


CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE
TIMES

March 2011

Opening

THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

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

In association with



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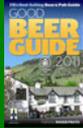
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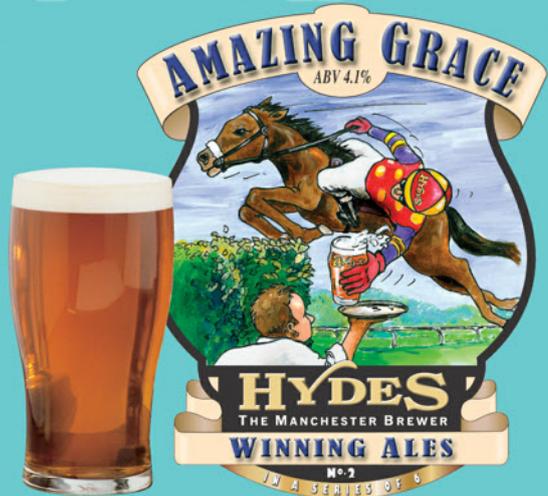
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The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for March is the New Victorian in Bramhall and was nominated by John Sutcliffe who tells the story.



Once upon a time, there was a very big public house with a very big car park. It was on a prime corner site, in the middle of Bramhall Village and was demolished to make way for a new shopping centre.

Part of the site was retained for a new pub. The Orange Tree was pub co owned and largely food orientated, with real ale but of moderate quality. As times became hard, the pub co's estates diminished and the big bad banks were concerned for the security of their investments, but this story has a happy ending.

John William Lees, northern family brewers of great renown, bought the Orange Tree and in December 2009 it opened again after refurbishment as the New Victorian.

The tenant is Max Kalton. He and his friendly team have built up a very successful business, and given Bramhall a real pub again.

The beers, J. W. Lees Bitter, Coronation Street, and two seasonal ales are well kept. Food is homemade. There is a choice of five starters, 11 main courses, mostly under £10 with three vegetarian dishes. There are also burgers, salads, and children's meals and a selection of sandwiches, mostly under £5, served until 5.00 p.m. At weekends the contract car park at the side of the pub can be used without charge and customers can have breakfast or Sunday lunch.

The award of Pub of the Month will be made on Thursday, 24 March 2011 starting at 8.00 p.m. and will be a double celebration as it coincides with the 40th Anniversary of CAMRA. We are fortunate in the Stockport & South Manchester Branch area to have beers from four family brewers and many micro-breweries. J. W. Lees was not well represented so the New Victorian is a welcome addition, making their excellent beers more readily available. Don't miss a good night.

Buses are 378 from Stockport and 157, X57 from Manchester via Cheadle. Bramhall railway station is 10 minutes walk.



The Pub of the Month award is sponsored by Stephenson's, a local family firm that has been supplying the local pub and catering trade for over 140 years. Check out their advert on this page.

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Comment, Notes & Contents

What's On

Opening Times – Comment

This issue is rather unashamedly Manchester-centric. Or to be precise we look at the beer and pub scene in Manchester City Centre and the adjacent "Salford Strip". The two present quite a contrast. The City Centre pub scene presents an almost uniform good news story for the cask ale fan with many of the newer outlets offering, or even majoring, on cask ales. This month we report on the new beery interest at the Soup Kitchen in the Northern Quarter which comes hot on the heels of new outlets like the Port Street Beer House, the Gas Lamp and the Molly House.

Journey of the City Centre, though and it's a very mixed bag. Head down Wilmslow Road or into Chorlton and the pubs thrive. However most of the other major arteries from the City Centre lead to a scene of pub dereliction and decay with the pub going tradition dead or dying. Are we beyond the point of no return here? Are prosperous pubs and enthusiastic pub going to be confined to urban centres, middle class suburbs and country dining outlets?

It is easy to be pessimistic but even in these areas there are pubs that do well – pubs like the Vale Cottage and Lord Nelson in Gorton for example, where enthusiastic licensees and well run pubs which major on quality across the board show what can still be done.

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. 7,200 copies a month are printed by Phil Powell Printing of Failsforth. All articles copyright CAMRA unless otherwise stated.

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Trading Standards – for complaints about short measure pints etc contact Consumer Direct (North West). Consumer Direct works with all the Trading Standards services in the North West and is supported by the Office of Fair Trading. You can email Consumer Direct using a secure email system on their website (www.consumerdirect.gov.uk) which also provides advice, fact sheets and model letters on a range of consumer rights. Their telephone no. is 0845 404 05 06.

Copy Date for the April issue is Saturday 12 March

Contributors to this issue: John Clarke, John Tune, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Frank Wood, Dave Hallows, Jim Flynn, Mike Rose, Mark McConachie, Alan Gent, Caroline O'Donnell, John O'Donnell, Chris Walkden, Beverley Gobbett, Stuart Ballantyne, Stewart Revell.

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Local CAMRA branches organise regular events in pubs across the region – members of other branches & general public are welcome to attend except some Branch business meetings (contact branch contact if in doubt). Organising branch in brackets.

March

Thursday 10th – Hydes of March Crawl: Dutton, Park St 7.30pm; Jolly Angler, Ducie St, 8.30pm; Grey Horse, Portland St, 9.30pm (NM)

Thursday 10th – City Centre Social: Moon Under water 8pm; Gas Lamp 8.30m; Corbieres 9pm; Sawyers 9.45. Finish at the Rising Sun. (TRH)

Saturday 12th – Warrington Social: meet 12 noon Lower Angel, Buttermarket St; 1pm Albion. Train times tbc. (TRH)

Tuesday 15th – CAMRA 40th Anniversary Social – special social at Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. New faces welcome. Buffet provided. From 8pm. (TRH)

Wednesday 16th – CAMRA 40th Anniversary Social and Pub of the Year presentation. Venue tvc. (MEC)

Friday 18th – Didsbury East Stagger: 7.30pm Gateway, Wilmslow Road; 8.30 Didsbury, Wilmslow Road (SSM)

Wednesday 23rd – Social: Port Street Beer House, Port Street, City Centre. From 8pm. (NM)

