



FEBRUARY 2009

# Opening

THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

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



**T**he Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year for 2009 is the Arden Arms on Millgate, Stockport. This caps an extraordinary year of achievement for Joe Quinn and Steve King who also scooped up the Manchester Food & Drink Festival Pub of the Year Award last autumn. Indeed, the Arden is no stranger to CAMRA awards having won a string of them in the past, including our local Pub of the Year Award for 2004. At that time the pub went on to be a finalist in the national Pub of the Year contest – let's see if it can go one better this time.

While other pubs have also won our local Pub of the Year award more than once, this is the first time a pub has won twice with the same licensees in post – a testimony to the long-term commitment to quality shown by Steve and Joe.

Many readers will be familiar with the Arden – and those who aren't should put that right as soon as they can – and the many features that make it special. The historic interior is always worth a mention – indeed the pub is on CAMRA's National Inventory of True Heritage Pubs in recognition of the many original features and the layout that has largely remained unchanged for over 150 years.

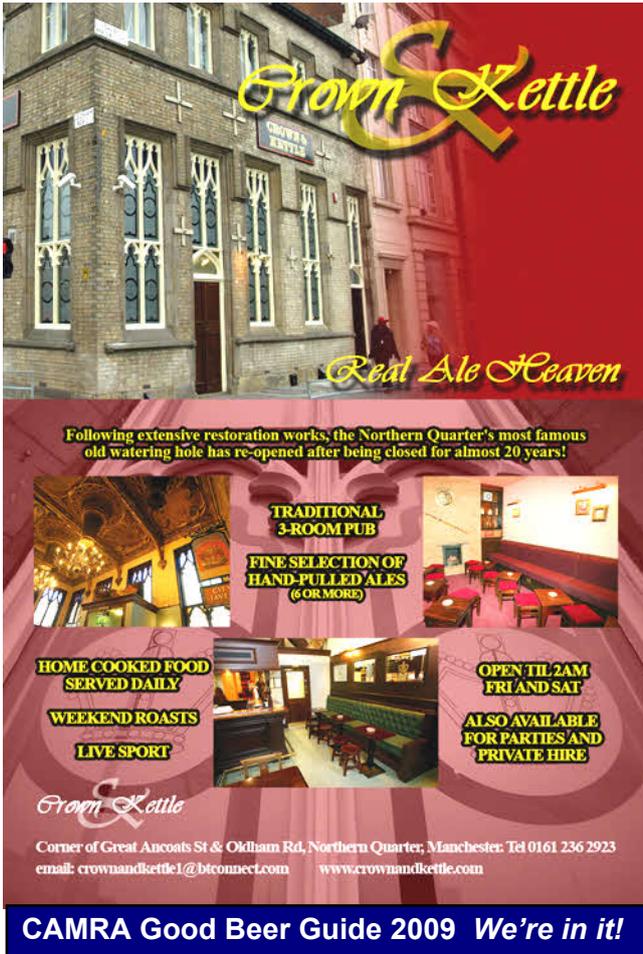
However a good pub is more than just bricks and mortar, and the Arden scores heavily everywhere it matters. Well kept Robinson's beers, including Double Hop and the seasonal, renowned top-quality food, friendly and efficient staff and a terrific atmosphere all contribute to make this one of the area's flagship pubs.

"We are more than delighted with this award", Joe told Opening Times, "it really is an honour". This well deserved award will be presented on the evening of Saturday 25 April – get there early if you want a seat as the pub is sure to be packed that night.



Hearty congratulations to our runners-up. Only one vote separated the Woolpack, Brinksway, and the Railway, Portwood, again testimony not only to the high standard of local pubs but also to the hard work of Andrew Sinclair at the Woolpack and Sue Hitchen at the Railway.

Both took over from long-serving and well regarded licensees, and both have made the pubs very much their own. Two quite different pubs but both sharing a commitment to high quality in all respects.



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**CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2009 We're in it!**



**Pub OF THE Month AWARD**  
CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

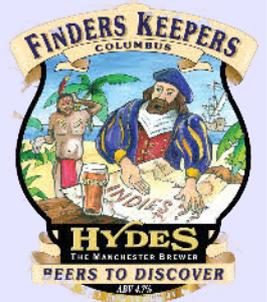


**The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for February is the Fletcher Moss, William Street, Didsbury.**

Just off Wilmslow Road in Didsbury village centre, this is a pub that the casual visitor to the area might overlook – and by doing so would miss out on one of the few remaining traditional locals in the area. Once known as the Albert, and rather run down to boot, the pub was transformed by Hydes about 12 or so years ago. The pub was opened up and extended, including the addition of a conservatory at the rear, but all this was done with sufficient care to ensure that the pub did not lose its traditional atmosphere. At the same time the pub was renamed after the local alderman who was a great advocate of the village and gives his name to a local park.

Since the refurbishment the pub has been expertly run by Ken and Lynn Mallion who have ensured welcome continuity and stability while many nearby pubs have seen a succession of licensees come and go.

Ablly assisted by assistant manager Mark Burne, who looks after much of the cellar work, the pub now has an enviable reputation for the quality of its cask ales, earning the Fletcher Moss a place in the national Good Beer Guide. It is very much a cask ale house with six usually available on handpump. These will include Hydes Mild, Bitter, Jekyll's Gold and the seasonal, plus a guest beer sourced from Waverley TBS and also often one from the Greene King stable, sourced by Hydes.

