

JANUARY 2008

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TIMES

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THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

COVERING THE CITIES OF MANCHESTER & SALFORD, STOCKPORT, TAMESIDE, TRAFFORD, N.E. CHESHIRE & MACCLESFIELD

# Spoilt for Choice



**O**ur photo shows just part of the bar at last year's National Winter Ales Festival organised by CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. This year's event, again held at Manchester's New Century Hall from 16 – 19 January promises to be bigger and better than ever. Apart from a wide range of seasonal stouts, porters, old ales and barley wines there will be plenty of session milds and bitters to cater for an anticipated bumper crowd of eager drinkers. Add to that the usual huge foreign beer bar with many German draught beers and an unrivalled selection of draught and bottled Belgian beers, plus some well chosen ciders and perries, and you have an unmissable event. See the full page advert on page 19 for more details.



## Swan Safe

Following our front page story last month we were pleased to learn that the **Swan With Two Necks** on Princes Street, Stockport, is in fact safe from demolition. Both the Swan and the bank building next door will be incorporated in the proposed Bridgefield scheme. The bad news is that the nearby **Tiviot** remains under threat so the fight goes on.

## Special Feature



This month we have a special Foreign Beers feature on pages 6 and 7, concentrating on the Belgian Beer scene and local sellers of Belgian beers. There's a report on the Bruges Beer Festival, a look at importers Dranke Centrale and more general news.

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**The Stockport & South Manchester pub of the month for January 2008 is The Arden Arms, on Millgate in Stockport.**

The owners, Robinson's Brewery, have recently completed major structural repairs to the building without affecting the appeal or features of the interior which is on CAMRA'S National Inventory of Historical Interiors. Only the best-kept pubs with minimal "knocking about" over the years make it onto this A-list of institutions. A few of the features that put the Arden onto the inventory are the superb glazed, curved bar & chequer board tiling to the floor. A small snug is reached by actually going behind the bar.

The interior is always kept in excellent order with brown and cream décor, lots of wood, real fires and chandeliers. All topped off by a warm, friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Unseen by the regular patrons, are a number of body niches in the cellar walls attesting to its former use as a mortuary for the coroners' courts nearby.

There is a beer garden to the rear of the pub in an enclosed courtyard and for smokers a brand new smoking area set with patio heaters.

One would be forgiven for thinking a place such as this could not fail to succeed. Yet many will remember the period of decline brought on by a succession of short-term licensees, who let standards slip somewhat.

Then eight years ago Robinson's engaged Joe Quinn & Steve King to reverse its flagging fortunes. That move struck gold. So much so, that with their dedication, they won a whole string of CAMRA and other awards: - Branch Pub of the Month Dec 2000 & June 2003. Branch Pub of the Year 2004, Greater Manchester Regional CAMRA Pub of the Year 2004 and runner-up in the CAMRA National Pub of the Year 2004 and The Manchester Food & Drink Festival 2007 Pub of the Year finalist.

To assist Joe and Steve in these achievements is the excellent range of Robinson's Cask Ales: - Double Hop, Hatters Mild, Unicorn Bitter and O.B. Very often Old Tom is also available served from a barrel on the bar top during the winter months. All served in tip-top condition, going perfectly with the excellent home cooked food (served Monday - Friday 12-2.30pm & Saturday & Sunday 12-4pm).

Although the recipes in the kitchen may be ever changing, their recipe for success doesn't. Continued hard work and commitment has once again won them this accolade, and I doubt it will be their last.

The presentation is on Thursday 31st January at 8pm - come early to get a seat! The Arden Arms is on the corner of Corporation Street and Millgate near ASDA. It's only ten minutes walk from both Stockport's bus and rail stations and just a minutes walk from the 203 and 384 bus routes. **KW/CW**

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## Opening Times – Comment

I hope that everyone had a good Christmas. Now is the time to look forward to the New Year and what it may bring for the real ale drinker and pub goer.

The price of beer will be crucial. It is a fact that last year's hop and malting barley crops were poor. Prices have soared and while the bigger brewers buy two or three years in advance, the country's micro brewers will be facing rocketing costs. This will inevitably affect the price of their beers. The national brewer and pubco dominated British Beer & Pub Association is suggesting the £4 pint might be in the pipeline. While that is irresponsible scaremongering, even without duty increases, it is highly likely that by the end of this year your average micro-brewed pint could be 20-30p a pint more expensive. We could be in for interesting times.

## Opening Times - Information

*Opening Times* is produced by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Additional material is supplied by the High Peak & NE Cheshire, Trafford & Hulme, North Manchester and Macclesfield & E Cheshire Branches. The views expressed are not necessarily those of CAMRA either locally or nationally. 7,000 copies a month are printed by Phil Powell Printing of Failsworth. All articles copyright CAMRA unless otherwise stated.

News, articles and letters are welcome to the editorial address – 45, Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD. E-mail – stocam@btinternet.com. Phone 0161 477 1973. Advertising rates on request.

Postal subscriptions are available at £6 for 12 issues (make cheques payable to *Opening Times*). Apply to John Tune, 4 Sandown Rd, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, SK3 0JF.

**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  
**Salford:** 0161 925 1346 **Tameside:** 0161 342 8355  
**Chafford:** 0161 912 2274 **Derbyshire:** 08456 058 058  
**Cheshire:** 0845 11 32 500

**Copy Date for the February issue is Friday 18th January.**

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## Cheadle Hulme with Rita Bradbury and Mark McConachie

In recent years Cheadle Hulme has become a popular hot spot with pub goers and a number of establishments have spruced up their tired premises with a fresh lick of paint and major refurbishments. With a new pub opening in the area it has provided us with a good excuse to check out the beers and see if Cheadle Hulme is all it's cracked up to be. So without further ado the stagger began on Hulme Hall Road at the recently refurbished **Hesketh Tavern**.

However, the visit might well have proved short lived had we not swiftly walked to the rear of the premises due to the front door being out of use. I can only assume the reason for this is the Hesketh's target customers mostly arrive by car and this provides a convenient entrance. Prior to entering the pub there is a large heated area for drinking. Inside, the seating in the main appears to be intended for its target customer with a pronounced food bias. The pub was very busy and we had to stand close to the carvery area to enjoy our drinks. The carvery operates until fairly late and I must confess the food looked very tempting. Three cask beers were on offer; John Smiths which went untried, Adnams Bitter which was good and Hydes dark seasonal beer Atomic which was judged better still.



Stepping back into the cold we had a good ten minute walk through a leafy residential street towards the **Governor's House** on Ravenoak Road. This former Hardy & Hanson pub was taken over by

Greene King. It was visibly not as busy as previous visits and only time will tell whether this was due to the change in pub's ownership or customers deciding to test the water of a new pub opening in the area. The Governor's layout remains the same as before, it has a central bar which is surrounded by lounge style drinking areas. The selection of beers available was Greene King IPA but on this occasion it was untried, Hardy & Hanson bitter which was good, Hardy & Hanson Pride and Joy was considered very good and went down very well as did Smiles bitter.

