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DECEMBER 2002 No:224

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## QUALITY COUNTS



### Robbies Pubs and Brewery Celebrate First Class Beer

**A**n awards night at Marple's Ring O'Bells last month saw four pubs in the Opening Times area pick up awards in Robinson's Bar & Cellar Awards. At the same time, the brewery itself presented with a CAMRA award for its contribution to quality cask beers.

Robinson's in-house Bar & Cellar Competition is now in its fifth year and this year was remarkable in that four of the five award winners came from the Marple area. Every pub in Robinson's estate is entered in the competition which sees impromptu cellar visits, and additional marks awarded for beer quality, presentation and bar appearance. Those pubs making it through to the finals are subjected to a further visit by Head Brewer Chris Hellin and Marketing Manager Oliver Robinson where scores out of a possible 300 maximum are awarded. At the awards night, Production Director David Robinson explained that just three points separated this year's top three pubs, such were the high standards. In third place, with 294 points, were Peter and Gail Brady from the Admiral Rodney in Prestbury who particularly impressed the judges by the good work Peter does in difficult cellar conditions.

Second place went to last year's winners, Steve and Jan Healy of the Railway, Rose Hill, with a score of 295 point and just missing out on two consecutive wins by one point. The Railway was also the only pub to score 100% for a perfect cellar.



This year's winning pub is the Ring O'Bells itself, run by Murray and Marjorie Johns. Their score of 296 included a 100% score for beer quality. Commended by David Robinson for "oozing quality management in the way they look after the pub", Murray made a generous acceptance speech which took care to thank everyone involved in the running of the pub. This award topped of a good year for the pub, Murray having previously picked up a British Institute in Innkeeping Licensee of the Year award.

A further award was made to the pub with the most improved cellar and this went to the Devonshire Arms in Mellor which also achieved a perfect score for bar appearance.

#### Cask Champions

After the winning pubs had been presented with their prizes, Stockport & South Manchester Branch Chairman took the stage to make a special presentation to David Robinson and Chris Hellin. Explaining that the branch's Cask Champion Award was not presented every year, John made the point that this year Robinson's were clear winners. CAMRA sought to promote cask beer and the best way of doing this was to make sure that every pint was a good one. The Cask Champion Award is given to organisations, pubs or breweries making a particular impact on cask beer quality in the Stockport and South Manchester areas and, since the advent of the bar & Cellar Competition, the high quality of the beer leaving the brewery was now matched by the beer served in many more Robinson's pubs. Another factor in the award was the introduction of a range of quality seasonal ales, which added to the interest of the beer range in those Robinson's pubs that stocked them.

Accepting the award, David Robinson thanked CAMRA for its support over the years and commented that these days CAMRA and Robinson's were very much singing from the same hymn sheet.

### RAILWAY ON TRACK

For the second year running, a Stockport pub has made it to the finals of CAMRA's National Pub of the Year competition.

Last month news came through that the Railway, Portwood, was one of the final four pubs bidding for CAMRA's ultimate pub accolade. Having taken both local and regional pub of the year titles in his stride, Railway licensee Alex Lord was stunned at this latest development. "I just don't believe it", Alex told OT, "this really is fantastic news."

With a full range of Porter Brewing Co's superb beers, guest beer at weekends, traditional cider, a wide range of foreign beers and excellent home-made food, the Railway really does have plenty to offer and this latest success is fully deserved. This is a view shared by Porter Brewing's Dave Porter. "Obviously I'm elated at the recognition for what we do at the Railway. What we do, we aim to do very well and I'm delighted at the pub's success."

As last year, the Stockport pub is the only urban pub in the finals, the other three being The Swan, Little Totham, Essex; The Plough & Harrow, Monkash, Glamorgan; The Albert Tavern, Freuchie, Fife. After last year's win for the Nursery, will lightning strike twice in the same place? He deadline for judging is December 31 with the results announced during CAMRA's National Pubs Week which runs from 22 February to 1 March.

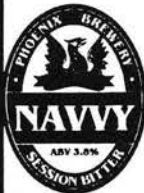
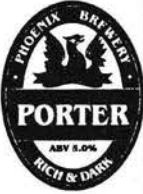


Our pictures show: above right; David Robinson with Marjorie and Murray Johns of the Ring O'Bells and their awards; above OT Editor and Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA branch chairman John Clarke flanked by (left) Robinson's brewer Chris Hellin and (right) David Robinson with their Cask Champion award.



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## IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

Well, licensing reform is with us at last. Let's not kid ourselves, though, that it's all going to be plain sailing. The legislation will doubtless be subject to considerable amendment before it hits the statute books, and it has to be said that so far it not exactly perfect. Many publicans are concerned that the transfer of licensing control to local authorities will lead to an increase in costs and red tape. This is a difficult one to call. Certainly the system needed reform – in this day and age people quite rightly expect regulatory regimes to be transparent and accessible, and not only to just those who own and run pubs, but also to those who use them and who live in the communities in which they are located. It is unclear that what is proposed will achieve those objectives. Furthermore national guidelines need to be enforced to prevent local politicians grandstanding or acting in an oppressive manner. Having said all that, licensing has been in the hands of Scottish local authorities for some time with no adverse effects. Many trade figures would like control to remain with the magistrates and it has to be said that if licensing benches had shown a willingness to radically reform to allow greater access and transparency then they would perhaps not have been sidelined as is currently proposed. Perhaps it's not too late for them to grasp this particular nettle.

Other aspects of the proposed legislation are certainly questionable. The abolition of drinking up time will force every pub to apply for an extension to their hours, simply to maintain the status quo. And the proposal that children should be allowed unaccompanied into those pubs which choose to admit them is, frankly, bonkers and a recipe for disorder. Indeed it is difficult to imagine any reputable licensee signing up to that particular proposal.

Despite the obvious or perceived flaws in the proposals, the fact that at last something is going to be done about our antiquated licensing laws is to be applauded and is a welcome Christmas present for all pub-goers.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

And on that festive note, all that remains is for me to wish all our readers, advertisers and all those licensees who take OT in their pubs, a very happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.

*John Clarke & P.B. Hutchings*

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### OPENING TIMES ISSUE 224

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**COPY DATE FOR JANUARY IS DECEMBER 27**

# PUB OF THE MONTH DECEMBER 2002

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	MERRY CHRISTMAS 25	26	27	28
29	30	31	HAPPY NEW YEAR			



**M**anchester City Centre is increasingly dominated by bland mega-pubs and soul-less bars dispensing bottles to the undiscerning on weekend evenings. It is pleasant to be able to recognise the achievement of a pub that defies the trend, serving a varied community in all the ways that a true town centre community pub should. The Stockport & South Manchester Branch Pub of the month for December 2002 is the Waldorf on Gore Street, a stones-throw from Piccadilly.

In the capable hands of Wayne Nuttall for the last seven years, first as manager and latterly as tenant, the Waldorf has survived the many changes in the area (including the ever-expanding Malmaison hotel opposite, and the appearance of the "superpubs"). Throughout it has been a beacon of comfort and quality, serving an ever-excellent pint of Taylor's Landlord, and three other ales, which change regularly, though one will almost always be a 'brand' beer for those who know nothing better. There is a very popular lunchtime food menu available Mondays to Fridays, a function room (with a late license for those organising functions), and the pubs character changes several times a day, as different groups come and go. Live sport is shown on a large projector screen, and there are numerous social events based around the pub, which while basically one room, is well divided into distinct well-furnished comfortable areas, all served from a central bar. Wayne has this month taken on additionally the nearby Crown & Anchor on Hilton Street, which he hopes to run in a similar style. It should prove a success.

All in all the Waldorf a thriving classic town centre pub, doing all the main things well. Why not join us the evening of the 17th (a Tuesday) for what should prove an enjoyable and convivial evening. There is a 192 stop opposite and the mainline station is a couple of minutes away.

PBH

**PLEASE NOTE THE EARLY DATE - AND DIFFERENT WEEKDAY**

The local branch of CAMRA decide on a Pub of the Month by a democratic vote at the monthly branch meeting.

**OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING**

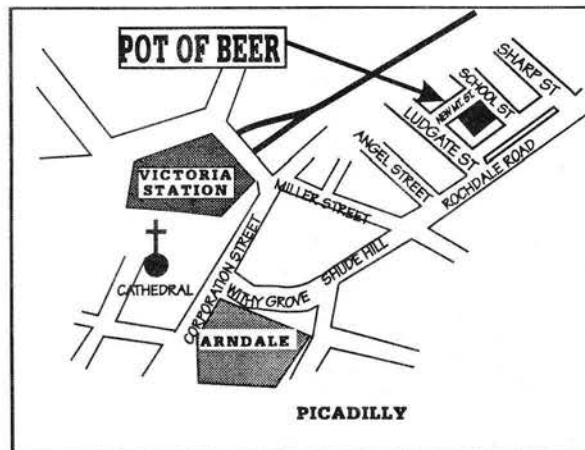
ADVERTISING RATES: 1/8 page (60mm x 85mm): £30; 1/4 page (120mm x 85mm): £50; 1/2 page (horiz: 174mm x 120mm; vert: 250mm x 85mm): £85; Full page (175mm x 240mm) £140. Surcharges apply for back page. Discounts available on adverts of 1/4 page or above for runs of insertions. Advert design & origination usually free of charge unless large costs involved. Ring 0161 477 1973 for details. Artwork should be submitted as hard copy (positive bromide) or PC COMPATIBLE (NOT MAC) \*.eps, \*.tiff or \*.cdr (Corel Draw versions 3, 5 or 7 - please state which AND you MUST include hard copy back-up).