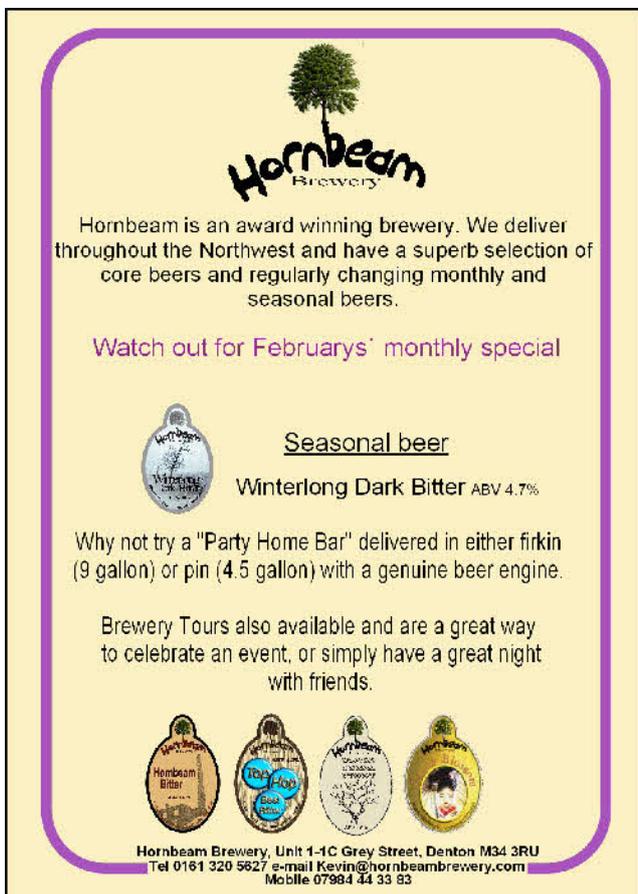


Enjoying its role as a local community pub, the Fletcher Moss is basically "wet-led" with the only food offering being Holland's Pies (which are available all day) but despite this, Ken tells us that the pub is weathering the current economic conditions very well with little or no noticeable impact on trade.

As well as the absence of food, there are no teams of any sort based at the pub. "We are perhaps a bit boring when it comes to things like that", say Ken. "All we do is serve good beer and let people talk". Boring or not, it's certainly a recipe for success at the Fletcher Moss.

This will be the third time that Ken and Lynn have won a Pub of the Month award (the previous two being in July 1999 and April 2005), so this award is testament to their continuing commitment to quality and hard work in running the pub. It will be presented on the evening of Thursday 26 February. **JC**

*The Fletcher Moss is just off Wilmslow Road in the centre of Didsbury. Buses 23, 23A, 22, 42 and 370 will get you there from Stockport. The same services will also do the same from Manchester in addition to the many bus services that run down Wilmslow Road to East Didsbury / Parrswood.*



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## COMMENT, NOTES & CONTENTS

### Opening Times – Comment

Congratulations to Steve and Joe at the Arden Arms for their local Pub of the Year win. As we report, this is the first time that the award has been won for the second occasion by the same licensees. The Arden now goes forward to the regional Pub of the Year contest and if it wins that, it is on to the National Pub of the Year competition.

Speaking of which, our local Pub of the Year from 2008, the Crown on Heaton Lane, is in the final four of the national contest. As this was typed the result was eagerly awaited and by the time you read this it should have been announced (or will be imminent). Fingers crossed!

### 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.

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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:

<b>Stockport</b>	0845 644 4301	<b>Trafford</b>	0161 9122274
<b>Manchester</b>	0161 234 1555	<b>Derbyshire</b>	08456 058058
<b>Salford</b>	0161 925 1346	<b>Cheshire</b>	0845 1132500
<b>Tameside</b>	0161 342 8355		

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# Stagger

## The Family Brewers Stagger – Hyde Road

There are very few, if any, Staggers you will read in Opening Times where no beer is available more than once during the evening and every one of the area's family brewers is represented. This was what the Hyde Road stagger offered and so it was a little disappointing that relatively few people turned up to face the late autumn weather.

The traditional first pub of the evening, the **Travellers Call** had recently lost its cask beer and therefore our stagger commenced at the **Pineapple**. This pub set back behind Somerfields until a few weeks prior to our visit had been a Hydes pub, but it had just been taken over by the seemingly ever expanding Keary's Bars (who also run the excellent Dane Bank and the not so excellent Bulls Head in North Reddish and Roundhouse in Heaton Norris).

The new management have redecorated the large L-shaped room and a good job they have done too. It is a pity that they could not have left one side of the place free of the five televisions loudly playing pop videos that now dominate. The Hydes Original was still available which we all drank and found to be in reasonable order. Nobody tried the Hydes brewed Boddingtons Cask.

Our next step took us to what used to be the back of the market area in Gorton but no more. The **Suburban** is now completely dwarfed by the new Tesco store which completely hides it from Hyde Road and what was the original front of the pub is no more than a couple of metres from the ubiquitous retail giant. This may be the reason on our visit why the place was almost deserted at 8pm on a Friday. The vault is the oldest part of the pub and the lounge is in an extension built when times were better a few decades ago. The latter had been pleasantly refurbished since our last visit and it was here we sat and consumed the Lees Bitter which was again in reasonable condition although not quite up to the standard of our first pint.

Walking around the outside of the store we made our way to the corner of its extensive car park and Robinson's **Plough**. Parts of this pub are early eighteenth century and the contrast between the modernity of Tesco and the homely, slightly weather beaten pub exterior is certainly stark. Inside this multi roomed traditional pub we were greeted by the always welcoming landlord Tony who told us that it was originally built



in 1702 and discussed his daughter, Sally Lindsay who was taking the lead role at the Royal Exchange at the time. We sat on the bench seats in the vault and although the licensee expressed concern that his Hatters was not up to his usual standard we found it to be

the best beer so far that evening and the Unicorn wasn't bad either.

Perhaps disorientated by all the changes we took a circular and perhaps not altogether sensible route from this point. Turning left again along side the car park we made our way up Wellington Street and ignoring the **Angel** (keg) up the road we turned right along Cross Lane passed the recently refurbished but still depressingly keg **Cotton Tree** to the welcoming lights of the **Royal Oak**. This is always one of my favourite pubs on this stagger and clearly the locals agree because it was comfortably busy on our visit. There are two rooms either side of a central bar and we sat in the lounge admiring its bric-a-brac on the beams and wood panelling, and drinking the Everards Tiger which again was in decent form.

