sell the Cream of Manchester here. And they are industry-recognised as a Cask Marque accredited pub. Being a balmy evening the place was busy inside, but more so outside, where the cobbled gore to the front of the pub was full of contented folk taking pleasure in the day. The inside has a well-appointed front lounge separated by the bar from the vault that hosts TVs and a pool table. As said, the beer on sale was Boddies, and our party of twelve or so thought it merited a score between average and very good.

We stay on Hall Street for the next two pubs. First off was the **Emigration** (Robinson's), this was retailing Hatters and Unicorn... A most accommodating welcome greeted us here, both from the bar staff and several jocular drinkers at the bar. The bar is side-on to the pub, a number of flat TVs were dotted around the rooms as people viewed the rugby. The rooms are snug to the left, long bar with slightly sunken area off, and a rear patio. Although the atmosphere was good, the beer varied from below average for the mild, whilst the Unicorn was judged excellent by some.

Just across the street is the Good Beer Guide listed (and past Pub of the Month winner) **Victoria**. This is a pub of some history and went through the ownership of Wilsons and latterly Greenalls. It is popular with people who like darts as the pub is host to several teams in various leagues – just have a look at the trophies in the vault. The other room is decorated with prints of local scenes and such; it is warm and welcoming. It was busy in both rooms on a very warm night, I thought the vault had the edge on the number of people though. We took our beers outside to the large tree-shaded beer garden at the rear to enjoy the slight breeze there. The Victoria usually has three or four cask beers on, but tonight because of heavy consumption earlier in the week, we were left with Banks's Original and Bitter. The mild was rated as good, whilst the bitter came out as very good to excellent.

We left a number of our Offertonian Staggerer's here as most of us wanted to finish the crawl in town. Consequently we walked the half-mile or so to the **Thatched House** at the top of Churchgate. This was a past Pub of the Month winner back in late 2005, it was also the pub selling the most number of beers of the night – Black Sheep Bitter; Boddies; Kelham Island Easy Rider; and Hopback Summer Lightning. These were joined by Old Rosie cider and Broadoak perry.

The Thatched usually does live rock music most nights in the latter part of the week, tonight there was none though, as an over-heating van had apparently put the mockers on the visiting musicians. This is another former Wilsons house, this one is built in twin-gabled, mock-Tudor style. Some of the glass is original (notably the very rare Showells Ales windows), but the interior is opened out, fairly dark with a stage area to the right of the bar, and a pool room off to the left. That also gives people access to the outside drinking area. A friendly atmosphere pervades. We sampled all beers bar the Boddies, none was found wanting, indeed they were deemed to be in very good to excellent condition. That ended a most interesting night in the pubs of Offerton. Why not give them a go yourself – see travel information below.

*Buses 358 and 383 serve the Wrights Arms and Fingerpost; Bus 314 serves the Hall Street area. All services depart from Stockport Bus Station; they run day and evening.*



### Iced Up

From time to time, there are fads in the drinks market that defy rational understanding, and looking back a few years appear utterly ridiculous. In the 1980s we had the absurd sight of people drinking lager from the bottle with a slice of lime wedged in the neck. Now the latest nonsense is serving bottled cider with a pint glass half full of ice.

This originated with the Irish cider brand Magners, a product which I assume is manufactured from apple concentrate as I'm not aware that Ireland has any great tradition of cider making. To launch this in the UK its producers decided it needed a gimmick, and serving it "over ice" was the answer. So swiftly has this caught on that you now find some of the established British cider makers suggesting that their products should also be served in the same way.

With the cooling facilities now available in pubs, there is no need to put ice in any alcoholic drinks just to cool them down. You never hear of people asking for a pint of lager with ice. And, if what you're drinking has any quality or integrity, the last thing you want to do is to dilute it with tap water. With luck, before too long drinkers will realise that this fad has nothing to commend it and consign it to the dustbin of history along with the slices of lime.

However, it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and this Irish invasion has had the effect of increasing cider's market share and sparking a new interest in the sector. Supermarkets and off-licences are now stocking a far wider variety of quality ciders from independent producers than they did a few years ago, and hopefully drinkers will begin to realise there is far more to cider than just some fake fizz in a glassful of ice.

### Clear the Way

I've never been a fan of perpendicular drinking, although I suppose I can understand the attraction of staying at the bar close to the source of supply. But a phenomenon I've seen more and more recently is large groups of people standing around in the middle of pubs, even when there are plenty of seats available nearby. Even worse is where they obstruct through passageways.

I was recently in a pub where four people were standing in a narrow doorway between the two sides of the building. Three or four times every minute, someone needed to get through, with multiple "excuse mes". Yet none of them grasped the simple fact that they were blocking the way, and ought to move. There's something about stand-up drinking, whether by Hooray Henries or tattooed yobs, that seems to breed this kind of selfish, thoughtless behaviour.

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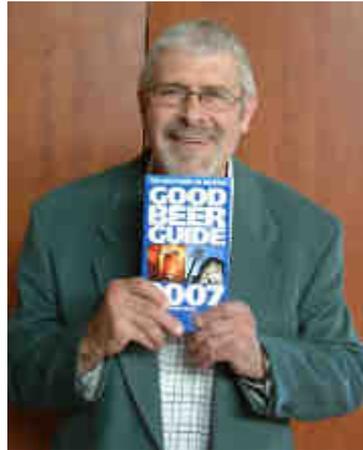
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**Good Beer Guide 2007**

Launched last month, the 2007 Good Beer Guide is more than just a pub guide. Now in its 34<sup>th</sup> edition Britain's longest-running and best-selling guide contains Britain's best pubs for real ale. But for beer lovers it also gives up-to-date information on the country's beers and breweries. It's compiled by 82,000 dedicated volunteers in the Campaign for Real Ale. There are no fees for listings, and every pub is checked many times a year.



Edited by award-winning beer writer Roger Protz (pictured left) the Good Beer Guide was officially released on Wednesday September 13<sup>th</sup>. The Guide is the number one guide to pubs selling fine quality real ale. From sophisticated city bars to cosy country inns, tiny off-beat

locals to grand architectural gems, with the Good Beer Guide 2007 you are never far from a decent pint of real ale.