Thursday 24th – Pub of the Month presentation to the New Victorian, Ack Lane East, Bramhall. From 8pm. (SSM)

Friday 25th-Saturday 26th – **MOSI Beer Festival** – Power Hall, Museum of Science & Industry. Opens 6pm Friday. Volunteers needed (TRH)

Saturday 26th – Shrewsbury by rail. Meet Stockport station 10.30am. (MEC)

Wednesday 30th – City Crawl: starts Mark Addy, New Bailey St, then Gas Lmp, Bridge St 8.15; Bridge, Bridge St 8.45; Sawyers, Deansgate 9.15. (NM)

Thursday 31st – Branch Social in Urmston: Tim Bobbin 8pm; Steamhouse 9pm; finish at Lord Nelson (TRH)

April

Saturday 2nd – New Members Trip to Saddleworth (details from Chris Wainwright (0161 456 7645) (SSM)

Wednesday 6th – Social: Smithfield, Swan St 8pm; Bar Fringe 9pm. (NM)

Friday 8th – Cider Pub of the Year presentation to the Railway, Avenue Street, Portwood. From 8pm. (SSM)

Your Local CAMRA Branches:

SSM: Stockport & South Manchester www.ssmcamra.org.uk

Contact: Mark McConachie 0161 429 9356, mark.mcconachie@o2.co.uk

NM – North Manchester www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk

Contact: Dave Hallows 07983 944992, davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk

HPNC – High Peak & North Cheshire www.hpneccamra.org.uk

Contact: Mike Rose 07986 458517, mikewrose@gmail.com

MEC – Macclesfield & East Cheshire www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

Contact Tony Icke 01625 861833, contact@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

TRH – Trafford & Hulme www.thcamra.org.uk

Branch Contact: John Ison 0161 962 7976, enquiries@thcamra.org.uk

CAMRA Branch Business Meetings

Thursday 7th – The Railway, Asley Road, Hale. Starts 8pm (TRH)

Thursday 10th – Crown, Buxton Road, Great Moor. **NB** – guest speakers from Robinsons Brewery – John Robinson, and David Bremner, Director of Marketing. Starts 8pm (SSM)

Monday 14th – White Lion, Disley. Starts 8.30pm (HPNC)

Wednesday 16th – Branch Meeting & AGM: Unicorn, Church St, City Centre. Starts 7.30pm (NM).



The Salford Strip

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SO, what's the Salford Strip then? No, it's not some dubious card game or sleazy nightclub. It's that stretch of road running from Salford University down towards Manchester taking in Crescent and Chapel Street. In some ways it is a microcosm of the problems affecting the pubs in many inner city areas, but there are some gems along the way.

Furthest out near the University, the first pub on our journey is one of the gems, namely the **Crescent**. This famous free house has had several managers over the years and it now in the capable hands of Steve Wise. Popular with university staff and students alike, plus beer lovers in general, there are usually nine guest beers on handpump with another four dedicated to cider and perry. A small range of foreign beers completes the picture. It may be difficult to drag yourself away.



Not quite next door is the long-closed **Black Horse**. It's currently surrounded by scaffolding but it's unlikely to re-emerge as a pub.

Across the road and overlooking the River Irwell is the **Old Pint Pot**. This is a new pub but it has an interesting history and at one time was home to the former Bridgewater Brewery. It's now an open-plan student oriented pub owned by Marston's with perhaps the outside terrace its best feature (and then in summer only!). There is cask beer, though with Marston's Pedigree and Wychwood Hobgoblin on handpump.

Reaching the junction of Oldfield Road to the left the site of JW Lees **Jollies** (never was a pub more inappropriately named) is occupied by Chungs Chippy while back on Chapel Street the **Bell Tower** is closed and derelict, the **Park** has been bricked up for years and the **Lord Nelson** is a burnt out ruin. Turn left into Ford Street and you will come across the closed and fire damaged **Church**.

You'll need a drink after all this trudging through urban decay and relief is at hand. Round the corner on Bexley Square is the **New Oxford**. This multi-award winning free house will need little introduction to regular readers. Suffice it to say that Tim Flynn and Paulette Scanlon have turned this unassuming pub into one of the top cask beer pubs in the region. Up to sixteen guest beers and four cask ciders are only part of the picture. There is also a wide range of foreign beer on tap along with 120 or more Belgian beers in bottle. Again, a difficult place to leave.



Crossing Trinity Way and heading to the junction with Bloom Street and New Bailey Street you will see the **Salford Arms**. This has recently re-opened but offers no cask beer. Across the road the former **Brown Bull** is now a hotel and fast food takeaway and ahead you will see the long-closed (but still rather optimistically 'to let') **Albert Vaults**.

Turn left down Bloom Street and the **Kings Arms** awaits. Another famous pub, the King also has something of a name as an arts venue. As a result the pub has something of a bohemian feel to it and has some interesting memorabilia notably a pre-1914 price list from Leigh Labour Club. There are six handpumps with Tetley Bitter seeming to be a house beer plus five guests, often including beers from Bazens' Star.

Back to Chapel Street and passing the Albert Vaults the next pub is the **Rovers Return** occupying a rather handsome Victorian building and offering Lees cask beers in homely surroundings. And that's your lot. A year ago you could have finished on another high at the **Black Lion**, run by Tim and Paulette from the New Oxford as their second pub. Enterprise Inns put paid to that and the pub is now closed and 'to let'.

Stagger...

Manchester City West Stagger – with Jim Flynn

It was a cold crisp January evening when we all met up at the **Lass O'Gowrie** on Charles Street, near the BBC for a crawl around the pubs on the west side of the city centre.

Our starting point is one of the classic pubs in the city centre with a delightfully ornate tiled exterior and inside the bare but warm brick walls and largely young clientele producing a lively but pleasant atmosphere. There is a snug off the main room and at the side is an outside drinking area overlooking the River Medlock - and the outside drinking area of our next port of call.



