

December 2011

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TIMES

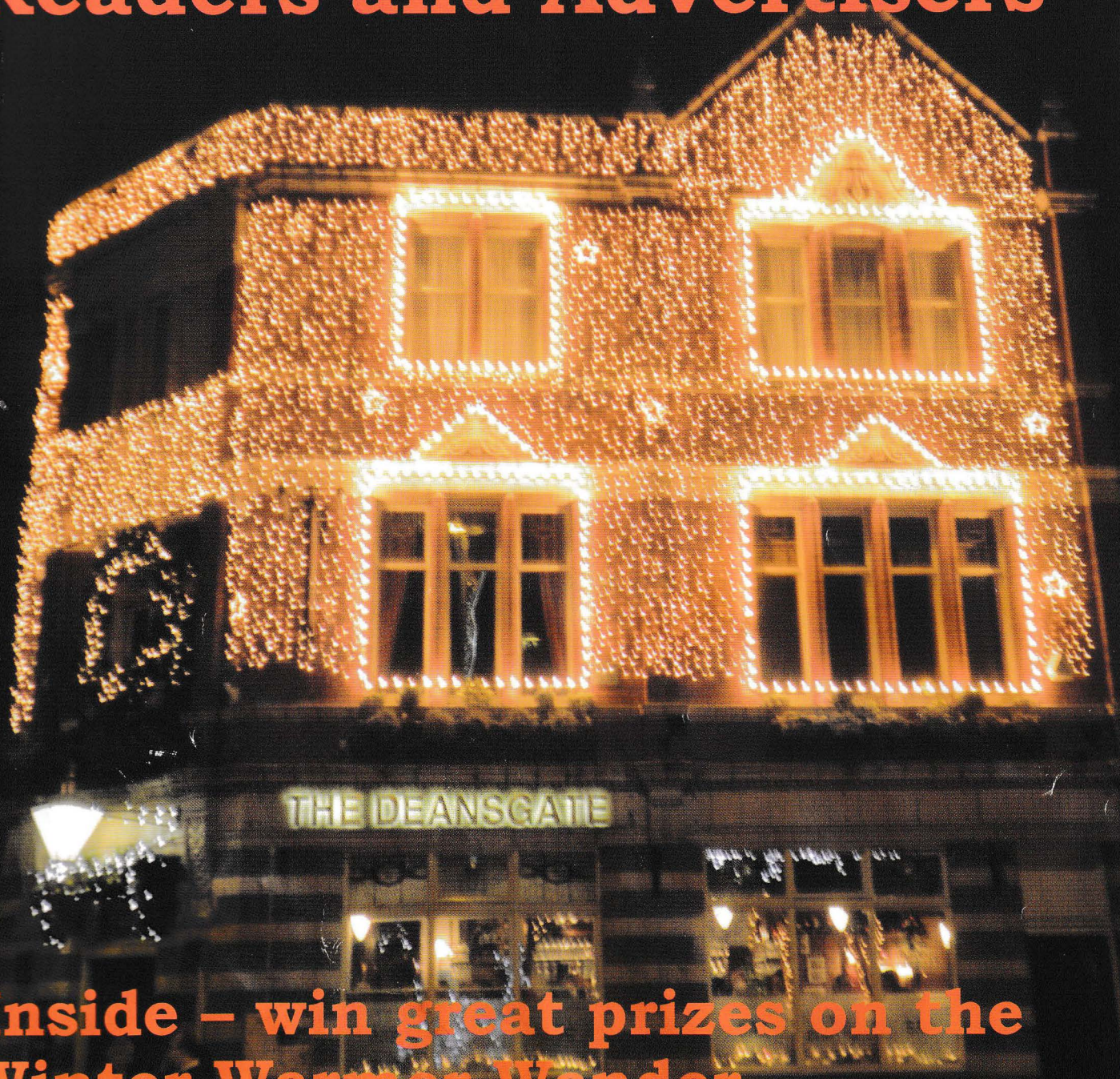


Opening

THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

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

**Merry Christmas to all our
Readers and Advertisers**



**Inside – win great prizes on the
Winter Warmer Wander.
Full details on page 15**



Regional Pub of the Year 2011

THE MAGNET



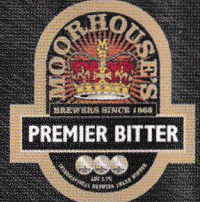
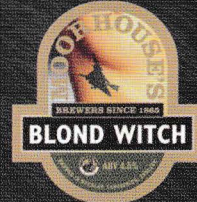
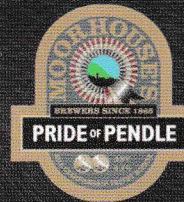
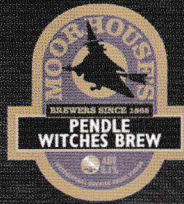
The Team at The Magnet would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Please see the website for Christmas Opening Hours

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Pub OF THE Month AWARD



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for December 2011 is the Paramount on Oxford Street in Manchester City Centre. Jim Flynn reports.