The Good Beer Guide offers:

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Full details of beer, food, entertainment, family facilities, history and architecture for the pub entries.

The unique Breweries section that lists all the breweries that produce cask beer, with tasting notes compiled by CAMRA-trained tasting teams. This year 84 new breweries feature.

There's also information about beers suitable for vegetarians and vegans, as well as the growing number of organic beers.

2007 Good Beer Guides can be obtained from Jim Flynn a price of £14.99 (includes p & p). Please send a cheque made payable to CAMRA, Stockport & South Manchester to 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG.

Join CAMRA and get the Good Beer Guide at the members discount, see page 22.

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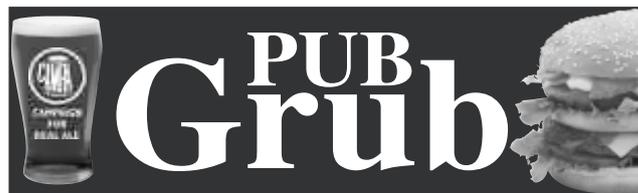
**Special Weekend Discounts for CAMRA members (with membership cards):**

- ❖ All cask beers £1.50 a pint 12 - 7pm
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### Opening Hours

Monday:	Closed
Tuesday - Thursday:	12pm – 12am
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**Visit our Beer Festival  
October 20<sup>th</sup> - November 6<sup>th</sup>**



## The Swan With Two Necks, Stockport

The Swan With Two Necks on Princess Street, Stockport, is one of the town's more characterful pubs. Built in about 1926, the building has changed little since then and has a well-earned place on CAMRA's National Inventory of historic pub interiors.



One of the few changes has been the opening of a back room to public use and this, together with the superb top-lit central room is now where you will

be served some excellent and home-cooked lunchtime food by landlady Ange, who originally took over the pub as she wanted to run a food operation.

The menu comprises what might be called standard pub fare but is noteworthy because of the quality of what is on offer and the extremely reasonable prices. You will struggle to spend much more than four quid on a main course, and most items on the menu are comfortably less than that. There is a lengthy printed menu and this is accompanied by a specials list chalked up on a blackboard next to the kitchen door in the back room. It is here you go to order your food, too.

On my visit the specials included fish, chips and peas (£3.75); braising steak, onions, chips, peas and gravy (£4) and a selection of barns (e.g. hot chicken and stuffing, hot roast beef and onion, BLT) all at £2.30. Tempting though these were we (for I was accompanied again by the notoriously hard to please New Chairman) went for two dishes from the main menu – corned beef hash, pastry top, bread & butter plus red cabbage (£3) for me, while the offal loving NC went for liver, onions, chips and peas at £3.50.

We were soon served with piping hot platefuls of tasty food. The hash was thick and tasty and the pastry crust light and crisp. The liver and onions made for a filling and tasty plateful that was soon finished off.

This is of course a Robinson's pub and there was quite a choice of beers to wash down the food – Hatters, Unicorn (or mild and bitter if you will) plus the stronger Double Hop and the very strong Old Tom. We both chose the Unicorn and very good it was too. Other recent visits have found the other cask beers on good form as well.

Highly recommended – if you like good beer, interesting old pubs or tasty food there will be something for you at the Swan With Two Necks. **JC**



# Brewery NEWS...

## Greene King in 'rip off' storm

**I**t's not often that you get a brewery openly advising licensees to fleece their customers but that's certainly the impression that new national brewer Greene King has done with their trade advertising for Old Speckled Hen.

The 5.2% ABV beer has been reduced in strength to 4.5% thus attracting a saving in duty. So, a cheaper pint all round then? Well, no. While the duty saving is commendably being passed on to licensees, that is as far as Greene King suggest it should go. "Why have we made these changes?" they ask. "To make you more money by...maintaining premium retail selling price" is one of the answers.

They claim that research has shown drinkers would be willing to pay the same price for the weaker beer as for the 5.2% version "because of 'Hen's' premium image". Are we really that gullible? *Opening Times* suggests that any Old Speckled Hen drinkers reading this should make sure that their favourite tippie has been duly reduced in price and if it hasn't – take their business elsewhere.

## Family Favourites

Our local family brewers are hopefully above such practices – certainly when Hydes' reduced the strength of their Light a few years ago, they made sure that drinkers benefited from the reduced duty paid. A quick look now at the current seasonal beers on offer from our local family firms:

**Hydes'** – the current seasonal is Hidden Treasure (4.5%), a beer for autumn brewed with Northdown and Fuggles hops along with Maris Otter and Cara malts.

**Holts** - the next Seasonal from Joseph Holts, will be 1849, available in selected outlets of their estate and the Free Trade. The bottled version is 4.5% ABV, and we expect the cask version to be very similar. This will replace the current Humdinger

**Robinson's** – the current seasonal is Lighthouse (4%) a 'golden autumn ale' with an interesting blend of toasted biscuit and mellow citrus flavours. Of course now that autumn is with us, so is draught Old Tom. The bottled version has just picked up another award.

The 8.5% abv Strong Ale was entered into the International Beer Challenge which saw 350 beers of every variety from around the world vying for notoriety in the stiffly fought contest. Like all entries in the contest the beer was judged not just on its flavour but the overall presentation of the product. "Brewing a great beer is one thing, but a product has to stand out on the shelf if it is to succeed and sell in the modern market place. Having picked up many of the most prestigious titles in the beer world during its proud history Old Tom is no stranger to winning competitions. But last year we decided to invest heavily in the presentation of the brand and developed a tactile, embossed bottle to secure its position in the international market," said Robinson's commercial director Oliver Robinson.

Following a three day judging process, the competition's renowned panel eventually ranked Old Tom in their top 50, after a review of beers from every corner of the world.

**JW Lees** – the seasonal for the last three months of the year is an old favourite, Plum Pudding (4.8%), a welcome return

for this rich, warming, dark beer brewed with a hint of fruit especially for the festive season

**Cains** – the seasonal for September/October is Dragon Heart (5%), a strong brown ale "brewed to a 19th century recipe and fermented in traditional open vats. A blend of premium ale malts and the finest of English hops combine to produce a fruity and complex character"

## Micro Magic

Our local micro brewers continue to supply a range of interesting cask ales. As ever our apologies for those we couldn't contact this month.