We wound our way down Tan Yard Brow back on to Hyde Road and found that the **Friendship** still had no cask beer on despite its refurbishment. We openly wondered why having invested money in a pub, licensees and pub companies can't see the sense in putting on cask beer, the only growing segment of the beer market? Pondering on this question we walked back to Holt's **Waggon and Horses**. This very large roadhouse type pub seemed strangely quiet in comparison with my previous visits but still had the robust lively ambience so common to Holt's pubs. We sat amongst the pictures of old Hyde Road and sport on the TV (low volume) in the lounge area and drank our Holts Mild and Bitter both of which were in good condition.

Leaving the Waggon and Horses we crossed the road and walked back towards Manchester to the **Lord Nelson**. The place was heaving and the karaoke was very loud. This 300 year old pub has had a makeover since my last visit and this time the licensee has got it right on the beer front, serving Theakstons Best Bitter. Given the crowd and music Friday evening is probably not the best time to do justice to the pub for the first time but from what I saw the place has a clean modern look. On the walls where we sat are photos of Man United teams and legends (it's the home of the East Manchester supporters club) paradoxically along with memorabilia from that great City fan, Ricky Hatton, including signed boxing gloves.



The original road went behind the Lord Nelson (its address is Fox Fold, where the entrance to the pub was originally, not Hyde Road) and led past the **Vale Cottage**. These days the easiest way to reach the pub is by means of a footpath (although you can find your way by car via Kirk Street). The Vale Cottage can be described as Gorton's hidden treasure, a country pub in the heart of the urban environment. Surrounded by trees and paths of the local conservation area this is one of Manchester's must visit pubs, with parts of the building dating back to the 17th century as can be seen by the beamed ceilings and low doors. The place was as busy as ever but we found a table in one room reached by means of the crowded corridor in front of the bar. Here we were greeted by Geoff the relief manager who apologised that John Smith the landlord was not around to meet us. There were three beers available; Theakston's Black Bull, Taylor's Golden Best and Taylor's Landlord, and despite the absence of the licensee all were in good form with the Landlord the beer of the night. What else would you expect from our 2006 Pub of the Year!

There are a few staggers with consistently higher quality of beer but there are few if any which can match the Hyde Road stagger for variety of both beers and pubs. Well worth the fare on the 203 bus out of Stockport or Manchester.

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**J**UST on the Branch border is the Good Beer Guide listed **Railway** on Shaw Hall Bank Road at Greenfield. A fairly long standing entry, it is an old pub with two hand pumps on each side of the three sided bar. The beers on my visit on a Sunday afternoon in mid January were Wells Bombardier, Millstone Tiger Rut, Theakston's Old Peculier, Copper Dragon Golden Pippin, Deuchars IPA and my choice all afternoon, Beyond the Pale from Elland Brewery, which I started on and could not move myself off to try anything else.

My reason for getting there early enough to get a good seat was the reformation of Mike Sweeney and the Salford Jets who were one of the early prominent punk bands of the late seventies. Playing with them was the talented Dave Sharp who himself was in a band of the same era - the Alarm. They have renamed as the Roadrunners and plan to start gigging regularly throughout 2009. On the first showing they are well worth seeing, with Dave fitting in well with his own songs, and covers of Bob Dylan and others. The highlight for me however were the chart hits that Sweeney and the band had, in "Who you lookin' at" and "Gina in my Cortina" that were tremendously nostalgic to me as I was in my late teens at the time and punk rock brought alive what had been a boring mid-seventies era of soul and progressive music that were only made interesting by the late great Frank Zappa and sprinklings of Dr Feelgood and the like.

For any gig addicts, the Holmfirth Picturedrome is a great venue, just over the Pennines in Summer Wine country. Recent gigs I have seen there include the Blockheads who are still musically very tight and in Norman Watt Roy, one of the original line up, there is no-one who puts more into playing a bass guitar. They were supported very ably by the Sex Patels on this occasion, a band that cannot easily be categorised, with bongo's, hippy types with matted hair, members of the Patel family and a very large lead singer with a great voice reminiscent of Alison Moyet or Mama Cass...very entertaining, with Taylor's Landlord a rare regular real ale in a gig venue. Other gigs of some impression I have checked out at this venue have been a double bill of The Hamsters and Wishbone Ash and Southside Johnny & the Asbury Dukes. Class. Across the road, there is the chance to try The Nook, a regular Good Beer Guide entry that has always a good selection of real ales.

The **Corner Cupboard** in Glossop has resumed selling real ale after many years (*writes Dave Rawlinson*). One regularly changing cask beer is on offer; at the time of writing it was Thwaites Lancaster Bomber at £2.40. Jennings Wainwrights was the next one on. The licensees Dave and Tracey are planning to push this part of the market and are pleased with how it is going so far. The pub was originally the Victoria Inn and a Gartsides house (Pottinger Street, Ashton - founded in 1830). Gartsides were taken over by Bents Brewery of Liverpool in 1939. Bents Brewery, for the record, was formed in 1889 as a result of a merger between R Bent & Co. and Montgomery's Brewery of Stone. Bass took over Bents in 1967.

Elsewhere, the **Wagon** on Broadbottom Road, Mottram is shut and boarded up. In Broadbottom village, the **Cheshire Cheese** is reaching the heights it once got to a few years ago, when it had Good Beer Guide status. The Thwaites Dark Mild, a rare beer for the area, has been excellent when I and other Branch members have been in lately.

On the Charlesworth to Marple road, the **Rock Tavern**, which has had a chequered history of opening and closing in recent years appeared to be once again shut in mid January.

Finally, in Hyde, the **Sportsman's** Cuban restaurant has now opened. Geoff & Cangui did this when they previously ran the White Hart at Mottram a few years back and High Peak members were treated to a "tasting" session at their Branch meeting in mid January, the result being that they immediately booked a Branch Social and meal for early in March!