THIS very busy Wetherspoons pub while buzzing with conversation and life has a more relaxed ambiance than the frenetic atmosphere found in many other city centre pubs. Around the walls are old photos of theatres and cinemas from Manchester's old theatre land in the vicinity of the pub (from which it derives its name) and aptly it is very handy today for many modern day venues. The pub is extremely pro CAMRA supporting all our local campaigns such as Mild Magic and the Winter Warmer Wander but it takes more than all this no doubt positive stuff however to make a pub of the month.

So what has led to this award and what makes the Paramount different from many other Wetherspoon's pubs? The answer is clear; what really gives it an edge is the passion the managers and staff have for their cask beers. When early in 2006 real ale enthusiasts Mark and Natalie Hodgson moved from the Wye Bridge House in Buxton to take over as the management team at the Paramount they set about improving the cask beer sales and they have succeeded in a massive way, making the pub a Good Beer Guide fixture for the last four editions.

Gone are the days when you can't find anybody behind the bar who knows anything about the beers on sale, its staff are well trained and customer orientated. Above all, although the number and variety of beers (and now ciders) available has increased considerably over the years, the quality is always of the highest standard. It always has beers from local micros as well as ales from further afield, all in excellent condition and all at Wetherspoon's bargain prices. Mention a new up and coming beer to Mark and lo and behold the next day one of his team is on the phone endeavouring to bring it to the pub.

The December Pub of the Month is always a very lively and very popular affair lodged as it is between Christmas and New Year when most people are off work. So why not join the local CAMRA branch to celebrate the award which will be presented on Thursday, 29 December when, I am sure, a great night will be enjoyed by all. Come down and take this opportunity to congratulate Mark, Natalie and their staff for all their efforts in ensuring that the Paramount has continued to be such a beacon of excellence.

The pub is only a short walk from Piccadilly Gardens and two minutes from Oxford Road station and the St Peter's Square tram stop so there's no excuse, come on down on the 29th!

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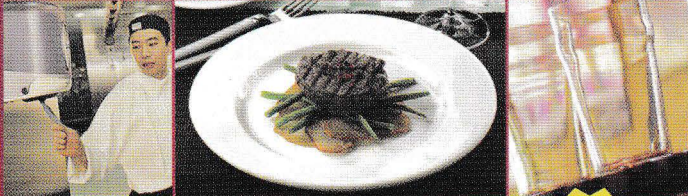
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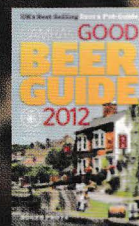
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Comment, Notes & Contents

What's On

Opening Times – Comment

All of the Greater Manchester CAMRA branches are now gearing up for what has become one of the main events of the local CAMRA year – the National Winter Ales Festival. It is back at the Sheridan Suite, and is planned to be bigger and better than ever. We will have more details in the next issue but this month do take time to check out details of the very deserving festival charity on page 23.

Once again we are launching our popular Winter Warmer Wander put together by local CAMRA members Margaret O'Brien and Dave Platt – many thanks to them for their hard work. There are 40 pubs taking part this time and we have a great range of prizes to be won so please give it a go over the holiday season.

Finally can I just send the warmest of seasonal greetings to everyone involved with *Opening Times* – our contributors, distributors, production and distribution team, advertisers and most of all, to you our readers. Have a great Christmas – and we'll see you again in January.

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 Failsworth. All articles copyright CAMRA unless otherwise stated.

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Copy Date for the January issue Saturday 17th December

Font cover – the Deansgate pub in Manchester gets in the festival spirit

Contributors to this issue: John Clarke, John Tune, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Frank Wood, Phil Booton, Mike Rose, Caroline O'Donnell, John O'Donnell, Mark McConachie, Tony Icke, Jim Flynn, Andy Sullivan, Heather Airlie, Rhys Jones, Sophie Cunningham

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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.