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# LICENSING REFORM - THE FACTS

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF LICENSING LAWS

**A**s they are about to largely disappear, Opening Times looks back at the way our licensing laws have developed. As you will see many of them originate from the First World War, almost 90 years ago...

**1872** - The Intoxicating Liquor (Licensing) Bill of 1872 first introduced restrictions on opening hours and was universally reviled. 800,000 people petitioned against the Bill which was eventually passed and became known as the Aberdare Act. The Act sought to put an end to gin palace type premises and was designed to make life difficult for landlords.

**1914** - Licensing changes introduced. In August 1914 powers to close public houses and to restrict pub opening hours were given to military and naval authorities. This power was extended to civil authorities shortly afterwards. In October 1914 evening closing time in London became 10.00pm instead of 12.30am.

**1915** - Opening hours reduced from 16-17 hours (19.5 hours in London) to 5.5 hours and evening closing was 9 - 9.30pm.

**1916** - The Government via the Central Control Board took over the four breweries in Carlisle as well as 235 pubs in the Carlisle, Gretna and Annan area. The next year pubs in the Enfield Lock area of London and Invergordon in Scotland were taken over. In all these areas there were worries that the effectiveness of the munitions factories were being endangered by drunkenness amongst the workers.

The State Management System, as it was called, banned Sunday drinking, the consumption of spirits on a Saturday and the use of spirit chasers. Food, soft drinks and facilities for women were introduced to pubs. There was even a call for the Nationalisation of the brewing industry and pubs.

**1921** - The 1921 Licensing Act transferred the assets of the Control Board to The Home Office and The Scottish Office. The State Management system carried on until it was abolished by Edward Heath in the 1970s. The 1921 Act also set opening hours at 8-9 hours a day, with afternoon closing. And 5 hours on a Sunday.

**1964** - The 1964 Licensing Act replaced the 1921 Licensing Act and other subsequent amendments.

Since 1964 there have been at least a dozen separate Acts and Deregulation Orders making certain amendments and adjustments to licensing law. These include all day opening on weekdays (1988); all day opening on Sundays (1995). This piecemeal tinkering with licensing legislation continues. Currently the Government is finalising legislation to allow pubs to stay open for up to 36 hours over the New Years Eve period.

The 1964 Act runs to 155 pages; 204 sections and 15 schedules. It includes regulations for seamen's canteens, licences in the Carlisle district and Sunday closing in Wales and Monmouth!

**OPENING TIMES** will follow the progress of the proposed Licensing reforms through Parliament and into Law and will contain regular updates.

## REFORM - THE CHANGES AT A GLANCE

1. Local authorities responsible for all licensing for drink and entertainment. Councils will have to promote four licensing objectives: prevention of crime and disorder; public safety; prevention of public nuisance; protection of children from harm.
2. Separate licenses for the premises and portable personal licences for publicans.
3. Permitted hours to be abolished with each pub choosing its own hours, subject to objections from others.
4. New applicants for licences must gain an accreditation qualification and be checked out by the Criminal Records Bureau.
5. Just one licence for both drink and public entertainment.
6. Children's access to pubs to be the norm, except where there is good reason to exclude them.
7. Minor changes to the rules concerning consumption of alcohol by 16 and 17 years olds. Spirits and alcopops excluded from this provision.
8. Local authorities will be free to allow drinking at football matches in their locality.
9. Courts and local authorities will be able to use a flexible range of sanctions against both premises and personal licence holders. These will range from warnings to modification of licence conditions to revocation.
10. There will be an avenue of appeal to the magistrates court.


## END OF DRINKING-UP TIME


Drinking-up time will disappear under the proposals for licensing reform, the government has confirmed.



The end of the 20-minute 'period of grace' means that pubs which have no plans to change their opening hours after the Licensing Bill becomes law will have to apply to close later in order to simply maintain the status quo.

A spokeswoman for the Department of Culture, Media & Sport said: "It was felt that because closing times are going to be staggered, the drinking-up time law has really served its purpose. The closing time that pubs state on their application will be the time they have to close their doors. What time they actually stop serving will be a matter for the pub to decide." The change in the rules will be made clear to pubs when they apply for the new-style licences. Licensed trade associations are warning that publicans should not state a final closing time assuming they will be given a further 20 minutes to allow customers to finish their drinks. Tony Payne, chief executive of the Federation of Licensed Victuallers Associations advised licensees: "If you want to finish serving at 12 midnight, put down on the licence application for a terminal hour of 12.30am," he said. "We will not be automatically given a further 20 minutes to let people drink up so include this drinking-up time beforehand."





  
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# LICENSING REFORM

## REFORM AT LAST

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is raising a toast to the reform of liquor licensing law announced in the Queen's Speech. British pub goers can look forward to a more flexible approach to pub opening hours from the summer of 2004.

Mike Benner, Head of Campaigns and Communications said, "After years of campaigning we can finally look forward to longer opening hours for pubs which will boost tourism and help stamp out binge drinking through a more relaxed and responsible approach to enjoying alcohol."

Recent CAMRA research reveals that seven out of ten British adults support longer opening hours for pubs.

Mike Benner added, "This will be a popular change with consumers who are tired of unnecessary restrictions on when and where they can enjoy a drink. The current laws are largely based on laws introduced during the First World War and have no place in today's society."

CAMRA has dismissed claims that the new Act may lead to a free for all, with all pubs opening 24 hours a day and unrestricted access for children. Mr. Benner said, "It is natural that people are concerned about a more relaxed approach to licensing after restrictions have been in place for so long, but it is simply not the case that all pubs will be able to open for 24 hours a day. Pubs will have to submit operating plans to the licensing authority and the police and local residents will have a say on the hours the pub will be able to stay open. It is likely that most pubs will just apply for an extra hour or two on Friday and Saturday nights."

"It will be up to publicans and the licensing authority to decide on the suitability of premises for children. It is not that case that kids will have access to premises without restriction, but it will mean that pubs will become more family friendly which will benefit millions of people."

"There were fears that our streets would be invaded by drunks when the law was changed in 1988 to allow pubs to stay open in the afternoon, but these fears proved unfounded as there was no significant increase in alcohol consumption or alcohol related disorder. The same will be true following these changes and we can all look forward to the benefits of a more relaxed approach to enjoying a drink."

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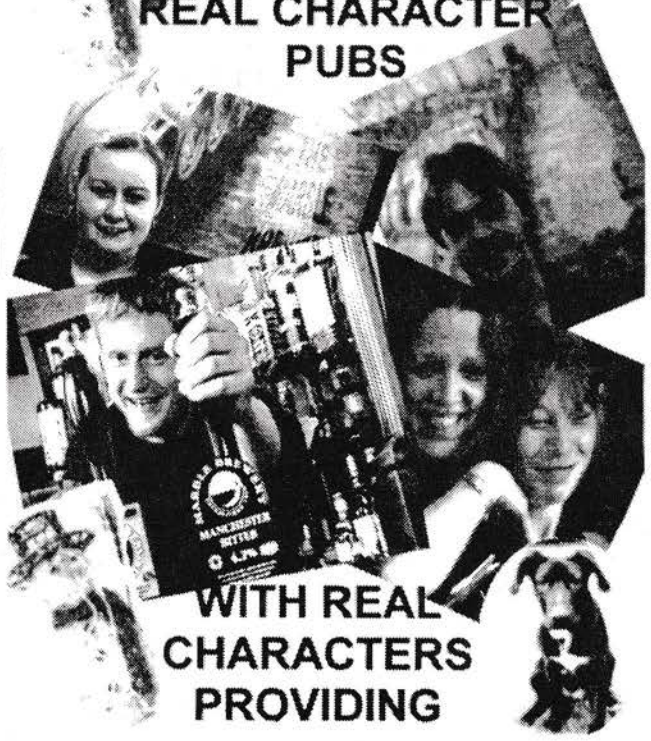
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# STAGGER

with Peter Edwardson

## Stockport Market Place

**S**eptember's Stagger took us to the Market Place area of Stockport, where the concentration of pubs meant that the amount of walking needed would be fairly limited, therefore giving more drinking time.

We began at the **Arden Arms**, just off the Market Place on Millgate, in the shadow of Asda. The attractions of this classic multi-roomed pub with its unique snug behind the bar have been widely documented, and it features on CAMRA's National Inventory of historic pub interiors. We found it fairly busy for early Friday evening. Four beers were available - Robinson's Hatters Mild, Best Bitter, Snowdon and Cooper's Bell, the latest seasonal offering. The Best Bitter was not tried, but all the other beers were pretty good, with Hatters the pick of the bunch.

We then moved up the hill to the Market Place itself and the **Pack Horse** with its attractive half-timbered frontage. This is a pleasant little pub, remodelled a few years back to give a main bar area with standing room, and two lounges opening off. An unusual feature was the extensive library of paperback books. Two beers were available - Tetley Bitter, which was about average, and Ansell's Bitter, rarely seen in this neck of the woods, which most of us chose and found to be rather better than the Tetleys.

A few doors along we came to the **Bull's Head**, directly facing the impressive glass-roofed Market Hall. This is a big pub with an imposing frontage and a spacious, high-ceilinged interior with plenty of comfortable seating, which looked as if it had recently received a smart refurbishment. The décor included numerous pictures of famous jazz musicians. It was fairly quiet at this time, but the disco-style lights hinted at the live music that was to come on later in the evening. The two standard Robinson's beers were available, Best Bitter being good, the Hatters shading more towards average.

Next on the agenda was the **Baker's Vaults**, another Robinson's pub with a high-ceilinged interior, divided into vault and lounge sides by a central bar. Live music also featured here, with "Casual Ties" just in the process of setting up. We found the Hatter's Mild somewhat disappointing, but this was due to reaching the end of the barrel, and it was much improved once a new one had been put on. The Best Bitter was fine. Unusually, both real ales are served here through free-flow electric dispense from T-bar fonts, which could be confusing to the casual customer.