Carefully crossing the road we entered the **Church Inn** located on the corner of Ravenoak Road and Church Lane. This family run pub has been a long standing entry in the Good Beer Guide. The main panelled lounge area is decorated with brass fittings which



give the place the appearance of a quaint village local. Also available is a separate vault with a television. At the rear of the pub is Edwardo's restaurant specialising in French cuisine. The outside courtyard area is set aside for drinking with a covered area for the smokers. The Robinson's Hatters was considered very good, with similar appreciative reactions to the Unicorn, although the seasonal beer Flash Harry received a mixed reception of poor and average.

Leaving the warmth and comfort of the Church Inn, with its standing room only, we headed back towards the centre of Cheadle Hulme.

Our next stop was the 15th Century Grade II listed **John Millington** pub on Station Road. The sympathetically extended Millington Hall was restored in 2004, its interior features a gothic appearance utilising stone work recovered from other buildings with some very interesting looking corbels, as well as some fascinating photographs detailing Hydes brewery's history. The beers available were Hydes Bitter the quality of which was good, Jekyll's Gold was very good and very well received, the seasonal beer Thriller was untried and Allgates Bonnie Prince Charlie received a mixed reception of average and fairly acceptable.

Departing from the John Millington's but staying on Station



Road our next port of call was only a short walk away. We entered the **Cheadle Hulme** pub which is situated conveniently next door to the railway station. The pub was refurbished a number of years ago and has successfully staved off the increasing competition providing its customers with a modern interior as well as retaining the traditional vault with dart board. The choice of beers this evening were Holt's Mild which was very good, however the quality of the bitter was judged even better and the quality of their seasonal beer Fifth Sense received mixed but good reviews too. I mentioned earlier a new pub has recently opened in Cheadle Hulme and this was our next stop.

The **Penny Black** on Warren Road was formerly a Post Office sorting office hence the name. If your preference for pubs is lively and you've no qualms about ringing ears or temporary hearing loss then it is possibly the place for you. Ploughing our way through the mass of people we eventually found the bar. The bar staff were snowed under with eager customers waiting to be served. The beers available this evening were Caledonian Deuchars, only average, and Wells Bombardier, average to good. Although it has to be said that perhaps due to the added pressure of serving a large number of people with too few bar staff at least one person in our group had to request a refill when he was poured a questionable measure with a large head. I'm not altogether sure whether the Penny Black's overall ambience received everyone's stamp of approval. We left the blast of music and extremely busy pub for our final destination.

Strolling round the corner we made our way to the **King's Hall**. This Wetherspoon's pub I have to say was noticeably quieter than on previous visits but this could be as a result of a new pub opening its doors only a stone's throw away. The quality of beers available this evening were as follows: Salopian Abbey rather a disappointing pint on this occasion, Everards Tiger was good, with Marstons Old Empire considered even better, the beer quality of the Caledonian Deuchars was judged to be a very enjoyable pint indeed and Robinson's Old Tom on this occasion was untried. Only time will tell whether the new kid (Penny Black) on the block is a passing fad or will continue to pose a threat to the King's Hall customer base. It has to be said however, the number of successfully run pubs in Cheadle Hulme does suggest that some competition is perhaps healthy and plenty of choice is probably good news for the customer.

*Cheadle Hulme is accessible by several methods of public transport including the following bus services and destinations: 313 Stockport/Cheadle Hulme, 157 Manchester/Woodford. Or alternatively if you prefer the train Cheadle Hulme railway station provides services from Stockport, Manchester and other places on the Crewe or Macclesfield lines.*

## SPONSOR REQUIRED

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For details and to discuss things further, please contact Jim Flynn on 0161 432 1816 or jim@flynnfam.co.uk.



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# Bruges – and its Beer Festival



**B**RUGES is a popular holiday destination and is perhaps the one Belgian town that *Opening Times* readers may have visited in any numbers.

Its appeal is obvious for both the beer lover and general tourist alike. A largely traffic free centre allows ample opportunity for wandering the well preserved medieval streets (although a fair few of the buildings are in fact late 19th Century reproductions constructed at the instigation of a large expat British community that lived there at the time), seeing the many sights and discovering the many delightful places to both eat and drink. Unsurprisingly it is now one of Europe's top five short break holiday destinations.

## Brugs Bier Festival

Apart from many excellent bars (of which more anon) the town now hosts its very own beer festival courtesy of the local Brugse Autonome Bierproevers, part of Zythos, the Belgian equivalent of CAMRA.

The first festival took place on 15 and 16 September this year and the venue could not have been more central or spectacular. Held in the "Halletoren" or belfry building (picture top right) dominating the central Markt, the beamed medieval hall and the internal courtyard were an impressive backdrop to some 167 beers from almost 40 brewers, including the Felstar Brewery from the UK.



Above – Festival goes through the internal courtyard

Apart from the chance to sample and even buy some excellent beers, there were also cookery displays with local chefs demonstrating cooking with beer and this was also reflected in the food available at the festival (although the stovveles and frites from one of the "huts" in the Markt – to which you could wander with your beer – made for perfect festival food).

It was all a huge success and a second event is planned for this year although it will be rather later on 15 and 16 November. This festival will be rather larger than the first and, being later should also feature some seasonal winter ales. There's a very useful website at [www.brugsbierfestival.be/](http://www.brugsbierfestival.be/).

## Eating and Drinking

Well, drinking mainly. Bruges houses some classic bars where you can experience the very best beers that Belgium has to offer.

The absolute essential stop is the **Brugs Beertje** on Kemelstraat. Run by the indomitable Daisy Claeys (pictured below serving beer to former branch Chairman Mark McConachie, OT editor John Clarke and Wyn Reece of *Dranke Centrale*), this world classic bar has a well written beer list with about 250 beers from all over Belgium – though look out for those from the local Regenboog brewery. Food is snacks only.

Fine food as well as a top flight list of about 120 beers is to be found at the **Erasmus** at 35 Wollestraat. The food is equally impressive featuring old and new Flemish dishes. The terrace at the back overlooking the canal is the best spot. There are also nine letting bedrooms here, too.



Hidden away is the **Garre** at 1 De Garre, a small alleyway off Breidelstraat. There are two rooms, one upstairs up a tight spiral staircase, to sample the 130 beers (including a potent house special) in rather elegant surroundings. Again food is cheese and sausage only.

Up and coming is the **Kuppe** (19 Kuipersstraat) with a growing beer list of 100-plus beers including some good finds – decent geuze, and lots from Gouden Carolus and De Dolle Brouwers, for example.

Two cellar bars to try are almost opposite each other on Vlamingstraat. The **Zolder** at No.53 has about 70 beers avoiding most of the usual suspects. Being slightly off the main drag it avoids the crowds, and the food, mainly pasta and stews, is accordingly cheaper than elsewhere. **'t Poatersgat** is at No.82 and offers about 120 beers, again from an excellent range covering the whole spectrum of Belgian beer styles.

Finally – don't miss the **Cambrinus** (19 Philipstockstraat) where you can choose from a list of not fewer than 400 beers!

**Don't forget** – Bruges is in fact Brugge to the locals. It's a Flemish speaking town so it's "dank u wel" and "alstublieft" and not "merci beaucoup" and "s'il vous plait"!



