

● March 2014



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Pub of the Month

The Navigation, Heaton Norris



The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month award for February 2014 is to be awarded to the Navigation at the top of Lancashire Hill, Heaton Norris. Stuart Ballantyne has been to visit.

The pub has been run for over five years now by Barry Harvey and his partner Deborah. Beartown is a small independent brewery based in Congleton with only a handful of pubs - in Greater Manchester it runs the Cheshire Ring in Hyde and the Navigation in Stockport. Over the last ten years the Navigation has had a chequered history with several changes of management - or at least that was the case until stability returned to the pub under the stewardship of Barry and Deborah.

Barry has kept his prices down in the pub by absorbing any increases himself, because he feels that imposing such increases on his customers at this time would kill the pub's trade. In this credit crunch age that is a remarkable achievement and demonstrates a commitment to the pub and the pub's valued regulars.

Since taking over the pub Barry has increased the number of regular Beartown cask beers sold from three to five and introduced a guest beer. He regularly now sells Beartown Bearskinful, Kodiak Gold, Best Bitter, Bear Ass and Bruins Ruin plus a guest beer which is often Holt's Bitter. This growth has occurred because Barry keeps 'a damn good pint' and it is despite the pub's unpromising location with little or no passing trade. This shows just how hard Barry and Deborah have worked to make the Navigation such a success.

Originally very much a 'Blues' pub, the Navigation is now jointly popular with both City and United fans. The pub boasts both enthusiastic darts and pool teams that play in local leagues making the Navigation a true all-round community local. In the summer months (if we ever get one) the pub has an outside beer garden at the back which is very popular.

So why not join the local CAMRA group for the presentation of the pub of the month award on the evening of Thursday 27th March 2014 when a great night will be experienced by all those in attendance?



The Pub of the Month award is sponsored by Stephensons, 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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What's On



Information, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events

Opening Times - Information

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Trading Standards

For complaints about short measure pints etc contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service. This works with all the Trading Standards services in the North West and is supported by the Office of Fair Trading. You can email the Consumer Service at the following address:

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Their telephone no. is 0845 404 05 06. To report a matter to Trading Standards go to:

www.adviceguide.org.uk/consumer_e/reporting_a_problem_to_trading_standards

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East Cheshire: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/transport_and_travel.aspx. 0845 140 2666

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Contributors to this issue: John Clarke, Alan Gent, Dave Hanson, Stuart Ballantyne, Jim Beeson, Dave Burston, Peter Butler, Peter Farrand, Neil Worthington, Paul Felton, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Tom Lord, Caroline O'Donnell, John O'Donnell, Stewart Revell, Stewart Taylor, Jerry Wickens, Phil Booton, Tony Icke

Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Front Cover – The Snug at the Red Bull, Hillgate, Stockport

Your Local CAMRA Contacts & Websites

Stockport & South Manchester (SSM) www.ssmcamra.co.uk
Contact: Mark McConachie 0161 429 9356;
mark.mcconachie@o2.co.uk

North Manchester (NM)
www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk
Contact: Phil Booton, phbooton@hotmail.com

High Peak & NE Cheshire (HPNC) www.hpneccamra.org.uk
Contact: Stewart Taylor 07907 714826;
taylorshouse@supanet.com

Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC)
www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk
Contact: Tony Icke 01625 861833; bicke@madasafish.com

Trafford & Hulme (T&H) www.thcamra.org.uk
Contact: John O'Donnell 0789 880972;
enquiries@thcamra.org.uk

Local CAMRA Events

Wednesday 5th – Salford Quays Crawl: Broadway 7.30pm; Dockyard 8.30pm plus two others. (NM)

Thursday 6th – Branch Meeting: Old Hall, Timperley. Starts 8pm. (T&H)

Friday 7th - Mild Stagger: 7.30pm Railway, Portwood; 8.30pm Crown, Heaton Lane. (SSM)

Friday 7th – Social at Congleton Leisure Centre Beer Festival. From 7pm. (MEC)

Monday 10th – Branch Meeting: Harewood Arms, Broadbottom. Starts 8.30pm (HPNC)

Wednesday 12th – Social: Duke of York, Marlborough Rd, Salford 7.30pm; Star, Back Hope St 9pm. (NM)

Thursday 13th – Branch Meeting: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Guest speaker from Hydes. Starts 8.25pm. (SSM)

Thursday 13th – Quiz Night: Gardener's Arms, Deansgate Lane, Timperley. Time tbc. (T&H)

Monday 17th – Campaigning Meeting: Jolly Sailor, Sunderland St, Macclesfield. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

Wednesday 19th – Branch AGM Hare & Hounds, Shudehill. City Centre. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

Friday 21st – Shaw Heath & King St West Stagger: 7.30pm Florist, Shaw Heath; 8.30pm Armoury. (SSM)

Saturday 22nd – Pub of the Year presentation to the Hope, Wellington Road Nth, Stockport. From 8pm. (SSM)

Wednesday 26th – Branch Pub of the Year presentation from 7.30pm. See website or email branch contract for details. (NM)