The shortest of many short walks of the evening took us across the road to the **Boar's Head**, a prominent corner building with something of the style of an old coaching inn. Since my last visit, Samuel Smith's had carried out a very impressive refurbishment, which actually involved the reinstatement of some internal walls to create a number of cosy, intimate rooms. The former music room at the rear of the pub has been converted into a comfortable lounge and brought more into the main drinking area. As always in Sam's pubs, the only real ale available was Old Brewery Bitter, which was generally considered on good form, although this distinctive, malty beer isn't to everyone's taste. Nobody could complain about the price, though, an amazing £1.16 a pint, which has not changed for several years despite duty increases. We succeeded in recruiting two new CAMRA members here, father and daughter Harry and Gill. A brief look inside **Bamboozza** - formerly Addison's, and before that Yates's Wine Lodge - confirmed that no real ale was available, so we headed up the hill past the Parish Church to the **Old Rectory**, a Henry's Table pub-restaurant now owned by Scottish & Newcastle. The bar areas have a "gentleman's club" feel with easy chairs and extensive wood panelling, although clearly were not the venue of choice for Friday night revellers. None of us found much to praise in the only real ale available, Theakston's Best Bitter, although this was probably due more to it being inherently lacklustre than any failings of cellarmanship.

The row of powerful bikes parked outside and the thunderous strains of Van Halen's "Why Can't This Be Love" coming from within gave a clear indication that the next pub, the **Thatched House**, would be quite a contrast. Someone told me the name of

6

CAMRA  
CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

the band, but as conversation inside was impossible it passed me by. Creditably for a venue of this kind, three real ales were available - Worthington Bitter and Morland Old Speckled Hen, both of which were of average quality, and Boddingtons Bitter, on which opinions were divided between good and disappointing. The interior was spartan and low-lit, in keeping with the general feel of the place, and to be honest, while I'm not averse to the odd bit of rock'n'roll, this was too earsplitting to be remotely enjoyable, which perhaps explained why most of the bikers were outside with their machines.

We returned down the hill and on to Hillgate and the Spread Eagle, which was frequented by a much older and more sedate clientele than the previous pub. Built into the front of Robinson's brewery, the "brewery tap" has been greatly improved in recent years by keen licensees and is now a very pleasant place to drink, although it would benefit from more chairs and benches and fewer stools. One member of the party was feeling a little peckish and found satisfaction with a pork pie, pickled onion and mustard at 85p. Robinson's Hatters Mild and Best Bitter were both pretty good, although perhaps a little too cold. Old Tom was also on sale, in third of a pint nips as well as halves, and the two brave individuals who tried it pronounced it very good indeed.

Karaoke was in progress at Winter's, although not finding a very large audience. This pub, converted some years ago from a former jeweller's, with a distinctive external clock, always gives me the feeling of sitting in a shop window. As a Holt's pub it brought a new beer for the evening, although as the mild was the inferior "smooth" version, Bitter was the only real ale available, which was generally felt to be above average. It's interesting that Sam Smith's beer is now cheaper than Holt's - the bitter being £1.24 a pint here.

Our final port of call was the Queen's Head, often known as Turner's Vaults, another pub of great historic character. It has a long, narrow interior with a front bar, wood-panelled News Room and cosy snug at the back. We managed to find a seat and the Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter, again at a very reasonable £1.16 a pint, did not disappoint. Both this pub and the Boar's Head are tributes to Sam's sympathetic conservation of their pubs, a lesson that could be learned by many other pub owning companies.

Thus ended a very enjoyable evening during which we had experienced some excellent beer and a variety of characterful pub interiors. As always, the views expressed are only the impressions of a group of people on one particular night - why not try at least a few of the pubs yourself and see what you think?



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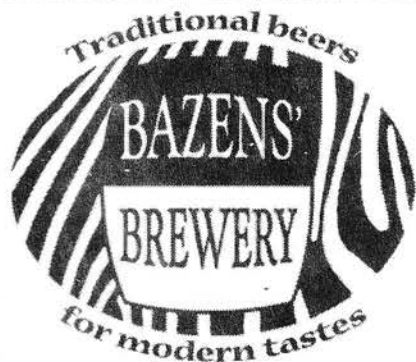


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**QUEENS TRIBUTE -  
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As we reported last month, the Queen's Arms, Honey Street, Cheetham, is the new *City Life* Pub of the Year. Owners Sue and Dave Price have contacted OT to express their thanks for the support from their customers over the years:

"Dear All  
 We would like to thank everybody for your welcome support over the years to enable us to have achieved City Life "Manchester Food & Drink Festival" Pub of the Year.  
 To celebrate, just hand this article to our staff to claim your free pint of beer (December only) and one pint per person"

★ ★ ★ ★

Also a date for your diary - 27, 28 February and 1, 2 March, the "Four Corners" Beer Festival which consists so far of the Queens, the Pot of Beer, the Marble Arch and the Beer House.

**STAY SAFE!**

**Don't drink and drive This Christmas**

**A**s a reader of "Opening Times" you will know that alcohol is very much part of the world we live in. Have a few drinks too many, and the only things that normally suffer are your head and stomach. But combine driving with your drinking and you have a lethal cocktail which could have a lasting effect - on your own and other people's lives.

Each year in Britain, some five hundred people die in road accidents involving drivers and motorcycle riders over the legal blood alcohol limit. Fifteen per cent of all drivers and riders killed are over the limit and around 50 per cent at night between the hours of 10pm and 4am.

The more you drink, the greater the problem. Some people's driving performance may be affected even below the legal limit. Twice the limit, and you are at least twenty times more likely to have an accident.

Contrary to popular opinion, alcohol is a depressant. It slows down the activity of the brain and makes you less alert, while at the same time giving you a strong but false sense of confidence. The more you drink, the more your brain is affected, and the greater your chances of having an accident.

⊕ Alcohol slows down your reactions

⊕ Alcohol affects your judgement

Those who believe that sticking to weaker drinks will stop them going over the limit are sadly mistaken. It's not the type of alcohol that's important, it's the total amount of alcohol the drink contains. Alcohol takes effect quickly and wears off slowly. Once you've had a drink, there is nothing you can do to reduce the level of alcohol in your blood.

⊕ Exercise doesn't work

⊕ Nor does black coffee

⊕ Nor medicines of any kind

⊕ Nor vitamins

The only thing that will reduce the level of alcohol in your blood is time - and a long time at that. The body gets rid of alcohol at a very slow rate - equivalent to about half a pint of beer in every hour. If you have been on a long or late drinking session, you might still be over the limit the morning after, or even at lunchtime.

**How To Avoid The Problem**

Plan in advance. Take a minibus or taxi. Use the bus, train or tram. If you can't arrange transport home, then fix up somewhere to stay. If you are in a group, decide amongst yourselves that whoever will be driving will not drink for the evening. Drink soft drinks. **Don't be a statistic this Christmas. Don't drink and drive.** For once the cliché is right. Drinking and driving really wrecks lives.

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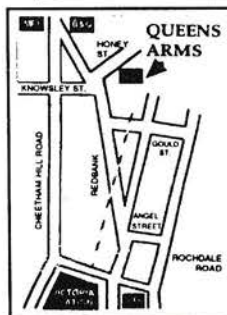
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# Stockie on The che

By John Taylor



**Question** - which darts league is the only one in the world ever to have provided two automatic qualifiers for 'World Embassy Finals'?

**Answer** - the Stockport Licensed Houses Super League. Their names - present England International Tony O'Shea, who plays for the Union in Reddish, and Darryl Fitton, who plays in the same league for the Royal Mortar on Hillgate. It's a great honour for the town, and I'm sure both players will be doing their best to make us all proud of their performances during the tournament, which takes place in January. Either of them is capable of lifting the world crown, it just requires a little luck, a good deal of consistency during the week, and an abundance of talent - which they both have, of course. In the first round Tony, who is the number six seed, has been drawn against former world champion Ted Hankey in a very difficult opening match on Monday 6 December. Darryl plays the lesser-know but just as dangerous John Burton from Wales the day before. The only sad part is that they have both been drawn in the same half and so won't be able to play each other in the final. The full draw is:

- Jarkko Komula (Fin) -v- Vincent Van Der Noort (Neth)
- Tony David (1) (Aut) -v- Brian Sorensen (Den)
- Ritchie Davies (Wal) v Albertino Essers (Neth)
- John Walton (8) (Eng) v Martin Phillips (Wal)
- Peter Johnstone (Scot) v Gary Anderson (Scot)
- Andy Fordham (5) (Eng) v Stefan Nagy (Swe)
- Peter Hunt (NZ) v Bob Taylor (Scot)
- Martin Adams (4) (Eng) v Co Stompe (Neth)
- Darryl Fitton (Eng) v John Burton (Wal)
- Raymond Barneveld (2) (Neth) v Matt Clark (Eng)
- Gary Robson (Eng) v Robert Wagner (Nor)
- Tony Eccles (7) (Eng) v Erik Clarys (Bel)
- Colin Monk (Eng) v Shaun Greatbatch (Eng)
- Tony O'Shea (6) (Eng) v Ted Hankey (Eng)
- Dennis Harbour (Eng) v James Wade (Eng)
- Mervyn King (3) (Eng) v Steve Coote (Eng)

Back to the real world, and still heading the Super League are the present champions Reddish WMC, who are four point clear of the Royal Mortar and six point clear of third placed Union Inn. These three are now well clear of the rest and with just seven fixtures remaining they still have to play each other. The Mortar are looking very strong at the moment and have won their last three matches 7-0. The union, though, recently lost ground having somehow lost 4-2 to Club Leisure with both teams only able to field six players. Prior to that match the club had lost their six previous fixtures. The champions also nearly came unstuck when in Week 18 they narrowly defeated Greg Steer 4-3. At the other end of the table, the Jack & Jill look to be heading back to the Premier Division after a couple of seasons in the top flight. Who will be joining them is anyone's guess with just two points separating six teams.