The cask beers are largely from the Greene King stable (Kimberley Ale, XX Mild, Olde Trip, Abbot Ale and IPA) but there are also always three or four guests (that night Black Sheep, Conwy Telford Porter, Coach House Farriers Best and Taylor's Landlord) and the house beer Betty's Best from Outstanding. Taking advantage of the discount for CAMRA members we tried the Betty's Best, Telford Porter, XX Mild and Olde Trip and found them largely on good form with the non-Greene King beers generally better received.

Crossing the bridge over the Medlock we entered the **Joshua Brooks** to be met with loud music, subdued lighting and just the one cask beer, Charles Wells' Bombardier. Again in this one roomed pub (there is a music bar in the cellar below) the clientele was young but this time unlike at the Lass they were for the most part not drinking the cask beer. Once we had all bought our beers, planted ourselves on the leatherette sofas and taken our first sips I could perhaps see why not. I have certainly had better beer than this.



We moved quickly on down Princess Street ignoring the totally keg **Old Garrett** and passed **O'Shea's** bar. This has always been keg in recent memory at least but I was dispatched to confirm this only to find that there was cask beer on the bar in the form of Black Sheep. This was the first time I had given much attention to O'Shea's - it is housed in what I am told is an old William & Glynn's bank but despite this I found this L shaped bar somewhat basic, almost like a 1970s works

canteen with red painted wood half panelling on the walls, bench seating and wood flooring. On the walls is the usual Irish bric-a-brac expected of an 'Irish' bar. Round the corner from the entrance is a stage area and pool table. The Black Sheep was a little disappointing but let's hope that it improves as the licensees get used to cask.

We traipsed along Princess Street and down Portland Street to the most idiosyncratic stop on our journey, **Fab Café**. Hidden away in a cellar it is easily missed amongst the all-you-can-eat buffet restaurants that abound this part of Manchester but is worth a visit if only for the very unusual decor. So it was a little disappointing to find that this sci-fi themed bar was relatively quiet perhaps because the place is looking a little tired these days. There was only one cask beer on, Black Sheep again but this time the beer was in much better order. I enjoyed drinking it and walking around looking at the pub to find the Tardis, a Dalek, and a mock up of the command desk from the Starship Enterprise (which doubles as the DJ's desk), Thunderbird and XL5 space ships hanging from the ceiling as well as old sci-fi film posters on the walls.

Down Portland Street and around the corner on Oxford Street is the **Paramount**, a large and on that night's evidence an extremely popular Wetherspoons. So named because of its location in Manchester's old theatreland, old photos of the now closed theatres and cinemas adorn the walls. The atmosphere was lively without ever being frenetic and everybody seemed to be having a good time. From my experience the beer here is always interesting and in excellent nick and the pub did not let us down tonight.



Available at the usual low Wetherspoon's prices were Banks & Taylor SOS, George Wright Macne Pivo, Beartown Kodiak Gold, Black Hole Cosmic, Abbott Ale, Thwaites Wainwright, Elland Paramount, Phoenix Lancashire Pale Ale and the beer of the night, Titanic Vanilla Stout.

Next door to the Paramount is **Alibi** a Barracuda Pub Company establishment, previously named Varsity. This one roomed bar had a similar largely young crowd to the Paramount but wasn't quite so busy. The place is broken up into distinct areas, including a balcony with one area covered with square pieces of what I presumed to be artificial fur. As in a number of the pubs visited the music was quite loud but conversation was still possible. This is a relatively recent real ale gain and the beers available were

Bombardier, Black Sheep, Sharp's Doom Bar and Thwaites Wainwright with all of us choosing one of the latter two both of which were considered above average.

After a short walk we arrived at the **Bank** on Mosley Street which as its name suggests is a former bank situated below the famous Portico Library. This however is a different kettle of fish to the previous ex-bank on our travels. The Bank is larger and a much more upmarket affair with a grand entrance area, a tiled floor, polished woodwork, tall parallel 'Doric' columns and a high ceiling. They had obviously had a run on the beer as a number of those named as being available were missing with pub clips turned around but there were three beers still remaining; Williams Brothers' Ginger Ale, Jennings Cumberland Ale and Adnams Abbey Ale. The latter was obviously the next to be lost from the list as it was cloudy and was taken back. The other two beers were considered more than reasonable. Behind the bar was a notice proudly stating that they had sold an impressive 827 pints of cask beer and bizarrely 383 sausages the week previous.



Our final stop was at the **Seven Oaks** on Nicholas Street in China Town. The outside of this pub is interesting as set in the white glazed bricks is 'growing' a metal tree presumably a representation of an oak. The pub itself was busy perhaps with the night's oldest clientele with maybe the exception of O'Shea's and the upstairs room was in use. Again music was being played over the speakers and a television was silently showing the news. Like a number of the pubs on this stagger the beer was over £3 a pint - par for the course in the City Centre these days. The beers on offer were Taylor's Landlord, the seemingly ubiquitous Black Sheep and Wychwood Hobgoblin. We tried all but the Black Sheep and found them in more than reasonable condition.



This is a stagger with a very distinct variation in the quality and variety of beer on offer, where most of the beers are hovering around the £3 a pint mark or even more (the one exception and by far the most popular being the Paramount) and while most of the customers encountered were in their twenties or early thirties nevertheless us old 'uns were never made to feel out of place.

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Sobering Statistics

ACCORDING to the most recent figures produced by the British Beer & Pub Association, in 1997 total UK beer sales in pubs and bars were 25.6 million bulk barrels. In 2010 the figure had fallen to 14.2 million, a decline of over 44%. There hasn't been a single quarter since 1997 when on-trade beer sales have shown a year-on-year rise. The biggest single year-on-year fall was 10.6% between the second quarters of 2007 and 2008, the first full year of the smoking ban. The average annual decline over the 13-year period was 4.4%. Over the past three years, that has accelerated to 7.3%.

These figures are thrown into even more sharp relief when we consider that in 1979, a year that history will come to judge as the all-time high water mark of the British pub trade, there were 37 million bulk barrels sold. The current figure is only 38% of that. The off-trade has taken up some of the slack, growing on average by 2.6% over the past thirteen years, but even so has only put back 3.6 million of the 11.4 million barrels lost by pubs, and has actually lost ground too in the recent recession.