December

Thursday 8th – Branch Christmas Party at Hydes Brewery. Limited numbers – book with chair@thcamra.org (TRH)

Saturday 10th – Manchester Christmas Markets and crawl – details to be confirmed (MEC)

Saturday 10th – Branch Christmas Social: Marple Cricket Club, Bowden Lane, Marple. Details from Branch Contact (HHPNC)

Monday 12th – Brew Dog "Meet the Brewer" night at The Brew House, Altrincham. Limited tickets - £7 per head. Trashy Blonde on cask. (TRH)

Tuesday 13th – Sale Social: Bulls Head 8pm; Ryan's Bar 8.45; Bank 9.15; Railway 9.45; finish King's Ransom. (TRH)

Wednesday 14th – Christmas Meal – Railway, Mobberley. Starts 7.30pm. (MEC)

Wednesday 14th – 20 years in Good Beer Guide presentation to Lamb Hotel, Church St, Eccles. From 8pm. (NM)

Friday 16th – Annual Hillgate Christmas Crawl: 7.00pm Queens Head, Underbank; 8pm Red Bull, Hillgate. Finish in Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley. (SSM)

Thursday 22nd – 25 Years in Good Beer Guide presentation to the Davenport Arms, Woodford. From 8pm. (SSM)

Tuesday 27th – Post Christmas Social – Waters Green Tavern, Macclesfield. Starts 8.00pm. (MEC)

Tuesday 27th – Winter Pub of the Season presentation and Christmas Social: Beech, Beech Road, Chorlton. From 7pm. (TRH)

Wednesday 28th – Salford Social: Black Lion, Chapel St 8pm; New Oxford, Bexley Sq 9pm. (NM)

Thursday 29th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Paramount, Oxford Street, Manchester. From 8.00pm. (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

Monday 5th December – AGM: Park Lane Tavern, Macclesfield. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

Thursday 8th December – Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Includes Winter Quiz. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Wednesday 21st December – Millstone, Thomas St, Manchester. Starts 7.30pm (NM)

Thursday 5th January – Sir Ralph Abercrombie, Bootle St, Manchester. Starts 8pm. (TRH)

Thursday 12th January – Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley. **Includes voting for 2012 Pub of the Year.** Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

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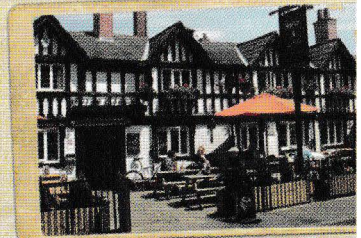


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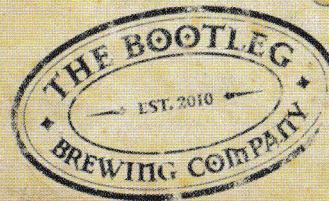


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Stagger...

Ladybarn, Fallowfield & Rusholme – with Mark McConachie

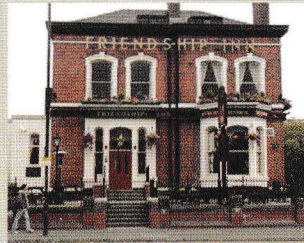
Our September Stagger began in the back streets of Ladybarn, at Robinson's monolithic **White Swan**. This multi-roomed old fashioned Robinson's local used to have a lovely etched glass and carved wood bar; now the signs of past glory only remain in the ceramic tiles and the Off-Sales sign etched in the glass outside. Little seems to have changed here with the passing of the years, and this is now one of Robinson's shabbier pubs. The furnishings and general decoration around the bar and rooms could do with some investment. The tiny Vault is now closed, and so too is one of the front rooms. They only sell Unicorn here now. Unfortunately this was a poor example tonight, perhaps because of lack of sales or promotion, but there you are.



Around the corner on Ladybarn Lane the **Brewers** remained closed but it is to re-open we are informed, else the area would have only the Swan, as the obscurely located **Old House at Home** closed for ever the previous month. Carrying on down Ladybarn Lane we passed the forlorn hanging sign of the former **Derby Arms**; the pub is still there, but now it is in use as flats. Our amble soon got us to Wilmslow Road, where we popped into the **Orange Grove**. Bare brick walls, sports TV screens, and a large bar divide the space up between a games area with pool table to the left, from its counterpart on the right which is more lounge-like. With a large garden to the front, and drinks and food offers, the place was busy with a mostly young crowd. Whilst the cider was Thatchers, the ales on offer were from Greene King - IPA, Abbot, and Old Speckled Hen. The Abbot went untried on this visit, the other two beers scored above average.