# Foreign NEWS...

For lovers of Belgian beers the big news is that on 21 December **Liefmans** was made bankrupt. The brewery, famous for its tissue wrapped bottles of kriel and frambozen (cherry and raspberry beers), amongst a wide range of brews, had been the subject of intense speculation for some months. Shortages of the company's beers in some markets had led to rumours of financial difficulties but the company was finally brought down by a large social security debt.



The board tried to save the company with an application for judicial administration that would have protected it from its creditors for six months but the court would not entertain this. Five administrators have now been appointed to run the business and the hope must be that it can be saved.

In another blow to Belgian beer lovers, this month we must say goodbye to the Barker family's involvement with the **Belgian Belly** in Chorlton. The business has been sold and is due to change hands by the end of the month. The new owner is apparently committed to business as usual.

Jason Barker, along with his sisters Sandra and Sue, has made the Belly a must-visit venue for the purchase of rare and unusual Belgian beers, such as has been their enthusiasm and commitment. They will be a very hard act to follow and depart with our very best wishes. We feel sure that the Belgian beer world has not seen the last of Jason Barker.

## Dranke Centrale

You may have seen some unusual Belgian beers around and about in some local free houses. Slaapmutske and Serafijn beers in particular have become quite widely available.

This is down to the efforts of Wyn Reece and Paul Scrimshaw who have been trading as **Dranke Centrale** for about two years now.

People may know Wyn as the man who first set up the excellent Le Trappiste Belgian bar in Altrincham. He is someone who has a love for Belgian beers and, along with Paul, is very keen to supply discerning bars with some top notch Belgian beer. It is Dranke Centrale that is behind the expanded range at the **New Oxford** in Salford. They are also to supply most of the Belgian beers for this month's National Winter Ales Festival.

Many beers can be supplied (the website is at [www.drankecentrale.com/](http://www.drankecentrale.com/)), but they have really concentrated on the products of two concerns – Slaapmutske and Achilles



(who make the Serafijn beers). This is to expand in the new year. They will also be supplying the excellent Urthel beers together with those from the very new Dochter Van de Korenaar brewery. In addition, a third partner has joined the business – this

is Bob Louwrier who hails from Utrecht in the Netherlands. This should see some of the better Dutch micro-brewed beer also appearing locally.

Our picture above shows (l-r) Wyn Reece, Bob Louwrier (standing), Dany De Smet (Slaapmutske) and Paul Scrimshaw. Dranke Centrale can be contacted on 0780 175 8282. Look for our feature on Slaapmutske Brewery in the next issue..



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Robin Wignall's monthly Peak District round-up

**T**he **Navigation**, Whaley Bridge had good pints of Black Sheep Bitter, as usual, during November visits, whilst a very recommendable guest beer for a few days was J.W. Lees Ruddy Glow.

As part of the Enterprise Inns link with local brewers the **Dog & Partridge**, Bridgemont, has had Hornbeam Top Hop and then Hornbeam Bitter as guests. These are of course two quality beers from the Denton microbrewer, which seems to have hit the ground running by gaining access to the Enterprise list. Only one slight snag was reported at the Dog & Partridge, the pale and hoppy brews from Hornbeam caused a slight dip in the sales of Deuchars IPA! However there was more Hornbeam to follow in December. Coach House Gunpowder Mild continues as good as ever.

At the **Navigation**, Buxworth, the hand pumps have now been grouped together on the bar. Wychwood Hobgoblin was the guest beer on a November visit, along with regulars Marstons Bitter and Pedigree, Taylor's Landlord and Theakston's Bitter.

The **Shepherds Arms** in Whaley Bridge saw the anticipated change of licensee in late November. John Oliver is returning to Australia after a job well done, and has been replaced by Susan Greenwood. Susan has a wealth of experience in the pub trade, most recently as manager at Robinson's Tatton Arms near Manchester Airport. No changes are anticipated on the beer front, though a mild could be tried in the near future. A redecoration is planned for the new year but no big alterations. The Shepherds is a classic case of 'if it ain't broke don't fix it!' Up at Fernilee, the **Shady Oak** had some particularly good Jennings Bitter in mid December, whilst Black Sheep Bitter was also on the bar.

Robinson's **Railway**, Whaley Bridge, is expected to re-open in mid December after a six figure alteration, addition and redecoration as noted last month. Phil Whittaker will be having a big push with cask conditioned beers when the pub reopens, with three or four Robinson's beers available on hand pump.

### Seasonal Beers

**B**y early December Christmas and seasonal beers were making their appearances locally. Both the **Cock**, Whaley Bridge, and the **Crossings**, Furness Vale were selling Robinson's Mr. Scrooge 4.4%, on good form in the Cock, and Old Tom. As I have written previously, it is good to see local Robinson's houses taking up the seasonal brews.

The Shepherds was selling Marstons Ugly Sisters 4.5% during one of my visits, with Bateman's Rosey Nosey, complete with flashing pump clip, and Jennings Redbreast to follow.

The **Navigation**, Whaley Bridge had Milestone Dasher the Flasher 4.5%. This sold out before I got there, but I am told it was a good malty seasonal brew. This is another beer with a battery operated flashing pump clip.

The Navigation at Buxworth was looking wonderfully seasonal with really good decoration. Cottage Merry Hound 4.2% was one of a number of seasonal beers expected and was in good form when I called.

With this article about to go to the editor came some late news. The re-opening of the Railway in Whaley Bridge is now planned for early January. I have just passed the **19th Hole**, Fairfield Common, Buxton, and spotted a To Let sign, obviously another Marstons house with questions about its future. And some better news as the **Jolly Carter**, Chapel en le Frith, is now reported to be open all day, instead of just evenings. The last time I called in Robinson's Unicorn was in decent form. Time for another visit!

## PENNINE ALE LIMITED

*Geoff Oliver's Company, Pennine Ale Limited has now acquired Porters Rossendale Brewery, the Griffin Inn, Haslingden and the Railway at Stockport.*

*Pennine Ale's The Sportsman in Hyde will now be taking the Rossendale Breweries beers.*

*Geoff also plans to be selling to the Licensed Trade sometime early this year.*

*He is brewing the more popular "core" beers that the brewery has been producing for some years.*

*The beers presently being brewed are: -*

*Floral Dance 3.6% abv*

*Bitter 3.8% abv*

*Rossendale Ale 4.2% abv*

*Railway Sleeper 4.2% abv*

*Porter 5% abv,*

*Sunshine 5.3% abv*

*For further information and trade prices please contact Geoff at: Pennine Ale Ltd, the Rossendale Brewery, Haslingden, Lanc's BB4 5AF*

*Tel: 01706 21 40 21*

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**CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2008 We're in it!**



**W**ell, it's all happening in Glossop & Buxton in the Derbyshire part of the branch. In Buxton, the **Spa Bar** has opened (formerly the Gaslight Club) on the Market Place... with cask beer as well. The manager tells me that sales are going well – when I called in early December beers from Storm, Milestone and Kelham Island breweries were on sale. The London Road on the corner of West Road is also selling more cask beer with extra handpumps installed

Also, following the closure at the end of October of the **George**, which was selected for the Good Beer Guide 2008, the **Swan** has taken on additional guest beers, including the Storm beers that were so popular at the George. Another bar is also opening at Buxton Market place, I believe more of a cafe bar, but also with real ale. By the time you read this, it will have started trading.



