

June 2012



# Opening

TIMES

THE FREE LOCAL CAMRA MAGAZINE

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

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call

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a week

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has today called for urgent Government action to save Britain's historic pub industry. It is the first time that new research shows that pub closures are now closing at the rate of one every 16 weeks on a weekly basis. The campaign has expressed particular concern that the current Government's policy is failing to protect the pub industry in the peripheries of Britain. These areas have been particularly hard hit by the downturn in the economy and the loss of 785 jobs, and is working to ensure that the industry is not further disadvantaged by the current Government's policy of cutting public services.



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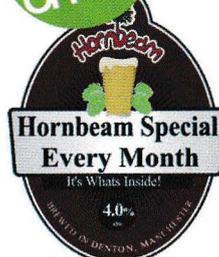
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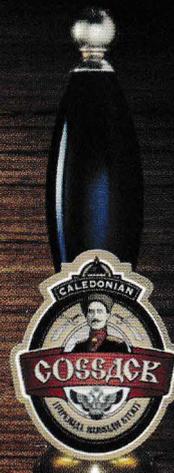
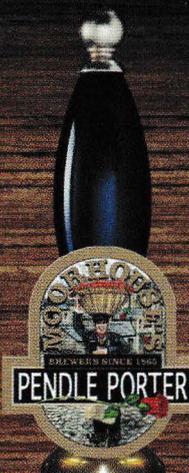
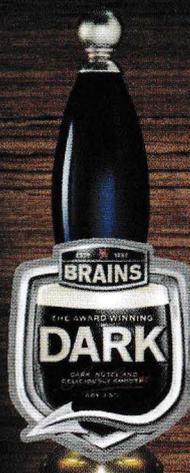
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CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE



# Pub OF THE Month AWARD



**The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month Award for June is to be given to the Cheadle Hulme on Station Road. John Sutcliffe tells our readers why it was chosen**

**L**OCATED AS IT IS next to the station, where the Macclesfield and Wilmslow railway lines meet, this was at one time called the Junction. It was an establishment of



character but with a reputation for being a little on the rough side. It was altered and renamed the Cheadle Hulme; good but rather bland. Gradually it was improved and eventually entered the CAMRA Good Beer Guide.

In April 2009, the present landlord, Dave Woods, with his wife Rebecca and their young son Max; now joined by young Harry, took over its management. Dave has a superb track record in the licensing trade and his considerable experience soon showed. He looks after the cask beers himself and they are always very well kept. Two years ago these consisted of Holts bitter, mild and monthly changing seasonal but there is now Holts IPA and up to three non-Holts guest beers. Dave is ably helped by Assistant Manager Matt Holmes and friendly and capable bar staff. He also holds occasional Beer Festivals including the one on 1st to 5th June with a marquee and 100 beers.

Within the first year that Dave was manager Joseph Holt's spent a considerable sum, tastefully refurbishing and providing new furniture for the premises. Every pub in Cheadle Hulme serves food and in many the food predominates. Here the dining is kept to the rear with popular carvery and hob in the day and a wider menu in the evening. Two meals are offered for £10.50 at lunchtimes on weekdays, £12.50 on Sundays.

The sociable drinking areas at the side and front, including the comfortable vault, with dart board, make this a superb community pub. There is live music once a month and a quiz night on Thursdays.

Holts support Christies Hospital with 10p of every pint donated but in addition to this, the Cheadle Hulme helps another charity each year, and this year it is Help for Heroes. A voluntary collection on music nights goes to this cause.

Dave is a very 'hands on' manager, nearly always present, behind the bar or in front with a friendly word for the customers, many of whom are regulars but anyone is made to feel welcome. This well deserved award for continuing excellence and improved beer choice will be presented on Thursday 28th June starting at 8.00 p.m. There will be a quiz from around 9.00 p.m.

The pub is served by railway to Cheadle Hulme station and buses 313, 307, 308 and X57/157 stop immediately outside with 368 & 369 within 5 minutes walk along Station Road.

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### International Brewing Awards



1998

Wobbly Bob



2002

Nobby



2002

Wobbly Bob



2004

Wobbly Bob



### From Mark Mawson, by email:

Another excellent Mild Magic will have come and gone by the time you read this. As we make the effort to visit pubs outside our usual areas to sample their mild and see what delights they offer, I expect a couple of basic things of them. Firstly they have a mild to try; secondly the staff have heard of Mild Magic; and ideally as a bonus third they are actively promoting mild.