Over the past thirty years, we have lost around a third of the total pub stock in Britain, but beer sales have plummeted by over 60%. Given this, it is perhaps surprising not that so many pubs have closed, but so few – and this must suggest that there is more pain to come. And before someone pipes up that “plenty of new bars have opened up to replace the lost pubs”, bear in mind that the sales figures quoted cover the entire on-trade including pubs, bars, clubs and hotels.

There is no simple, single-cause explanation for this long-term decline – it is the result of a variety of changes in society that have combined to greatly reduce the overall demand for pubgoing. These include, amongst others, the decline of heavy industry, increased gender equality, changing attitudes to drink-driving, the growing official demonisation of alcohol and, of course, most recently the smoking ban.

Even now, the sheer scale of the decline of the pub trade still isn't appreciated anywhere near widely as it should be, and pub closures continue to be viewed as an isolated problem rather than symptoms of a general trend. Pubs will not disappear entirely, of course, and there are still opportunities for well-run pubs in the right location to thrive, but it is clear that in the future the appeal of pubs will be much more of a niche one than it used to be.

By the way, the figures I am quoting are shown in the “UK Quarterly Beer Barometer” produced by the BBPA, which can be downloaded from their website at www.beerandpub.com, so feel free to check them out there.

Cause or Effect?

YOU often hear the view expressed that “I'm not surprised that pub X has closed. It had gone really downhill – it had stopped serving real ale and opening at lunchtimes, and seemed to appeal mainly to deadlegs. They ended up putting strippers on to try to attract custom.” Now, that may well explain why Pub X has closed instead of Pub Y, but very often such measures are a symptom of falling sales rather than a cause. Pubs often seem to get into a spiral of decline from which it is difficult to escape.

The reasons why the pub trade as a whole has seen such a dramatic decline over the past thirty years are not because pubs are badly run. Indeed the average pub now is probably much better run than it was in 1979. It is a result of the wider changes in society I mentioned above. This is not being a doom-and-gloom merchant, it is simply being realistic – you can't tackle a problem without understanding it first.

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MOSI Real Ale Festival

In association with Trafford & Hulme CAMRA

MOSI (the Museum of Science and Industry) is hosting its first beer festival. With a great selection of beers, ciders and perries, the event will be hosted in the splendour of the Power Hall and is being held in association with Trafford and Hulme CAMRA. MOSI occupies the former Liverpool Road Station, one of Manchester's most important historic sites. Liverpool Road Station, which opened in 1830, is the world's oldest surviving railway station.

The Power Hall houses one of the largest collections of working steam mill engines in the world. The engines include a beam engine used at Haydock Colliery and the impressive 1907 McNaught engine from Firgrove Mill. The Power Hall also contains working examples of gas, oil, hot-air and diesel engines. These were made by local



companies such as Crossley Brothers and the National Gas Engine Co. Ltd. It is also home to a Galloways pumping engine and a towering 30-tonne hydraulic accumulator.

The former railway transit shed provides a fitting setting for locomotives and rolling stock. Get close up to a replica of Novelty, which ran in the famous 1829 Rainhill Trials. Nearby is the Beyer-Garratt articulated steam locomotive, the largest exhibit in the Power Hall. Made at Beyer, Peacock's Gorton factory in 1930, this Garratt ran on the South African Railways until 1972.

Commercial Events Manager Jo Barber told us "The recently completed £9 million refurbishment of the Great Western Warehouse meant that the old steam boiler that powered most of our engines had to be removed. The new, more efficient, steam boiler is ready to fit, but the cost of doing so is significant, due to the specialised nature of the job. MOSI has launched the Head of Steam campaign to challenge its visitors and supporters to help raise £50,000 towards the cost of bringing steam back to the Power Hall.

"The funds would enable us to install the new boiler as soon as possible. Subject to generating the necessary funds, we plan to finish the work by the end of 2011 at the latest.

"By buying a ticket for the Real Ale festival, visitors will be supporting the fundraising campaign. No advanced tickets available. Buy on the door on a first come, first served basis".

The festival will run from 6.30pm – 10.30pm Friday 25th March and 12 noon – 10.30pm Saturday 26th March.

Glen Smethurst

Glen Smethurst, who died in January, was the Free Trade Business Development Manager for Hydes Brewery. He had been at Hydes for nine years, starting out as a Free Trade Manager but then as his skills to get new accounts became apparent he was promoted to the Free Trade Business Development Manager. This meant that he actually covered all areas that Hydes deal with so he will be greatly missed across Manchester's licensed trade. He was voted Hydes Employee of the Year twice in the time that he worked for them.

He died doing something that he loved. He was a DJ and was actually at his niece's 21st when he had a massive heart attack and died suddenly in front of all of his friends and family on Saturday 29th January. His funeral was at St Anthony's in Woodhouse Park on Monday 14th February in front of a huge number of people wishing to pay their last respects to Glen. His wife, Julie was amazing and managed to stay very strong throughout the vast majority of the extremely moving service.

Beverley Gobbett



Soup Kitchen



Walking back from the Port Street Beer House to 57 Thomas Street the thought occurred – wouldn't it be good if there was somewhere in between the two that sold some decent beer.

In a serendipitous turn of events we get a call soon after. It's Chris Bailkoski from the **Soup Kitchen** (31-33 Spear Street, just off Stevenson Square). "We're putting cask in, let's talk". A lunchtime chat with Chris and business partners Nick Bowden and Sam Lewis-McAlpine followed and it's good news all round.

The Soup Kitchen has been around for about five years but it was 18 months ago that Chris and his partners took over. Since then it has been slowly turned from a lunchtime venue into a bar-cum-bistro with a nice line in good wholesome food (soups naturally feature) served until 9pm, and cool tunes (9pm-1am Thursday to Sunday).

A good range of bottled beers has already been developed with supplies coming from Dunham Massy and Hornbeam breweries. There was a plan to have Liverpool Organic on permanently too but there are supply issues at the moment so they have become the first 'Bottle Brewery of the Month' but the bottled range as a whole will grow over time.