Thursday 27th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Navigation, Manchester Rd., Heaton Norris. From 8pm. (SSM)

Thursday 27th – Bridgewater Street Social and Heritage Awards: Britons Protection 8pm; Peveril of the Peak 9pm; Bishopsgate (Table Table) 9.45pm; Waterhouse 10.30pm. (T&H)

Thursday 27th – Spring Pub of the Season presentation to the Crown, Bollington. From 8pm. (MEC)

Saturday 29th – Trip to Macclesfield: 12.35 train from Piccadilly and then tour town's pubs. (T&H)

Thursday 3rd April – Branch Meeting: Vine, Kennedy St, City Centre. Starts 8pm. (T&H)



Curmudgeon

Do Your Duty, George!

It's March again, and time for the Chancellor's annual Budget statement. Last year we got the welcome surprise that, not only did he scrap the hated Beer Duty Escalator, but he also made a small cut to beer duty. Hopefully this year we will see the escalator abandoned for all other categories of alcoholic drink. That will help the pub trade too, as drinks other than beer account for almost half of all alcohol sold in pubs, and whisky and cider are also substantial British industries providing large numbers of jobs.

Alcohol duty is a highly regressive form of taxation with a disproportionate impact on the less well-off. While, on average, higher income groups do drink a little more, alcohol duty (plus the VAT levied on the duty) accounts for two per cent of the disposable income of Britain's bottom fifth of income earners, but only 0.6 per cent of the income of the top fifth. Taking the foot off the gas on duty is an effective way of helping those on low incomes.

It's easy for holier-than-thou people to say that if those on low incomes choose to drink it's their decision, and they have no sympathy, but that line just comes across as patronising and sanctimonious. In the real world, people do drink, and it is generally recognised that the price elasticity of alcoholic drinks is relatively low, so in practice raising duty hits the poor hardest. And who is to say the less well off shouldn't be allowed a little pleasure in their lives once in a while?

Youth Exclusion Zone

Average alcohol consumption has now been steadily falling for ten years, and the sharpest fall of all has been amongst the 18-24 age group, which doesn't bode well for the future of the pub trade. However, it has been pointed out to me that the increasingly heavy-handed requirement for age verification is a major factor in deterring young people from using pubs. If you're constantly being asked your age, even if you look well over 18, it's inevitably going to put you off.

A generation ago, underage drinking in pubs was widely tolerated so long as no trouble was caused. This taught young people how to drink responsibly, and also got them used to the habit of pub going. They knew they were only there on sufferance and so had to fit in and learn the rules of the game. Any trouble, and they were out on their ear. Now, rather than running the gauntlet in the pub, it's much easier to obtain off-trade alcohol and drink it at home or at private parties. Once you've been ID'd once at the off-licence, that's it, and the flow of your evening is not being constantly interrupted. If you're under 18, you just get your older mate to buy it.

It's a classic case of unintended consequences that measures intended with entirely good intentions to curb underage drinking have simply had the effect of shifting it from a controlled to an uncontrolled environment. While reducing consumption overall, it's encouraging a less responsible drinking culture amongst young people in general. Yet I doubt whether a deliberate policy of turning a blind eye to well-behaved under-18s in pubs is going to find much favour in official circles.

Curmudgeon Online: curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com
(comments on these articles can be left on the website)



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Stagger

A Short Walk Through Gorton by Jerry Wicken



Once upon a time, many lifetimes ago, so the elders tell me, the Hyde Road/Gorton Stagger had a thousand pubs with a thousand different beers, each one so wondrous that drinkers bowed low before the temple of Sabzios to give thanks. Had these elders consulted the local soothsayers of the day, they would have been forewarned that the industries that provided the mighty drinkers for all these hostelries would be swept away by the Recession Monsters, and that beer drinkers would be replaced by meek tea drinkers who would cross the street to avoid the sirens luring them to their death by ale.

Like most fairy tales this one has a background of truth and certainly this stagger was once split into three, so many inns were there to review. What is left is a smattering of pubs not selling real ale and, despite rumours, just four serving up the real thing. As sad as this may sound, it does mean that the famous four are different from each other but commonly providing very good beer to meet the needs of their clientele. It is the survival of the fittest.



Bypassing the NRA Traveller's Call, the closed Imperial and the converted Nags Head we also established that the Suburban, whilst still trading, but had no real ale and, we were told, no demand. This was still an improvement on the nearby Pineapple which had been boarded up in a very permanent looking way. So our first stop was the Plough Hotel, a Robinson's house (pictured above), which has been a licensed premise since the time of George IV. There remains an old stone trough at the back, whilst inside the pub, it is multi-roomed with a lounge, pool and darts room, public bar, stained glass and a beer garden for warmer times than this January evening. We were given a good welcome and enjoyed between us the three ales on offer – Unicorn, Trooper and the seasonal Hannibal's Nectar - which were marked similarly good by all nine staggerers.