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*Robin Wignall's monthly Peak District Round-up*

**T**HIS month I'm catching up on one or two of the 'must visits' for news updates starting at the **Railway** in Whaley Bridge where Tina Longden moved in and re-opened the pub in November. Tina is local to the area and with experience in the pub trade has more than an idea of what will work.

The Railway had a good festive season starting with the switch on of the lights on the town Christmas tree at the end of November. The town is busy in the early evening and locals and visitors alike giving Tina a great start. At the moment Robinson's Unicorn is available, and that is in good form. A further real ale may be added before too long. Last year the Railway was a Mild Challenge pub, so this may provide an opportunity to extend the range. Food will be a future prospect. Darts and dominoes teams are about to be based there, and local groups use the pub for meetings. Tina is looking to develop the potential of the Railway and to make it into a good community local. At the moment the Railway opens at 16.00 Mon.- Thurs, 14.00 Fri. and 12.00 Sat. and Sun., and then stays open till late.

The **Soldier Dick** at Furness Vale re-opened in early December, to give David and Jackie the chance to make the most of Christmas. When I called a good pint of Black Sheep Bitter was the one real ale. This is popular and sells well and on the back of this David is looking to expand the range of real ale. In the restaurant home made food is a feature and affordable prices are a key consideration, alongside of course the quality of the food. The Soldier Dick also boasts six en suite hotel rooms to which David and Jackie hope to attract visitors. Here is a place to stay after a night out in the High Peak! The Soldier Dick opens from 12.00 till late every day.

Both the **Cock** at Whaley Bridge and the **Crossings** at Furness Vale had Old Tom and Mr. Scrooge during December and into January, and whilst the former sells a very good pint of Hatters, the latter complements this with very good Dark Hatters.

At the **Goyt** in Whaley Bridge where Tony Gunner is anticipating Cask Marque accreditation, Brain's Rev. James, Bombardier and Greene King IPA are some of the brews which have been available in good form.

The **Dog & Partridge** at Bridgemont has a consistently good pint of Coach House Gunpowder Mild, and the Deuchar's IPA is well worth a try. On a recent visit Wychwood Hobgoblin was between casks. This beer is unusual in that the pump clip had a battery powered flashing pumpkin.

At the **Old Hall** at Whitehough near Chinley, Thornbridge beers have been featuring as the local product. The dining room at the Old Hall has been opened into the room with a minstrel gallery, and work continues on the outbuilding where the micro-brewery is intended. The Old Hall is well worth a visit for its beer, its food and its architecture!

The **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge continues with what seems to be its permanent beer festival. Seasonal beers included Jennings Redbreast, Marston's Ugly Sisters and a very good pint of Ringwood Porter. Callers on the Winter Warmer Wobble in January would have been overwhelmed by the choice with Jennings Snecklifter, Wychwood Hobgoblin, Ringwood Old Thumper and Marston's Old Empire all qualifying for the Wobble. For easier drinking good pints of Jennings Mild and Marston's Bitter are available.

The **Navigation** in Buxworth as ever comes up with good guest beers. In mid December York Nordic Fury 4.3% was a good darkish malty brew. I understand that a new licensee is keen to keep up the tradition. Hopefully more on this next time and also hopefully something of an update on the Chapel en le Frith scene.



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### The Poundland Arms

Wetherspoon's decision to offer Greene King IPA at 99p a pint has certainly attracted a lot of attention. The predictable outcry from anti-drink pressure groups that it will encourage binge drinking is easily dismissed. IPA is a rather bland beer of moderate strength that generally appeals to an older male customer base who typically may only have a couple of pints anyway. The idea that their pubs are suddenly going to be inundated with former Stella drinkers swilling gallons of the stuff just doesn't stand up – if nothing else, it would be fairly hard work getting drunk on IPA anyway.

In reality, this is just a headline-grabbing initiative by Wetherspoon's that will heighten the public perception of their pubs as places offering good value – which in a recession is no bad thing. It's unlikely to make much difference to overall consumption patterns, or even prompt many drinkers to switch pubs. People will continue to pay a lot more to drink better beer in more characterful pubs.

But it does throw into sharp relief how, over the years, much of the pub sector has been very complacent on pricing. There has been an assumption that, year-on-year, prices can be increased by a bit above inflation, and the customers will put up with it. But most other sectors of the economy have been exposed to severe price competition, so why should pubs be exempt?

Surely the generality of the pub trade need to at least give some impression that they are doing something about prices – maybe, for example, offering one draught beer a week at 50p a pint off. You don't need to discount everything you sell, or even very much of it, to give an impression of being price competitive, a lesson the supermarkets have learned very well. Some of the major pub companies have now started giving price support packages to their hard-pressed tenants which allow them to offer discounts on some of their draught beers, and this is only going to become more common as the recession bites.

### Drinking in the Atmosphere

Although you may get cheap beer and reasonable, good-value food in a Wetherspoon's, in general they have about as much pub character as an office canteen, and certainly around here they would never be anywhere near my first choice of somewhere to drink. Even where they are housed in impressive buildings, the pub part seems to sit rather awkwardly amongst the architecture and never really does it justice.

From my earliest days of drinking, I found the differences in character between the pubs just as interesting as those between the beers, and the pub environment is as important to me as the beer in my choice of drinking venue. There is far more to pub going than just having a drink.

Now I like a good pint as much as anyone, but presented with a stark choice between somewhere that offered excellent beer, but was a vast impersonal barn of a place with nothing but high-level posing tables, and a cosy, comfortable pub with real fires and good craic, but only keg on the bar, I suspect I might well choose the latter. However good the beer, the amount of enjoyment it can deliver is limited if it can only be drunk in uncongenial surroundings. Fortunately around here there is still no shortage of excellent, characterful pubs with good beer, so customers do not have to face that particular dilemma.