**Bazens'** – the latest single hop beer is 'My Beautiful Willamette' (4%) and this will be out by the time you read this. A presentation was recently made at Bazens' to mark Knoll Street Porter's victory in its class in this year's National Winter Ales Festival. Our picture shows Richard and Jude Bazen (left) receiving their award from CAMRA's regional Director Steve Prescott.



**3 Rivers** – currently out is Pilgrim's Progress (4.2%) and also look out for 2D's Bitter, brewed exclusively for, and only on sale at, the Calverts Court in Stockport and the Moon Under water in Manchester. Old Disreputable (5%) is now permanently on sale at the Crown, Heaton Lane.

**Millstone** – the copper coloured Autumn Leaves (4.3%) is out now with a slightly tweaked recipe as the hedgerow hops previously used are no longer available. The new dark beer slowly edges its way to the mash tun – it will be a stout called, somewhat prosaically, Millstone Stout. Also simply named is the bottled 'Beer'. This is a bottled version of Tiger Ruts and will be exclusively available at Love Saves the Day (next to Deansgate Station).

**Phoenix** – always good beers from here. In the coming month look out for Last Leaf (4.5%), Fire Cracker (4.7%), Spooky Brew (4.7%), Uncle Fester (4%), Flash Flood (4.1%) and one of *Opening Times'* favourites – the wonderfully hoppy Rip Rap (4.1%).

**Shaws** – we hope to have a special feature on Shaws next month. In the meantime look out for perennial favourites Golden Globe and IPA and the new Willamette (4%). Brewer Neil Hay has acquired some Belgian Marynka hops from Poperinge and these will be used in a light and hoppy Belgian-style ale at 4.2%.

**Howard Town** – sales are now back up to pre-fire levels. The last crop of specials have sold out and the brewery is concentrating on the core range (Bleaklow, 3.8%; Wrens Nest, 4.2%; Dinting Arches, 4.5% and Glotts Hop, 5%). Specials will be produced for Halloween and Christmas though.

**Marble** – bi-monthly specials are now to be produced. First up will be a porter, appearing in November.

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**CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2007 We're in it!**

## From the Marble Vaults

The September 2006 Celtic Beer Festival is all over now, but it was fun while it lasted, writes *Steve Smith*. This beer festival at the Marble Arch has been very well received. So much so, that even with over a week left to run, increasing demand had meant that more beer had to be ordered, as stocks became exhausted. I didn't get to every session or event, but those that I went to provided a variety of guest ales interspersed with the Marble's own, to satisfy the most ardent imbiber. I even missed out on the last night, with beers on offer from £1 a pint (*me too - Ed*).

The popular new Marble beers in the Tawny Tasters' Choice range have been sampled and judged. First up was (Dominic) Driscoll Tawny (3.8% ABV) followed by (James) Campbell Tawny (4.5% ABV - brewed by Colin Stronge) and finally finishing off with (Colin) Stronge Tawny (5.7% ABV - brewed by James Campbell), this latter for me was the best of the bunch and the strongest beer the Marble has produced. However, this wasn't the overall winner. The honours went to Cambell Tawny, despite the subsequent threat of a rooftop protest by Dominic 'it should have been me' Driscoll.

The rest of the festival concentrated on a diverse range of ales, one of the strangest on the first night being the Williams Bros Roisin Tayberry Beer (4.2%), which came out like a fruit beer in a bright cloudy pink colour and tasted like a mixture of Cranberry and Strawberry flavours. Some of the Marble's own beers were kept on, notably the surprise appearance of Chocolate (5.5%). By Friday, a new batch which had been a-sleeping in the cellar over the past six months was unveiled. When sampled, the opinion was that it was the best it had ever tasted and delightfully drinkable.

On Sunday, there was a decidedly Welsh and Irish feel with beers from Purple Moose, Facers and Conwy representing the former and Whitewater Crowning Glory (3.8%), a dark, fruity and bitter ale with Messrs Maguire Pils (5.0%) representing the latter. Two other favourites of mine came on during the second week, notably both from Ireland; one from Hilden with Molly Malone (4.6%), a smooth drinking dark porter and a relative newcomer, College Green Molly's Chocolate Stout (4.5)

Other events included beer tastings, brewery tours, quizzes and music nights. A very good show indeed! Let's hope that more of these kinds of festivals follow in the future.

## Recent CAMRA Award



*CAMRA's Shayne Langlois (centre) presents the August Pub of the Month Award to Janice and Edgar at the Victoria, Withington.*

## Neil Richardson

THE death has been reported of Neil Richardson, for nearly 30 years the Editor and Publisher of the region's other real ale newsletter *What's Doing* along with many notable local history books, including seminal publications on pub and brewery history.



There was recently a short hiatus in *What's Doing's* production before the newsletter reappeared during which time Neil went off for what was expected to be minor surgical treatment. Regrettably another more aggressive condition was then discovered which Neil only survived for a few further weeks, getting just one last heroic *What's Doing* issue out in the meantime.

Neil's funeral took place at Bolton crematorium on August 30 and is reported to have been exceptionally well attended, the chapel being so packed that some mourners had to stand at the back throughout the ceremony. There was a later reception at the Lord Nelson, one of Neil's favourite pubs at Stoneclough near Kearsley, and which is also reported to have been well attended.

When *What's Doing* first appeared in 1976 the Campaign for Real Ale was barely five years old. The six major brewers of the time were apparently doing all they could to suppress interest in cask beer in favour of their continuous fermentation keg products. Keeping *What's Doing* going was never going to be easy and survived only with the continuous support of enthusiasts from the various Greater Manchester CAMRA branches, then in the process of forming. News and other reports were supplied free of charge by local writers and reporters, and it rapidly became a must read for many of the Region's real ale campaigners. Its particular strengths were in pub and brewery history combined with a strong campaigning edge and a healthy disrespect for many of those in authority, both in the brewing industry and CAMRA itself. Along with the editorship of *What's Doing*, Neil also made himself a name as a local history publisher with pioneering work in local pub and brewery history.