A hand pump will be installed to sell a cask beer (from mid to late March) and then later in the year (planning for late August), once the cellar is moved to the basement, the range will go up to four with the emphasis on rotating local beers for at least two pumps and one for cider/perry. Whilst they have one cask this will be rotating from within and around the M60.

From the end of February bag in box Ben Crossman cider and Broadoak perry was in the fridge and these may also rotate.

The Soup Kitchen is open for lunch from 11am-3pm each day, opening late Wed-Sun (1am Thurs-Sat). Updates available on twitter @SoupKitchen_Mcr and the website at soup-kitchen.co.uk

Elsewhere in the Northern Quarter, **Bluu** on Thomas Street has returned to the cask ale fold – when OT dropped in Marston's EPA was on two of the three hand pumps with the third unused. Meanwhile the **Port Street Beer House** has been an instant hit and the quality of the five cask beers has been uniformly excellent. The two large fridges are now almost full and two small fridges are to be installed to expand the range still further. There was a small error in last month's report – the pub is in fact currently closed on Mondays.

Chorlton & Trafford

The New Year saw the recession finally bite on the previously unstoppable growth of Chorlton's bar scene as **Dulcimer**, **Charango** and **Argyles** all closing during January. Charango re-opened in early February and OT understands that the Dulcimer premises are expected to re-open under a new name but with familiar faces behind the bar during March. Argyles was initially rumoured to be closed for a refurbishment but a lack of activity for several weeks seems to discount this.

However, other premises in Chorlton continue to flourish - **Oddest** is to host quarterly "Meet The Brewer" events, with the first to be feature Mallinsons' brewery of Huddersfield on Thursday 24th March. Bollington Brewery and Kelham Island are lined up for future events. At **Pi** (Chorlton), Tatton Blonde has replaced Bank Top Flat Cap as the permanent ale - the change has come about due to the popularity of Tatton beers at sibling Pi (Rose Hill) in Liverpool.

Duffy's Bar has added Hydes Original to its portfolio alongside existing regular Lees Original - it is a rare sight to see beers from our local family brewers alongside each other. When OT visited on a live music night, Black Sheep Bitter was also available & the pub was very busy.

Escape Bar, a previously sporadic real ale outlet, has made a firm commitment to selling ale permanently with the installation of an impressive illuminated stainless steel Black Sheep handpump - look out for more of these across the area as Black Sheep are on a marketing drive.

The **Steamhouse**, Sale has added four new handpumps - two more upstairs (making a total of four) and two in the downstairs "Troubadours' Cellar Bar" and had put in place a regular programme of live music. However, just when it seemed things going well at this fledgling bar, as OT went to press news broke that the manager had suddenly left the pub. The pub is being looked after by staff from the

sister pub in Urmston but opening times are likely to be restricted.

King of the Castle?



Manchester licensee Jonny Booth is edging close to being named as the pub trade's Newcomer of the Year 2011. The operator of the **Castle**, Oldham Street, has won his way onto the short list of contenders for the much coveted award that recognises the finest new talent in the country.

Since taking on The Castle, which underwent a substantial refurbishment late last year Jonny has transformed the profile of the pub to become what many say is the city's trendiest and best live music venue.

Jonny says: "We took on the tenancy with Robinson's in April 2009, and with their significant support we have completely turned around this Grade II listed building. We still have seven hand pulled beers on offer and have retained the original Victorian fixtures and fittings. But with the refurbishment complete we have gone on to introduce food and built a vibrant new trade with music at its heart."

Jonny will now have to wait until 6th of April when he will join over 1,500 guests at Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London for a glittering night of celebration and to learn if The Castle has secured the top award.

Alibi

As we reported last month, Alibi on Oxford Street, Manchester City Centre has been taken upmarket and cask ale has followed with four



hand pumps on the bar. Manager Nick Simmons is a cask fan and tells us that real ale is selling well. Currently there are several different beers on including Black Sheep, Wells Bombardier, Thwaites Wainwright, Sharps Doombar, Well's Banana Bread Beer, and Hornbeam Lemon Blossom.

Wainwright and Bombardier are regulars (and the best selling beers) but the other two pumps will feature changing guest beers, although Hornbeam Lemon Blossom "flies out" so expect to see that sold quite regularly, too. A real cider may also follow in the near future.

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See page 18



From Nancy Swanick, licensee Peveril of the Peak, Manchester, and her sons:

Dear friends at CAMRA, our heartiest congratulations on your 40th Anniversary, and we wish you good luck for the future.

Thank you all at CAMRA who made my 40th Anniversary such a memorable night. The beautiful mirror is my pride and joy, also the flowers and awards.

Special thanks to Neil, Bev, John, Colin, Andy, Peter O'Grady, Mike Goode and Rodger. You all worked so hard to make this special for me and I appreciate it so much. I also received cards and presents from the customers, my dear friends. Also emails from across the globe = doesn't good news travel fast.

I would like to thank Enterprise Inns for absolutely nothing and also for ignoring the special occasion. My turn to congratulate them on boarding up their pubs, which I know they are preoccupied with. Extortionate unsustainable fair rents are the key factor, in my opinion, to the demise of the great British pub.

Once again, many thanks CAMRA for your support throughout my years here at the Pev. Good luck for the future.

From Mike White, Alkrington:

The Trafford & Hulme Winter Pub of the Season Award combined with the presentation to landlady Nancy Swanick for her 40 year tenancy at the Peveril of the Peak was a raging success on Tuesday 25 January.

The pub was packed, the Jennings Cumberland Bitter ran out and the presentation by CAMRA and the buffet put on by Nancy were both fantastic.

Beverley Gobbett of Trafford & Hulme branch did the first part of the presentation, two framed awards to Maurice, Nancy's son, and then Neil Worthington introduced the magnificent 40 years commemorative mirror presentation to Nancy and Maurice with humour, a little bit of polemic on the state of play of the pub trade today and plenty of admiration aimed at Nancy and the boys for maintaining the beer standard over all these years, with many awards from the eighties onwards. The engraved mirror is a really colossal memento in both artistry and significance and will be treasured by the Swanick family for many decades to come. A beautiful and unusual vase of flowers was also presented.