Curmudgeon Online: [www.pubcurmudgeon.org.uk](http://www.pubcurmudgeon.org.uk)  
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## The Chorlton Challenge

THIS annual event started in the **Hillary Step** on Upper Chorlton Road, writes *Heather Airlie*. Already in the Good Beer Guide, they offered a fine selection of Thwaites Lancaster Bomber, Phoenix Simco, Cottage Wheel Tappers Ale, and Golden Pippin from Copper Dragon in Skipton. On the non real ale font was a very interesting real lager. Next door is an unlikely-looking outlet for real ale, **Jam Street Café** that serves an award-winning full English all-day Breakfast with Big Tree Bitter on hand pump from Dunham Massey. It was on good form too and if you like to visit unusual places to drink and eat this is the one for you. The café also had three more Dunham Massey beers in bottles along with a good selection of bottled foreign beers. There was even a decent cider in a bottle with Weston's Organic.

A short walk up Manchester Road took us to another Good Beer Guide entry of ten years standing, the **Marble Beer House**. Available were Marble Pint, McKenna's Reprise Porter, Lagonda IPA, Ginger and Manchester Bitter with guests Pictish Alchemists Ale and Copper Dragon Golden Pippin.



Next door is **'Pi'**, another former shop with three real ales on from Millstone, Phoenix and Bank Top plus foreign beers such as Bruxelles Blonde, Bacchus Raspberry, Lindenboom Lager, Kuppers Kolsh, Kostritzer, La Chouffe and MacChouffe all on draught. Meat or vegetarian pies can be served on their own or with homemade mash and peas. Even the veggie gravy is made on the premises and is as warm as the welcome.

Above – Trafford & Hulme CAMRA outside *Pi*

The former snooker hall that is the local Wetherspoon's, **Sedge Lynn**, provided Barum's Black Wattle, White Horse Epona, UBU Purity, Evan Evans Bishops Revenge and Meantime Coffee Porter. Always a lively place, it didn't disappoint.

The **Bar** on Wilbraham Road is another original supplier of real ales in the area and also carries Marble beers along with guests Millstone Three Shires Extra, Phoenix Last Leaf and Pictish Brewers Gold.

Just next door, **The Nook** gave us a fine welcome, in a slightly bohemian setting. Acorn Yorkshire Pride was on as well as a real cider, Thatchers Heritage all at a very reasonable £2 a pint. Foreign beers on draught include Sugres, Tuborg, Lowenbrau and Pilsner Urquell lagers.

Next door again, **Abode** had all real ales at £2 also. Hydes Bitter and seasonal, Mumbo Jumbo were joined by Bazens' Flatbac. Foreigners on the fonts were San Miguel, Erdinger, Budvar, Lowenbrau, Pilsner Urquell and Peroni lagers.

Down the road is the folk pub of Chorlton – **Dulcimer**. A free house, its main supplier is Thwaites, with beers including the seasonal, Shuttle, Lancaster Bomber, Harviestoun Thistle Do, Glencoe Wild Oat Stout and their mild.. Upstairs doubles up as a music venue with a large stage with an Indian rug thrown over it. Although on the pricey side, it remains popular.

**Argyles**, once a bank, back on Manchester Road gave us an unusual pint of Adnam's Old Ale and the more common, Fuller's London Pride. Bigger than it looks from the outside, it has a wonderful airy conservatory at the back.

Back on to Wilbraham Road, Holt's **Spread Eagle** served what I'm told is a good quality Holt's Bitter and Mild, mainly serving to the more senior side of Chorlton society, with a few of the younger crowd gathering for the beginning of their night (and us over half way through!).

JW. Lees's pub, the **Lloyds Hotel** now just has the seasonal ale on as well as the standard bitter, which was a surprise contender at the recent Taste of Manchester competition. A number of followers of the live band on that night were already claiming their spot, making it a busy venue.

And so to Chorlton Green and the final stretch. The **Beech** on Beech Road has started its refurbishment and looks as though it will be all the better for it. It is already making a huge difference to the feel, giving a much more welcoming appearance. The guest beers on were Taylor's Landlord and Dunham Massey Stamford Bitter. Once again, another publican had positive comments about this local micro, which brews an increasing range of superb beers. Over the road is the **Famous Trevor Arms**. It has two rooms and very popular for sports as well as the ever changing selection of ales. Available at the time were Elgood's Cambridge Bitter, Smile's Red Ember and as seen on the telly – Morrissey Fox Blonde Ale. Due to popular demand, The Trevor now has Taylor's Landlord on as its house beer, replacing Boddington's bitter.



The **Horse & Jockey** on the green had put up a placard

outside announcing that CAMRA would be touring – not sure if that was wise or not! The pub was number 16 at the end of a busy night but still had Theakston's XB, Adnams Broadside and Taylor's Landlord. The Horse and Jockey now has its new manager in place who apparently has plans to expand the beer range.

We were a bit tired by then, and numbers had dwindled somewhat, but a good time was had by all. Special thanks to Danny for his hospitality, who has now returned to his regular spot at another Trafford & Hulme CAMRA haunt, the Church in Flixton.

## Didsbury Area Updates

UPS and downs at the **Barleycorn** in West Didsbury. At one point over the Christmas and New Year period three ales were on handpump (Everards Sleigh Ride, Springhead Polar Bear and Morrissey Fox Blonde) and all were in good condition.

A return visit was less promising with just the Polar Bear nominally on sale but this was declared off when I tried to order it. I did have a chat with the barmaid who told me that the new manager here is very keen in his ale and wants to use this to provide some variety, despite having apparently been advised by his predecessors to stick with Wells Bombardier and Deuchars IPA.

I also called in at the **Four In Hand** on Palatine Road. Three ales were on - all from the Marston's family - Burton Bitter, Jennings Redbreast and Wychwood Winters Troll. The Redbreast was average to good but the Troll had a slight vinegar taste. When I took it back they said it was a fresh barrel that morning but offered me a Redbreast in exchange without question. When I thought about it, they were very quiet so I probably had a half that had been sat in the pipes all day.