In the team knock-out quarter finals, the results were as follows:  
 Royal Mortar 7-0 Club Leisure; John Hollins with legs of 18 & 19.  
 Union Inn 5-2 Royal Oak; Brian Adshead with two legs of 17 darts and brother Dave (24 & 14), Tony O'Shea (20 & 18) were the Reddish stars.  
 Salisbury Club 2-5 Magnet; best darts Derek Higgins (21 & 17) for the visitors. Copperfield 'A' 1-4 Reddish WMC; Dave Beckett (24 & 16) and a maximum for the champs.

The semi-final draw, with matches to be played on 10 December is: Royal Mortar-v-Reddish WMC @ the Copperfields; Union Inn-v-Magnet @ Old King.

\*\*\*\*\*

Next month we might be getting some feedback from the new Stockport World Darts Champion, or you might just have to put up with me again. Well that's it for another month, see you soon

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## New Local Micros

**G**reater Manchester looks set to gain not one but three new micro brewers - all in the Oldham area. The Greenfield Brewery went into production on 16 November. Based in the Waterside Mill, Greenfield (where else?), the brewery is the concept of Peter Percival, who has been the brewer at the Church in Uppermill for the past three years.

With backing from friends Mark Atherton and Richard Hankinson, he took over the unit in early October and the brewing plant was supplied by none other than Dave Porter of Porter Brewing Co. It's a 5-6 barrel plant, entirely purpose built with, initially two fermenters. Two beers have been produced to date - Bill O'Jacks is a 4.1% light, golden, hoppy bitter, while Greenfields Ale is a 4% dark amber winter beer, with a mild taste. Look out for a full report on this new venture next month.

Also just into production is Paul Robinson's Ramsbottom Brewery with Rammy, a 3.6% session beer. More news on this one next time, too.

Also in the pipeline is something called the 'Bookworm Brewery' which will see a large plant (from 8-15 barrels we hear) installed in a bar-restaurant-brewery operation housed at a former library on Beal Lane in Shaw. It's all just in the planning stage at the moment and we don't know who's behind the operation. More news if and when we get it.

## Family Favourites

**HYDES** Hydes' latest seasonal, Winter Fuggle (5%) is proving to be something of a success. Extremely smooth and drinkable, it has been compared by some to a strong mild. Well worth seeking out. They have also announced the craft ale programme for 2003 which is themed around the brewing process under the general heading "Fine Beers In The Making". The planned beers are:

**January/February** - Malt & Mash, a 4.5% russet coloured beer  
**March/April** - Copper Hopper, a 4.2% bitter brewed using American Cascade hops.  
**May/June** - Hubble Bubble, 4.4%, pale gold

with a clean dry flavour. **July/August** - Rack 'n' Ruin - a 4.1% summer ale brewed with three hop varieties. **September/October** - Firkin Fruity, a 4.5% beer described as a classic berry red ale  
**November/December** - Rompers Rein, the 5% Christmas beer brewed with black malts, with a hint of fruit and spice to produce a dark chocolate coloured beer.

Hydes XXXX, the 6.8% ABV winter ale is to be brewed again this year. It should be available from early December although which outlets will sell it remains unclear at this time. We have asked the brewery for a list of outlets so that readers can seek it out should they wish to do so. For the first time (ever, we think) Hydes are going to market XXXX. It is to be promoted via posters, T-shirts and polo shirts. Contact the brewery for prices and to see if they have one in your size.

The next seasonal beer to emerge from **Holt's** will be called Blackwell and it will be available at the end of January. Production of Thunderholt will cease but it will be brewed again next October. 'Blackwell' was the name of Sir Edward Holt's weekend retreat in Bowness-in-Windermere, built in the 1890s. The building has been fully restored and now operates as an Arts & Crafts centre. The new beer will be quite different in style from Thunderholt, with an ABV of 4.4%.



**Robinson's** current seasonal is the well-received Robin Bitter, a malty beer with a dry aftertaste. This has been one of the most popular of Robbins current round of seasonal beers. Next month sees a brand new beer introduced to the Robinson's seasonal portfolio - Double Hop is a pale, crisp, hoppy 5% beer, currently being exported (in bottle) to the USA.

## Micro Magic

As usual, the local micro brewers have plenty of beers in the pipeline for the festive season...

**Pictish** - Brewer Richard Sutton is still rushed off his feet, so great is demand for his beers. This month's special is the return of an old favourite, Winter Solstice. The strong Rudolph's Rocket Fuel will also be brewed if Richard has time. One story that he is keen to kill is the rumour that Pictish has been bought by Phoenix Brewery. "If anyone wants to buy me, they've got to give me the money to retire", Richard told OT.

**Beartown** - Beartown brewery have produced a new beer called Pandamonium, a 4.5% Blackcurrant Stout which is currently on sale at the Navigation, top of Lancashire Hill, in Stockport. This new beer came as something of a surprise to Angella the licensee as it was just delivered without her knowing of the beer's existence or her ordering it. OT has of course tried it and can say it is an excellent well-balanced beer, not over sweet or cloying as some fruit beers can be but with a definite aroma and taste of blackcurrants. At £1.60 a pint it is well worth a try.

Work is also well underway on the new Beartown Brewery pub in Fallowfield. Bruins, as it is to be called, is set to open on 6 December. We've had a sneak preview and can report that unlike the other Beartown outlets, this will be much more in the café bar format with clean lines, an impressive beechwood bar front and plenty of space for vertical drinking.

**Phoenix** - as ever, the reliable Phoenix Brewery has a clutch of new beers out this month, many with a festive feel. Humbug (7%) and Golden Glow (6.5%) are well-established favourites but also look out for Snow Bound (4.3%, pale and hoppy), Flash flood (4.1%, pale, well-balanced with a citrus finish) and Christmas Kiss (4.5%, mid-brown, brewed with Progress and Goldings hops). The excellent Phoenix Porter (5%) is also available now, too.



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A WARM WELCOME IN A TRADITIONAL PUB

**Leyden** - another brewer with a festive special in the pipeline. This will be Christmas Cracker, a 4.3% bitter with a seasonal feel. If you're lucky you might also catch the last of Lanky Lass, a 3.8% beer brewed for the Smithfield (Swan St, Manchester) beer festival. This pale, dry-hopped bitter has almost sold out.

**Boggart Hole Clough** - in common with many local micros, Boggart Hole Clough is currently brewing flat out. Luckily, they've still found time to introduce two new beers this month. Bogsleigh is a 6% Irish Red-style beer while Boggart's Balls is a 4.5% "roast smoked flavour Christmas beer with a hint of chocolate". Phew - sounds like that one's got something in it for everyone!

**Khean Brewing Co** - the new Congleton micro has been going great guns since we first reported on it. To maintain the cricketing theme, the initial Premium Bitter has been renamed Legspinner. This has been joined by a session beer, the 3.9% All Rounder, and a very well-received dry stout, the 4.2% Caught Behind. Just brewed as OT went to press was Seamer, a 4.5% 'conker coloured' beer, brewed to be less bitter than Legspinner and All Rounder with a good malt-/hop balance. Brewer Ken Newsome is also looking to produce a Christmas special with a 'Christmas cake flavour' with some added spice. The name is as yet undecided - to keep up the cricket theme, though, a distinct possibility is Jingle Bales!



It might be quite difficult getting around over Christmas, with endless numbers of intermittent train strikes, works undertaken by the organisation formerly known as RailTrack, and now apparently a bus strike as well, but it might well be worth it. Up until the weekend before Christmas there are the Christmas Markets, and as far as I can ascertain there are no less than five different German beers available. The big tent has a Berliner pale and a black lager (sadly a bit underflavoured) but an interesting curiosity. One of the stalls in the middle is selling a quite effective Saxon Pilsner (dry with a hoppy bite) and at the Princess St end there is both the Paulaner stand (also selling bratwurst this year) and another selling... an unidentified (as yet) pale beer. Average is about £1.50 for 0.4l (about £2.05/pint equiv). Bar Fringe has a succession of interesting beers coming on, both British and foreign draft and some bottles. The Christmas menu at the Pot of Beer is both unusual and excellent - its certainly where I'll be eating my pre-Christmas, Christmas lunch. Interesting British beers are destined for the Smithfield and Pot (and of course the Marble) and as the food operation at the BeerHouse gradually comes on stream, so the range of interesting non-standard beers continues to increase. Its usually quite diverting to go in once again (especially on the 21st when they hope to have a barbecue, the fancy dress on Christmas eve and the "piss-up" scheduled for New Year's eve!). My discourse on Bamberg is postponed until the New Year as OT has had far too many "what we did on our hols" articles recently, in my humble opinion.

**Bottled Beer of the Month....NOT!**

Holsten Fusion (5%). Ohmigod! A German-brewed bottled beer mixed with fruit extract! No!, No! and thrice No! The present for somebody you hate. The Citrus version is foul, the "Kurrant" (I kid you not) version is execrable, and the Apple just about drinkable (but why would you want to). The beer itself must have been over 6% 'cos the blend is still 5%. Ugh!

# Robinson's COMPETITION



Robin Bitter is a unique seasonal ale brewed specially for the dark months of November and December. It is a rich, dark full bodied bitter with a distinctive roasted malt character complemented by the vague hint of liquorice.