The Gorton Mount being closed, the Angel and the Cotton Tree offering keg-only, our next stop was the Royal Oak (pictured below). This free house offered Lancaster Blonde, Sharp's Doom Bar and, the rarely sighted Tetley's Dark Mild. Our numbers had increased to 11 and all beers were tried and marked average to good. The pub has two distinct rooms - live artistes and karaoke in one room whilst the other bar had TVs, tables with built in crib boards, beer mats advertising the upcoming Manchester Beer Festival and (hedging their bets) photos of United and City. Again we received a friendly welcome but the pub was only moderately busy for a Friday evening.

Following a familiar pattern, the Lord



Nelson, busy with customers in search of food, was another keg only pub, so the next stop for us was Holt's Waggon and Horses. Despite a forward-facing Mild pump clip, the only beer on offer was Holt's Bitter. The pub could be termed multi-sectioned and clearly designed for the hard of hearing or for old married couples with nothing left to say to each other. These can surely be the only logical explanations for the decibel level of the music making any conversation as redundant as the manufacturing workers who used to keep Hyde Road pubs thriving 30 years ago. Shouted scores across the table informed me the beer was rated average to good. In the interests of balance I should mention that the pub was thriving with drinkers, more young than old, apparently enjoying the music. It is of

course heartening to see any pub offering decent beer busy with customers, so the fact that it is not to my taste should not deter others from visiting. It was a feature of this stagger that each of the pubs offered different experiences to the drinker and that is all to the good.

Rumours of real ale at the Friendship proved unfounded and none was on offer at the Bandstand so our last stop was the rather splendid Vale Cottage. Walking through less than salubrious back



streets this is the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. It is cosy, welcoming, busy and alive with conversation. It has the ambience of a country pub; many customers appeared to have dressed up to go out – in other words people had gone out for the evening not just for a quick drink. Food is available lunch and evening and quizzes run on Tuesdays and Thursdays. To back this up a pub needs good beer and the Vale Cottage did not disappoint. Moorhouses's provided Blonde Witch and Pride of Pendle; Timothy Taylor Landlord is the pub's regular offering. All beers were scored good to very good with the accent on very. It is almost unfair to choose a beer of the night but statistics tell us it was the Pride of Pendle (just).

As we have learnt the past is a different



country but whilst this stagger only has four real ale outlets remaining, the quality and variety of these four pubs teaches us to cherish the present. Please take a wander yourselves and find out which of the four best serves your desires.

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A Lost World of Pubs

Peter Edwardson Looks Back

I recently acquired a fascinating second-hand book called *The Renaissance of the English Public House*, written by architect Basil Oliver and originally published in 1947. It is basically a hymn of praise to the "improved public house" movement of the inter-war period which sought to give pubgoing a more responsible and respectable image as compared with the old concept of single-minded perpendicular boozing. The vast expansion of new housing, both private and council owned, saw large numbers of new pubs – often very large and architecturally ambitious – constructed along "improved" lines and many existing pubs extended and refitted along the same principles.

Swept Away

The book is extensively illustrated and includes a large number of pub floorplans. One thing that is very evident is the elaborate compartmentalisation of interior layouts, with numerous rooms and bars serving different functions. Apart from the usual public and lounge bars there are men's, women's and mixed smoke rooms, games rooms, tea rooms, snack bars, dining rooms, restaurants, ballrooms and assembly halls. It is also clear how great care has been taken by the architects in balancing the different elements of the pub so that they all fit together, in particular the issue of access to toilets.



All of this has been pretty much entirely swept away now, and very few of these pubs survive with anything like their original plan. This trend was well under way in the more lively and brash atmosphere of the 1960s, when internal remodelling was often seen by brewers as a way of attracting a younger clientele. Now, many of these big pubs have been demolished and their sites redeveloped for alternative use. A lot of those remain have been converted to a dining format and their interiors completely changed. A few have even been bought by Wetherspoons. Some linger on as rather down-at-heel locals which give the impression of barbarians playing amongst the awesome ruins of Ancient Rome.

An entire chapter is devoted to pubs in the West Midlands, where the massive "Brewer's Tudor" roadhouse or estate pub,

often built by local brewers Mitchells & Butlers is, or was, a distinctive feature of the local scene. Apart from this and a section on the Carlisle State Management Scheme, the book largely concentrates on London and the South-East. That is not to say, though, that "improved" pubs were not built in other parts of the country and, if you look, there were plenty in the Greater Manchester area. Still with us, for example, are Holt's enormous Melville in Stretford, the Kingsway in Levenshulme and the Gateway in East Didsbury which has now been taken over by Wetherspoon's (pictured below left in its Hydes' days).



Looking round Stockport, I can think of at least seven major inter-war new-builds – the now-demolished Greyhound in Cheadle Hulme (pictured above in its final days) and Wembley in Adswold, the now-closed Royal Oak and still-open Five Ways in Hazel Grove, the Heald Green Hotel, the massive mock-Tudor Ladybrook in Bramhall (pictured below) and the Nursery in Heaton Norris, which is a rarity that still largely retains its original layout. Beyond these, there are several other smaller pubs or major remodellings. Robinson's also built a number of new pubs in the improved style outside the Stockport area such as the Broadoak in Ashton-under-Lyne and the Bleeding Wolf at Scholar Green in Cheshire.