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**Brewery NEWS**

**JW Lees & Hydes' Seasonals**

Local family brewers Hydes and JW Lees have announced their seasonal beer programmes for 2009.

Lees will in fact have eight new beers out for this year. Four are in the "Seasonal Range" and four more comprise the "Special Occasions Range".

The first seasonal beer, for March-May is Hopping Mad (3.5%). This is a dark brown beer made using crystal malt and Styrian hops. There are liquorice notes in the taste and a roasted finish.

This is followed by Gold Digger (3.8%) for July to August. A golden ale with a fruity and zesty taste coming from the use of Goldings hops. Cock & Bull (4.5%) is the beer for September to November. This boasts a chestnut colour, a hoppy smell and a crisp finish. Finally for December and through to February 2010 is Dark Side (4.2%), an ebony ale made with chocolate malt and Northdown hops.



Three of the four beers in the Special Occasion range are available all year. These are Dragon's Fire (4%), an all malt beer with a citrus aftertaste; Game On (4.5%) a robust, tasty brew and Supernova (3.5%) a dark ale with a rich, fruity taste. The fourth in the range will only be out in December – this is Christmas Cracker (4.8%), a full flavoured, hoppy, spicy beer.

We don't currently have any tasting notes for the Hydes range but here are the planned beers. The theme this year is "Great Ales to Discover". First up and available until the end of this

month is Finders Keepers (4.7%) – this is a mid-brown, refreshingly hoppy beer. Next up for March- April is Spin Doctor (4.2%) followed by Sacre Bleu (4.4%) for May and June. The summer beer for July and August is Golden Find (4.1%). The September and October beer is Rocketeer (4.5%) and finally for November- December is High & Dry (4.9%) – the beer occupying this slot in the programme is usually something dark and interesting.

Hydes have also scored a success with their powerful XXXX this year. There has been new publicity material and a redesigned pump clip. For the first time in some years, demand was such that a second brew had to be made to keep up with demand.

One of the local micro scene we didn't have much chance to catch up with many local brewers this month. However Lee Wainwright of the Bollington Brewing Co tells us that two new beers have recently been produced. One is a 5% oatmeal stout and the other a 4.1% wheat beer. Lee fancied calling these Oat Tom and Wheat Nancy but no-one seemed to like these suggestions! Several new recipes are being developed to test the limits of what Lee has learned over the past six months. In another interesting development, the brewery has sent its first beers off for bottling, which is quite a major development for them.



We are also pleased to say that Lee has agreed to brew the fourth of our Opening Times Birthday beers. More on that one in April. Next month's beer comes from the well regarded Phoenix Brewery. Full details next time.



**White Lion, Underbank**

First timers Eleanor and Dave Chapman have taken on this historic town centre landmark. They opened it in August last year, but wanted to get things settled, and the customer-base right before putting cask ale back on. Currently two beers are being sold - Hydes Jekyll's Gold and a guest, but as the pub is free of tie, Eleanor has free reign to stock anything she wants really.



There has been a pub on this site since the 15th century, the current building was built in 1904 for Chesters brewery. A large building with three areas all decorated in light shades. To the right is the performance and big TV area, down the left side is comfortable seating, whilst beyond is a lower area

with quite an intimate feel. Interesting old photos of the pub abound along with other artefacts. From Sunday to Wednesday they only open till 7pm, but the remainder of the week they open past 11pm. Lunches are served 11 - 4 (not Tues), and 12 - 4 Sundays. The pub features live bands every two weeks, there is also a Tuesday evening dining club, and comedy on Thursdays. A function room is available upstairs. This is an interesting development on a large site, with the Chapman's seemingly a very capable couple of making a good go of it.

Well-known faces, Ange and Trevor (formerly of the Swan with Two Necks) have taken on the tenancy at **Winters** (Holts). They opened up on January 16th after a thorough cleaning took place. No news yet on how it's going.

A new broom swept into the **Magnet** on Wellington Rd North in early December. Now run by a pair of experienced hands in the form of Paul (ex Bishop Blaize) and Derek. They run three other pubs in the region - Three Crowns, and Dog & Duck, both Oldham centre; and the Pineapple in Ashton (West End). All incidentally sell cask ale, with the latter for example doing Greene King IPA and Pedigree or Old Speckled Hen when it hadn't sold the real stuff in years. Naturally then, cask is on offer at the Magnet initially being Greene King IPA and a guest. The whole place has been re-decorated in vibrant colours, each room having its own colour. This and the seating is set for some change in the next few months however. Lunches are served daily 12 till 6 (this may vary), whilst most nights there is entertainment such as a quiz on Tues; Jazz on Weds; karaoke on Fri/Sat. Sundays sees it host Irish music players from mid-afternoon. A function room is available. The outside will receive some attention soon too. A very good and promising start here.

Duncan Hutchinson has taken over as tenant of the **George** at Compstall. For some, early retirement might not be ideal, but for electronics engineer Duncan, it presented the perfect opportunity to launch a new career and achieve his perfect work-life balance.

He explained: "I became interested in the pub industry from seeing how well it suited my daughter Tanya and her partner Mike who were already pub managers. So when I was offered early retirement I saw it as the right time to make the move and join them in the trade.

For Duncan though, the career change has also been the launch of a family business with Tanya and Mike joining him at the George, along with his own partner Linda who has now given up her career as a dental nurse.

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*This month we welcome back Opening Times chef, Ken Birch.  
Look out for more beer related recipes from Ken in forthcoming  
issues*

### **Furness Meatballs**

These are suitable for use with pasta, rice or bulgar wheat.  
Suitable for two people (or four on a diet!).