As we cut a swathe through the pubs from High Peak (home) to North Manchester most delivered the basic first two, though a couple of Wetherspoons had staff we had to explain Mild Magic to. What got my goat were the following two pubs. Moon under Water (Manchester), when asked "what mild is on?" came the reply "we don't stock mild!", we countered with "but you're on the Mild Magic list" to be hit for six with "never heard of it". As this was towards the end of a long mild stagger we gave up and left as we had the solid reliability of the Marble Arch to end with.

On arrival, there was no mild pump to be seen, and when we enquired after it was told "we don't have any". On perusal of the beer list on the table, no mention of a Marble mild any more, pity as last year we had an excellent 6% Marble mild here. But to close on the positive pubs hitting the bonus third. Thanks to the Milson Rhodes (Didsbury) for a great up-sell of their mild when we really only wanted an espresso at that time of the morning, the mild was better than the coffee! To the Victoria (Withington), two milds and spotted our cards before we made the bar to describe the choice; and to the Molly House (Manchester) who were interested in the other pubs we have visited and the milds enjoyed which engaged other drinkers at the bar on a busy Saturday night.

### From David Newton, by email:

I could not help but notice upon my visit to a recently opened craft beer bar in central Manchester recently that there was a significant difference in price between the cost of two halves and a pint. For example, we paid £4.45 for two halves whereas we expected, looking at the chalked-up prices, around £4.10. I did query this and the barman explained that I was not the only one to notice this "anomaly".

There appears to be no motive for this except to maximise profits from those who balk at the relatively high prices and choose to take a half instead. Leaving aside this dubious practice, by law all prices should be displayed although there does seem to be some reasonable leeway with some other bars only prominently displaying the pint prices with the expectation that customers can always divide by two when necessary. And that leads to my question: how much variance can there be between the cost of a pint vs two halves before the law requires that both prices be displayed? I would have thought that a difference approaching 10% was pushing the bounds of legality to breaking point. Time to ring Trading Standards perhaps?

*(Legally the price list on display only has to be representative rather than comprehensive, I think - Ed.)*

### From Geoff Corfield, Ontario:

Last night I was sitting in the Victoria Tavern (London, Canada) drinking Waterloo Dark (5% ABV, sweetish lager - close your eyes and you can almost pretend it's a dark mild); and reading Peter Edwardson's excellent account of the historic Hillgate pub crawl. I could taste the Sammy Smith's in the Turners and the Old Tom in the Blossoms, and I was especially glad to see the Sun & Castle still going. The quiet front room just inside the door was one of my favourite spots. All the best to those of you still there from the time I used to do the Hillgate (and there are still quite a few of you).

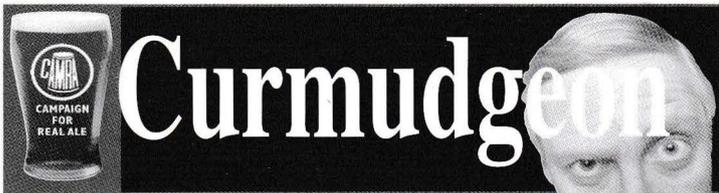
*(Geoff was active in CAMRA locally many years ago - it's worth pointing out, I think, that his letter was actually typed - on a typewriter. Unless his computer has a fantastic retro font - Ed.)*

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## Hazy Thinking

**I**N THE LATE Seventies and Eighties, I had too many experiences where I was served a pint of soup masquerading as beer and, on taking it back to the bar, was told “it’s real ale, Sir, it’s meant to be like that.” On a couple of occasions the barperson even said “and you’ve had a drink out of it!” as a reason not to change it. And there were a handful of times when I was handed a pint with obvious bits of white stuff floating in it. At that time, the perception that it was frequently cloudy was a major disincentive to many drinkers trying real ale.

Fortunately, things have greatly improved now. Many brewers, including Robinson’s, have introduced cellar quality initiatives, and the Cask Marque scheme has done much to drive up the quality of beer handed over the bar. It’s now generally accepted that real ale should be crystal clear, 100% of the time, and any failure of clarity is sufficient grounds for a refund or exchange, no questions asked.

However, recently there has been a growth in mutterings that demanding clear beer is a bit *passé* and 20th century, and drinkers should be willing to embrace a new wave of funky, artisanal cloudy beer. Moor Brewery of Somerset put forward a motion to the 2012 AGM of brewers’ organisation SIBA that it should remove clarity as a requirement for beer competitions. It was passed, albeit watered down to say that not all beer styles required clarity.