After the *What's Doing* printer ceased to trade, Neil took over the equipment and became printer and publisher as well as editor, perhaps a unique role in any CAMRA newsletter. Entirely (or largely) free of advertisements for many years, *What's Doing* always therefore had a small cover charge but in other respects it was and remains the model for many later branch newsletters, including our neighbouring *Out Inn Cheshire*.

Neil's death came at a particularly bleak time for North West real ale enthusiasts with the closure of one real ale 'treasure house' and the decline of another, plus the reported death at the last OT went to press of Kath the much loved licensee of the Castle on Oldham Street. We send our condolences, on behalf of every real ale drinker in the region, to Neil's widow Sue, and her family.  
*Robin Pendragon*



The Church Inn, Flixton



THE LATEST Pub of the Season for Trafford & Hulme Branch has been selected as the Church Inn, Flixton. It is situated on Church Road, in the older part of Flixton, alongside the parish church (hence the name), and a handy five minutes walk from the railway station on the Manchester-Warrington line. In times gone by it has been a school house and a courtroom. It has been reported that the pub has held a licence for about 130 years.

The Church Inn first appeared in the Good Beer Guide in 1996 but unfortunately in 2005 the long serving landlord retired and the pub was not included in the Guide for that year due to two or three temporary managers running the pub. However the present family has been very successful and the cask beers have been excellent since they took over the running of the pub.

The cask beers on offer at present are usually Timothy Taylor's Landlord, Coachman's Bitter from the Coach House brewery in Warrington, and there are usually one or two guest beers on offer, often including a mild, all served in excellent condition.

The interior is divided into three drinking areas served from a central bar - a small room on the left as you enter is the vault/games room where regular darts and dominoes matches and there is also a main drinking area, with raised no-smoking area. A beer garden is available for warm evenings.

The presentation will take place on Tuesday, 17 October at about 9.00pm. All welcome. **BT**

Sue & Graham welcome you to

### THE RAILWAY VIEW

Byrons Lane, Macclesfield

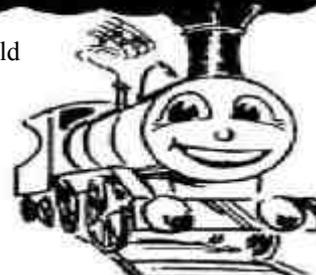
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PUB OF THE MONTH - MAY 2006**

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**32 Great Underbank, Stockport**

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**CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2007 We're in it!**



I thought this was going to be a quiet month but instead there's a bumper package of news for you, with quite a few major changes and one prominent, but hopefully temporary cask ale loss.

#### Comings and Goings

Well of course the big news is the change of regime at the **Crown**, Heaton Lane. The pub has been in a state of flux for the best part of the year so far, since Graham and Jeanette Mascord went bankrupt late last year. Rumours have flown round the local cask ale scene and I'm pleased that the pub can look forward to some stability. I know there's a good team in place now and I for one am looking forward to the future with some confidence.

As for the town's other two free houses, the **Olde Vic** in Edgeley continues to come up with the goods – five ever-changing guest beers in top quality augmented by real cider make this a must-visit pub. The **Olde Woolpack** on Brinksway still offers a range of guest beers but the pub is also still up for sale so I suppose there must be a question mark until someone buys it.

The other notable departure is that of Debbie and Tony from the **Kings Head** on Tiviot Dale.



*Happier times at the Kings Head*

They left the pub on 4 September citing a serious disagreement with the company that owns the pub. It is ironic that their departure comes just as the real ale trade was taking off with regular beers from 3 Rivers and other micro-brewers

Debbie told me that she and Tony wanted to thank everyone for their support over the years. They will be living in Offerton and while they have no plans to re-enter the trade at the moment, they both hold personal licenses so I guess that nothing can be ruled out in the long term.

The pub is now advertised as 'to let' on the Admiral Taverns website and despite the claim that real ales are a feature, when I called in mid-September no cask beer was available and nor was there any sign of it becoming so.

There has also been a change of hands at the **Three Shires** on Underbank. Sarah Kennedy has departed and it is now owned by Simon Parry, who previously ran the bar and cellar. He has assured me that the tradition of an ever changing selection of cask beers will continue under his ownership. This is good news as the Three Shires has been quietly excelling for some time now.

New faces, too, at the **Hare & Hounds** on Dooley Lane, Marple, a Hydes' house that was taken on in March of this year by experienced tenant couple Robert and Samantha McDermott. Since their arrival a number of improvements and adjustments were made that have resulted in a marked boost in trade for both beer and food. Beers on offer are Hydes' Original, Jekyll's Gold and the seasonal beer. Trade has picked-up to the extent that three 18 gallon containers of Original are shifted in a week, together with two to two-and-a-half of each of the Jekyll's and the Seasonal.

The food offering (a full review will appear in a forthcoming issue of OT) has moved on from the Hydes' in-house menu only, to a variant of that plus a whole raft of Specials printed on a separate page that appears on each table. Attention to detail and freshness are key, so there are no ready-prepared meals from "Food Service" companies used. Robert and his skilled kitchen team enjoy using seasonal ingredients and experimenting with new ideas and flavours - Robert was formerly the Hydes' Area Trainer Chef, so he should know a thing or two about assembling menus. Food is served daily till 9pm, except Wednesday's when it is till 8pm. The Hare & Hounds seems like a winner on all fronts. Any further recognition it gets will be well deserved. To get to the pub, take bus 358 or 383 (bus 358 or 384 upon return) from Stockport, get off at "Seventeen Windows" and walk down Dooley Lane for one third of a mile

### Festival Fun

I paid a very enjoyable visit to the in-house beer festival held at the **Duke of York** in Romiley, held over the second weekend of September.



Festival Organisers Anthony Meynell (left) and Iain Broomhead

A professional looking programme detailed the very imaginative range of beers put together by cellarman (and CAMRA member) Anthony Meynell and Iain Broomhead. I called in on the Saturday night when many beers had sold out following a very busy Friday but there was still a good range available. The previous festival was staged in 2004 - I hope we don't have to wait two years for the next one.