Over in Glossop, exciting times too, with the unfortunately named **Last Orders**, or Last Resort as the locals knew it by. In the past this was the Trap for many years, previous to this, prior to 1975, the Albion, when it was a Chesters pub, selling Chesters "fighting" bitter and the much missed Chesters mild. Honeycomb Leisure, the company that owned the Last Orders group of pubs in the North West, was bought out by Cains of Liverpool some months ago, and Cains have done an extremely quick refurbishment and on my invite to look around on the last day of

November, it was only a week to reopening as the **Market Tavern** – our picture shows Ajmail and Sudarghara Dusanj of Cains at the opening of the pub. Three handpumps were in a prominent position on the bar, the new signage over the door, the menus printed and the new landlord to be told me that two of Cains regular beers would be joined by the seasonal special.

Cains are promising a three-year investment programme with the pubs they inherited from Honeycomb and say this is the first of such changes planned for the next year. The branch area has two more Last Orders pubs, in Denton and Hyde, so let's hope these two pubs receive similar treatment.

Just 100 yards away, the **Norfolk Arms**, which has been having massive spending on it since Holts bought it earlier in the year, also opens in mid December (after these notes were written) and the big investment made here is an exciting prospect to look forward to. This opens wide the choice of beers in the town and as in Buxton, follows the closure of a Good Beer Guide 2008 pub (the **Gloveworks**) that was smoke damaged in early October and whose future looks uncertain at present.

Both pubs are offering food, the Market Tavern's prices looking extremely competitive with all the 11 main courses under £5.00 and the two grills under £6.00. They also have two meals for £7.00.

Just to make things more interesting still, the **Sparrows** on Gladstone Street, some 250 yards from the traffic lights but in a residential area is reopening with activity moving along when I have passed in the past few weeks. Closed for the best part of a couple of years, it has been to auction on a number of occasions and now to reopen as an Irish themed bar. Not sure when, nor whether real ale will feature, but a clue could be that it is the same owners as the former Moulders Arms which is similarly themed, on Hyde Road across from the Sportsman.





Just for a change there's some good news around this month. Let's start in Northenden...

### Farmers Arms

**T**HE **Farmers Arms** is under new management again. Since September, Sarah Ridgeway has taken over the helm. She started her licensing career at Mr. Thomas's Chop House in the City Centre and since then has run numerous pubs, the last being the Blue Lion in Newton-Le-Willows.

The Farmers has had a minor refurbishment and a dress code has been introduced after 7pm at weekends. This has discouraged certain unwelcome elements(!) and has been appreciated by the regulars, resulting in an upturn in trade. Food is still available throughout the day. Cask ale is now dispensed from four hand pumps, presently the ales on offer are Wells Bombardier and Marston's Pedigree, both of which were of a high standard when I called, with the options of various guest ales for the other two pumps. There is plenty of seating and a more than adequate outside seating area.

### Woodstock

**I**N West Didsbury the **Woodstock** (Barlow Moor Road) reopened in mid-December after a refurbishment.

The decor is ... em... "interesting". Downstairs walls are white, but the ceiling is gold paint complete with ornate cornices in what can only be described as a mock stately home style. This theme continues on the back bar and other walls with large ornate gold framed mirrors and pictures in all rooms. Upstairs is the really interesting bit decor wise - walls are chocolate brown almost throughout - which means it's **very** dark. Lighting is a mixture of chandeliers & church candles. All in all, it seems very fussily busy.

As for the beer, there are four handpumps on each bar (upstairs and downstairs). One serves an organic cider (I didn't notice which one), and three with cask ales. I have to say I was disappointed with the choice. Considering that it had formerly pretty much managed to have three regularly changing regional or local guests on at all times (and when it closed it was in the middle of the Ember Inns ale festival), it was disappointing to find the range consisting of Pedigree, Landlord and Black Sheep

I guess it may just be early days and a more interesting range might follow, but if it doesn't then I think the market research is seriously flawed with that choice as all of these beers are easily available locally and for less.

### Staying In South Manchester

**T**HE seemingly ongoing saga of the **Ladybarn** continues. In December a "Pub Business to Let" sign was followed by an "Under New Management" banner, advertising beer at £1.90. I didn't have the chance to call in but I had a quick look through the window and wasn't surprised to see nothing on the two handpumps. So this could be a real ale loss (again)?

Just across the road, the **Brewers Arms** is open again, still advertises "traditional cask ales" outside and still sells only keg beers.

Not too far away, the **Old House at Home** in Withington has Wells Bombardier and Black Sheep Bitter on handpump.

Finally, we have a new pub on Wilmslow Road (just near Moss Lane East). This is Wetherspoon's **Ford Maddox Brown**. It is quite an impressive place, with a mixture of seating, including armchairs and a few arty artefacts as well (Brown was a pre-Raphaelite painter).

But the beer range was decidedly average (to me) - Greene King IPA and Abbot, Pedigree, Deuchars and Hornbeam Top Hop (the highlight). No traditional cider - when I enquired, I was

offered Kopparberg! The duty manageress said it is a "reduced range" Wetherspoons, so is unlikely to have many guest beers, except during festivals. I imagine the main clientele would be students, as it was not very busy, so the range could increase in term time.

### East Manchester

**A**S usual it's a mixed bag here. Another Gorton pub has succumbed to the wrecking ball of history. The **Belle Vue** (originally the Longsight) on Kirkmanshulme Lane was demolished in mid December. This was a modern Banks's house that was only built in the 1980's. Banks's don't appear to have had a happy time in south Manchester

On Hyde Road the **Friendship** has reopened after what looks like a major refurbishment. Inside it looks better than it has done for years. That's the good news. On the other side of the coin the opening out of the pub has meant the loss of the exceptional vault and the opportunity to reinstate real ale has been passed up.

There's clearly a demand for the real thing locally - the nearby **Waggon & Horses** and, notably, the **Vale Cottage**, sell reliably good pints. Not only that but another long term keg-only house is back in the cask beer fold.

This is the **Lord Nelson**, also on Hyde Road. A major refurbishment has seen the pub transformed. It's certainly more welcoming than before and the rambling interior, while basically open plan, is nicely divided up into various areas. There's clearly a major food operation here, too. However the good news is the return of real ale here. Three were on sale when I called - Theakstons Best Bitter and XB along with Shepherd Neame Spitfire. Well worth dropping in.

### City Centre

**F**IRSTLY, some overdue words about the **City Arms** (Kennedy Street). This has always been something of a City Centre institution notable for a more than decent range of beers. For some years it was run by keen beer man Sean Piatt and his departure prompted some concerns for the future. All misplaced, I'm pleased to say. Mike Farrand is the new man in charge and he is clearly a keen beer man - the range is both top quality and ever-changing. On more than one occasion I have popped in for one and found myself staying for a couple. It's that sort of pub. To ease congestion, a hatch has been knocked into the wall of the corridor leading to the gents - and I understand that Mike is toying with the idea of installing a spiral staircase to open an upstairs room as a lounge.

I also planned a tour of the Northern Quarter but rapidly became rather dispirited at the lack of cask beers in some of the newer outlets. If top class bars like **Odd** (Thomas Street) can do it - good Marble Manchester Bitter on my last visit - why can't the rest. And don't tell me there's no demand because that is clearly cobblers.