Keep yourself warm over the festive period by winning a stylish Robinson's fleece in this month's competition. Margaret Corlett of Newton Heath, meanwhile, was the winner of our October competition and receives a tray of Frederics and a Frederics T-shirt.



To enter this month's competition, all you have to do is answer the following three questions.

1. In which year was Robin Bitter launched?
2. To what aby is Robin Bitter brewed?
3. Which ale with a Welsh theme was launched this year?

**Robinson's**

Send your answers by the end of the month to: Robinson's Competition, BHA, 94 Churchgate, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 1YJ

Or by fax to 0161 477-0809

or e-mail info@barryhook.com

Normal competition rules apply

**HELP HOLD BACK THE NITROKEG TIDE!  
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STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER



## LICENSEES

We're looking for pubs to join in next year's event.

£10 gets your pub into this successful campaign.

**Due to demand, a limit of 86 pubs has been set this time.**

The prizes have been changed, too.

Challenge Extra (T-shirt) for 12 pubs, in 12 areas

Challenge Super (Sweatshirt) for 36 pubs, in 12 areas

Challenge Ultra (Pewter Tankard) for all of the pubs

Contact Mark McConachie

0161 429 9356 for details.

# CAMRA CALLING!

## Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

Here are the monthly branch event diaries, starting with Stockport and South Manchester, followed by High Peak and Macclesfield

Diary

### DECEMBER 2002

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup>** - Branch Meeting and Xmas Quiz: Gateway, Kingsway, East Didsbury. Start 8.00pm. Lots of great prizes so let's have a good turnout please.

**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup>** - Pub of the Month presentation to the Waldorf, Gore St, Manchester City Centre. From 8.00pm.

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup>** - Annual Hillgate Stagger: 7.00pm Queens Head (Turners Vaults), Little Underbank; 8.30pm Red Bull, Hillgate. **This is the longest running event in any CAMRA branch! Let's have a really good turnout this year and get the festive season off with a swing.**

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> January** - Annual Branch Meal: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. 7.30 onwards. Giant prize raffle and (hopefully!) guest speaker. Book with John Clarke (0161 477 1973) or Paul Formby (0161 612 0759 after 6.00pm).

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup>** - Branch Meeting: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm. **NB the 2003 Branch Pub of the Year will be decided at this meeting - a good turnout, please.**

*The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:*

**Monday 9<sup>th</sup>** - Monthly Branch Meeting: Sportsman, Mottram Rd, Hyde. Starts 8.30pm.

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>** - Branch Trip to Paradise Brewery Beer Festival - contact Frank Wood on 01457851674

### DECEMBER 2002

*Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton. They have notified us of the following events:*

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup>** - Xmas Meal: Poachers, Bollington. £15.95 per head - booking essential. Phone for details asap - contact Keith Farman 01625 0572460

**Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January (tbc)** - Winter Pub of the Season Presentation to the Dolphin, Macclesfield

*Trafford & Hulme Branch covers Trafford Borough, Manchester west of the M56/Princess Parkway and a large part of the city centre.*

*They have notified us of the following events:*

**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup>** - Monthly Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm.

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup>** - Xmas Curry in Broadheath. Phone Joan Taylor (0161 962 2396) for details.

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> January** - Regional Meeting hosted by T&H: Vine, Kennedy St, City Centre. Starts 8.00pm.



To Do Address Noteepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner

12



## CAINS

# BREWERY TOURS

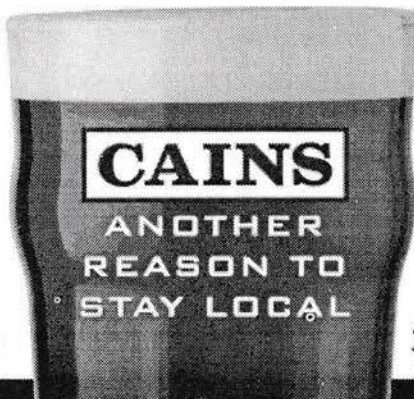
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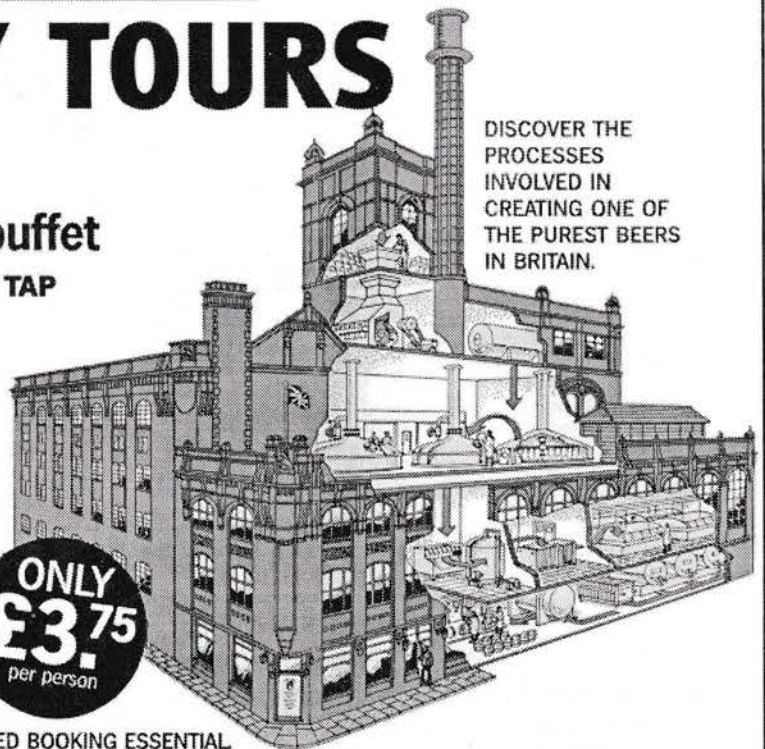
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# 5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison **DECEMBER '97**

**T**here was one front page story – the opening of the Marble Brewery, based at the Marble Arch free house on Rochdale Road, Manchester.

Looking after a huge variety of cask ales from micro-breweries all over the UK had given licensee Mark Dade the idea of brewing himself, and it had taken a year to bring the dream to fruition. The brewery had been designed by Brendan Dobbin, who had also helped install the five-barrel plant. It would distribute its products to The Bar, and the Marble Beer House in Chorlton, in addition to the Marble Arch itself. The brewery now produces beers made with organic ingredients and GM-free yeast, accredited by the Soil Association and the Vegetarian Society.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Editorial comment was focussed on the state of the Real Ale market – “Sales down by 14%, Real Ale in crisis.” Bass blamed the closure of two breweries on the steep decline in sales of cask conditioned beer. But many of the local breweries (including micros) were selling more cask beer than ever before – so what was going on? Bass and other national giants accounted for around 86% of all beer brewed in Britain, and it was their rush to invest in and promote nitroreg (or “smooth”) that had produced this apparent crisis of falling real ale production. Whitbread were preparing to sell their breweries and become solely a retailing company. This was where the Campaign for Real Ale arrived in the early 1970’s. Once again, they would support small regional brewers who had remained true to cask ale, whilst the big brewers the big brewers were attempting to consign draught beer to the dustbin.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

CAMRA’s Champion Winter Beer of Britain competition had been held at the Glasgow Beer Festival the previous month, and some of Manchester’s local brews were among the winners. In the Stouts & Porters class, McGuinness Tommy Todd’s Porter gained the bronze award, but it was in the Barley Wine class that local brewers had excelled. Lees Moonraker won the top awards, with Robinson’s Old Tom as runner-up. The National Winter Ales Festival subsequently moved to Manchester and the Upper Campfield Market off Deansgate but, sadly, that venue had been lost and for 2003 the festival is moving again, to Burton-on-Trent.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Finally, two items of pub news with up-to-date comments on the ever-changing face of the local pubs...

The Navigation, Lancashire Hill, was selling Websters Bitter and Green Label, as well as the most recent addition to the range, Tetley Bitter, all at £1 a pint. Twelve months ago the pub, which by then was keg-only, was acquired by Congleton’s Beartown Brewery and now sells an impressive range of Beartown beers on handpump. Hydes had made a great job of re-furbishing the Horse & Farrier in Gatley – recarpeted and refurbished throughout – even the vault had a new polished wooden floor. They have just repeated the exercise with another impressive job converting the pub into one of Hydes’ “Heritage Inns”.



## Seasoned but Rare

Most of our local independent brewers have now introduced programmes of seasonal beers, typically changing every couple of months. Virtually all of these have been well worth drinking, and some - Robinson’s current offering Robin Bitter particularly springs to mind - have been exceptional. Yet these beers can be found in very few of these brewers’ tied houses, and in those where they do appear, low turnover can lead to inconsistent quality. Drinkers have been known to avoid the seasonal unless they see someone else drinking it, and it has even been suggested that in one or two high-profile pubs the seasonal beers are kept on to promote the image of the brewery, but a gallon or two at the end of each cask goes to waste.

At the same time, these seasonal beers often do very well in the free trade, so why should there be this disparity? Many of the independent brewers’ tied houses tend to be community locals used by conservative-minded drinkers who stick to what they know and are unwilling to pay a premium for an unfamiliar beer. You can’t blame them for that, and such drinkers sustain a healthy regular turnover of mild and bitter in plenty of good pubs. The more adventurous drinkers tend to congregate in the pubs that specialise in a changing range of beers, leaving the seasonals falling between two stools. But it’s disappointing that some very good beers get stuck in a vicious circle of low sales and variable quality, and perhaps the brewers could think of some more imaginative ways of promoting in their own estates what after all should be seen as their flagship products.