Well known local CAMRA figures, friends of the pub and members of the family all turned up enthusiastically to make a truly memorable evening; this was such a well-planned and successful evening which Nancy supplemented so well with a terrific buffet, and with her extremely amenable bar staff.

CAMRA branch – you were brilliant! Thank you.

From Brian Lomas, Failsworth

John O'Donnell is right to celebrate the refurbishment of the Castle on Oldham Street, Manchester (*Opening Times* January). He might also have usefully drawn attention to the beer prices. On a recent visit I was charged £3.00 for a pint of Dark Hatters. That is quite a price to pay to enjoy the resplendent surroundings.

From John Hesketh, Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar:

A couple of points that may be of interest. The Sunday Telegraph together with 'Famous Grouse' published a supplement with the UK's 100 Famous Pubs. Of only 10 in the North West, and the only one in our region, the Buffet was lucky to be very strongly featured.

I noticed in the winter issue of Birmingham's CAMRA mag they made a large feature of a pub selling its 500th different guest beer. Here we exceeded 7,500 last December (in 13 years), all carefully recorded (7,548 as I write this).

From: Sophie Cunningham, Fundraising Officer, After Adoption

We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone involved in helping After Adoption raise a wonderful £4,500 at the CAMRA National Winter Ales Festival 2011.

Thank you to all on the organising committee for selecting us to benefit from this fantastic opportunity and supporting us in making it such a success for our charity. In particular we would like to thank Jim Flynn for his support and suggestions.

Not only has this helped us raise such a wonderful amount but it has brought the name and work of After Adoption to the attention of the thousands of people who attended. We were especially pleased to be the selected charity of an event taking place in our home town, where the charity was founded, which made it even more special.

All the money raised will go directly to support our work with children and adults affected by adoption, and this would not be possible without the support of our volunteers, who gave up their time to help and put in a huge amount of hard work and enthusiasm, so a big thank you to them and our staff. Thanks also to Brenda Marsh and Sandra Burgess for their donation from their jewellery sales at the Festival, and for helping us out every day on our stall.

We also want to thank Enterprise Inns for their generous support in sponsoring our activity at the Festival, and all the companies who gave us the fantastic prizes that made our Prize Draw such a success: The Mark Addy, My Brewery Tap, Ales by Mail, Horse & Jockey, Hornbeam Brewery, Frog and Bucket Comedy Club, Boggart Brewery, Wetherspoons - The Paramount, CAMRA Books, ALL Beer, The Lowry Hotel and Costco Manchester.

And finally, to everyone who came and visited our stall, bought Prize Draw tickets or made a donation - on behalf of all at After Adoption, thank you.

From Pete Summers (via email):

On Friday 14 January, I ventured down Manchester to sample the good beer pubs in the Northern Quarter. One new pub was the Odd Bar on Thomas Street; I decided to make this my first port of call as I'd never been in the bar before and it must be great as it's in the 2011 beer guide. As it says in the Guide, the Odd Bar has one handpump and has different, local brews. How sad therefore that no real ale was being dispensed from this hand pump. What a sad state of affairs just 14 days into the new year.

My main concern is how pubs like these get into the beer guide as they seem to be 'fad' pubs. Surely, CAMRA should be trying to promote old style pubs, of which there are plenty in Manchester, as these are great heritage pubs and are worth preserving e.g. Briton's Protection, Hare and Hounds, White Lion (I'm sure these pubs still sell real ale). The same goes for Wetherspoons pubs which have a great range of beers, but should there be so many in the guide? These are pubs with no tradition other than being former banks or cinemas.

So can I ask other CAMRA members to think of traditional pubs which still sell real ale and are committed to it to be given priority rather than these wine bar type bars? By the way, I still managed to get round seven pubs in the guide that night, so it's not all that bad in the Northern Quarter.

From Peter Edwardson, Heaton Norris:

In the February issue of "Opening Times", you say that "the local pub and beer scene is going from strength to strength". At a time when pubs are dropping like ninepins, with plenty more in the pipeline, one could be forgiven for thinking that this represents the "Comical Ali" school of pub and beer journalism.

From Dave Nuttall:

Thank you from myself and Mark Simmonds and myself to all the CAMRA members who came to support us at our cask ale bar on the Christmas Market in Albert Square in December.

It was a real pleasure to meet every one of them, and their encouragement was much appreciated. We'll be there again next year, and hope to have cask a more local events over the coming few months (including a range of Stouts and Irish Red Ales at the Manchester Irish Festival if all goes to plan). Thanks to you too, for your support, which was really kind.

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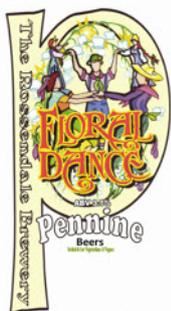
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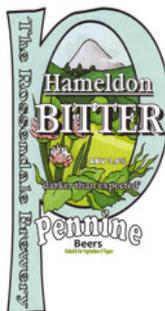


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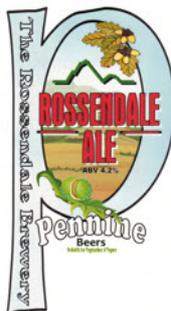
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Pitch Porter
5%

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High Peak Pub Scene

Frank Wood with Pubs News from High Peak & North East Cheshire CAMRA plus Robin Wignall's monthly round-up of the Peak District Pub scene

High Peak Pub News With Frank Wood

New Mills Beer Festival

PREPARATIONS are in hand for the new High Peak Branch Beer festival, named the **Hills and Mills Festival**. It runs from 12.00pm on Friday 8th April to Saturday 9th, the hours being fixed at 12 noon to 11.00pm on both days. Chalkers Snooker Club is the venue, on Buxton Road, Newtown, very close to New Mills Newtown railway station on the Buxton line. The 199 hourly bus service from Manchester Airport to Buxton, via Stockport, also virtually passes the door.