From the perspective of 80 years later it is difficult to visualise the social conditions that lay behind this style of pub. Class divisions in society were more sharply defined, so there was a clear divide between public and lounge bars. Women were still widely regarded as second-class citizens, and much of the pub was a male preserve, but encouraging women in for a drink with their husbands or boyfriends, especially at weekends, was something that

these pubs aimed to do. Pub-based activities such as darts and bowls were growing in popularity, and many improved pubs featured a bowling green where space permitted. There was no television, so for many people just going to the pub to chew the fat with your friends was a common activity several nights a week. But beer consumption had fallen dramatically since the days before the First World War, so customers were generally just having a modest two or three pints.

Patronising Vision

The question must be asked, though, whether these pubs ever really achieved the popularity their designers hoped for. Were they perhaps a slightly patronising architect's vision of the ideal pub, imposed from above on ordinary people who actually preferred something more small-scale and homely? They were criticised in their time by writers such as John Betjeman, who wrote in his poem *The Village Inn*:

Ah, where's the inn that once I knew
With brick and chalky wall
Up which the knobbly pear-tree grew
For fear the place would fall?
Oh, that old pot-house isn't there,
It wasn't worth our while;
You'll find we have rebuilt "The Bear"
In Early Georgian style.

While in *Portrait of Elmbury*, published in 1945, John Moore wrote:

"...the majority of the population, it seems, likes the little pubs also, and people from the cities drive twenty miles on Sunday morning to crowd us out of our local because they hate the big roadhouses too. A pub, after all, is not just a place for convenient drinking; if it were these modern palaces with their ceaseless fountains of beer would serve the purpose very well. But a pub is primarily a meeting-place for friends; where friends as well as drinking may talk, argue, play game, or just sit and think according to their mood."

You have to wonder whether many of these improved pubs were ever really busy except on weekend evenings and special occasions. I only encountered them when they were already in steep decline, but I remember going in to the Gateway in the mid-80s and finding it a shabby, virtually deserted, barn-like place that wasn't remotely congenial. Having said that, where the architecture is on a more modest scale, as with the Nursery, and the pubs have been looked after, the 1930s style can actually offer a pleasant, cosy atmosphere where it is easy to feel at home.

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Pub News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Chorlton Update



After a two month long closure, JW Lees' relaunched Chorlton's 'The Lloyds' on 8 February. It's certainly been a major project - while the pub looks much the same as before from the outside, internally it has an all new "contemporary" look throughout. Wood panelling and floral patterned wallpapers are broken up by bookcases used as partitions; soft furnishings around the perimeter are upholstered in more floral patterns while the body of the pub has high tables and chairs.

There are four handpumps on the bar - when OT called these were the Lees staples of Governor, Bitter and MPA plus current seasonal Drayman's Cheer - while the emphasis is most definitely on dining, drinkers are clearly welcome. The menu looks well thought out with some imaginative touches. On our visit service was exemplary too. All in all a very good start.



upper two levels of the pub, Opening Times hopes that the Horse & Jockey isn't just going to become another formulaic dining pub. Some of the work will take place while the pub continues to trade but it will be closed from 17th - 25th March. The pub will reopen on Wednesday 26 March with a launch party planned for Saturday 29th.



At the opposite end of the Chorlton stretch of Wilbraham Road, Valentine's Day was a sad day for regulars at Oddest Bar (above) as it saw the final shift by manager Nichola Clark before she moved to Staffordshire and a new career with her own pub in Leek. Nic has been at the helm of the bar since it opened five years ago, and was instrumental in expanding real ale sales across all three Odd bars. At Oddest, she quickly increased the bar's range from four to six ales and led it into the Good Beer Guide in 2012 and 2013 with a heavy emphasis on LocAle including commissioning three house beers from Blakemere and Black Jack breweries. She is replaced by Megan Bews who moves from sibling Odder and who has pledged to maintain the high standards and range of ales for which Oddest has become known.

Opening Times reported last month that the Gallery in Chorlton had closed its doors - sadly we found out just after going to press that its anonymous sibling bar in West Didsbury closed shortly afterwards. Although the Burton Road version never sold real ale, it's still a loss of another pub - an open pub can add cask beer, a closed pub can't.

City News

In Manchester, Alibi bar on Oxford Street (next door to JD Wetherspoon's Paramount) is closed after having been purchased by Turtle Bay Restaurants - a chain of Caribbean themed restaurants - and we somehow doubt real ale will feature when it re-opens. The pub was previously owned by the Bramwell Pub Co which went into administration in October. Although a number of Bramwell sites were purchased by Slug & Lettuce operator Stonegate Pub Co, a further 67 sites were put on the market by the administrators while continuing to trade - as well as Alibi, the Chadwick in Urmston is also up for sale.