## The Cost of Calories

In an effort to restrain the nation’s spreading waistlines, the Food Standards Agency has proposed that all menus in pubs, restaurants and takeaways should have to state the calorie content alongside each dish. You can see the point of this, as people have little idea how fattening meals eaten outside the house are likely to be, and a large proportion of such meals are, to be honest, far more than a normal person needs. But there’s a big risk that this policy may damage the business of independently-run pubs, and end up doing the opposite of promoting healthy eating.

Many smaller pubs may be deterred from providing any food at all if they have to work out the calorie content even if they’re just knocking up a few sandwiches. Others will be reluctant to serve daily specials, instead falling back on standardised dishes, and all will be required to apply a strict policy of portion control to make sure they meet the requirement. Chain dining pubs that obtain their dishes from a central point and heat them up in a microwave will have no trouble in complying. On the other hand, independent outlets that want to offer varied menus using fresh local produce may find the requirement very onerous, and end up deciding it’s not worth the bother. The end result will be to encourage the trend towards processed factory food that has done so much to spoil our diet in the first place.

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Two of our branch area Robinson's pubs are in the top three of the Robinson's Cellar of the Year award 2002. Last years winner the Railway at Rose Hill, Marple has been pipped this year by the Ring O'Bells, also in Marple. For Mr & Mrs Johns it is the second award they have scooped this year, they also won Northern Area Robinson's pub of the year back in June. In third place was the Admiral Rodney at Prestbury.

One of our members reports that the Rock Tavern (Matteos) on the Marple Bridge to Charlesworth road is selling Holts Thunderholts, a rare beer for the area but at £2.00 per pint, a touch overpriced maybe? On the same road, a little nearer Marple at Lane Ends, he reports that the Lane Ends has Adnams Bitter alongside the Tetleys bitter. I have visited the pub three times myself since May and Adnams was on each time so presumably it is regular as it is also at the Oddfellows in Mellor some two miles away.

It is sad to see another former Good Beer Guide pub (where we used to have branch meetings and even a Christmas 'do' one year) now selling all keg. What was the Squirrels in Chinley (now the Chinley Hotel), well run by an enterprising landlord (Drew was his name) taking micro brews from far & wide is now, from my peek in the door last week, more of a hotel bar. I settled for sitting outside on the porch to shelter with my walking colleagues and finishing my coffee, before walking the old tram line down into Chapel-en-le-Frith.

In Chapel, a quick look round the market place found the Kings Head, advertised outside as a Porters Ale House (unfortunately not that Porter!) with only Tetleys bitter on handpump but with the clip turned round - the barmaid told us it was not available that lunchtime. Across the road the Dog Inn, though smartened up considerably since my last visit, only sold keg beers.

Next door at the Royal Oak, Burtonwood Bitter was the single beer on cask. However the recent new landlord of only two weeks, Gareth Jones a local lad, told me two more handpumps were being installed next week with Burtonwood Top Hat and another beer being introduced. He is a real ale man himself, being the assistant cellar man at the Royal in Hayfield for the recent beer festival. The Royal Oak is a very clean and pleasant pub in which to drink, with stone exposure on the walls, flag floors around the bar and good quality framed paintings and prints around the walls. A fairly spacious L-shaped pub, one end has tables and has been changed into an open plan eating area (Gareth's father previously owned a restaurant in Manchester and has been installed as the Chef), whilst the other end has a pool table and games room. A further visit certainly will be made once Gareth has put his plans into action and I will report back to OT.

From here we crossed the road to the Roebuck, a former Good Beer Guide pub. These days there is no sign of the guest beer that it had under previous licensees but the Tetleys Bitter and Dark Mild were on handpump, the Mild in particular being drunk by most of us and was on very good form too.

Three branch pubs which Shaws beers have been popular from the outset, are the George in Buxton and the Star and Old Gloveworks in Glossop. From mid-November all these three outlets have been selling the new Shaws IPA (5%).

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The Cheshire Ring in Hyde is boarded up. Nofurther details known. The Hare & Hounds at Simmondley near Glossop reopened on 22nd November after a full refurbishment. On a brief visit on Sunday 24th, the pub was much better laid out, mainly open plan but much cleaner, with a flag floor as you enter, wooden floor round the bar area and better access from the kitchen, which has been improved. The beers were Tetley Bitter, Old Speckled Hen and Taylors Landlord, the latter two at £2 per pint each.

In something of a departure, you will now find an 'outside' guest beer on sale at Hydes 'Q' in Stalybridge. One at a time is being taken off the Beer Seller monthly list and Wychwood Dog's Bollocks has been a success so far. Since Ray and Sheena run both this and the nearby White House as a family operation, it wouldn't surprise us if occasionally, a guest found its way up the road, either. Speaking of the White House, it is now the policy there to always have a mild available.

The Lamp, in Hadfield, closed over a year ago now, has had a lot of activity by workmen for two weeks now and sources close to the pub say it is being developed by Pubmaster as a pub & restaurant. High Peak Branch members raised £1467.00 from their latest Charity Walk earlier this year. At an informal presentation at the Sportsman in Hyde in November, the cheque was divided equally between Tameside & Glossop M.I.N.D and Stockport & district M.I.N.D. A great effort again, this year even more so when only 14 walkers registered for the day. Once again, it was a great opportunity for branch members to visit off the beaten track branch pubs, that we do not get the chance to visit too much during the course of a year. Next year's walk is likely to take in the Chapel, Chinley, Buxworth and Whaley Bridge areas and will be routed out early in the new year by the regular organisers.

Though Opening Times is not known as a tickers magazine, this month one of the North of England's best known Beer Tickers has reached his ultimate goal of 10,000 beers and it is worth a mention in these columns. Roly (Roland Holroyd), who has been well known in local drinking circles in the free houses of Greater Manchester for many years drank his penultimate beer in the Crescent on Thursday 28th November at the pub's in-house beer festival. In the few days leading up to the event, Shaws Brewery had a special T-Shirt made for him which was presented on the night by Phil Windsor and Neil Hay from the brewery and Shaws new brew, Tame Valley Ale was on the bar, the Crescent being the first pub selling it. Roly fittingly drank this as his 10,000th, a High Peak Branch member drinking a new brew from a High Peak Branch brewery. Good publicity for all concerned and the Reporter Group of newspapers are running a feature on Roly for this week's edition (5th December) following up on a feature on him earlier in the year.

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**PUB OF THE SEASON**

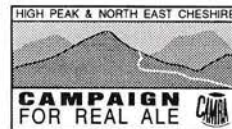
**The Highwayman, Rainow.**

The Highwayman, Whalley Bridge Road, must have one of Cheshire's most appealing pub interiors. A very attractive, remote and windswept moorland inn, with breathtaking views from the front door. It was known as the Blacksmith's Arms until 1949 and locally as "The Patch". Within, there is a maze of connecting rooms with a small tap room at the far corner. Very low ceilings and genuine old beams are complemented by scrubbed wooden tables and numerous settles. A room to the right of the hall is reached through a latched barn-style door and has a separate bar hewn from a single timber. The front snug is named after a local historical rogue, Tom King.

However, no matter how impressive the fabric or location of a pub, an essential ingredient of a successful formula is good licensees. Since taking over in March this year Susan and Rob have swiftly had a positive impact taking an already good pub on to even better things. They have, for example, opened up a separate room as a restaurant serving an interesting selection of good quality food. Without making any alterations to the pub they have increased trade enabling them to add another real ale. An excellent pint of Lancaster Bomber now supplements the enjoyable Thwaites Bitter. Both are of consistently good quality and of course, this is one of the few Cheshire pubs serving these excellent beers.

The Highwayman provides a timely reminder that rural pubs can still be successful if run by enterprising businessmen who want to run a successful pub, instead of people who want to run the pub down, turn it into a private home and make a fast buck. They have also illustrated that there is no need to make sweeping changes to the fabric of our lovely country pubs. They can be successful just as they are, selling good quality real ale and fine food in a traditional pub environment. Susan and Rob are to be congratulated for their efforts here - celebrate with us when our Autumn Pub of the Season is presented on Monday 9 December, from 8.00pm.

• The Highwayman is on the B5470 on the outskirts of the village towards Kettlethulme.



**FEATURED PUB**

**The Four Lane Ends,  
Lane Ends,  
Charlesworth Road, Marple.**

I found myself unable to walk recently for a couple of Sundays due to injury, writes Frank Wood, so a bicycle ride here seemed a good idea, though my route all uphill for 1½ miles from Marple Bridge was a bit of a slog. As I rounded the last corner however, I was met by the smell of fresh cooking wafting from the pub (it has a growing reputation both locally and further afield for its freshly cooked food). It was the beer I was after though and a couple of pints of Hanby Wem Special (4.4%) went down very well after my exertions a warm day. Gary Wood the licensee has had the pub now for 6 years, being formerly a local at the pub as well as part time barman, living nearby for many years, and relief when the previous people went away a couple of times a year. When it came up, he did not hesitate in taking over.

The pub was formerly a Tetleys pub but is now owned by Enterprise Inns, who invested rather a lot of money in it last year. The pub was completely renovated and replanned with a rear extension, elevated drinking and eating areas, a new car park with children's play area and outside benches. Inside, the pub used to be several small rooms with very thick walls. These are all gone, the pub is now open plan, airy, cheerful and spacious.

On my visit the Hanby beer was accompanied by Adnams Broadside and Tetley Bitter, though Gary says the Tetley is the only regular beer (though Adnams does seem popular at the pub, one of their brews being on the bar on each of my last three visits). A nice feature in the front two drinking areas of the pub are the old photos of local views, enlarged and framed nicely.