It’s important to draw a distinction here. There are plenty of beer styles around the world such as Belgian witbier and German Hefeweizen which are traditionally and authentically cloudy. If British brewers wish to take up these styles, or brew other types of beer that are intentionally cloudy, then fair enough, so long as the customer is told what to expect at the point of sale. Cloudy beers can stand or fall on their own merits in the marketplace.

But this movement seems to go beyond that to suggest that the importance of clarity in normal cask beers is greatly overstated. It seems to be a case of “look at me, I’m a really serious, sophisticated beer enthusiast, I don’t need to conform to such tedious mass-market norms as clarity.” It’s a bit like a car buff saying that reliability is so *bourgeois*. It has been described by prominent beer blogger Tandleman as a “silly kind of artisanal snobbery”. If this view becomes widespread, there is a real risk of undoing twenty years of promoting good cellar practice and putting a whole new generation off cask beer.

The vast majority of real ale is intended to be served clear, and with vanishingly few exceptions, a cloudy pint is a sign of a brewing fault or poor cellarmanship – either serving green beer that hasn’t yet had chance to settle properly, or a cask having been disturbed in the cellar, or trying to eke out the last dregs and sucking up some sediment. You don’t need to taste it – it’s obviously not up to scratch, and should be sent straight back.

Some may criticise this as “drinking with your eyes”, but I make no apology for expecting beer to appeal to the sense of sight as well as taste, and to be well-presented and look good in the glass. Food is all the better for being carefully arranged rather than just flung on the plate, and so is beer. And that attitude is not all that far from suggesting you shouldn’t be that bothered about the taste so long as it gets you drunk.

Many of you will have been in the position where you order a pint in an unfamiliar pub, and it comes out borderline cloudy, with a thin, scummy head, and a glass that is warm to the touch, and you just know before a drop passes your lips that it’s not going to be any good. Clarity doesn’t guarantee a good pint, but for the general run of British ales, a lack of it is a sure sign of a poor one.

**Curmudgeon Online:** [curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com](http://curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com)



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# Comment, Notes & Contents

# What's On

## Fight Back and Save Your Pint

It's time to save your pint and fight back against this year's budget which saw the Government continue its damaging policy of the beer duty escalator. Every year beer tax increases by 2% above inflation meaning your pint in the pub costs you 5-10p more. This mounting pressure is contributing to the closure of 16 pubs every single week.

CAMRA is calling all beer drinkers and pub goers to sign an online e-petition today by visiting [www.camra.org.uk/saveyourpint](http://www.camra.org.uk/saveyourpint). We need 100,000 signatures to trigger a high profile Parliamentary debate and put pressure on the Government ahead of Budget 2013. To stand a chance of doing this we need your help in reaching as many people as possible. So please sign the petition and then spread the word.

CAMRA also has free material to take down your local and join the campaign. Email [claire.cain@camra.org.uk](mailto:claire.cain@camra.org.uk) to order free beer mats and posters.\* With around £1 on every pint going to the Treasury in beer duty and VAT, it's time to save your pint and call time on the beer duty escalator!

*\*One pubs pack contains 5 x A4 posters and 100 beer mats, please let Claire know how many pubs packs you would like.*

## 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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Postal subscriptions are available at £11.00 for 12 issues (make cheques payable to *Opening Times*). Apply to *Opening Times*, 4 Sandown Road, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, SK3 0JF.

**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](http://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 July issue is Friday 8 June**

**Contributors to this issue:** John Clarke, John Tune, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Pete Farrand, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Frank Wood, Phil Booton, Mike Rose, Caroline O'Donnell, John O'Donnell, Tony Icke, Barry Pryme, John Sutcliffe, Mark McConachie. Mark Charnley, Steven Swain, Andy Sullivan, Heather Airlie.

**Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn**

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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.

**Wednesday 6th** – Campaigning Social: Blue Bell, Moston Lane. Starts 8pm. (NM)

**Saturday 9th** – Trip to RedWillow Brewery, Macclesfield. Details from John Clarke on 0161 477 1973 (SSM)

**Tuesday 12th** – Quiz Social: Elektrik, Wilbraham Road, Chorlton. Starts 8pm (TRH)

**Wednesday 13th** – Pub of the Year runner-up presentation to Port Street Beer House. Starts 8pm. (NM)

**Thursday 14th** – Pubs by Tram: 8pm Packet House, 8.40 Navigation, 9.20 Gardeners Arms, 10pm Moss Trooper, finish Timperley Taverners. (TRH)

**Saturday 16th** – Stafford Crawl. Meet station at 11.30am (MEC)

**Sunday 17th** – Mild Magic Winners presentation and Pub of the Year Runner-Up Award: Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport. 4pm to 6pm. (SSM)