The **Unicorn** on Church Street however still impresses - Copper Dragon IPA has now joined the Bass and Boddingtons on handpump.

### The Northern - High on Style, Low on Beer

**P**ERHAPS one of the biggest let downs is the **Northern**, the decidedly upmarket conversion of the former, and very definitely down market, **King** on Oldham Street. It's all very smart and modern - there's a brand new entrance down a passageway on Tib Street, decent food and the décor emphasises the pub's Manchester roots. Pictures of Tony Wilson, Elsie Tanner, Ian Brown, and others adorn the walls. So what adorns the bar? The words 'usual suspects' spring to mind. As is all too often the case with the new bars in this area, all the imagination goes into the design and when it comes to the drinks offering autopilot switches on. OK, the Northern sells two cask beers - Black Sheep Bitter and Greene King Old Speckled Hen. Very Manchester. Not. For God's sake - Marble Brewery is just up the road. What is wrong with these people?

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**From: Anthony D Cooper, General Manager, The Fir Tree, Reddish:**

I am writing to point out a few points that you may wish to adjust in the article written by John Clarke (Stagger) in the December issue of your magazine.

Firstly The Fir Tree tried cask ale when we re-opened after our re-furb in December 2006. We continued with a variety of ales until June 2007 at which point we withdrew cask ales due to a lack of interest within our venue. We do still have 2 (not one) hand pulls in the vault but these are unbadged and redundant. We have not served Wells Bombardier since June 2007.

I resent the comments about a "murky looking liquid" as if this was the standard of our liquid fayre then we would not be the busiest and most successful venue in the area.

I have always tried in the various Pubs/Venues that I have run over 20+ years to have Good Real Ale but the venue and clientele do not always suit a Cask trade as is the case at The Fir Tree.

CAMRA in my opinion is an important part of our industry but I find it hard to support a group that will denigrate what a venue/licensee is doing just because they do not provide cask ale.

The Fir Tree is now an integral part of the Reddish community and is supported by many layers of the area's diverse community unfortunately the demand for Real Ale is small and we would not be able to do justice to a good ale on such a small turnover so we choose not to sell it rather than do it badly.

The issue that CAMRA should be tackling is why so many venues in Reddish or Stockport do not have Cask and leave those who do not do it alone and to make sure that those that do have a good cask trade do it well. A simple line of "This venue does not do Real Ale" would be much better than a biased opinion. I wish more power to the pulling arms of those licensee's who choose to have Real Ale but there is more to this trade than cask and in the current climate with the smoking ban and supermarkets running alcohol sales at a loss should we not be praising and supporting ALL that is good about our trade and not just the bits that suit our own particular tastes.

*(There are a couple of comments in this letter that cause me some concern. Anthony says that his pub stopped selling cask beer in June and thereafter the handpumps were unbadged. The Stagger took place on 21 September and on that night at least there was a handpump in the vault with a Bombardier pump clip on it. This handpump was dispensing beer. And it was a murky looking fluid, I'm sorry to say. I put these points to Anthony but he has yet to get back to me. Ed)*

**From: Mrs Sue Carroll, licensee of the Peel Arms, Macclesfield:**

I am writing to complain about the write up in Macclesfield Pub News (OT, December).

I can confirm that the Peel Arms is open since the brewery manager reopened it after a complete refurb in the summer. I bought the tenancy from Daniel Thwaites on 1 October and have worked very hard along with Mark my husband to get this pub up and running again.

Sadly I find this bad publicity is of the worst possible kind. Before putting items to press would it not have been possible to check with the pub or with Thwaites? There is constantly an A board outside which proves signs of life within the building. Anyone reading the article will not go out of their way to enter Peel Street and may take the opinion that the pub has closed down.

*(Apologies for this. The article was printed in good faith and I am very happy to put the record straight. Ed)*

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## THE CASTLE

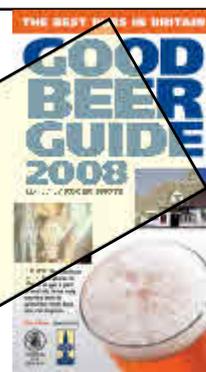
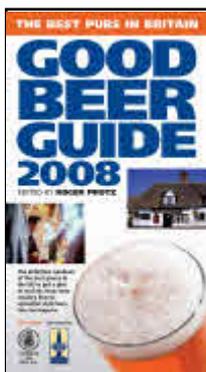
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## Plucked from Thin Air

RECENTLY there have been alarming reports about the high proportion of people drinking at levels that are claimed to be potentially hazardous to health, and the smaller but still substantial number drinking at levels that are actively harmful

"Hazardous" is defined, for a man, as 21 units of alcohol or more a week, "harmful" as 50 units or more. But what do those figures represent in terms of, say, a popular 4.5% ABV beer such as Pedigree or Old Speckled Hen? 21 units is a mere 9 pints a week, which in many people's eyes would count as pretty light drinking, while 50 units is just 3 pints a day which a moderate pub regular would take in his stride. So are vast numbers of people who don't come anywhere close to the typical image of a heavy boozer greatly underestimating the health risks associated with alcohol and unwittingly drinking themselves into an early grave?

The honest answer is no. These so-called "safe limits" were dreamed up by scientists in 1987 in response to a government request to come up with some figures. They were essentially plucked out of the air with no firm basis in scientific research. Since then, various studies have contradicted these figures. One showed that the healthiest group of men of all were those drinking between 21 and 30 units a week - and thus at a level officially defined as "hazardous" - while another found that men had to drink more than an average of 63 units a week before facing the same health risk as those drinking nothing at all. Yet, despite all the weight of contradictory evidence, nothing has been done to change the official guidelines.

In reality, people's body size and metabolism varies so much that it is impossible to define a one-size-fits-all level of "safe" drinking. 21 units a week may well be a kind of lowest common denominator below which alcohol consumption is highly unlikely to have any adverse health effects. But, for most adults, particularly those otherwise in good health, drinking rather more than that is unlikely to do much if any harm either. And it is also wrong to suggest that consumption at anything more than an optimal level will result in your state of health dropping off a cliff. We're constantly told that we should eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, but if you don't, it doesn't mean you'll contract scurvy.

Everybody knows that regular heavy drinking is likely to do long-term damage to health. But setting consumption guidelines that many will see as unrealistically low, and which have no scientific basis, is likely to work against the encouragement of moderation in drinking and undermine the credibility of all official messages.

## Supping with the Enemy

IT is also disappointing how drink producers seem prepared to go along with this nonsense and put these figures on labels. This obviously shows a distinct degree of hypocrisy, as they know very well that without large numbers of people routinely ignoring the guidelines their business would be greatly reduced.

What are we to make of a 500 ml crown-cork bottle of 8.2% ABV vintage cider, with a label saying it contains 4.1 units of alcohol, but responsible drinkers don't exceed 3 to 4 per day? But it also reveals a cowardly reluctance to actually stand up and defend the drinks industry, which is especially regrettable given how unscientific the figures are. At a time of mounting anti-alcohol hysteria, the unquestioning acceptance of these guidelines is giving a dangerous hostage to fortune.