There's a new but familiar name at the helm of the Town Hall Tavern. After two and half years as tenant at the Sir Ralph Abercromby, George Archondogeorge has moved on to the Tib Lane pub which has suffered from a number of short lived tenants in recent years. Greek George, as he is more commonly known, became a legend in the Manchester pub community as the long serving genial host at the Circus Tavern on Portland Street. Coming out of retirement in 2011, George and business partner Mike Christodoulou turned round the fortunes of the Sir Ralph, which had been closed and feared lost before they took it on, with a simple mix of good beer, a friendly welcome and good value food. As Opening Times went to press we had no details of what George has planned for his new project but we hope George's experience will bring stability to the Town Hall Tavern - we wish him well.

All Change



We reported last month on the closure of Ye Olde No 3 in Little Bollington and the re-opening of Altrincham's Wheatsheaf (pictured above). After going to press, Opening Times discovered that the two events were linked with the tenants having moved from one pub to the other two weeks before Christmas. January is traditionally the quietest time of the year for pubs but landlord Daniel Monks and his team have used it to complete the decoration of downstairs. A new chef is in place offering a menu ranging from pub classics like shepherd's pie and lasagne joined by more contemporary offerings such as salmon with dill. Refurbishment of the function room was completed in early February and it is now available for birthdays, weddings and just about any other event you'd care to hold.

On the ale front there are two pumps with rotating weekly guests including Timothy Taylor's Landlord and Marston's Pedigree.

Wheatsheaf, Agden Brow

Last Month we also reported that the Wheatsheaf at Agden Brow was closed. Someone clearly got their wires crossed as we are happy to confirm that the pub had not closed at all and remains open for business. Apologies to all concerned.



A cynical Chorltonian may suspect that The Lloyds' new direction is behind the announcement from fellow family brewer Joseph Holt that they are to spend £750,000 on a refurbishment of the nearby Horse & Jockey. The press release says it will "re-open with a completely new concept, menu, and interior design.... The revamp will also see the kitchen extended to accommodate a more detailed menu." Given that the menu was only overhauled late last year and there is no mention in the release about the restaurant which occupies the



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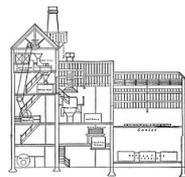


The Beer Shop is now fully open until 22:00 every night for on and off sales. Check the website for future events following the successful "Meet the Brewer" with Toby Mackenzie of RedWillow. Tutored tastings and more Meet the Brewer events are planned for the new year. Visit www.ukbeershop.com or call 0161 947 9338 for updated information.

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What's Brewing

Brewery News from around the region



Moorhouse's

Moorhouse's has revealed a raft of special ales for 2014. This month a new higher strength Moorhouse's IPA (5.5%) will be rolled out as 'a big hitting flavour packed IPA'. New Zealand Nelson Sauvin and Rakau hops provide 'complex notes of chardonnay-like grapefruit and gooseberry backed by hints of citrus and passion fruit'.

For April the golden clear wheat beer White Mist (4.2%abv) is back while May welcomes the first roll out of Eldorado (4.2%abv). This is golden coloured beer, single-hopped with American Eldorado to give a 'rich full flavoured beer with aromas of apricots and peaches, backed with a sweet biscuit taste from Maris Otter malt'.

VCA (Vanilla Cream Ale - 3.9%abv) returns in June following its successful debut last year, and features New Zealand Wakatu hops and Madagascar bourbon vanilla. Summer drinking peaks in July with On ur Bike (4.2%abv) to celebrate the arrival of the Tour de France to the UK. This is beer in the style of the classic French biere de Garde - blonde beer with an upfront sweetness from the pale, pilsner and Munich malts 'leading to a dry lingering finish'.

August welcomes back Pure Witch (4%abv) for the second year; Maris Otter malt paired with the Calypso hop for 'citrus like aroma followed by full malt biscuit like flavour with ripe peach and pear fruit overtones'. September sees the inaugural rollout of First Cut (4.2%abv) brewed with the first cut of Moorhouse's exclusively sourced barley combined with East Kent Goldings hops.

The dark days of October are matched with dark premium brew Black Cat Reserve (4.6%abv) rising for the Halloween season. This is based on the brewer's famous Black Cat ale but with the use of the Polish Junga hop. An intensely dark beer, it boasts 'deep complex notes of roasted coffee chocolate and mocha, balanced by hints of dark cherry and blackcurrant'. American IPA (5%abv) revisits for a sturdy November tippie while the Citra hopped Ice Witch (4.3%abv) will again provide tropical fruit sparkle for the 2014 Christmas festivities.

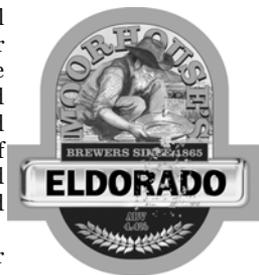
One local outlet where you will be sure of getting these beers is the Railway, Portwood (Stockport) which is a regular outlet for the brewery's products (and is always worth a visit in any event).