### **Ingredients**

2 medium eggs  
½ lb fine mince steak  
½ lb minced pork  
½ lb dry sage & onion stuffing (dry)  
¼ - ½ pint Bazens' Knoll Street Porter or similar  
1 teaspoon mustard  
1 clove garlic, crushed  
2-3 pinches dried mint, or 4 chopped leaves fresh mint  
Salt & pepper to taste

### **Method**

Combine both meats in a mixing bowl with the eggs (out of the shells, if you are cooking while still drunk!). Add the crushed garlic, mustard and mint. Stir thoroughly.

Add a little beer, combine well then add a little stuffing. Then add a little beer and, again, a little stuffing. At this stage taste the mixture for strength of the beer flavour. If the flavour is strong enough for your own taste replace the remaining beer with water. I'm sure you'll find some use for the left over porter!

When a stiff yet moist consistency is reached roll out the mixture on a board and form into golf ball sized spheres. Place on a baking tray and bake in a medium oven for 20 minutes. Serve with either a beer or a beer and tomato gravy.

### **Beer / Beer & Tomato Gravy**

Using a good quality gravy mix, make up a little stiffer than usual – top up with porter or pale ale. For beer & tomato gravy add tomato passata to this mix, in quantities which accord to your personal taste. If you're not sure, keep adding a little and tasting.

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## The Swan With Two Necks, Princes Street, Stockport

**T**HE pub side of the Swan with Two Necks was mentioned in January's Stockport Supping, writes **Mark McConachie**. So now to redress the balance, we provide an inkling of the food operation there.

Some background first. Young chef, John AG Smith arrived here from stints at Manchester restaurants Piccolino, and City Inn amongst others where he has obviously honed his skills. His pedigree is readily evident in the style of the menu, the detailed presentation, quality of ingredients, and of course the taste of the dishes.

The regular main menu offers dishes such as Battered Fish; Unicorn Sausage with Leek Mash; Chilli; Beef & Ale pie; hot and cold sandwiches; BLTs; minute steaks; tuna-melt; baguettes; and burgers. All meat is sourced from local butchers Tittertons, including the unique Unicorn beer sausages.

However the Specials menu offers the likes of Pheasant

Parsley Risotto; Pheasant & Beef Casserole (both £6.50); Lasagne at £5.95; and Syrup Sponge and custard for £2.95. When you see these dishes, they are a world away from the pub's predecessors whose traditional staples were the likes of pies, stews, lasagne, liver & onions, and such like. Some may argue there is no place for such "high-end dining" in a mere pub. Well, pah! frankly. This is top-notch grub at prices that would make a city restaurateur blench. All served in the homely and well-run environs of a town centre pub.



My Pheasant Parsley Risotto looked stunning on the plate - four ballantines of pheasant on tea-smoked mash set either side of the parsley risotto, on which sat four roasted shallots. All of this with a beetroot jus. Not only were the colours vibrant, but the flavours were equal to that. It may have appeared small at first, yet with the denseness of the game meat it was a filling plateful. Excellent. Although I'm not much of a pudding person (I leave that to our Editor), I just had to sample that old school favourite, Syrup Sponge with custard (okay, crème Anglaise to be precise). A light sponge with just the right balance of the syrup accompanied by a dinky jug of the custard. Superb!

With cooking this good, this young man surely has a great future. Let us hope that the folk of Stockport enjoy the flavours and presentations offered. I for one could quickly become accustomed to this very high standard of food.

I understand that a new kitchen should have been installed by Robinson's by the time you read this, allowing John even greater freedom and flair. He has added afternoon teas to his portfolio too, naturally accompanied by his own scones.

Of course, all of the fine food can be accompanied by the excellent Robinson's ales now available here - two milds, Hatters and the Dark variant, plus Unicorn, Double Hop, Old Tom and the current seasonal. The Swan with Two Necks, a real credit to the town.



To mark the 25th Birthday Year of Opening Times we are commissioning a series of commemorative beers from local breweries, one per month (although one or two "extras" are also likely). Each month we will be featuring the brewery producing the beer and also tell you a bit about the beer itself. The second in the series comes from Bolton's Bank Top Brewery. The brewery website is [banktopbrewery.com](http://banktopbrewery.com)

## About the Brewery

**B**ANK TOP is one of Greater Manchester's oldest established micro breweries, having been founded by John Feeney in 1993. John retired in 2007 (with plans to drive his motorbike down the famous Route 66 in the USA), passing the brewery over to current owner Dave Sweeney. Dave had joined the firm in 1999 and purchased a controlling interest in 2004. He has proved a worthy successor to John, maintaining the company's enviable reputation for reliable, well made beers.

The brewery was originally located in a fairly ordinary industrial unit close to the town's famous Howcroft pub. However after tortuous negotiations lasting nine years, the company moved in 2003 to a listed tennis pavilion on Ashworth Lane, some way out of the town centre.



As a result Bank Top now occupies perhaps some of the most attractive premises of any local micro.

Dave is now assisted by production manager and brewer Neil Turner plus office manager and weekend brewer Jennifer Burrows) who has a degree on brewing from the famous Heriot Watt university). Between them they produce no less than 13 core beers at any one time. There is also a range of seasonal beers and in addition seven of the beers are now available in bottle. Highlights include:

**Dark Mild (4%)** - a superb rich beer with roast notes all the way through and a long satisfying finish.

**Flat Cap (4%)** - the signature beer - a pale bitter with a citrus aroma and a hoppy citrus finish.

**Pavilion Pale Ale (4.5%)** - a pale ale with a big fruity flavour, peppery hoppiness and a dry, bitter yet fruity finish.

**Port O'Call (5%)** - a dark and easy drinking stout. Vintage ruby port is added to the casks to provide an unusual depth of flavour.

## About the Beer

**W**HILE Bank Top makes some superb dark beers, it is also well known for a range of excellent pale hoppy brews. It is an example of this style that has been produced as our birthday beer.

Opening Times Ale is a dangerously drinkable 4.8% brew using made with crushed optic malt and crushed crystal malt with some torried wheat (which aids head retention). The hops used are Columbus for bittering and Sjavinski Goldings to finish off. It's dark straw in colour with a blend of citrus and sherbet overtones. Enjoy!