**Thursday 21st** – Solstice Social: Swan With Two Nicks, Little Bollington. From 8pm. (TRH)

**Thursday 21st** – Solstice Walk: Leathers Smithy, Langley. Start 7.30pm. (MEC)

**Friday 22nd** – Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme Stagger: 7.30pm Griffin, Wilmslow Road, Heald Green; 8.30 Kenilworth, Cheadle Road. (SSM)

**Tuesday 26th** – Ashley Social at Greyhound. From 8pm (TRH)

**Wednesday 27th** – Gardens Crawl: Cask, Liverpool Rd 7.30pm; Knott Bar 8pm; Deansgate 8.30pm; Britons Protection 9pm; Ape & Apple 9.30pm (NM)

**Thursday 28th** – Pub of the Month presentation to the Cheadle Hulme. From 8pm. (SSM)

### Your Local CAMRA Branches:

**SSM: Stockport & South Manchester** [www.ssmcamra.org.uk](http://www.ssmcamra.org.uk)  
Contact: Mark McConachie 0161 429 9356, [mark.mcconachie@o2.co.uk](mailto:mark.mcconachie@o2.co.uk)

**NM – North Manchester** [www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk](http://www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk)  
Contact: Dave Hallows 07983 944992, [davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk)

**HPNC – High Peak & North Cheshire** [www.hpneccamra.org.uk](http://www.hpneccamra.org.uk)  
Contact: Mike Rose 07986 458517. [mikewrose@gmail.com](mailto:mikewrose@gmail.com)

**MEC – Macclesfield & East Cheshire** [www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk](http://www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk)  
Contact Tony Icke 01625 861833, [contact@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk](mailto:contact@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk)

**TRH – Trafford & Hulme** [www.thcamra.org.uk](http://www.thcamra.org.uk)  
Branch Contact: John Ison 0161 962 7976, [enquiries@thcamra.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@thcamra.org.uk)

### CAMRA Branch Business Meetings

**Thursday 7th** – Altrincham Conservative Club, Market Street, Altrincham. Starts 8pm. (TRH)

**Saturday 9th** – AGM, Ramsays Bar, Buxton. Starts 1.30pm (HPNC)

**Thursday 14th** – Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport, Include New Faces Social. Starts 8.15pm (SSM)

**Wednesday 20th** – Angel, off Rochdale Road. Starts 7.30pm (NM)

**Thursday 5th July** – Royal Oak, Barlow Moor Road, Chorlton (upstairs function room). Starts 8pm (TRH)

# Stagger.....

## Bramhall & Hazel Grove with Mark McConachie

**W**E BEGAN OUR mid-winter crawl at the Robinson's **Three Bears** on Jacksons Lane. This is a relatively new pub, having only opened in the early nineties. It had undergone a recently completed refurbishment which has transformed the façade quite markedly. A large, heated and comfortably furnished smoking terrace goes part-way across the front now. This is very much in a similar style to the terrace installed at the **Puss in Boots**, which like this pub is also run by Almond Pubs on behalf of Robbies.



The interior work has also been carried out to a very smart standard. Although not a large house, the work done has retained the cosiness the pub always had. Busy with early evening drinkers, and a fair number of diners too, yet we managed to find ourselves a table. Beside our table were three bears carved in wood, yet with moveable head and limbs. The diners occupy the space to the right, near to the food servery area, whilst the drinkers have the rest of the pub in front of the bar. Tonight that bar dispensed four Robbies beers - Hatters, Unicorn, Dizzy Blonde, and seasonal ale, Long Kiss Goodnight. The Unicorn came out top with our drinkers, whilst the others were rated average to good.

Off we went to the next pub, the **Shady Oak** on Redford Drive. This was achieved via a walk through residential streets and a small park, then across a gladed brook.



The "Shady" is a tidily presented pub that was custom-built for the estate; it is set beside a

well-used Co-op store. Upon entry, a small room leads to the bar which offers a good display of cask ales. Off this is a neat snug, beyond that a pool and football-table area. Up a level, and behind the bar is a high-vaulted room that at one time was used for screening TV football, but nowadays is used for hosting live entertainment (which we were told is proving a popular feature). Beyond that room is a capacious smoking area. Food is quite a feature here now, with plenty of main meals and snacks at reasonable prices (served lunchtime, then evening till 8pm, weekends from noon till 8pm). On the bar tonight were Thwaites Original, and Wainwright, Wells Bombardier, and Marston's Pedigree. Neither the Original nor Bombardier was tried, the other beers scored well though, with the Wainwright coming out favourite.