### Bits and Pieces

The **Magnet** on Wellington Road North has reopened after the retirement of the long-serving licensee and a refurbishment. No real ale is now sold in this pub, probably for the first time in its history. When I put my head round the door on a Monday night it looked as though the customers had gone the same way as the real ale since the place was deserted. Compare and contrast with the **Midland** just down the road - two cask ales and nicely busy on a Monday night. This obviously well-run pub is certainly worth a visit.

Finally, it has come to my attention (looking at various pub company websites) that quite a number of local pubs are about to change hands. More on this one next time.



**W**ITH TYPICAL maritime perversity, a rope used to trim a sail is known at sea as a sheet, the old square-riggers having two, one attached to each corner at the foot of the sail. When a rope, or a sheet, was slackened off to such a degree that it no longer exercised any control it was said to be 'in the wind' and the vessel at the mercy of the waves, thus *three sheets in the wind* is an exaggeration, but the allusion obvious. Under these conditions the foot of the sail was flapping about all over the shop and the vessel veering this way and that, hence *foot-loose and fancy free*.

\*\*\*\*\*

**D**runkness in the 17th century Navy was notorious, what with the daily rum-ration being one pint per man per day! Things had got so out of hand by 1740 that Admiral Vernon decreed the ration be diluted and issued in two stages, the first at about 11 am when, in the Northern Latitudes, *the sun was (visible) over the yardarm*. Vernon was known for his distinctive boat-cape made of a heavy material called grogram and thus nicknamed Grog, a term that transferred to the unpopular, dilute ration of rum.

\*\*\*\*\*

**P**ubs and inns on the waterfronts can still be dodgy places but then they were downright dangerous with the press-gangs on the prowl, bursting into the pub and carting off all and sundry. But these gangs did not get their name from pressing or forcing men into service, this press is a variant of the old *prest*, meaning an enforced loan to seal a coercive contract. Each man on waking up was obliged to take the King's Shilling as an advance against future wages to legitimise his 'enlistment'. Those who refused were introduced to the ship's cat until they saw sense.

\*\*\*\*\*

**I**f waterfront hostleries are your favoured watering holes then best keep a weather eye out, for the laws backing the press gangs have never actually been repealed, although an act of 1835 insists that all pressed men have to be released after five years service. Well, it's one way to see the world.

\*\*\*\*\*

**N**ot allowed to use such tactics, the Army had to resort to Recruiting Sergeants who would tour the inns and ale-houses, tantalising the gullible with tales of grand adventure. All one had to do was to accept the King's Shilling to formalise enlistment and these Sergeants were not above dropping the coin into the mug of the unwary so it would end up in his mouth or get fished out by hand. Either way, he was in the Army. It is said that pewter drinking mugs with glass bottoms were first produced so that drinkers could check the bottom of the mug for such unwanted bounty.



## The Hatters Arms

Church Lane, Marple

0161 427 1529

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Ales at their Best  
Including the Seasonal Beers  
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*For the height of indulgence use our original  
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# High Peak PUB NEWS

WITH FRANK WOOD

**T**he **Outside Inn** at Mottram roundabout at the Longdendale end of the M67 has changed its name recently to The **Mottram Wood**. Not really sure which wood it refers to, I was not aware of one in the area, but we will endeavour to have a look in for next time.

A recent visit to the **Old Hall Hotel** at Chinley, found Adnams Bitter, Burton Bitter, Jennings Fish King (4.3%) and Wranghams Grand Old Duke (4.1%) available. The latter were the current changing guest beers.

Down the road in Buxworth, the **Navigation** has its leasehold for sale, on my visit Thornbridge Hall Blackthorn was the guest beer with Landlord, Pedigree and Theakston's Bitter the regular beers on sale. Also Navigation Ale was available, not sure of the source of this.

The **Glossop Beer Festival** last month was a success again, though the poor weather meant that the projected sales were down from last year and beer was left at the end. Again, several of the top ranking tickers in the country turned up and sang the praises of the choice of beers they needed to clock up..



*Happy faces at Glossop including your author (right)*

### Ashton News

Quite a change in Ashton where Pauline Town left the Witchwood on 7 July and has now moved to the Station on Warrington Street, which she holds on a free of tie lease from an investment group.

Her co-leaseholder is Ben Marshall who has also moved from the Witchwood and Ike Isherwood joins the team to look after bar and cellarwork..

There are usually eight cask beers on sale including Holts Mild and Bitter, a 5% ABV house beer from Millstone (Off The Rails) and the rest made up from changing guests from local-ish micros. Real cider is on sale too, and the pub has joined the Cider Circuit this year.

CAMRA members can enjoy discounts at weekends on production of their membership cards – between noon and 7pm all beer will be £1.50 and after 7pm one beer will be £1.50. Look out for the beer festival from 20 October to 6 November when 50 additional beers will be available. Well worth a visit.

### Cheshire Ring Festival

Another festival to put in your diary is the "Ale-ow 'een" Festival at the Cheshire Ring, Hyde from 26-29 October. Always a good'un this with 20-plus beers promised along with the usual surprises. Don't miss it.



Robin Wignall's monthly round-up of doings in the Peak District...

AS LAST month's column went to the editor came the news that the **Goyt** in Whaley Bridge had changed hands. Cliff and Wendy Trelfa have called it a day there. In recent years the Goyt has been a regular in the Mild Challenge, and is well noted for its well-kept Tetley Dark Mild, Tetley Bitter, Greene King IPA and Abbot complete the real ale list.

On a personal note I am sorry to see the departure of Cliff and Wendy. The Goyt was one of my first ports of call when moving to Whaley bridge over three years ago and they made me very welcome, as well as providing good beer. My thanks to them both and best wishes for the future. More information next time.

A few days later came the news that the **Lamb** at Chinley Head on the Hayfield-Chinley road had been sold. In mid-August the pub was closed for some alterations which hopefully won't affect the drinking areas. This is a pub where timber beams really have a job to do, and are not just there for decoration. More information in a later column.

In mid-August the **Railway** in Whaley Bridge changed hands and was closed for refurbishment. The latest board indicated re-opening on 8 September with Robinson's Smooth Bitter and Smooth Mild!

Still in Whaley Bridge an early August visit to the **Shepherds'** found Young's Ramrod as a guest beer. Good to see Young's beers in the W&D estate. I fondly remember years ago when the late John Price ran the Grey Horse in Heaton Norris, Young's Bitter was for a good while a guest beer available alongside the less attractive Greenall's Bitter.