A couple of doors away is the **Great Central**. Opened in the mid-noughties as a Lloyds No. 1 bar set beneath apartment accommodation, now a Wetherspoons. A large space has been made to appear more intimate by cleverly breaking the space up with columns, artefacts and good lighting. Although set fair-square in the middle of a student area, this seems to attract a wide range of customers. Five beers adorned the long bar - Greene King's Ruddles and Abbot were alongside Jennings Sneek Lifter, all of which went un-sampled, however the Ossett Yellow Mellow scored above average, as did a beer from the USA, Firestone Walker Red Nectar.

We then crossed the busy Wilmslow Road to the **Friendship**. An Impressive Victorian villa that was refurbished in 2011, the large horseshoe bar serves a variety of areas and can now accommodate 12 cask ales - offering the Hydes range, as well as varying guest beers. Beers going untried were Hydes 1863, Original Bitter, Manchester's Finest, Peach Treat, and the seasonal ale - Thirst Aid, along with the powerful Phoenix Wobbly Bob. We did however try Marble Bitter, which scored very highly, whilst Bateman's Summer Swallow, and Keltek Majik were comfortably above average too. The range was almost like a mini-festival, many of which the pub hosts. The rear extension completed a few of years ago has created the space for provision of interesting and popular Oriental food, including takeaways.



Something Blu was still closed and boarded, whilst **Bar 43** was also closed. Meanwhile **Revolution** and **Baa Bar** were resolutely keg. **Twisted MCR** is the new name for what was Robinski's, it did sell Westons Organic cider at one time, however all real cider is now gone, and the bar staff told me the place was to shut in April 2012 for conversion to flats.

Crossing Moseley Road you reach **256 Wilmslow Road**, the erstwhile Queen of Hearts. This had just opened the week before as a new Hydes acquisition, and most impressive it was too! I liked the London Underground reference in the lobby which leads you into a very large former church hall. Around one side of the room is a mezzanine drinking space, opposite that is the long bar, whilst to the rear through some arches lies a pool and darts playing area.



To complement the inside, a most lavish exterior drinking area has been fashioned in the grounds. Quality furniture alongside fixed wooden seating will surely be a draw in the sunnier months. Hydes' have spent a considerable sum on the refurbishment here, so I hope it pays off for them. Beers on tap (served in heavy plastic tumblers) were Hydes Original Bitter, and Peach Treat - both on good form. My thanks must go to one of the door staff on the night who was most informative about the pub and work undertaken.

Next door is the former **Cheshire Cat**, also subjected to a makeover by Hydes, and re-named the **Sir Joseph Whitworth**. Here the range is tad wider than next door with Hydes Original Bitter, Manchester's Finest, Peach Treat, Thirst Aid, plus real cider. This one-time church annex is now a three room pub in a style somewhat reminiscent of a Gentlemen's club. The main high-ceilinged room is dominated by wallpaper that features a large floral print. The northern gable features a lovely leaded-glass window, whilst down a few steps leads you to a more intimate setting with a feature wall decorated from wooden cask-ends. All beers bar the Original were tried and found to be on very good form. Once again, a commendable job by Hydes.

Further on, **Trof**, **Font**, and **Corner Bar** were all trading still, yet none of them offered any cask beer (*but Font now sells Westons Cider on handpump: Ed*). I hopped on a bus to Platt Lane to get to **Hardy's Well** - formerly the Birch Villa, sited at the southern end of the so-called Curry Mile, noted for its poem writ large on the southern gable (this is by Lemn Sissay, a local poet). Inside this large, high-ceilinged, slightly care-worn, one roomed pub there is a cosmopolitan mix of locals and students. Tonight's beers were Taylor Landlord, which was almost the beer of the night, alongside a well thought of Copper Dragon BB, and Thwaites Wainwright. Weston's Old Rosie is the cider, and you can find entertainment in the two pool tables and the real parrot behind the bar. Our photo shows barmaid Dorne with pub parrot Jo-Jo.



The **Huntsman**, a former rather basic Bass boozier was still closed with no sign of life. Thus, it was off the main thoroughfare and onto Walmer Street to find the **Albert**. A two roomed Hydes pub that has a lived-in feel to it yet is by no means shabby with every wall in the place shouting of the Emerald Isle. Whilst the sole offering of Hydes Original Bitter was better than average, the place no longer has the buzz and atmosphere of a decade ago.