Beers have been sourced from Derbyshire, South Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and Cheshire, ensuring a good selection. A selection of ciders is also on offer. Chalkers is a spacious venue and we are hoping for a successful weekend. For anyone wanting to try other local pubs, The Good Beer Guide selected **White Lion** at Disley is a couple of bus stops back down the A6 towards Stockport and for those wanting to visit a classic, the **Shepherds Arms** at 7 Old Road, Whaley Bridge, is well worth seeking out. Care is needed here though, as it does not open until 3.00 pm on Fridays.

Round and About

A surprise when I visited **Fairfield Golf Club** at Buxton recently. The club has two handpumps in regular use featuring Theakston's Best Bitter and a guest beer, which changes. However, the secretary informed me that Wychwood Hobgoblin was a favourite at the moment and it had been on fairly regularly of late. Also on the up in Buxton, the **Wye Bridge House** (Wetherspoons) got glowing reports from High Peak Branch members at the February meeting for its wide choice and quality of beers on sale.

More pubs up for sale in the Branch area with Pugh & Co, are the **Cottage** on Hyde Road Denton, the **Nags Head**, Charlestown Road, Glossop, the **Lane Ends** on Ley Lane Marple Bridge (ex Good Beer Guide) and the **Halfway House**, on Whiteacre Road Ashton under Lyne. Rumours also abound that the **Duke of York** at Romiley has been shut. It has indeed been shut but was seen to be open again when our man passed in mid February. We will report more on this when we have more information.

The **White House** at Stalybridge, has undergone a transformation. On a visit on 14th February, several branch members called in to check it out before the Branch meeting at the **Buffet Bar** up the road and were all impressed. Spotlessly clean, with six handpumps all in use, the pub was a credit to Hydes. The beers on the bar were Hydes

Original, Hydes IPA (6%), Hydes Splash & Dash, Green King Abbot Ale, Allgates Twitter & Bisted and Jennings Cross Buttocks. A pub definitely worth seeking out. Incidentally, the **Buffet Bar** also did not disappoint as ever.



Above – the much improved White House

The **New Lamp** on Bankbottom, Hadfield has re-opened after a refurbishment, and again, this Punch Tavern pub looked pretty smart when I called in on 13th February. Only one hand pulled beer is currently on sale, but best to walk before you can run, as the pub needs to build up its custom after being closed before Christmas for some time. However, I could not fault the Black Sheep Bitter. Another pub that has re-opened is the **Spring Gardens** at Compstall, though no news of the beers on sale at the moment.

Finally, I called at a favourite pub of mine on Thursday 10th February, the **Railway** at Greenfield, although marginally out of our Branch area, a fine pub (Good Beer Guide 2011). The event was the legendary Angelo Paladino, a superb singer guitarist who plays there from time to time and always gets a full house. The plan to watch the first set and leave was forgotten as he played two superb sets. Millstone Tiger Rut, Deuchars IPA, Wells Bombardier, Copper Dragon Golden Pippin are the usual beers on sale, with the guest beer being Saltaire Blonde.

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall



In Whaley Bridge, Dominique Bailey took over the **Railway** (pictured above), after experience in various pubs in the Robinson's estate. A busy Christmas and New Year gave

a good welcome. Live entertainment can be expected at weekends. Community use of the pub and its function room are being encouraged. The local Probus Club already meets there. The Whaley Bridge Film Club shows its films here and for an evening the function room becomes a cinema. Dominique is sticking to the tried and tested formula, one real ale, Unicorn, in good condition. The Railway is now open at 16.00 in the week and 12.00 at weekends.

Along the road at the **Cock**, Christmas brought good numbers of diners into the pub. This was a real boost to this recently refurbished local, where there is now a focus on dining. However beer is not neglected. A January visit found Unicorn, Hatters, Double Hop, Dizzy Blonde and Manchester Icon. In the best traditions of the Cock, Hatters was in good form and went down very well. I attended a meeting at **Furness Vale Club** in December. Here a Hydes beer is usually on hand pump, and on that occasion Manchester's Finest 4.5% lived up to its name.

An early February visit to the Good Beer Guide listed **Pack Horse** in New Mills, or rather on the Mellor road out of New Mills, was well worthwhile. A good meal was washed down by Howard Town Longendale Lights, Phoenix Arizona, very good, and a VAT beating 3.5% bitter from Phoenix, also in good form. We did not try the Tetley Bitter. The Packhorse has much to recommend it, a warm stove, splendid views including that to Lantern Pike, good food and of course good beer.

Hannibal's Nectar was available in the **Crossings** in Furness Vale in early February. Peter Sheridan is always quick off the mark with the Robinson's seasonal beers. I tend to start here with Hartleys XB, not often found this far south. Robinson's must spend a fortune roading it up to the Lake District. Another winter ale of note was Daleside Porter at the **White Horse** in Whaley Bridge. This is one from the Punch Finest Cask list, and was a fine brew.

In the Press

A December copy of the *Congleton Chronicle* had an article about a backbenchers' debate in the House of Commons, which included Staffordshire Moorlands M.P. Karen Bradley. Part of her constituency lies in the south west of the Peak District. She bemoaned the loss of 39 pubs a week, her figure. She sees pubs "as an important part of the country's history and heritage," and values pubs as "hugely important for communities and to a sociable and controlled drinking environment". She has a justifiable go at the big pubcos, their rents, beer prices and one size fits all management. Perhaps she could also have a go at her political masters when next they come to increase duty on beer, or the next time they look to increase VAT.



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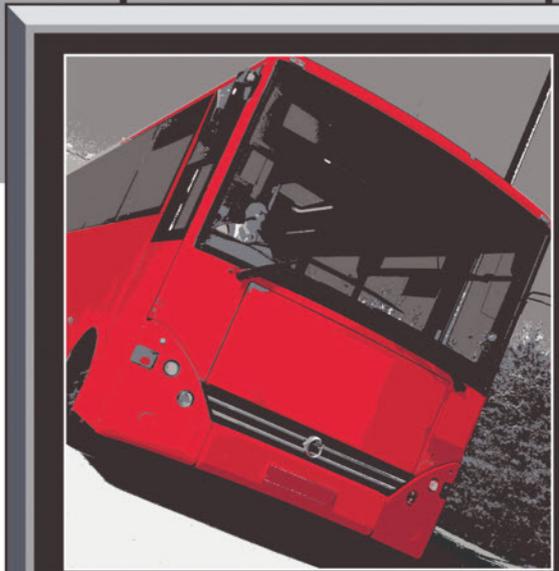
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👉 Visit **www.gmpte.com** for full information about local bus, train and tram travel, including a journey planner, maps and timetables.