Also on at the Shepherds' was Wrangham's Grand Duke. This had the look of a Marston's pump clip, but does anybody know otherwise? Marston's Pure Blonde (4.2% ABV) has been doing the rounds of the W&D estate, and in early August a decent pint was available in the Shady Oak in Fernilee.

Real cider made a seasonal reappearance at the **Navigation** in Buxworth. The tourist season makes this viable in summer, and it was good to find Thatcher's Heritage available again this year. The guest beer available on my call was Lancaster Turner's Sunset. The name alludes to a work of JMW Turner who crossed the Morecambe Bay sands to Heysham near Lancaster during his travels in Northern England in 1797. The beer was well worth a try.

Bank Holiday weekend at the end of August saw the excellent little beer festival at the **Dog & Partridge**, Bridgemont. There was the usual good mix with beers from Scotland (Fyne Piper's Gold and Vital Spark) to Cornwall (Duchy of Cornwall Scuttled) and Suffolk (Adnam's Explorer). Piper's Gold (3.8%) was a deservedly popular session beer that ran out on the Saturday afternoon, as did the darker, maltier Vital Spark (4.4%). Gray's Dark Mild (3.8%) was the other obvious session beer and was a good dark mild. Where are Gray's beers brewed? Kelham Island Pale Rider was popular, whilst Loddon Check-Mate, Oakham Mompesson's Gold and Draught Bass completed the picture. All the beers I tried were in good form with jacket coolers to keep temperature. Put the Dog & Partridge Festival in your diaries for the end of August in 2007. It's well worth a visit.

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Before I go on I would just like to record my deep regrets at the death of Kath Smethurst, licensee of the Castle on Oldham Street. She was a true character and ran a fine traditional pub. Her son Damien has taken over and I am sure that he will continue the fine traditions of this cracking local. Elsewhere there is a cask ale gain, interesting bottled beers and in-house festivals to report.

### Back In The Fold

This is the **Olde Cock** in Didsbury, after several years selling only keg beer. Last January Graham and Cally Kelly moved there following a 3½ year stint at the **Old House at Home** in Withington, still a good cask beer house. With this background they viewed the four vacant handpumps at the Olde Cock with some dismay and real ale was reintroduced in August. This chimes with Graham and Cally's aim of making the pub more community focussed and so far the beer seems to be selling well enough to keep it on. Up to three beers are sold towards the end of the week and over the weekends – one comes from the 'standard' Greene King range, which isn't restricted to their own beers and in addition Graham can source up to 16 additional beers a month from the Beer Seller agency.

Cains Dragon Heart and Old Speckled Hen were on when I called and the Cains was very tasty. Future plans include the installation of line coolers and this will help to maintain quality. This is welcome move by Graham and Cally and deserves support. Pop in if you are in the area.

### Arndale Ale



Our photograph above shows the new **Paradise Brewery Bar** in the newly opened Arndale Market. Whether it's strictly a bar or more a high class market stall selling beer might be a moot point, but however you class it, this is certainly a welcome development. Only one hand pump has been in use so far but it's certainly proving popular enough with sales far exceeding expectations. A special draught beer, Arndale Ale (3.7% - I think) has been produced and is a dark, malt accented beer. Various bottle conditioned beers are also sold and, given the location right next to one of the market's High Street entrances, this venture should be a roaring success.

The interesting bottled beers are sold at **Love Saves The Day**, next to Deansgate Station. As well as lots of good things to eat, this excellent deli also sells some cracking bottled beers. There's the full Millstone range (and Millstone will be



### The Vale Inn, Bollington



*Lee Wainwright received his award from Macclesfield Branch Chairman Jill Hasler*

Macclesfield and East Cheshire recently presented Lee Wainwright at the Vale Inn with the Pub of the Season award for Summer 2006. The award recognises pubs that reflect the aims of CAMRA- friendly pubs serving a choice of real ale, kept and served in the traditional way.

Since taking over the pub 18 months ago, Lee has set about building a local reputation for providing just that. He serves an ever- changing range of beers, including Vale Ale, brewed especially for the pub by the local Macclesfield brewery, Storm Brewing, as well as a real cider or perry and a variety of continental bottled beers. Home cooked food is also served.

Pubs serving the local community are usually home to a variety of teams- darts, pool etc- but the Vale is the adopted home of the Bollington cricket squad. The area to the rear of the car park has been developed into an outdoor seated area, providing a peaceful spot overlooking the park, from where at the weekend in summer, one can enjoy a pint of good beer while watching the Bollington cricket team's home matches- what could be more traditional?

bottling a special house for them), a range of Suma organic beers, which I guess come from the Little Valley Brewery near Hebden Bridge, and three real curiosities. These are in fact labelled 'Curious Brew' and are commissioned from an unknown source by Chapel Down Wines. There's Brut (5%) made with champagne yeast, a very hoppy Cobb IPA (5.6%) and a bottle conditioned, oak matured Admiral Porter (5%). They are all rather good.

The **Bank** on Mosley Street appears to be doing a good trade. It has rationalised its cask beer range to a manageable three now – seasonal beers from Everards and Highgate, plus Lighthouse from Robinsons when I called. A chat to the Manager revealed that a variety of beers will be tried in future. He appeared keen to maintain choice and quality. Finally the increasingly impressive **New Oxford** on Bexley Square, off Chapel St, Salford is planning a beer festival for the last weekend of this month. Julie Black from 3 Rivers is helping with the guest beers so this will be one for your diary.

# The New Britannia



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## GRANDDAD was *always* a bit of a practical joker.

So I should have known better when he took me down his local. Especially when he blindfolded me. Hand on elbow he steered me to a chair and sat me down. "Here, sip on this," he ordered, holding a glass to my lips. "What is it, Granddad?" I CHUNTERED, apprehensively. "Never you mind," was the stern reply. "Just get it down you," I sipped, timidly, then again, bravely. Then again, with NARY a care in the world. It was smooth, hoppy and dry. "It's delicious!" I exclaimed, ripping the blindfold from my eyes to reveal my Granddad's laughing face. "Theakston's Mild," he chortled. "I can't tell it with my eyes closed. Now you can too." "But, even my dad says Theakston's Mild is only for pensioners," I protested. "Aye, your father's just not old enough to appreciate it," said Granddad, his eyes twinkling merrily. "But I reckoned his son would be."