Food is served Tuesday-Thursday (5-8pm) Friday-Sunday (12-7pm) and is all freshly prepared to order including a large blackboard of specials. On my visit, the generous looking Sunday lunches looked very nice and a friend of mine who regularly dines there on Sundays speaks highly of the quality. Custom has widened considerably since the building work. Whilst trade was mainly local before, now people come from deep into Cheshire, Derbyshire and Greater Manchester and with the views down into the Cheshire Plains, the pubs ambience and friendliness, I am pretty impressed myself.

To get there, take the 394 bus that runs between Hazel Grove and Glossop every hour by Speedwell buses (not Sunday). Speedwell are an independent company who took over only a few weeks ago after Stagecoach dumped the route. Take care however, as the buses only run until early evenings.



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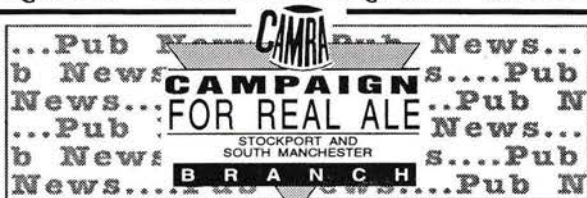
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# O P E N I N G T I M E S

From Rhys Jones, Aberystwyth:

While your scorn for the Hogsheads chain's latest piece of marketing drivel is entirely merited, I fail to see why you object to the reported policy of requiring a minimum sale of two containers a week in order to stock any particular beer. In the case of cask beer, this implies that a cask will be on service for three or four days - surely about the optimum to retain top quality. If this policy means better beer quality in Hogsheads, I'm all for it. (Whether I will actually wish to visit the new-style Hog's Heads to be interacted with by Hoggers is, of course, another matter entirely).

From Geoff Johnson, Stalybridge:

Disappointed to report that a trip to the Derby Brewery Arms on Wednesday discovered no cask mild - "the lines were being cleaned"(!) we were offered smooth. The Thunderholt seasonal was cloudy and the bitter lacked condition. I hope the pub is not following the practice that is evident in other Holts pubs of allegedly stocking cask mild but it never being available. In any event it amazes me that a pub round the corner from the brewery can't keep decent quality beer!

Letters to Opening Times: The Editor, Opening Times,  
45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport. SK3 9HD  
or [johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com](mailto:johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com)

Two major developments from Hydes to report this month. First, *Horse & Farrier* in Gatley has reopened its doors after a 8½ week refurbishment and it has to be said that this is a first class job by Hydes. While a great deal of work has been carried out but it has been done with such sympathy to the pub's fabric and traditions that the casual visitor could be under the impression that very little has been done. There's a new bar counter, the whole pub has been refurbished and redecorated, and a former bottle store has been converted into a snug, OT would like to have brought you more details but every time we've called the pub has been so busy it's been difficult to get a proper look at it! There will be slightly more emphasis on food (including a Sunday carvery) with the aim of bringing the food up to about 20% of turnover. It remains very much a beer pub, though, with the full Hydes' range on handpump. The new licensees are Alan and Jenny Hazlehurst who have our best wishes (although given the instant success of the new-look pub, they hardly need them!)

The *Horse & Farrier* is one of Hydes new 'Heritage Inns'. There will soon be another one nearby as the Manchester brewers have purchased *Millington Hall* on Station Road in Cheadle Hulme. Both a full license and planning permission have been applied for and given the scale of the work planned it will probably be well into 2003 before this welcome new development opens its doors for business. Further acquisitions may well be in the pipeline as Hydes have announced that some £6 million has been set aside to expand the estate from its current 80 pubs.

Two Hall Street pubs in Offerton that seem on the up are the *Victoria* and the *Emigration*. At the former the cask ale range now comprises Cain's mild, Greenalls and John Smiths bitters plus a changing guest. On OT's visit this was Cain's FA. The beers tried were in very good order; this coupled with very pleasant surroundings makes it worth a look-in. Also worth a visit is Robbies' *Emigration*. Sporting what looks like a recent re-decor inside, manager of a year's standing, Iain McKinley offers Hatters, Best and the Robbies seasonal for you to delight in. Iain told OT his favourite of the seasonals has to be Robin Bitter and, although primarily a pub attracting local custom, visitors are assured both good beer and good cheer. A poser re the *Emigration* pub name - is it the only pub so-named in the UK? Does the name derive from a racehorse or some other source? OT would be interested in your theories.

A warm welcome to Jenny and Duncan Laing, new licensees at the *Stockport Arms* on St Petersgate. They started in late August and, although new to the trade, have seen through some improvements. The place has been redecorated; a new lunchtime (noon till 2pm) menu is in place; a 'No Swearing' policy is in force; and Fri/Sat evenings sees a female DJ host a disco. The beers are Greenalls and Tetley bitters, so things are looking up.

The *Travellers Call* on Great Moor usually gets a mention because of its vast collection of bells and nauticalia (is this a new word? - Ed(1)). Don't forget the fine Robinson's Hatters and Best, together with all-year round Old Tom on gravity. Worthy of note must surely go to the pub's fundraising capabilities - this year's annual ten mile walk raised a whopping £5,000 for Francis House; pretty good going for a small pub with a capacity of, say, 100 maximum! Each year a different local charity is chosen as the recipient; this year's event was the sixteenth such walk and the tally of funds raised so far is a mammoth £58,000. OT congratulates all concerned and the editorial team will have a drink to that.

A major renovation and refurbishment is set to take place at the *Queens Arms* in Cheadle. The pub is to be completely refurbished both inside and outside with major work taking place in the cellar and the siting of the bar. The front two rooms are to be retained but the existing bar is to be replaced by a larger L shaped bar, which will also serve the rear smoke room. The outside toilets will be demolished and a new internal toilet block is to be built on to the side of the pub that currently serves as an additional car parking area. The ornamental glass ceiling that is presently above the bar will be removed and reused as a decorative feature somewhere else in the refurbished pub. By moving the toilets to the side

of the pub the corridor to the toilets will be brought into the pub increasing the size of the rear smoke room. Modest changes to the kitchen and the upstairs living quarters are also planned.

All this amounts to huge changes for the pub. Robinson's plan to assess the pubs requirements in more detail early in the new year with a view to starting work around April 2003. The pub will remain open throughout the changes but so extensive will the changes be that it is not expected that the work will be completed before the end of 2003. Licensees Helen and Tony Dunn told OT that "its early days yet in the planning process but if you have any sensible suggestions about how best to improve the pub then we would be pleased to hear from you".

In Hazel Grove, Bill and Hilda have now retired from the *Royal Oak* on Commercial Road. Their replacements are already familiar with the Hazel Grove pub scene as Steve and Judy Knowles from the nearby Grove have taken over. We wish them the very best in their new pub. The *Cock Inn* was also awaiting a new licensee as we went to press; the current licensee is also the landlord of the *Sportsman* in Strines. More Offerton news - we welcome new faces at the *Harvester*, Turnstone Road. These are Cath Donaghue and Carol Hulme who have been there over three months now. The *Harvester* remains a cask beer outlet with both Marstons Pedigree and Greenalls Bitter permanently on handpump.

Late Manchester news - in a welcome move, the *Royal Oak* on Cross Lane, Gorton, is now selling a guest beer. So far both Caledonian Deuchars IPA and Jennings Cumberland Ale have been enjoyed there by our reporter.

The Thatched Tavern in Reddish now has added Boddingtons Bitter to go alongside Tetley Bitter and Dark Mild. Not bad when most pub sin the area can't even sell one cask beer.

Finally, Stockport doesn't lose that many pubs but another one bit the dust last month. The *Blue Bell*, Shaw Heath, closed its doors, probably for good. This large ex-Wilsons pub has had lots of money spent on it in recent years, most recently via a large investment by Holts. Despite this investment, the *Blue Bell* struggled to attract custom to what is a very large pub, which must have substantial overheads. Planning permission to convert the building into six flats has been applied for and is likely to be granted.



## NATIONAL BEER NOTES

Last month Shepherd Neame's Spitfire Ale made its TV debut with a series of animated spots created by RPM3. The ads continue the German-bashing creative theme and adopt the strapline: "Spitfire - the bottle for Britain."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Organic beer production has boomed on the back of drinkers' demands for food and drink made without the use of agricultural chemicals. Such has been the growth in organic brews that there are believed to be 59 British beers that meet the accreditation requirements of the Soil Association, which checks that only truly organic ingredients are used. Britain is also the world's major producer of organic beer with a clear lead over the likes of France, which has 32 brews, Germany (14), US (11), and Belgium (3).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Yet another branded high street chain appears to be on the skids. Following the collapse of the Old Monk pub company, it's now the turn of SFI Group. Formerly known as Surrey Free Inns, the company has grown from a handful of pubs in the Home Counties to a national operator with well known brands like Slug & Lettuce, Bar Med and Litten Tree (there are examples of all three in the Opening Times area). They've now unearthed a £20 million 'black hole' in the balance sheet and the company's shares have been suspended. This latest piece of bad news follows a cash crisis, a profits warning and the cancellation of the dividend.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

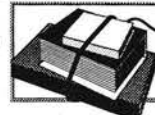
By contrast, yet another dedicated cask ale brewer and traditional pub operator has produced a healthy set of results. This time it's Gales, based in Horndean, Hampshire which has reported a 10.5% increase in brewing volumes in the last half-year. Wet sales and profits through the company's pubs are also both up by 6%.

★ ★ ★

The Office of Fair Trading has asked the country's biggest pub companies to supply details of the structures of beer tie agreements held with tenants. The follows complaints lodged by the Federation of Small Businesses and could lead to another full-scale investigation into the beer tie.