Newcomers

There are currently four breweries operating in Stockport (Robinsons, Quantum, Fool Hardy and Ringway) but it looks as though this year will see three more start-ups. Two of the town's celebrated free houses (the Magnet, Wellington Road North, and the Crown, Heaton Lane) are both installing breweries. The building to house the kit at the Magnet has now been completed and the brewing equipment has been ordered from Germany. The actual name of the brewery has not yet been decided.

Meanwhile down the road, Steve Alexander at the Crown has formed the Stockport Brewing Co Ltd and this will be brewing in a railway arch across the road. The required permissions have been obtained, a brewer has been trained and work is underway. The launch is planned for April.

And finally...not yet off the blocks, but hoping to brew in Reddish is Jonathan Dean's Cryptic Ales. We know little about this enterprise at the moment but hope to have more next time.



Outstanding Brewery

Bury's Outstanding has recently welcomed two new employees, Lauren and Robin. Lauren has previously worked for the brewery and is carrying out lots of tasks including lab work and art work. Robin is a very experienced sales and delivery man and his efforts have already led to a good increase in sales.

The chaps at the brewery have also been saving up and have invested their hard earned pennies in some new equipment. They've recently bought two new 2000 litre fermenting/conditioning vessels which can be used in brewing both lagers and ales. The tanks have doubled the brewery's lagering capacity and has raised its total fermenting capacity to 20,000 litres.

In January the brewery assisted the Twenty Twenty Two venue in Manchester's Northern Quarter with a refurbishment. Twenty Twenty Two now has Outstanding's cask and keg products on the bar. The venue hosts a variety of exhibitions and events.

The fellows from the Silver Street Brewery, based in the Duke of Clarence in Bury, have been brewing at Outstanding whilst their building is being refurbished and their brewery commissioned. Silver Street have a number of new beers and will be brewing on their own plant by the time this goes to print.

Ringway Brewery

Ringway Brewery in North Reddish continues to do well with its range of firmly traditional, but extremely well executed, cask beers. Ringway's Paul Alderson tells us that sales are good with a number of regular accounts on board. The newest beer is "Wor Stout", a 4.3% very dark, "nice easy drinking" milk stout. Worth seeking out.

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High Peak Pub Scene



Tom Lord & Robin Wignall with News and Views

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

A recent edition of the Buxton Advertiser carried the story of the closure of the Beltane in Buxton for licensing issues. The same article did note that the premises are expected to reopen after management and operational changes. In early February notices in the windows were advertising for staff. So hopefully this story will have a happy ending quite soon. Updates another time.



I also passed No. 13 on Market Street in Buxton, just off the Market Place. It was not open at the time, but some pubs and bars in Buxton and elsewhere don't bother on Monday afternoons. Through the window I could see three hand pumps, including one from Buxton Brewery. This is another bar which deserves an update fairly soon.



In Whaley Bridge the White Horse uses its free of tie hand pump to sell ales from Storm Brewery just over the hill in Macclesfield. Silk of Amnesia was a recent offering. This was alongside Keltex Golden Lance from Cornwall, one of the beers on the current Punch Finest Cask List. Unfortunately a change of licensee is expected in the near future as Phil Cottrell moves on to pastures new. Again watch this space for developments.

Also in Whaley Bridge the Railway is reported to have changed hands during January. This Robinson's house has had continuity of management in the last few years. The Railway is good for a couple of cask beers on a day to day basis so hopefully any changes will retain a decent pint of Unicorn and another beer from Robinson's.

A recent visit to the Soldier Dick found the four hand pumps put to good use. It was good to see Thwaites Nutty Black ahead of Mild Magic, along with Wainwright from the same brewery.

Interesting guest beers were Arkell's Wiltshire Gold, definitely a stranger in these parts, and Skinner's Cornish Knocker. Licensee Mike Nelson also uses the facility of running a free house to take beers from more local breweries. Buxton beers have been available and I understand that Whaley Bridge Brewery will have a beer or two available in the coming weeks.



The Old Hall Winter Festival will have passed by the time you read this, but will have been the main event of the month. However February and March promise to be busy just keeping up with the changes out in the High Peak.

The Torrs, New Mills

It is now a good two years since the Torrs in New Mills closed its doors as a pub. Recently a group from New Mills Local History Society were invited to visit the premises by the new owner. After restoration the building will reopen as an indoor market and café and the visit enabled a good catch up on the history of the pub.



There had probably been a pub on the site since the 1830s, as a map of that time marks the Bay Horse in that location. The present building dates from about 1880 and over the years has been the Crown, the Bees Knees and finally the Torrs. There are recent etched windows remaining and probably older stained glass windows, as well as late Victorian tiles on the staircase. Otherwise much of the decor dates from more recent times.