Curmudgeon Online: [www.curmudgeon.org.uk](http://www.curmudgeon.org.uk)



Mike and Lyn Wawiorko with a local round-up

ON Newton Street, the **Prince Albert** has a new landlord and offers Old Speckled Hen as a regular together with a guest, a well kept Greene King IPA at our visit. It is a small corner pub, one L-shaped lounge around the bar and a small beer garden. The **Flower Pot** on Congleton Road has lost part of its front lawn to a road widening scheme, but this road house inn still has a large outdoor area. It continues to serve well kept Robinson's Unicorn.

On Crompton Road the **Bruce** has Tetley bitter. Another corner local, it has a snug at the front, two lounges and a fair sized beer garden. The **Crompton Road Tavern** is another haunted pub with a little girl often heard walking around upstairs. Regular Marston's Pedigree was joined by Courage Directors when I called in. The beer range may change as ownership has passed from W&D to an independent chain. There's regular live acoustic or mellow music. A major refurbishment is planned and may be underway before Christmas.

On Bond Street the **Crown** has Black Sheep Bitter along with a guest voted by the customers. There are ladies darts and netball teams, along with a fishing club, dominoes, crib and a football team planned for next season. Up the road the **Barnfield** has Robinson's Unicorn and planned pins of Old Tom for Christmas. There's a heated shelter in the beer garden and lots of potted plants. The **Plough** on Prestbury Road had guests Flowers and Black Sheep along with regulars Tetley Bitter and Deuchars IPA. Sadly, the imaginative choice of guests that gained an entry in the old Good Beer Guide isn't often found and we hope they return regularly. The beer garden has been tastefully refurbished with a shelter along one side.

Finally, two pubs on the up and up. The lively and welcoming **Chester Road Tavern** has a landlord who cares about his ales where regulars Cains Bitter, Black Sheep Bitter, Wadworth 6X and John Smiths are joined by a guest. This is a traditional four-roomed local with a horse racing club and crown green bowling team, along with the usual pub teams. A darts team is being recruited for next season. The **Oxford** has roughly monthly events with well-known comedians - call in for the schedule. There are 3-4 ales to choose from, often from the W&D list such as Jennings or Marston's, but with some imaginative guests such as Everards Sunchaser we don't often find elsewhere in Macclesfield. A dominoes team is planned to join the pool, darts, football, and poker teams. Free popcorn is offered at the Tuesday movie night. Outside there's a large beer garden with a pool table. On the third Wednesday of the month there's a folk night.

## Bosley

ON the edge of our CAMRA branch area, on the main road to Leek, we have a couple of pubs that aren't often visited. The **Queens Head** is a comfortable pub with offering an interesting menu at lunch time (except Monday) and each evening. There's a curry night on Mondays and a steak night on Wednesdays. To drink there's a choice of Boddingtons or an enjoyable well kept Bass. The landlord has plans to add a third pump for a guest ale. On Friday evenings once a month there's entertainment. Outside there's a large garden, car park and possibly a unique covered smoking area with TV and darts.

Across the road the Bosley **Harrington Arms**, not to be confused with its namesake at Gawsworth just a few miles away, is another Robinson's country pub offering a choice of Unicorn or Hatters. There's a large car park and a garden with an imminent smoking shelter. It's a four roomed pub with darts, pool, a golf society and a table tennis table in the garden. Food is served at lunch times, evening up to 8.30 and also take-way sandwiches from 9 to lunch time.



Just for a change there is plenty of good news around this month. It certainly makes a change from the usual doom and gloom. We kick off with a glimmer of light in the darkness that is the Reddish real ale scene.

### Carousel

**T**HE **Carousel** on Reddish Road, Reddish re-opened on 17 December after a major refurbishment and now stocks real ale!

The new manager Jo Worthington is an old hand at managing pubs. Her background most recently is the Revolution Bar and Wytchwood in Ashton. The pub at the moment has Deuchars IPA and Courage Directors as Jo wants to get a feel for the community before going ahead with more ales. She will be adding Theakstons Best soon.



This is a food-oriented pub allowing children in till 7pm (in a separate section), meals are served from 12 noon with the last food order at 7:45pm.

There is a function room upstairs which should be now completed.

The pub was quite full for a Thursday when I called, with a pleasant atmosphere, lots of helpful bar staff, plenty of seating, and a long bar to hold up!

I called just four days after opening and the Directors had already run out – so who says there's no demand for real ale in Reddish? The IPA was of excellent quality – all in all a welcome gain for the area.

On the down side, I have seen an e-mail from the manager at the **Fir Tree** and it must now be assumed that this pub no longer sells cask beer. So, as one door opens, another one just slams shut.

### Heaton Moor

**A** couple of snippets first. The **Kro** organisation has now taken over the former Bakery on Heaton Moor Road – their first venture outside Manchester. The bar now boasts the clean, modern appearance that characterises the Kro chain but, more to the point, cask ale is back. This is 3 Rivers Manchester IPA and, despite the £2.60 a pint price tag is selling well. It was certainly on good form when I called.

It also seems that my earlier visit to the **Elizabethan** when no cask ale was available seems to have been a one-off. I called after Christmas and there were four cask beers on the bar including Robinson's Mr Scrooge and Marston's Ugly Sisters.



However it is the **Plough** (pictured above) that has really aroused my interest. The licensee for the past six years has been Ian Wardle. Ian is a cask beer fan but until last Spring the pub was owned by Punch Group which did not encourage him

to experiment with cask beers. The pub was then sold to the Orchid Group and Orchid have given Ian access to the Direct Delivery Scheme run by SIBA, the organisation representing many micro brewers.

As a result out went the Tetley Bitter (a move that showed there was in fact little loyalty to the brand amongst the pub's customers) and in have come four cask beers. The house beer is "Plough Ale" a 3.8% ABV brew from Howard Town of Glossop and this is accompanied by three changing guests. One of these comes from Carlsberg and is usually something like Black Sheep, Old Speckled Hen or Directors. The other two are ever changing guest beers from local micros – when I called these were Howard Town Wrens Nest and Beartown Bear Ass.

The Plough has also been very impressively refurbished in a "modern traditional" style and is well worth a visit.

The **Crown** nearby also does a range of cask beers including guests. When I put my head around the door after Christmas, the potent Theakstons Old Peculier was on handpump.

### Hazel Grove News

**A**NOTHER former Punch pub that is now part of the Orchid Group is the **Bulls Head** in Hazel Grove. And once again this is a similar story to that at the Plough.

The landlord at the Bulls Head is Gary Willis who again has a strong cask ale background, having run the Victory in South Gosforth, a multi-beer cask ale house.

His task at the Bulls has not been an easy one as the pub had sold little or no cask beer for years.

However, again making use of the SIBA scheme cask ale is now back and selling well – currently nine or ten 9-gallon casks a week. Black Sheep Bitter is the regular beer and this is accompanied by two changing guest beers – when I called these were Storm Brewing's Storm Power and Lees' Manchester Rambler.



Ian tells me that his regulars will try all sorts of cask beers, although anything over about 4.5% sells slowly, and the different beers are something of a talking point.

I also hear that there is another cask ale gain in Hazel Grove. Welcome back to the **Horse & Jockey** where I am told that Theakstons Best Bitter and Holt's Bitter are now on handpump.