Another walk awaited us next, to get to the **Ladybrook** on Fir Road. The pathway that runs alongside the brook made short work of the fifteen minute walk.



The Ladybrook is a large 1930s mock-Tudor pub built in the roadhouse style for Manchester brewer, Boddingtons. Some years ago, this place had many rooms, one of which housed a billiard table. That table and the room that housed it have vanished to become part of the general space used for drinking and dining. Much use is made of wood in the interior panels, balustrades, columns, and exposed beams. The large space is open-plan but tastefully split-up into separate drinking areas, all of which have plush upholstered seating. Beyond the bar in the back room is a large vault. For now, ever more so than before, this Spirit Group house does a good trade in pub-grub. And, indeed why not? The place was busy with a fair mix of people enjoying the drinks and food. The number of cask beers on offer, and crucially those buying it, was pleasing to see too. Beers on the bar were - Boddingtons Bitter, Wells Bombardier, Sharps Doom Bar, Buxton Blonde, and Tatton Ale. It was the latter three beers which took our fancy, with them all scoring very well indeed.

Timing things well, we just caught the 378 bus in time to avoid the long walk to Bramhall centre. None of the bars - **Beluga**, **Napa**, nor **Bubble Room** sells cask, so our target was the **New Victorian** on Ack Lane East which local brewer, JW Lees of Middleton acquired a few

years ago. As the "Victoria", the pub had a poor reputation; that tarnished image has thankfully gone now as it was very busy with all tables occupied and a good number of stand-up drinkers too. A large L-shaped room is divided by various means and differing levels set a pleasant ambience amongst the varied crowd. I believe food is served noon till 7pm for those thinking of such. The fashionable air is echoed in the furnishings with floor-to-ceiling windows helping this effect. Cask ale seems to have grown in volume here, with beers being JW Lees Bitter, Coronation St, and seasonal ale, Rising Sun. The last came out top amongst our tipplers, followed by the Corrie and the Bitter.

A quick check of bus times showed we could get the 378 once more, but this time to finish the crawl at the **Pointing Dog**, Grove Lane, Cheadle Hulme.

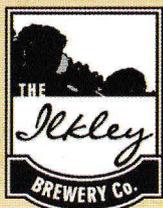
This opened in July 2011 after a conversion of the former Smithy. The exterior is a striking mix of



boarding, white rendering, and weathered copper set in extensive grounds. A lawned area to the rear aspect is bounded by trees, in front of which is a large covered pergola and patio area. Inside is a very modern space set around an island bar with an open kitchen visible beyond that. All five rooms offer the user a drinking or dining experience; given that an emphasis is heavily placed on dining, everywhere is a place that you may eat. The front rooms appear slightly more plush and give you some old hunting photos and enlarged postage stamp images of hunting dogs to look at. Elsewhere the décor is minimal and somewhat rustic; some walls are painted, whilst others are seemingly bare plaster. This look is fitting as most rooms have no ceiling, just the exposed underside of the roof structure. These blend with huge sliding wooden gates that act as doors-cum-wall screens; one of the rooms even has a faux minstrel's gallery. Beers on the bar were Thwaites Wainwright, Theakstons Best, and local brew, Dunham Massey Big Tree Bitter. We only had time for the last beer which was a tad disappointing in condition, yet pleasant enough.

Our last bus home awaited (the 313, this time), and so our stagger was at an end.