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Brewery News

Pub News Extra

Good News for Cask?

Perhaps the biggest news item last month was the £20 million purchase of Cornish micro Sharps by multi-national brewer Molson Coors.

Good news or bad? Beer writers such as Roger Protz were quick to see history repeating itself while others saw the move as welcome recognition of the cask ale revival by one of the global brewers who still dominate the UK's beer trade.

Let's just consider what Molson Coors have shelled out their £20 million for. There's a modern, well equipped brewery at Rock and the brew house is headed by Stuart Howe who is making an increasing name for himself as an adventurous and cutting edge brewer.

But that's not why Molson Coors have decided to splash the cash. No, what they were after is Doom Bar. This is an easy drinking brown beer. It's the sort of beer that some enthusiasts decry as dull and boring. It's also well made and many mainstream drinkers find it an enjoyable and satisfying drink. It also accounts for 90% of Sharps' production.

It is clear that unlike most of the international brewing giants, Molson-Coors have come to see a future of some sort in producing cask beer. Their investment in the William Worthington Brewery at Burton is evidence of this and they clearly see Doom Bar as a good fit for national roll out. Its likely quarry is Deuchars IPA, Best, King IPA and the like and will be a reassuring name at the bar, which will offend few and give an easy introduction to cask ale for the cautious. Expect to see it on more bars near you anytime soon.

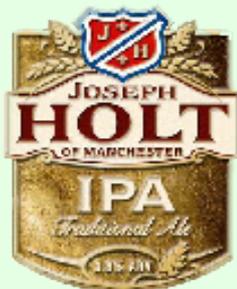
But with the expected expansion of Doom Bar's distribution and production will come capacity issues down there in Cornwall. Doom Bar is the sort of beer that could be made anywhere and Burton on Trent is so much better located than Rock don't you think? So good news for cask but possibly bad news for Sharps. Our prediction? Doom Bar moved to Burton and the Rock brewery sold to Stuart Howe and others as some sort of management buy out. Let's see.



More Brews News

Joseph Holt are introducing a new cask beer as an addition to their core range. The beer is Holts IPA (3.8%) and the first 30 barrel batch was delivered to selected pubs on 14 February. The new IPA is described as a "fresh tasting traditional golden IPA with a good floral hop aroma. The 3.8% ABV beer is brewed with English ale malt and hopped with East Kent Goldings and Styrian Goldings".

Local outlets will be the Cheadle Hulme, Griffin (both Heaton Mersey and Heald Green), the Legh Arms, Sale Moor; Lord Nelson, Urmston and the Queens in Hyde.



Good news from **Hydes**, too, where there are plans to promote their excellent XXXX. This powerful (6.8% abv) winter warmer has been receiving rave reviews this year and the brewery have indicated that this year it has gained more accounts for the beer. Not only that but the hope that it will also be bottled, thus making it available all year round. On the down side we learn that Hydes had discontinued their "ordinary" mild. However two milds are still being produced – the dark Owd Oak and the pale 1863 (which started life as Best Mild). Finally look out for Hydes new seasonal for March and April – Amazing Grace is a 4.1% amber ale brewed using Fuggles and Challenger hops.



Diary Date

Congratulations to the **Railway**, Portwood, Stockport. This has been voted the first ever Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year. More on this next month but make a note now of the presentation night. This is to be **Friday 8 April** when landlady Sue Hitchen is also planning to hold a mini cider festival. This is a great award for the pub and we anticipate a good turnout on the night.



Stockport News

In Heald Green the **Tatton Arms** the builders were in as we went to press. We understand that it is to be extended (at both ends), internal walls removed to open it out, and that it would be more food-oriented (and also that the stained-glass windows were to be retained - but contained within new uPVC double-glazing). A re-opening this month is planned.

Cheadle Hulme now, and the **Millington Hall** is scheduled to have a beer festival from 30 March to 3 April. Featured beers will come from the likes of Dunham Massy and Marble plus some specials from Hydes, too. Real cider is also planned.

In Hazel Grove, the **Grove** closed in late January. It is apparently either to be converted into or replaced by a church. This in turn is a replacement for the church across the road that is to be demolished to make way for an Asda extension. This project will also see off two more pubs we are told – the **Woodman** and the **Anchor** are those destined for the chop. Another local pub loss is the **Four Heaton** on Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris. The Hydes house closed last month and the site is to be redeveloped for housing. While it is sad to see the pub go it has seemed to struggle badly for quite some time now.



Malcolm Bird up at the **Cheshire Line**, Cheadle, now also runs the **Moor Top**, Heaton Moor. The Moor Top will be taking part in this year's Mild Magic and will be stocking Holts mild for the event. He also plans to have Marston's Pedigree as a permanent hand pumped beer at the Moor Top.

Last month we reported that **Ye Olde Woolpack** was to install more hand pumps. Well they are now in situ with seven hand pumps installed and in use. Breweries featured have included Abbeylea, Brentwood, Prospect, Howard Town, Wolf and Raw, so quite an interesting range. Quality has remained on top form, too, and of course there remains the ever changing menu of 10 ciders and two perries at all times

More Manchester News

The Athenaeum, in Spring Gardens, City Centre has re-emerged as **Browns**. It is now much more upmarket with the accent on dining. However cask ale is sold with two hand pumps dispensing Sharps Doombar and Thwaites Original. We had a half of the Sharps for £1.70. It was in good condition. Whilst mainly for dinners we found the staff friendly and ready to stop by for a chat.

Elsewhere in the City Centre there are mixed reports. The **Sir Ralph Abercromby** was closed as we went to press with reports that Enterprise Inns were looking for a new licensee. However on Deansgate, cask ale sales at the **Sawyers Arms** have gone so well that two additional hand pumps are to be installed.



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