## Cider and Perry Frequently Asked Questions.....

### Why does an apple taste sweet yet cider is naturally dry?

Within an apple there is everything needed to make cider. To make cider the apples are milled, i.e. reduced to small pieces, and then pressed to release the juice. Using the natural yeast, which covers the apple skin (or introduced yeast) and the sugars contained within the juice, fermentation takes place. Once fermentation is completed the sweet sugars have been converted into alcohol leaving a dry product. Cider can then be sweetened by using unfermented apple juice or artificial sweeteners.

### Which apples are best for making cider?

The apples which we eat as dessert fruit, are very different from the specialist fruit, which is usually used to make cider. There are over 600 types of apples grown in the British Isles and each one has a unique balance of sweetness, acidity and tannins. Of these it is estimated three quarters are cider apples. It is the three components of sweetness, acid and tannins that give the cider its range and depth of flavour. In the majority of cider making areas specialist cider apples are used, but in Kent dessert apples balanced with the acidity of cookers are used.

### What's special about a cider apple?

Cider apples are usually more closely related to the wild crab apple than to eating or cooking apples as they are smaller, harder & lack the unblemished attractiveness of eaters or cookers. If you tried to eat a cider apple you would discover its main difference from eaters or cookers is its tannin level. Tannin is responsible for the fruit's astringency, making the fruit taste bitter and drying the mouth, and making it difficult to swallow.

### Is there anything or anywhere special needed to ferment cider or perry?

Once pressed the juice of apples or perry pears is placed in wooden vats or food grade containers and fitted with an airlock. These are then usually placed in a barn or cellar and allowed to ferment. Fermentation usually is completed by the spring of the following year. This means the cider & perry which we drink this year is last year's crop of fruit.

### When is cider & perry made?

The majority of fruit ripens in September; therefore October is the ideal time to mill and press. The autumn evenings being warmer and dryer than the winter months allow the cider and perry to get off to a good start. Fermentation can be very vigorous at this initial stage.

### What is perry?

As cider is made from apples, perry is made from pears, not just any pear though. These are perry pears, which tend to be smaller and harder than dessert pears. Perry tends to be produced sweet or medium sweet although CAMRA's 2003 National Bronze Perry was Barkers Dry from Worcestershire. Perry also contains natural levels of non-fermentable sorbitol. Perry trees while bearing fruit in 3/5 years will continue to produce fruit for 200 or 300 years which is much longer than apple trees, this has led to the phrase "plant perry for your heirs".

**Join CAMRA Now. See Page 22**



**Join Our Cider Circuit and Win a Cider Box!**

**T**HIS MONTH we are offering you the chance to win a 36-pint 'box' of cider, kindly donated by John Reek of Merrylegs Cider (supplier of cider and perry to many local freehouses – contact 01626 770845) as we re-run our Cider Circuit. Not only that but we have made it easier for you to win a prize.

All you have to do is visit one of our participating pubs and buy a pint or a half of traditional cider or perry, and then get the barstaff to put a sticker next to the pub's entry on the form in the next column. Get 12 stickers (**which must include 3 pubs from each group**) and you will win a large bottle of traditional cider or perry. Get a sticker from all participating pubs and you will not only get a bottle of cider and perry but you will also be entered into the draw for the 36-gallon box. We hope to have some other cider and perry prizes, too. The Circuit runs from **Saturday 7 October to Saturday 11 November**. Completed forms should be sent to: "Cider Circuit, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport, Cheshire, SK3 9HD" to arrive no later than Saturday 18 November. If you are entering the grand draw, make sure you specify whether you would like dry, medium or sweet cider. All prizes will be presented at a special cider afternoon to be held at the **Cheshire Ring, Manchester Rd, Hyde** on **Saturday 3 December** from 2pm onwards.

**A (Cider)Apple a Day Keeps the Doctor Away?**

**A** GLASS OF CIDER a day might be more effective than the proverbial apple at keeping the doctor away, a group of scientists believe.

Researchers say that chemicals in British cider apples can protect against strokes, heart disease and cancer. They are now planning to test the theory on 12 volunteers (form an orderly queue please) who will each be asked to drink a pint of cider daily. The boffins will then check samples of the volunteers' blood and urine to see if drinking traditional cider passes the disease fighting antioxidants into the body.

The compounds in question are called phenolics and play an important part in giving cider its taste and colour. However the researchers from Glasgow University suspect they also have major health benefits. The study leader is Dr Serena Marks who says "Previous research suggests there may be an association between phenolics and protection against some serious diseases, so we are trying to find out how we might get phenolics from our diet. We know apples are high in phenolics, and our research shows cider apples have a higher phenolic content than dessert apples."

Dr Marks and her colleagues have measured phenolic levels in 19 varieties of English cider apples and 35 types of cider. They found that some kinds of apple and sorts of cider had more of the phenolics than others. Factors affecting their concentration are believed to include the age of the fruit, light exposure, growing region and storage conditions.

The lucky volunteers will be asked to drink about a pint of cider in a controlled environment. Dr Marks hopes the results may lead to cider production methods being altered to maintain high phenolic levels, even after fermentation.

**Cider Circuit - The Pubs**

**Group 1**

- Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport
- Navigation, Lancashire Hill, Stockport
- Railway, Avenue St, Portwood, Stockport
- Ye Olde Vic, Chatham St, Edgeley, Stockport
- Thatched House, Market Place, Stockport

**Group 2**

- Cheshire Ring, Manchester Rd, Hyde
- Bike & Hound, Hamnett St, Hyde
- Star, Howard St, Glossop
- Globe, High Street West, Glossop
- Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar

**Group 3**

- Station, Warrington St, Ashton
- Marble Beer House, Manchester Rd, Chorlton
- Legh Arms, Ashton Old Rd, Openshaw
- Waters Green Tavern, Waters Green, Macclesfield
- Duke of York, Stockport Rd, Romiley

**Group 4**

- Crescent, The Crescent, Salford
- Marble Arch, Rochdale Rd, Manchester
- Bar Fringe, Swan St, Manchester
- Crown & Kettle, Great Ancoats St, Manchester

**Name**.....

**Address**.....

.....