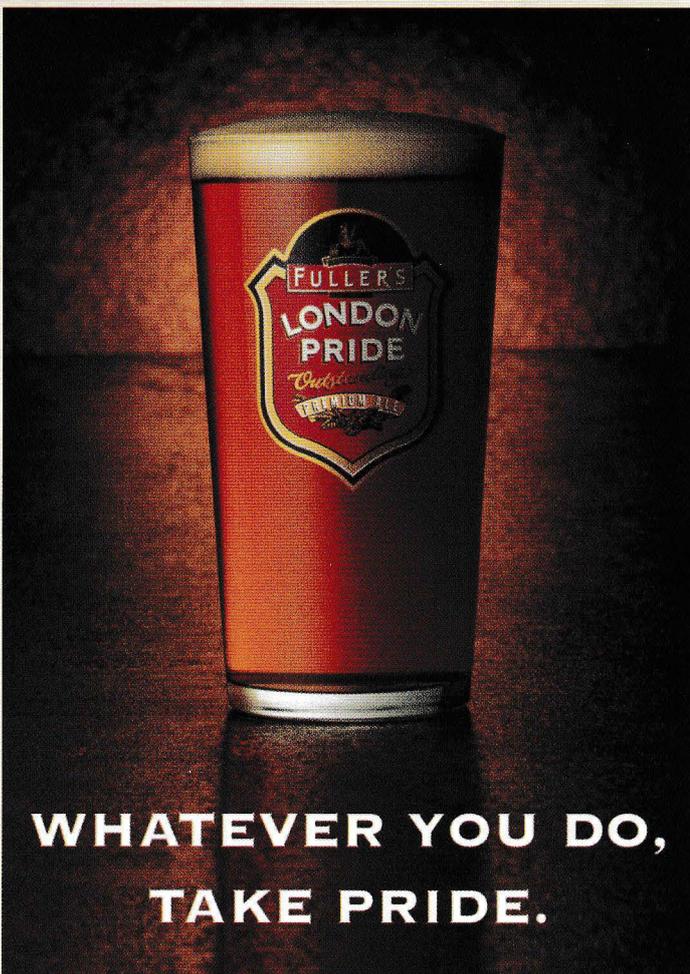
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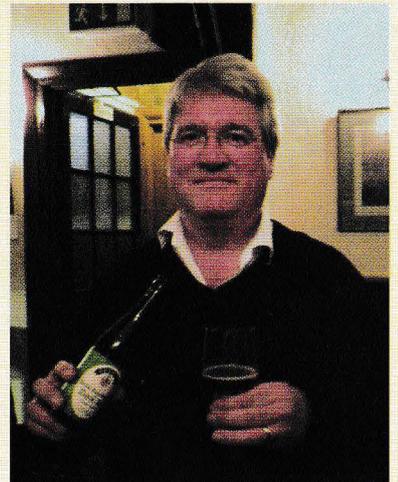


WHATEVER YOU DO,  
TAKE PRIDE.

## Gluten Free Beers

**I**F YOU ARE a beer lover, being diagnosed as coeliac is a bit of a bugger really. For those of you who don't know this is a genetic condition involving an intolerance of gluten. Given that the grains used to make beer – usually malted barley and malted wheat – are rich sources of gluten, a diagnosis puts beer strictly off the menu.

Cider and perry are obvious options but they are not of course to everyone's taste. Luckily there are now an increasing number of gluten free beers made in the UK and one of the leading suppliers, Green's, is now based in Stockport. OT met up with Green's owner David Ware (pictured right) to get some background information, and also to try the beers.



Although he's not a brewer, David had been in the industry for many years, including 27 at Tetleys in Warrington followed by a stint at Cains. While he was there he met up with Green's founder Derek Green. Derek was coeliac who had teamed up with Belgian "brewing architect" Roger Musselsche to create a range of gluten-free beers, initially made using grains such as millet, sorghum, buckwheat and brown rice. The result was Discovery, the first beer in the Green's range. The beer is brewed in Ghent and is a 6% brown beer with a slight spiciness coming from the Belgian yeast and a cidery palate.



So far, so good. However in 2007 Spanish brewing giant Estrella Dam entered the gluten free market, having devised a method of removing gluten from standard beers. Back to the drawing board for Derek and Roger with the latter finally working out how this was done. Thus, most of the Green's range is now made from "de-glutenised" barley malt. The first beer made in this way was Premium Golden Ale (4.7%) which also has a notable Belgian character (all of the Green's beers are in fact made at various Belgian breweries). However the range was given another push with the

introduction of three "Bottle Refermented" ales.



The Blond Ale (5.8%) is as good as a Belgian blond beer you are likely to get. It's spicy yet unspiced and hugely refreshing. Amber Ale (5%) is not as upfront as its blond cousin but builds up to a long, dry finish. The range is completed by Dark Ale (5.8%) which again shows a strong Belgian influence. None are what might be classed as a distress purchase, and are fine beers in their own right.

David, who took over the business last November, is keen to expand the range and is working on new beers to accommodate modern interest in IPAs and fruit beers. The range will also be made available in 750ml bottles.

Most of the Green's beer is exported with two thirds of the turnover coming from the USA (where some of the beers are sold at a hefty 8% ABV), with other important markets in Italy and Scandinavia. There are a growing number of UK outlets – they can be contacted on 0161 456 4226. Check out the website at [www.glutenfreebeers.co.uk](http://www.glutenfreebeers.co.uk). The good news for local coeliacs is that Derek is also negotiating with one or two local retail outlets so you may not have to journey too far to pick up a bottle or two.

## Trafford & Hulme Club of the Year



**I**N AN EVENING of smiles, songs and supping, **Altrincham Conservative Club** was last week presented with a certificate confirming it as the Campaign for Real Ale's local Club Of The Year.