### Hillgate Notes

**A**S usual the annual Hillgate Stagger was a mixed bag. Good to see a Robinson's seasonal at the **Royal Oak** on High Street where the licensee is clearly trying hard.

At the **Bishop Blaize** opening is currently intermittent and I am told that the temporary licensee of this "To Let" pub is due to leave shortly. I fear for the future here.

At long last work is underway at the **Red Bull** where the pub is to be extended into the building next door. In fact the building next door looks to have been knocked down so I guess the extension will be brand new.

Scaffolding surrounds the former **Black Lion** which is being converted into offices, I think, and it looks as though the former **Golden Lion** is being turned into flats. There's no real ale at the **Crown** and at the **Bowling Green** on Charles Street, Boddington's Bitter has been replaced by Theakstons. An excellent and well-run local, this.

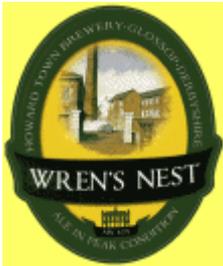
### Last Bits...

Finally – the freehold of the **Comfortable Gill** on King Street West is for sale at £175,000. A possible chance for a local micro brewery? The **Cheshire Line Tavern** in Cheadle is shut – a sign outside says it will eventually be reopened by Marston's.

## Recent CAMRA Award



Pictured above, Stockport Beer & Cider Festival Organiser Jim Flynn presents the Beer of the Festival Award to Tony Hulme, of Howard Town Brewery.



The winning beer, Wren's Nest, was one of several Howard Town beers enjoyed by the CAMRA party at the brewery on the day of the presentation. Our thanks to Tony and all at the brewery for their hospitality.

Wren's Nest (4.2% ABV) is becoming something of a serial award winner for Howard Town having previously been voted the Supreme

Champion Beer 2007 by SIBA, the Society of Independent Brewers, to which many, if not most, micro brewers belong.

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*To all our customers*

**Open All Day Every Day**

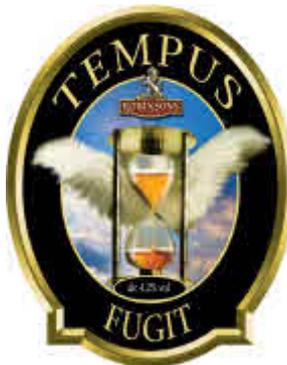
**CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2008 We're in it!**



# Brewery NEWS...

Over the next couple of months we hope to bring you details of the 2008 seasonal beer ranges from the local family brewers. We kick off with **Robinson's**.

As last year there is no seasonal for January (we'll all have to make do with Old Tom – look for our special feature on this beer next month). For February and March the beer is Tempus Fugit (4.2% ABV), a chestnut brown premium ale with aromas of sweet malt and oats. This smooth, round and full bodied beer has a sweet malt palate complemented by a soft bitterness and dry roasted or nutty finish



For April, May and June is Top Tipple (3.9%) a light golden bitter beer with aromas of citrus fruit and honey. "This light refreshing beer has a round sweet malt palate perfectly balanced by a clean crisp bitterness" says the brewery tasting notes.

Olympic Gold (4%) is the beer for July and August. This is a harvest gold premium bitter with a distinctive citrus fruit aroma.

It should be a smooth, full bodied bitter beer has a clean, soft and refreshing palate perfectly balanced by both spicy and orangey citrus fruit notes

The year closes with Spellbound (4.1%) for October and November while December sees a reprise of this year's excellent Mr Scrooge (4.4%)

## Micro Magic

Firstly apologies to those breweries not featured this time – our ring round for news was just after Christmas when many were on holiday.

These are those we did manage to contact:



**Hornbeam** – going from strength to strength with beers appearing all over the place. The Dark Domination Porter (6% ABV) seems to be getting better and better – three weeks or more cellaring turns what is already a fine beer into something quite magnificent. Try it if you can.

The first of the brewery's Christmas beers, Christmas Champagne Ale, appeared in two versions, one at 4% and one at 4.6%. The two strengths were used to appeal to both those pubs that preferred stronger guest ales and those whose regulars favour more session strength beers. Having rapidly sold out, brewer Kevin Rothwell found he couldn't re-brew the beer as the hop variety used (Nelson Sauvignon from New Zealand) was unavailable. A further beer, Hoppy Presents (4.3%) was therefore also brewed to fill the demand.

Coming up next is Winterlong (4.7% ABV) a dark bitter that was due to be out in early January.

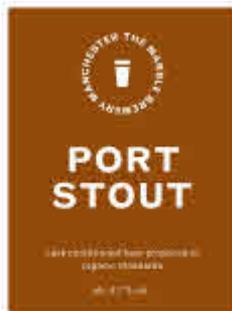
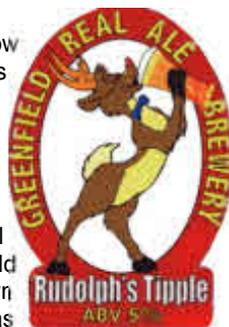
**Pennine Ales** – the renamed Porters Brewery is now full steam ahead under new owner Geoff Oliver. Geoff is now seriously into the brewing and so far there haven't really been any serious hitches. One, possibly fortuitous, mistake occurred when the Sunshine was accidentally grossly overhopped. This mis-brew was met with acclaim and while the price of hops means that this level of over-hopping cannot be

sustained, it has led Geoff to increase the hopping rate of the Sunshine.

**Howard Town** – again going great guns. Two on-going seasonal beers are Robin's Nest (5.2% ABV) and Sparrow's Nest. The latter was a lower strength (3.6% ABV) version of Robin's Nest with a hint of liquorice. The next special will be for Valentine's Day with the appearance of Love Nest – no other details known at this time.

**Millstone** – no new beers for the foreseeable future as Jon and Nick are fully employed in meeting demand for the core range. OT's informal campaign for Millstone Stout will continue throughout 2008.

**Greenfield** – the brewery is now seriously into bottling and public sales of both cask and bottled beers, although the pub trade is certainly not going to be neglected. The three bottled beers to date have been Rudolph's Tipple (5% ABV), Icicle (4.4%) and Ice Breaker (4.2%) and all sold out in short order. Greenfield produces the house beer for the Crown & Kettle in Manchester and this has been very successful with sales of about five 9-gallon casks each week.



**Marble** – nothing new planned for January. However the excellent Port Stout (4.7% ABV) will be available all month. By all accounts this year's vintage is a special treat.

**Pictish** – the excellent strong and hoppy wheat beer, White Out (6% ABV) has reappeared after three or four years. Very good it is too – enjoyable pints were tried in the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport.

Other pale beers to look out for are Riwaka (4.2% ABV) a single hop beer using New Zealand hops and Simcoe (4.7% ABV) using the American hop of the same name. On the dark beer front, the rich and satisfying Pictish Porter is still available and may be re-brewed.

Rudolph's Rocket Fuel (7.3% ABV) returned as a Christmas special, having been absent last year and the January special is Northern Dawn (4.3% ABV), a caramel coloured beer with a lingering malty but bitter finish.



**Dunham Massey** – a third addition to the core range is Stamford Bitter (4.2% ABV), a complex beer, paler than Big Tree Bitter and Deer Beer, with four hop varieties used and with a high wheat content in the grist. A tasty seasonal was Winter Warmer (6.6%), a proper old-fashioned (in the best sense of the word) winter ale with a warming malt character and a dry finish. Dunham Massey are now also bottling their beers.