.....

**Phone No**.....

**Sweet, Medium or Dry Cider?**.....

**Note – most of our participating pubs are open all day, certainly from midday. However the Olde Vic doesn't open until 5pm (Mon-Fri and 7pm at weekends. The Waters Green is closed between 3 and 5 (7 on Saturdays) and doesn't open until 7pm on Sundays. The Thatched House is closed Mondays and opens at 8pm Tues-Thurs. The Globe is closed Tuesdays, opens at 5pm Mon, Wed-Sat**



Here is our monthly round-up of what's happening in the local CAMRA branches. Members of all branches are of course very welcome to attend each others' events.

The **Stockport & South Manchester** branch covers Stockport Borough apart from Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley and Marple, plus that part of Manchester from the River Medlock in the north to the M56/Princess Parkway in the south. *Branch Contact – Pete Farrand 07786 283990*

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: Kingsway, Levenshulme. Starts 8.00pm.

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup>** – King St West and Edgeley Stagger: starts Pineapple, Heaton Ln 7.30pm; Crown, Heaton Ln 8.30pm

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup>** – Pub of the Month presentation to the Lass O'Gowrie, Charles St, City Centre. From 8.00pm

**Monday 30<sup>th</sup>** – Social: Bank, Moseley St, Manchester from 8.00pm

The **High Peak & North East Cheshire** Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple, Tameside and Derbyshire from Glossop to Buxton. *Branch Contact – Tom Lord 0161 427 7099*

**Monday 9<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: Kinder Lodge, Hayfield. Starts 8.30pm

The **Trafford & Hulme** Branch covers the Borough of Trafford, Manchester West of the M56/Princess Parkway and a large part of the City Centre. *Branch Contact – John Ison 0161 962 7976*

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup>** – Thornbridge Brewery trip

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>** – Liverpool crawl, meet between 12pm and 1pm in the Head of Steam pub on Lime Street station.

**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup>** – Pub of the Season presentation to the Church Inn at Flixton from 8pm.

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>** – City Centre Pub Crawl: 7.30pm Shakespeare, 9.15pm Wetherspoons Picadilly, 10pm Waldorf on Gore Street.

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup>** – Urmston social, meet 8pm The Urmston, 9.15pm Lord Nelson.

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November** – Branch Meeting – Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm

Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the **Macclesfield & East Cheshire** Branch covers a wide area from Knutford to Congleton. *Branch Contact – Trevor Gammage 07802 645898*

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup>** – Campaigning Meeting: Rising Sun, Rainow. Starts 8.00pm

**Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> October** – Autumn Pub of the Season presentation to the Rifleman's Arms, Wilmslow. 8.00pm

The **North Manchester** Branch covers The Northern Quarter and North East Manchester plus the City of Salford. *Branch Contact – Roger Hall 0161 740 7937*

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup>** – Cider & Perry Crawl: Knott Bar 8pm; Waterhouse, Princess St 9pm, Bar Fringe, Swan St 10pm

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: Hare & Hounds, Shudehill, Manchester City Centre. Starts 8pm.

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>** – City Crawl: Shakespeare, Fountain St, 7.30pm, Wetherspoons, Piccadilly, 9.15pm, Waldorf, Gore St, 10pm.

# It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale



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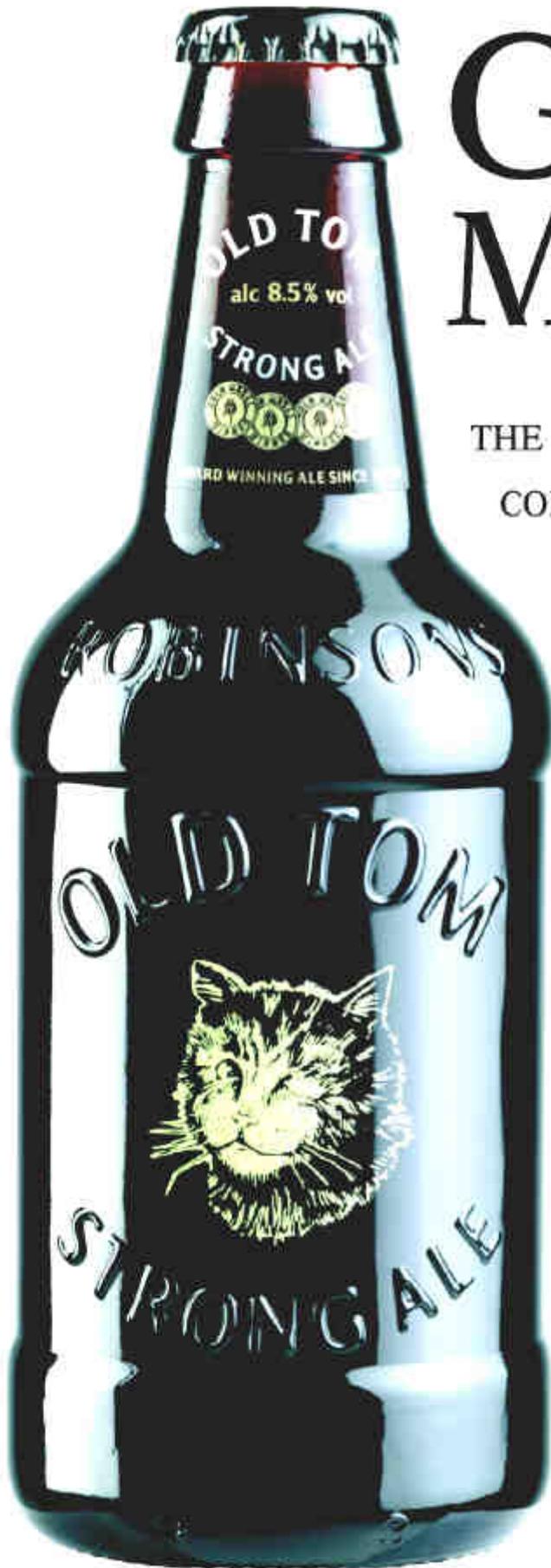
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