Members at the Market Street Club welcomed campaigners from CAMRA's Trafford and Hulme branch to see their club Steward Bob Jones presented with the award by local CAMRA Chair Beverley Gobbett. Music was provided by Altrincham Acoustic, the "best folk club in Manchester", who usually meet at the Club on every second Sunday of the month.

In presenting the award, Mrs Gobbett commended Bob's hard work since he became Steward almost ten years ago. She told the club that the award recognises clubs that have made a commitment to offer their members well kept cask ales and that Bob had built up sales of real ale on the club's single pump from a couple of casks a week to over one a day on average. She also paid personal tribute to Bob's generosity in giving up his spare time to help other local licensees wherever he could.

Club Chairman Derek Derbyshire thanked Bob for his excellent stewardship and the support and friendship he offers to their members.

*Pictured above from left to right: Club Steward Bob Jones, CAMRA Chair Beverley Gobbett & club chairman Derek Derbyshire*

## Brewery Tap Tour

**A**LTHOUGH TRAFFORD & HULME Branch has been on a few trips into Yorkshire, usually by train, this was one with a twist – a plan to visit the taps of the micro-breweries of West Yorkshire. Heather Airlie went along....

Meeting at Victoria Station in Manchester, we caught the slow train to Marsden, and the **Riverhead Brewery Tap**. Created in 1997, in what had been a grocery store, the ground floor is entirely focused on cask beer. The room is almost saloon-like, with the main element being wood. The whole operation was taken over by the Ossett Brewery in 2007; now with up to a dozen pumps, they mostly provide Riverhead Beers plus two or three of their beers.

As we had been joined by a hardier traveller who had chosen to get the 184 bus all the way, we elected to get a bus rover ticket rather than continue by train, which would allow us to get on and off for the rest of the journey following the Colne Valley to Huddersfield. Other modes of transport could be narrow boat via the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, or the railway, as in the popular Rail Trail.

Our next stop was the **Commercial Hotel** in Slaithwaite, tap for **Empire Brewing**. Although it has been refurbished, it has retained traditional features with a contemporary style and a friendly welcome. It has eight hand pumps, including the house ale 'Commerciale' and Moonraker Mild, brewed along the canal at Empire Brewing. At 3.8% the mild had great mouth feel and bags of flavour, possibly my favourite of the day. They also had a good selection of award-winning growlers from the local butcher plus some well-filled baps.

Next on the list was a short ride and steep climb up to the **Sair Inn**. This olde style pub contains Linfit Brewery, named after the vernacular version of the village of Linthwaite which grew with the textile mills around 1600. The pub has four wonderfully well-preserved traditional

rooms, complete with fires, but we disregarded them to sit out in the sun with a view across the hills to Golcar. We were even visited by an ice cream van, much to the frustration of the friendly house-dog, who couldn't take his eyes off mine! Beers available were Bitter, Linfit Bitter, Swift, Gold Medal, Leadboiler and Old Eli.

After rolling back down the hill, two buses took us up the other side of the valley to **Golcar Brewery** which happily was having an open day in celebration of Golcar Lily Day. Unfortunately our information was not quite correct time-wise, but John the brewer was kind enough to serve us a beer anyway while he waited for the workers from the festival to arrive for their just desserts.

As John states on his website, "Golcar Brewery was established by John Broadbent in 2001 to supply his village pub, the **Rose & Crown**, with its own beer. The Rose remains

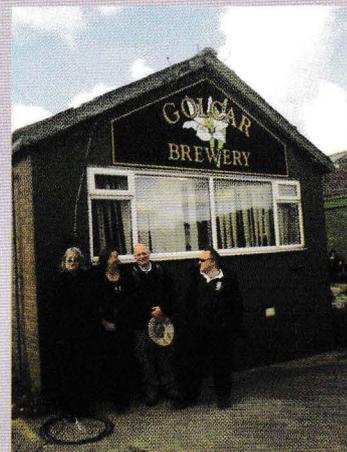
a regular outlet for John's beers whilst the brewery has expanded and supplies beer to the free trade throughout West Yorkshire. Four regular beers are available along with specials, some brewed to assistant brewer Andrew Moorhouse's own 'Sidecar' recipes".

A stagger down the hill took us to said Rose and Crown, where we were able to try two Golcar beers, with a further two hand pumps. A large stone-built pub, it has a seating area outside, where once again we could see across the valley to Linthwaite. As busy as one might expect on Lily Day, it was nevertheless still welcoming. We were even invited to help ourselves to chips and sausage butties.