**Shaws** – still supplying beers only to pubs that are free of tie, the brewery's procession of pale and hoppy beers continues unabated. The seasonal special was Santa Shaws (4.7% ABV), a pale, IPA-style beer using Cascade and Northdown hops.



**3 Rivers** – this year's Yummy Figgy Pudding (7.5%) was hugely successful with sale at twice the level of 2006. Next up is "Thank God It's Over", a chocolate orange stout.



### Mike Rose visits The Beltane in Buxton

The Beltane is in the centre of Buxton, nestling in the Peak District, at the end of the branch line from Manchester. It is located on Hall Bank, a steep hill which runs from the Market Place, itself well populated with real ale pubs, towards the Opera House, and is a few minutes walk from the station.

The Beltane is an attractive pub in converted shop premises, although the previous occupant had been a bar. One feels it has found its spiritual home as a pub.

There is seating area at the front, leading to the bar on the right and the conservatory on the left. Quiet background music plays.

The Landlord, Dave Severeide, is justifiably proud of the conversion he and his partners carried out themselves on the pub. The extensive use of oak is most attractive, and I love the exposed stone on one wall of pub.

The Beltane only opened in June 2006 and has already built up an excellent reputation and a band of loyal regulars. It went straight into the 2008 Good Beer Guide! The bar staff are friendly and welcoming. There is also a free wifi point.

There are always three rotating ales on hand pump, although they do not often go below four per cent ABV. They are always kept in excellent condition, and sparklers are not used. In addition there is a selection of Belgian Trappist and other interesting bottled beers. None of the standard lagers are available, instead there is an unusual range including Leffe Blonde.

For cider drinkers there is Stowford Press cider on draft and Wychwood Green Goblin cider in bottles. Unusually no optics are used. The Beltane also does a good trade in teas and coffees.

I like the fact that the Beltane appeals to all ages. There is a one third discount on food and non-alcoholic drinks for pensioners at all times. The pub is closed on Mondays. Good food is served lunchtimes and weekday evenings.

Live music is played at the Beltane, with free admission. Every Thursday evening there is folk, jazz or rock and the pub is really heaving when this is playing. On the first Tuesday of month there is a Cajun acoustic session and on the third Tuesday there is a Celtic acoustic session.

*The Beltane is at 8a Hall Bank, Buxton. Tel. 01298 26010*

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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-west. Branch Contact – Pete Farrand 07786 283990**

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup> – Burnage & Heaton Mersey Stagger: meet Victoria, Burnage Lane 7.30pm; Albion, Burnage Lane 8.30pm**

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> – Branch Anniversary Meal: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Cost approx £8. Guest speaker to be confirmed. Book with John Clarke on 0161 477 1973.**

**Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> – Pub of the Month presentation to Arden Arms, Stockport. From 8pm.**

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> February – Committee Meeting, Armoury, Shaw Heath. Good Beer Guide 2009 pre-selections to be made at this meeting.**

**Friday 14<sup>th</sup> – Branch Meeting; Florist, Shaw Heath, Stockport. Good Beer Guide 2009 selections will be made at this meeting.**

**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 14<sup>th</sup> – Branch Meeting: Stalybridge Station Buffet. Starts 8.30pm**

**Monday 11<sup>th</sup> February – Branch Meeting: Sportsman, Mottram Rd, Hyde. 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. Branch website: www.thcamra.org.uk**

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> – Altrincham Survey: Bridge, Moss Ln, 8.00pm; Altrincham Conservative WMV, 9.15pm**

**Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> – Winter Pub of the Season presentation to the Bar, Wilbraham Rd, Chorlton.**

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> February – Branch Meeting: Waterhouse, Princess St, City Centre (tbc). Starts 8.00pm**

**Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Knutsford to Congleton. Branch Contact – Tony Icke 01625861833**

**Monday 28<sup>th</sup> – Branch AGM – Beartown Tap, Congleton. Starts 8.00pm. All please attend.**

**Monday 11<sup>th</sup> February – Founders' Crawl of Macclesfield: British Flag 8pm; Chester Road Tavern 9pm; Waters Green 10pm.**

**The North Manchester Branch covers The Northern Quarter and North East Manchester plus the City of Salford. Branch Contact –**

*Dave Hallows 07983 944992. davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk*

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> – Good Beer Guide 2009 short-listing: Crown & Kettle, Oldham Rd, Manchester. Starts 8.0pm**

**Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> – Branch Meeting: New Oxford, Bexley Square, Salford. Starts 8.00pm**

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> February – Trip to Hornbeam Brewery. 7.30pm – cost £7.50 for tour, beer and food. Book with Phil Booton on 0161 957 7148**

# It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale



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Just fill in the form below and send, with a cheque (payable to CAMRA Ltd) or for Three Months free membership (for those renewing or joining by Direct Debit) complete the Direct Debit Form. All forms should be addressed to: Karen & Chris Wainwright, CAMRA Membership, 173 Shearwater Road, Offerton, Stockport, SK2 5XA. Alternatively you can join online at [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk).



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Signed .....

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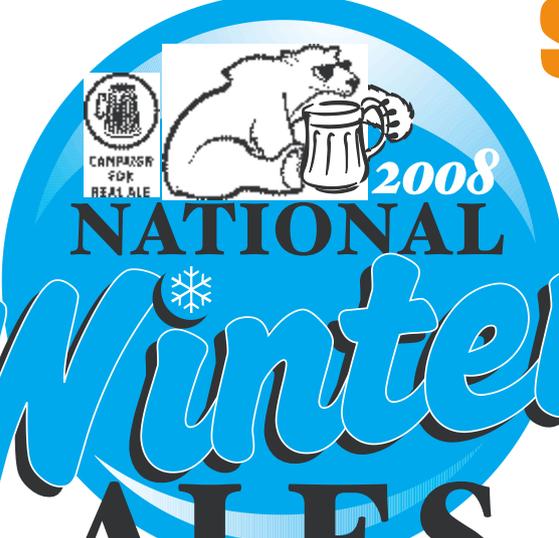


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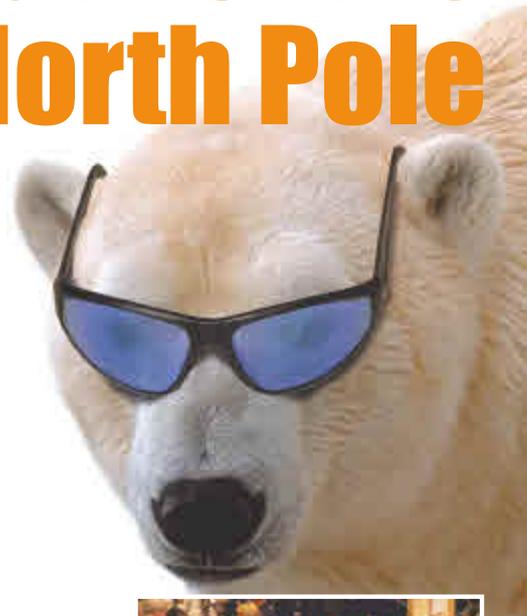
- This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.
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