We finished in the rejuvenated **Whitworth** by the park of that name. The paraphernalia around the neighbouring corner Shisha bar/restaurant means you could very easily miss the place. Inside the pub is on two levels, higher at the entrance, then down a step to the bottom level near the bar. Décor is minimal other than a number of mirrors set about the place, and lounge seating in the lower saloon area. A very neat outside area exists at the rear. Two cask ales are served now, the regular being Black Sheep BB, and tonight joined by Wells Eagle Bitter. Both were enjoyed, and scored above average. A fitting end to a lengthy crawl.

SSM CAMRA Pub of the Year 2010

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Flash Flood, Black Bee, White Tornado,
Last Leaf, Massacre, Porter, Snowbound,
Wobbly Bob, White Hurricane, Uncle Fester,
Christmas Kiss, Humbug, Tyke, Thirsty Moon

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1998
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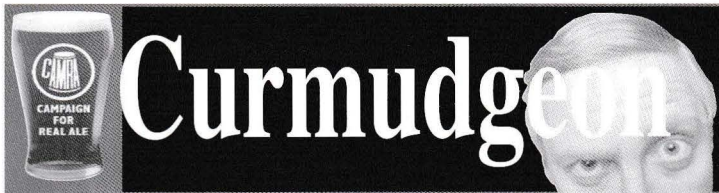
2002
Navy



2002
Wobbly Bob



2004
Wobbly Bob



Drinking in the Atmosphere

ONE of the best things CAMRA has ever done is to produce the National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors (<http://www.heritagepubs.org.uk/>), which lists just under 300 pubs across the country which have interiors that are still largely as built, or as remodelled before 1939. It is disappointing that less than 1% of all the pubs remaining in Britain fall into this category. Visiting one of these pubs is always something special, and it is good to see a place with such a sense of history still functioning as a modern business, as opposed to being preserved in aspic by the National Trust. While it is perfectly possible to have a dismal pub operation in a superb building – and I have come across one or two that left me distinctly underwhelmed – in general the unspoilt historic interiors add to the atmosphere and stick in the mind.

Over and above these, around the country there are still maybe a few thousand pubs that, while changed over the years, still present very much a traditional layout and atmosphere. A few examples from the local area would be the Griffin in Heaton Mersey, the Armoury in Edgeley and the Boar's Head on Stockport Market Place. Some may dismiss this as having an affection for outmoded "old men's pubs" that have no place in the modern world except as museum pieces, but in reality pubs were designed like this because they worked, and still usually provide a far better pubgoing experience than their more modern counterparts.

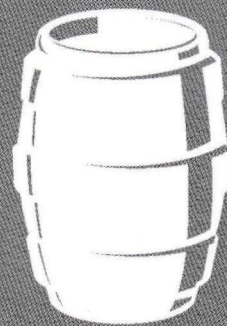
Until relatively recently, when new pubs were built they still generally conformed to the established norms of layout. For example, Holts' Sidings in Levenshulme is still recognisably a "proper" pub in the traditional mould. However, over the past couple of decades an entirely new design vocabulary has evolved for pubs and bars that throws all the traditional design concepts out of the window. The key features of this are:

- Very long bar counters dominating the space in which they are installed
- Wide circulatory spaces around the bar
- An interior comprising a sequence of free-form interconnecting areas rather than defined "rooms"
- Free-standing chairs and tables rather than fixed seating
- High ceilings
- A deliberate avoidance of warm textures and colours

While the success of their business model cannot be denied, Wetherspoons must be the single biggest offender in this regard. With few exceptions, their pubs are soulless, impersonal drinking barns largely devoid of pub "feel". In my view this is a conscious policy to make their establishments look as little as possible like old-style pubs. They have often been praised for their sensitive conversions of impressive buildings, but in general it's still just the standard Spoons layout and ambience and doesn't really gel with the surroundings. If you put a works canteen on the floor of a cathedral, it's still a works canteen.

This new design language removes any feeling of cosiness or intimacy and produces an atmosphere more akin to an airport lounge than a conventional pub. Unlike a shop, a pub is a place where, as well as buying goods, you are in effect buying time in a particular environment. No matter how good the food and drink on offer, if you don't feel "at home" you're not really going to enjoy yourself. And, even if the choice of beer is a bit limited, give me a proper pub any day with bench seating, geezers standing at the bar and one or two handpumps, over drinking some new-wave brew with an overpowering taste of tropical fruit while perched on a high, uncomfortable stool in somewhere resembling the interior of a warehouse.