★ ★

In the week before we went to press PubCo and Brewery stocks suffered sharp falls because of a profits warning from Wetherspoons. Usually upbeat boss Tim Martin reported that like-for-like sales growth was stuttering in the last four weeks - down to 3% from 5%+ because of customer belt-tightening before Christmas. Apparently this reduces their planned opening schedule to a mere 50-60 outlets in each of the next two years. The "gits-with-braces" were so panicked by this that Wetherspoons and others had between 7% and 11% wiped off their value in a day.



**BOOK REVIEW**



**The Good Beer Guide to Belgium & Holland** edited by Tim Webb (CAMRA Books, 352 pp, £11.99)

What have Audrey Hepburn, the bloke who played harmonica on the theme to *Midnight Cowboy*, Emperor Charles V of the Hapsburgs, Plastic Bertrand, the electric train, the pistol and Saint Christina the Astonishing (who could juggle hot coals and levitate to the tops of churches) got in common?

They all came from Belgium and feature in long-overdue and very welcome third edition of the *Good Beer Guide to Belgium & Holland*, which was published in three countries last month. The Guide has a comprehensive introduction to the 117 breweries and over 1,000 regular beers from the greatest ale-producing nation of all. Plus details of 640 top rate specialist beer cafés from brewpubs on the edge of Amsterdam's Red Light District to 17th century mills in the deserted and beautiful valleys of the Ardennes.

That most British of institutions, the Campaign for Real Ale, has gone all European because, in the words of editor Tim Webb: "the world is losing most of its finest beers to the accounting fashions of bottom-line bandits and brand-obsessed execs, who drink wine with their friends and bottled water at lunch. These are not people to leave in charge of your laundry, let alone the future of one of the world's great drinks."

Belgian beer gets the edge on the other great brewing nations because of its extremes of variety. Cherry beers, strong dark ales from Trappist monasteries and sweet cloudy "white" beers are seen increasingly in the UK. Back home, the range of styles is massive, from specially cask-aged brown ales that may take two years to ripen, via subtle blond ales laced with coriander and dried peel, to sumptuous amber brews that match fine wines in strength and depth.

After 1945 the Dutch replaced their brewing skills with prowess in advertising. Recently things are changing. Webb cites some impressive Dutch brewpubs as examples of where Dutch brewers are beginning to beat the Belgians at their own game. The book aims as diverse as Tim Webb explained: "We try to keep it full of useful tips on places to visit, stuff to eat, open-door breweries, festivals and the like. Plus some pretty bossy advice about what we think is over-rated. We probably have the only comprehensive listing of how to get across the North Sea in the travel book business." While the listings are invaluable, the real strength of the book is the gloriously opinionated Webb himself - some of our favourite bits include:

- On failing to find beer cafés in Luxembourg: "In Esch we found a gorgeous looking bar with a fin de siècle frontage that has been taken over by the friends of Lisbon Athletico and was gradually swapping its ancient fittings for new Coke adverts. In Wiltz we thought we spotted a café with a great view of the valley only to find that its reason for existence was to inebriate the workers at the local abattoir, after which it had been named."

- On finding a beer café in Luxembourg: "This pleasant café and dining room is still almost as famous for its unfiltered Pilsener and typical Luxembourg cuisine as it is for its moody service and refusal to allow drinkers to sit at tables reserved for clearly mythical diners."

- On a hotel in Arlon: "If you have ever wondered what Fawley Towers would have been like without a trace of humour, try the truly astonishing Ecu de Bourgogne"

- On the use of hop extract: "Whoever suggested to Chimay, and a dozen other less honest specialist brewers that the science of hop ester extraction had reached a point whereby you could substitute hop oil or powder for whole hops, needs to be put up against a wall and, well, prayed for"

- On what makes a good beer: "After hearing a paean of praise from our favourite professional taster, we asked: 'But is it a nice beer?'. With extreme reluctance and after four paragraphs of provisos, because this guy avoids value judgements like cats avoid motorcycles, he opined: 'No, it's an extremely dull beer but it is beautifully made'."

Highly recommended and an ideal Christmas stocking filler.

JC



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# MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

After last month's bumper crop of news there's less to report this time round, particularly in the City Centre. I was however browsing in Selfridges's food hall (oh yes, this column gets to all the best places) and came across a small but well chosen range of bottled beers including Boon Gueuze, Freeminer Deep Shaft Stout and Shakemantle Ginger Ale, plus Wickwar Station Porter. The prices didn't seem too bad either.

There is however one bright piece of news from the City Centre - we've had a real ale gain! That long-time bastion of keg fizz, the Crown, off Fountain St near to the Town Hall, has new faces behind the bar and a new attitude to the products it sells. It's still a Bass (or Six Continents) pub but is now doing cask ale in the form of Bass and three other handpulled beers. When I popped in 'early doors' there were a fair few in and the Bass was terrifically good - the first 'Burton snatch' I've experienced in a long time (*no smut - Ed (1)*). All the beers come from the Supply Line portfolio, so I'm told there's a fair few to go at. As they wish trade to build steadily and, crucially, they have the financial backing to achieve this, the pub will be allowed to grow organically, so to speak, and will thus only open Mondays to Fridays until its feet are firmly set. Promises to be a very decent addition to the Albert Square drinking scene

## Sounds of the Suburbs

What I was able to do was get out and about a bit round some of the suburban pubs I've been meaning to visit for some time.

In West Didsbury the **Barleycorn** (Barlow Moor Road) was all keg and due for a refurbishment last time I called. Well, it's now been done up (in a sort of lounge-cum-café bar style) but, you guessed, it's still all keg. Across the road, though, the **Woodstock** still offers four cask beers (Fuller's London Pride, Greene King IPA and Old Speckled Hen, Draught Bass) in pretty good nick. This was in fact the first time I'd been to the pub in daylight hours - it really is in a very impressive setting and a credit to the area.

Holt's **Railway** on Lapwing Lane is also performing well, with Mild, Bitter and Thunderbolt on handpump. The food's good too, but... I was disappointed to see that the gassed up cask lager is still being served on handpump. Why on earth Holt's can't sell this stuff another way, and so make the pub eligible for the CAMRA awards and guide entries it would surely get, I just don't know. Presumably they don't care.

I was also made my first visit in along time to the **Old House At Home** on Burton Road. I'd not been in since licensee Dave Ogden left unexpectedly. Carolyn Kelly is licensee now and I was pleased to see that three guest beers still feature alongside the Boddies. When I called these were Wyre Piddle Piddle in the Hole, Wychwod Dogs Bollocks and Skinner's Spriggan Ale - I tried the Piddle in the Hole and it was OK without being anything special.

I'd heard some upbeat reports about the **Cotton Tree** on Cotton Lane, Withington but I must say my visit was slightly disappointing. At 1.15pm on a Saturday I was the only customer and so drank my (rather good) pint of John Smith's Cask in splendid isolation. It's a well-appointed pub but must surely be under-performing. There were display cards for cask Tetley Bitter and in the other

room I saw reversed pump clips for Greenalls Bitter and the long-defunct Mild but the John Smiths was the only offering. Later I saw an advertisement in the trade press for the pub's lease (yours for £49,950) so perhaps it's in a transitional stage.

A visit to Ladybarn brought mixed results. On the down side I was disappointed to see that the handpumps in the **Peninsula** now appear to be disused but on the upside, cask ale is back and seemingly doing well in the **Brewers Arms**. Tracy Maun is still in charge and the pub has finally been repainted - it's still badged as a cask ale house and this time there's Tetley Bitter on handpump to back up the claim.

I also popped into the **Rampant Lion** on Anson Road. It had been a long time since I last called and it was good to see cask ale on sale with Tetley and Boddingtons Bitter on handpump. On my way back to town, I passed though Rusholme where I observed 'To Let' signs on both the **Clarence** and **Hardy's Well**. Neither have sold cask ale for some time - would it be too much to hope that whoever takes them over puts real ale back in? Yes, I suspect it probably would.

## Ducie Doings

A chance mention in the Old Monkey of changes at the **Ducie**, had me scuttling down to the Burtonwood pub at the back of the university. There, I was welcomed by new man at the helm, Paul Wright. Paul also has an interest in the city Burtonwood pub, the **Bulls Head** on London Road in which he retains a hand. Those who remember the **Ducie** as a quaint, rather care-worn, Irish pub run for many years by the friendly face of Marion, are in for a surprise. Re-opened on November 14th, the original plan layout is much altered - the two front rooms remain much as they were, but smartly spruced-up; you still go up two steps to the back to the bar which now occupies the back wall of the two former rooms. These back rooms are now combined into one comfortable bar / lounge. The whole being done-out in that modern-take on Victoriana - the lightly scumbled walls, dark wood, photos of local scenes and such. The old bar by the side of the stairs in the right room has gone, but the gabled roof-light remains as a reminder of the old pub.

The Irishness may have gone, but the Burtonwood bitter remains, and is now joined by that brewer's Top Hat and a guest - this being Jennings Cocker Hoop on my visit. As a new kitchen has been built, a full food menu will be on offer noon to 2.30, and 5 to 8 (Monday - Friday) along with sandwiches and bar snacks. For the sporting, a dartboard is being fitted in one of the front rooms. Before leaving, an impromptu cellar visit was given - very tidy it was too. All in all, a splendid effort that should see a wider cross-section of people using the pub. The **Ducie** is on Devas St, off Upper Lloyd St.

**Stop Press** - there's a very impressive food operation newly launched at **The Knott**, Deansgate (opposite Atlas). An initial sampling produced large amounts of excellent food, all washed down with Marble beers. I'm told a full review will appear in 'Pub Grub' next month. Recommended.

## OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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(Opening Times 224)

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