There is no obvious evidence of a local-ish brewery being involved, but S & N Pubs were the owning pubco before selling on to Star Inns who then disposed of the premises to the current owner. Wincle beers had been on sale in the final days, the evidence being beer mats. In the cellar were 36 gallons of John Smith's Extra Smooth, notably well past their Best before date. Readers of this publication will know of course that John Smith's Smooth does not have a Best anyway. It is always sad to see a pub become a lost local, but at least the building has a chance to have a future. It was also good to have the chance to find some of its history.

High Peak Pub News

With Tom Lord

The landlord at the Beehive in the centre of Droylsden is giving a discount of 10p per pint on Saturdays for card carrying CAMRA members.

The Melandra Castle in Gamesley near Glossop will be up for auction on 27th February. Also in Glossop a new bar has opened in the Howard Town Mill complex. This is the Pico Lounge which has a regularly changing guest ale.

The former Sportsman pub on Mottram Road in Stalybridge has now become a letting agency! News from Hyde is that as from the 20th January Geoff Oliver from Rossendale Brewery is now back in charge at the Sportman on Mottram Road.



A glance at the Robinsons website shows that several pubs in the High Peak Branch area are currently available to let. They include the Bulls Head and the Friendship in Glossop, the Cock in Whaley Bridge, the Hatters Arms in Marple, the Junction at Hazlehurst and the Royal Oak in Mellor (pictured above).

Finally, some dates for your diary. This year's Dove Holes Beer & Jazz Festival will be on 5 and 6 July.

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National Pub of the Year

Award Goes to Lancashire Local



A sleepy village pub has been thrust into the limelight after being named the best in the UK by CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. In an idyllic setting across from a small stream and surrounded by green fields, The Swan with Two Necks in Pendleton, Lancashire, has beat off competition from over 57,000 pubs across the UK to be crowned CAMRA's National Pub of the Year.

Steve Dilworth, landlord of The Swan with Two Necks, says the pub is something of a hidden gem and hopes that the award will provide a boost for the surrounding community.

"We are delighted and proud to have been judged CAMRA's National Pub Of The Year. We've been at The Swan with Two Necks for Twenty Seven Years and think of it as our hidden gem. This is a fantastic achievement not only for ourselves but our dedicated staff - and a great boost for our community."



Pubs are judged by CAMRA on a variety of criteria such as atmosphere, level of service, value for money and community focus, with extra weighting of course given to the quality of their real ale, cider and perry. Any landlords looking to make their pub the best in Britain might want to take note of Steve's somewhat unorthodox advice on getting the best out of his real ale, as he claims "Talking to the barrels has finally paid off!".

The three other finalists are, in alphabetical order, The Hope in Carshalton, The Horse and Jockey in Stapleford, and The Old Spot Inn in Dursley.

The presentation of the National Pub of the Year award took place at The Swan with Two Necks, Pendleton, Lancashire, BB7 1PT on Wednesday the 12th February. Pictured left, CAMRA Chairman Colin Valentine (left) presents the award to Steve Dilworth

Neil Richardson Award

An annual award made by North Manchester CAMRA is the Neil Richardson Award, presented in memory of the late editor of the branches seminal monthly magazine What's Doing. Neil was a great supporter of the more traditional pub and each year the branch makes the award to a pub that embodies the virtues that Neil was keen to uphold and celebrate.



The Award for 2013 was presented to the Marle Arch on Rochdale Road in Manchester. The pub is known for being the home of Marle beers (which are now brewed down the street) and the stunning tiled interior. Arthur Chappell nominated the pub and here is what he said about it:

"I can't praise the Marle Arch enough – it takes great pride in its own history, and celebrations of its 125th anniversary are well publicised. It's one of the few Manchester pubs and breweries with its own Wikipedia entry. It is a Grade II listed building, with a red granite frontage. Its famous glazed tiling frieze work was actually buried until a refurbishment uncovered the work. For once, this second refurbishment actually did the pub a favour rather than an injustice. The slowly sloping floor has a sense of Victoriana and tradition. You feel as if you are stepping back in time here."

Pictured above – North Manchester Chairman Steve Davis presents the award to Marle Arch manager Gaz Bee.

Community Pubs Month

CAMRA will again be organising Community Pubs Month in April following the success of 2013's event. This month of action gives pubs a campaign to focus promotions around and try some new marketing initiatives to attract more custom.



We would like all pubs to take part by organising some fun events for the local community to enjoy in April and encourage pubs to try a variety of different communication methods of informing the locals of what is planned including press releases, social media such as Facebook & twitter, website, collecting local email addresses and sending regular e-newsletters, leaflet drops, adverts in other local amenities etc

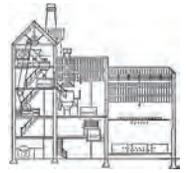
Twenty-six pubs close every week. We do not want this situation getting any worse, so please encourage your friends (especially those that do not visit pubs regularly) to have a night out in one of your local pubs in April to show your support. Imagine if your local was one of the 26 to close next month!

How will CAMRA support this event?

We have produced some free promotional packs for pubs to use that will remind people how great pubs are. All pubs that feature in the Good Beer Guide 2014 will automatically be sent a promotional pack. Other pubs can order one by visiting communitypubsmonth.org.uk. The promotional packs will be sent out in February and March. CAMRA's national press office will also issue a number of press releases to raise the profile of pub-going.