Correction: In last month's column, I stated that Robinson's Dizzy Blonde was now outselling Unicorn. I was told this by a normally reliable source, and actually questioned it at the time, but was assured it was correct. However, following a recent presentation by David Bremner, Robinson's Marketing Director, it is clear that this is incorrect, and in fact Unicorn continues to outsell Dizzy Blonde by about 7 to 1, although sales of Dizzy Blonde are increasing. Apologies for any confusion this may have caused.



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OUR BREWER WAS UP
AT 2AM
SITTING NEXT TO THE
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LIKE A PROUD FATHER.
HE DOESN'T DO IT FOR THE
FAME
THE GLORY
AND CERTAINLY NOT THE
MONEY
IT'S HIS PASSION.



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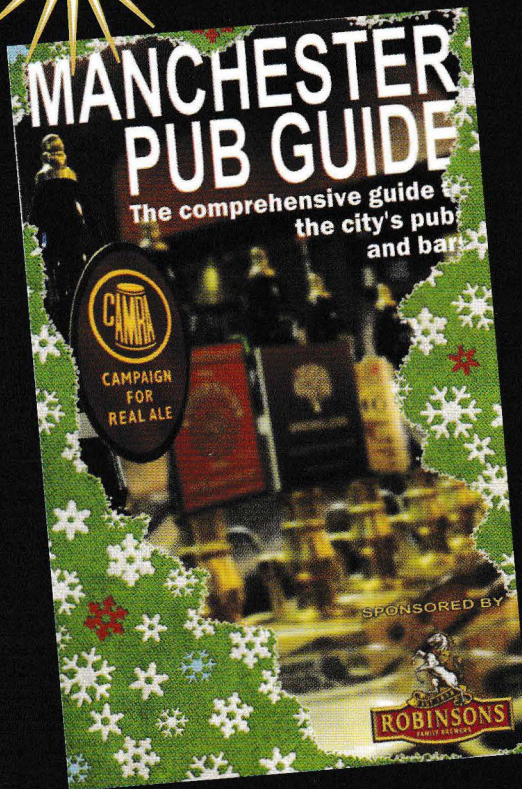
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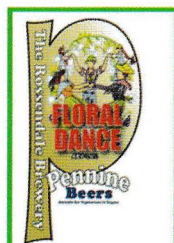


Pennine Ale (Rossendale) Limited, The Griffin Inn, 84-86, Hud Rake, Haslingden, Lancashire BB4 5AF;
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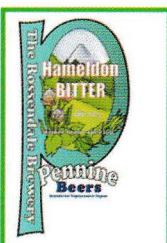
Contact Robin: 07709 874 783; robin@rossendalebrewery.co.uk
Or Geoff: 07816 912 794; geoff@rossendalebrewery.co.uk

Meet our beers - Beer Tasting Notes



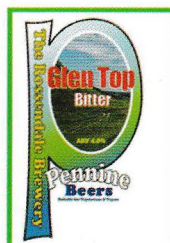
Floral Dance
3.8%

A pale and fruity session beer, with body that is more than a match for many stronger beers!



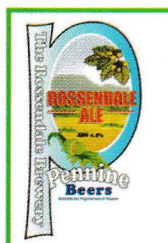
Hameldon Bitter
3.8%

An unusually dark traditional bitter, with a dry and assertive character that develops in the finish.



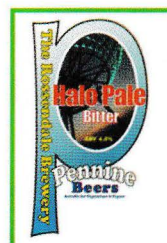
Glen Top Bitter
4.0%

A citrusy, full bodied, pale beer. Intentionally not over hopped with quite a dry after taste.



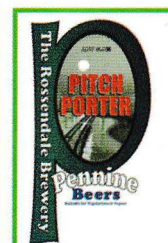
Rossendale Ale
4.2%

A malty aroma leads to a complex, malt dominated flavour, supported by a dry, increasingly bitter finish.



Halo Pale 4.5%

A citrusy, pale ale brewed with Cascade aroma hops, finishing with a slightly bitter aftertaste.



Pitch Porter 5%

A full bodied, rich beer with a slightly sweet, malty start, counter-balanced with sharp bitterness and obvious roast barley dominance.



Sunshine 5.3%

A hoppy and bitter golden beer with a citrus character. The lingering finish is dry and spicy.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further info!

All of our beers can be sampled at:-
The Griffin, 84-86, Hud Rake, Haslingden Lancashire (Brewery Tap) - 01706 21 40 21
The Sportsman, 57, Mottram Road, Hyde Cheshire - 0161 368 5000
www.rossendalebrewery.co.uk

All of our beers are suitable for Vegetarians & Vegans.