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*

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: Armoury, Shaw Heath, Stockport. **NB Selections for Good Beer Guide 2010 will be made at this meeting.**

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup>** – Stagger: Shaw Heath & King Street West. Start 7.30pm Florist; 8.30 Armoury.

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup>** – Pub of the Month presentation to the Fletcher Moss, Didsbury. From 8pm.

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup>** – Visit to Outstanding Brewery, Bury. Book with John Clarke on 0161 477 1973.

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>** – Winter Warmer Wobble presentation night. Crown, Heaton Lane. From 8pm

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March** – Branch Meeting: Lass O'Gowrie, Charles St, City Centre. Start 8pm. **Guest Speaker – Steve Holt from Robinson's Brewery / Vertical Drinks**

The **High Peak & North East Cheshire** Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple, Tameside and Derbyshire from Glossop to Buxton. *Branch Contact – Mike Rose 07986 458517. [mikewrose@btinternet.com](mailto:mikewrose@btinternet.com)*

**Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March** – Branch Meeting: Roe Cross Inn, Roe Cross, Mottram. 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](http://www.thcamra.org.uk)*

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February** – Ashton-on-Mersey Social: Meet 8pm Old Plough, 9.30 Buck – both on Green Lane

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup>** – Good Beer Guide selection meeting: Volunteer, Cross St, Sale. Starts 8pm.

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup>** – Social in Altrincham foreign beer bas: 8pm Le Trappiste; 9.15 Mort Subite

**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March** – Branch meeting: venue TBC

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

**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup>** – Campaigning and Good Beer Guide selection meeting: The Boarhound, Brook St. Macclesfield. Starts 8pm

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](mailto:davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk)*

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup>** – Good Beer Guide 2010 Selection meeting – city centre. Kings Arms, Bloom St, Salford, 8pm

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: New Oxford, Bexley Sq, Salford. Starts 8pm.

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>** – Good Beer Guide 2010 Selection meeting – out of city: Unicorn, Church St, M'cr City Centre, 7.30pm

**Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March** – Social: White Horse, Worsley Rd, Swinton, 8pm. Buses 12 & 26.

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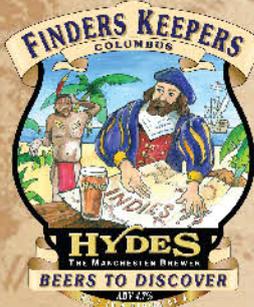


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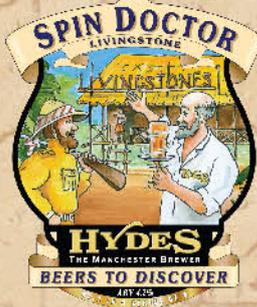
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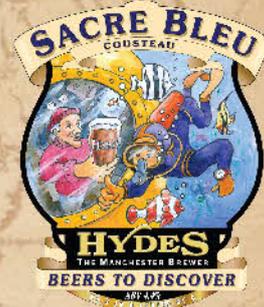
*Another Great Range of Craft Ales for 2009*



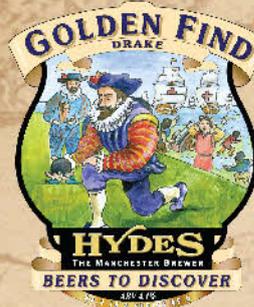
Jan - Feb abv 4.7%



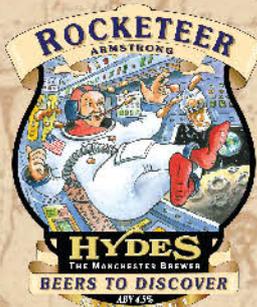
March - April abv 4.2%



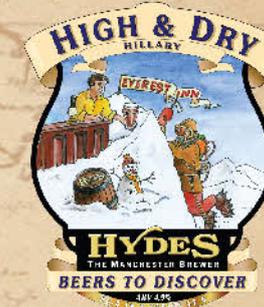
May - June abv 4.4%



July - August abv 4.1%



Sept - Oct abv 4.5%



Nov - Dec abv 4.9%

TEL: 0161 226 1317



[www.hydesbrewery.com](http://www.hydesbrewery.com)

# Pennine Ale Ltd

## THE ROSSENDALE BREWERY

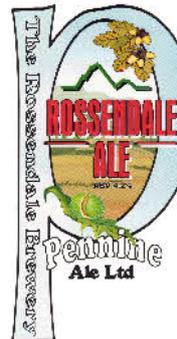
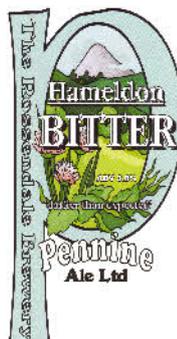
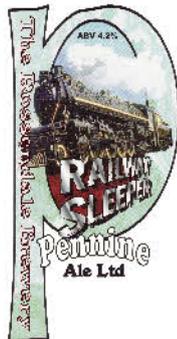
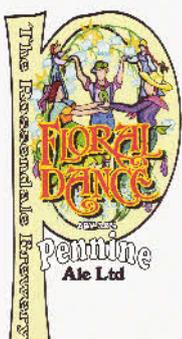
All of our beers are now available to the Free Trade. Landlords please try them at one of our pubs below: -

The Railway  
Stockport  
0161 429 6062

The Griffin Inn  
(Site of our Rosendale Brewery)  
Haslingden  
01706 21 40 21

The Sportsman  
Hyde  
061 368 5000

Contact Geoff Oliver  
01706 21 40 21



## February & March

**TROUBLE & STRIFE** ABV 4.1%

Premium copper red ale with distinctive deep, fruity, wild American hop aroma. This rich, full bodied, bitter beer has a hop dominated palate but also exhibits an interesting balance of biscuit and burnt toffee flavours.