Pub & Brewery News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond



Hazel Grove Changes

There are numerous changes afoot in the village (although it's not quite the pub apocalypse reported by the Daily Star). We have already reported on the change of hands at the White Hart and in a couple of months George and Elaine Wood will be retiring from the [Grapes](#).



The licensees of Robinsons' Three Tunnes and the pubco-owned Horse & Jockey have also announced their departure (the latter pub has been a cask ale free zone for ages now so hopefully new faces might want to have a look at that).

Robinsons have closed the Cock for a much needed refurbishment (and an "ale house" format is rumoured to be on the cards) while the Bulls Head will have reopened as the Bullock Smithy with an improved beer offering by the time you read this (more on that one next month). We also hear that the [Phoenix](#) has now reverted to its original name of the [George & Dragon](#) which may or may not be due to the arrival of a new management team. Hopefully more next time.

Among the newcomers are business partners Mike Carulli (pictured below) and Quint Cartwright who took over at the [Bird in Hand](#) in mid-January.



While Quint is the tenant of the pub the day to day running is in the hands of manager Mike, who comes with plenty of experience in the pub trade, having spent seven and a half years at the [Wheatsheaf](#) in Failsworth until last September. When the opportunity to take on the [Bird in Hand](#) arose Mike jumped at the chance and told OT that he fell in love with the place as soon as he walked in. "It's full of character and characters," he says.

Although Mike hasn't handled cask beer for over a decade he has been on a quick, and very successful, learning curve. The pub is already gaining a name for the quality of the beers and sales were comfortably up in the first two weeks, with 1892 (mild to its friends) being a notable and surprising success. He now plans to undertake the formal Robinsons training course. The pub itself has a well-maintained, comfortable feel and deserves to succeed – it certainly has the right people in place to make that happen.

Pub Shorts



The [Ashlea](#) in Cheadle (above) is currently running a beer festival featuring an enhanced range of guest beers. This started on 17 February and runs until 16 March. There's a 10% discount for CAMRA members and a saver card with a "buy five get one free" offer.

Opening Times recently visited the [Midway](#) on Newbridge Lane in Stockport, and was very impressed. Manager Rob Denny is in charge of the beer and now has four on offer Moorhouses' Blond Witch, Taylor's Golden Best, Sharp's Doom Bar and Theakston's Lightfoot. Quality is high and the pub now has Cask Marque accreditation. The food is also highly recommended.

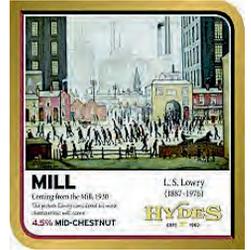
The [Salford Arms](#) (on the corner of Chapel Street and Bloom Street) is having a "Pie & Ale" festival later this month. This pub seems to get better and better so OT will certainly be along. Check out the advert on the facing page.

The [Crown](#) in Great Moor has now had its Cask Marque accreditation confirmed and extended up to the end of this year. This is good news for Mark Taylor as the pub's status in this respect had been in some doubt following the departure of Dennis Davies, who took all the relevant paperwork away with him when he left.

The [Mauldeth Hotel](#) on Kingsway in Burnage is currently sporting a 'Pub Business To Let' sign (or at least it was last week when OT drove past). The banners advertising cask ale and live music have also come down.

Hyde's Lowry Tributes

Hydes' Brewery has teamed-up with the Lowry to launch six cask ales to mark their relocation to Salford Quays and pay tribute to the highly acclaimed local artist.



The first celebration ale from the 'Lowry Collection' is a 4.5% brew entitled Mill - inspired by LS Lowry's famous 1930 painting 'Coming from the Mill', which features centrally in the beer's branding.

This is described as a "full flavoured mid chestnut coloured ale is brewed to an exclusive recipe and offers a warm and spicy finish to the palate perfect for the winter season". The beer will be available in the majority of their 60 pubs as well as select number of pubs and bars across the country until the end of February.

This first beer will be succeeded by a further five distinctive brews from the Lowry Collection, each being available for a two month period. Remaining true to the theme, the full range of beers offering styles and flavours to match the seasons will be certainly worth looking out for. They will be: Dispute (5% - March/April); Retired (3.6% - May/June); Request (4% - July/August); Outcast (4.3% - September/October) and Lowry (4.5%-November/December)

Tony Smith, Commercial Director at The Lowry (pictured above right with Hydes MD Chris Hopkins), said: "We were delighted that Hyde's chose to honour LS Lowry in this way. The artwork they have used feature some of Lowry's most popular and best known works - and we are pleased to be able to share them with real ale lovers and discerning drinkers across the country."

Chris Hopkins, Managing Director of Hyde's brewery, said: "The Hydes marque has been a part the city's brewing landscape since 1863. We are privileged to be able to associate our fine refreshing beers with such a highly revered artist and feel sure this exclusive collection will prove enormously popular".



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