The next stage of the journey should have been straightforward, but with the distraction of food, our party had become a little disorientated and some started walking down the hill to Milnsbridge rather than wait for the bus. With strict instructions to keep looking out for the bus, they still managed to be on the wrong side of the road when it arrived, so it sailed past of course. A couple of us got off the bus to wait for them and ensure they found their way to the **Rat and Ratchet**, another Ossett Brewery pub on the south side of Huddersfield town centre.

The 'Rat & Ratchet' brewery had closed when it was sold to Ossett Brewery, so this is a revival, now simply called **'The Rat Brewery'**. Although an uninspiring exterior, the first thing that hits you when you walk in the bar is the expanse of hand pumps, an impressive dozen. A fine selection of their own, Ossett and other local brews had kept the others entertained while we waited for non-existent buses, but they still had time for a quick visit to the Grove. Although not technically a tap, it does have plenty to offer in the way of beer. It boasts eighteen real ales from regional and micro-breweries.

A walk across town took us to the **Sportsman** with its nano-brewery in the cellars. The Art Deco interior has a curved bar as its centrepiece and half a dozen hand pumps. Serving local and regionally produced beers such as Mallinson's, Empire, Golcar, Anglo Dutch, Riverhead, the pub always has a mild available. A satisfactory end to a good day out with some mighty fine ales not normally found on the west side of the Pennines.



# News Extra

**A** RECENT STAGGER around Stockport brought the unwelcome news that neither the **Rectory** nor the **Pack Horse** in the Market Place was selling cask beer. These are notable losses as both have sold good quality cask in the past.

Staying with the no cask beer theme, Scottish brewers **BrewDog** opened the latest in their chain of bars in Manchester last month. It's on Peter Street opposite what was the Free Trade Hall. Plus points – good food offer, keen and enthusiastic staff, over-sized lined glasses and an impressive selection of imported bottled beers, primarily from the USA but with one or two European brewers there too. Bad points – a pricing policy that seems to be all over the place (halves and thirds are rather more than their respective fractions of a pint) and no cask ale. And that's the real elephant in the room. If you claim to be at the forefront of a craft beer

revolution you can't do that without doing cask because if you do you are missing a trick. So, you pay your money and takes your choice

And of course across town both the **Port Street Beer House** and **Common** (Edge Street – and pictured here) have been doing it longer and arguably do it better. Speaking of Common they have finally rid themselves of their InBev loan tie. This has enabled them to up their game somewhat. The two cask beers will now come from local-ish micros, the draught pumps will see one reserved for USA beers, one for British, one for European beer, one for dark beers and a couple for the weird and wonderful. The bottle range features the likes of Kernel and RedWillow from the UK and brewers such as Stone and Mikkeller from further afield. The food's great, too.



In Salford, iconic Holt's house the **Eagle** on Collier Street has been taken over by the team behind the Castle on Oldham Street. After a redecoration it opened for business on 27 April. It is being run by Esther Maylor (pictured above) who tells us that trade is up and the changes have met with general approval (although some of the old locals departed when the TV was taken out). However the pub is getting spin-off trade from the nearby Black Lion and Kings Arms as well as the recording studios at the end of the street. Cask ale is the biggest seller with Holts Bitter top of the tree. The, fairly mainstream, guest beers also do well and the pub is a convert to real cider, too. Well worth a detour – OT will certainly be back.

The **Peters Square Tavern** in Stockport is to reduce in size from this month by closing the front room on the St Peters Square side to concentrate trade on the current back room, which will be accessed from Piccadilly. With beers from the Thwaites stable it is envisaged that the pub will be a good deal more cosy and bring back the atmosphere that once held sway in the nearby Unity. The **Nelson Tavern** has had a thorough redecoration of late and is now a very pleasant place to enjoy a drink, however there is now no cask ale offered at all.

In Bredbury, the **Horsfield Arms** closed last month and we understand that its days as a pub are now over. Staying with Robinsons there are new faces at the **Blossoms** in Heaviley. There is to be a substantially revamped food operation and longer opening hours. More on this one next time.

We finish with a mention of the **Commercial** on Manchester Road in Mossley. The former keg-only pub has had a new lease of life with three cask ales now on sale. Millstone Tiger Rut is the permanent beer and this is joined by two changing monthly guests. They are clearly doing something right as the pub has also gained Cask Marque accreditation. The pub has also benefited from a refurbishment and is handily located next to the railway station, thus adding another halt on the Trans-Pennine Ale Trail. Walkers, dogs and children are all welcome – get yourselves down there!

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