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BEARTOWN GETS NEW PUB

The ever-expanding Beartown Brewery have picked up another pub in the Opening Times area – the Cheshire Ring in Hyde.

Last month we reported how the pub – once a famous freehouse – had been put up for sale by Enterprise Inns. A delicensed future apparently beckoned but the pub has been rescued by the Congleton-based micro and it set to reopen towards the end of this month.

There will be one major difference from the other Beartown pubs – the Cheshire Ring will not be a managed house but a tenancy, Beartown's first. The incoming tenants are Duncan and Rachel Ward who we caught up with at Stockport Beer Festival at the end of May.



Duncan has an impressive pedigree when it comes to pubs and beer. His first pub (and Good Beer Guide entry) was in Norwich back in 1986. He then opened the Hobgoblin in Reading in 1993 and sold over 1,500 different real ales before he left, and again gained entry in the Good Beer Guide. This was followed by a spell selling real ale and British food in upstate New York and then a couple of years with the Sunday Times Wine Club. Phew!

Naturally, someone with this track record wasn't going to stay away from the pub scene or too long. This, couple with a desire to relocate to the north, saw Duncan circulate many local micros with his CV and Beartown had the good sense to take him on.

So, what's planned for the pub? Expect reasonable prices at all times, for a start. There will be a proper no-smoking room and a non-smoking section of the bar to get served at. Children will be welcome in the no-smoking room up to 8.00pm, too. Nor will there be any loud music or noisy gaming machines. What there will be is proper 'real food' cooked on the premises, a well-thought out wine list and of course, a cracking range of beers. Being a tenant, Duncan is only tied to Beartown for draught real ales so well known for their range and quality. The rest he can source himself so expect a good range of bottled and draught foreign beers together with real cider and perry.

It's good to see the Cheshire Ring rescued. In its heyday it was a real 'destination pub', well known for choice and quality. If all goes to plan, that role is about to be regained. We'll bring you a further report once the pub has opened.

MULTI RECORD BREAKER!

The hot weather brought out the crowds and helped turn the 17th Stockport Beer & Cider Festival into the best yet, with several records broken during the course of the three-day event.

A slow start on Thursday night, where attendance and sales were down, was more than made up over the next two days. Friday night saw the highest attendance at any session ever, with 1,300 people through the doors during the course of the evening session. They were a thirsty crowd, too, with over 4,250 pints of beer downed in that one session alone.

Total attendance was over 4,300 - a record, we think, and total beer sales totalled almost 13,000 pints. On top of that, cider and perry sales exceeded 2,000 pints – the second best ever, and over 60 new members were recruited – the highest number for some years. Despite the high temperatures, beer quality held up well and, unlike last year, was almost all gone by the time the bar closed on Saturday night.



A gleeful Festival Organiser, Jim Flynn, pictured above with Festival (and Olde Vic) Licensee Steve Brannan, was cock-a-hoop. He told Opening Times: "Last year we competed with a Bank Holiday and World Cup football. This year we have bounced back with a vengeance with records broken or equalled all over the place. Next year we 'come of age' with our 18th festival so we will try and make it that little bit special, although this year is going to be a hard act to follow." Jim also took the opportunity to thank not only the numerous festival sponsors, including the Stockport Express, Robinson's and Hydes' breweries, and festival licensee Steve Brannan, but also the many CAMRA members who gave up their time to help staff the event. "With over 120 volunteer staff we were able to make sure the festival was both well-run and policed. I was particularly proud that even at the busiest sessions no-one had to wait very long to be served."

**INSIDE
JUNE'S
OPENING
TIMES**

Editors View	2	Book Review	7	Mild Challenge	11	Curmudgeon	15
Pub Grub	4	Beer & Cider Awards	8	Macc Pub News	12	Peak Pub News	17
Pub of the Month	5	GBBF 2003	9	CAMRA Calling	14	Manchester Matters	18
Stagger	6	Thai me to the Tusk.	10	Five Years Ago	15	Pub News	19



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2002
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 Gold Medal

IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

This month I'm going to indulge in some unashamed self-congratulation. And why not? First - well done to everyone involved with Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Records fell like nine-pins and it's a real tribute to the hard work of all our volunteer staff and organisers. Here's looking to next year!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Congratulations also to all those involved with the new Stockport Pub Guide, Viaducts & Vaults 3. Of the three guides to Stockport pubs that CAMRA has produced, this must be the best yet. It's got everything you want in a pub guide and more besides - if you've not got your yet then order one today - the address is on the opposite page. Alastair Walker and his editorial/production team have done a superb job here.

Lots of people were involved in the production of Viaducts & Vaults 3, not least my co-editor here on Opening Times, Paul Hutchings. Paul is largely responsible for the slick and professional appearance of the book and I know he dedicated a huge amount of time to what I hope will be another award-winning guide. Thanks to one and all. Sorry there's no Brewery News this month, what with the Festival I seem to have run out of time. Sorry - but it'll be back next month.

John Clarke

Whilst adding my congratulations to the organisers of the very successful Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, and echoing John's recommendation of Viaducts & Vaults 3 - its amazing that 7 long years have elapsed since its predecessor hit the streets - I would just like to say a few words here in praise of the traditional family-owned regional brewers who remain the unsung champions (and by far, the largest producers) of cask ale. In those seven years, the proportion of pubs in Stockport selling only fizzy chemicals has increased from 6% to 30%. That it has not increased more has been largely due to the influence of the local family owned brewer - Robinsons, with help from Holts, who have opened more pubs in the area, and Hydes who have recently shown their confidence and commitment with the refurbishment of the Moss Rose into the 'Four Heaton's'. It was also nice to see my old friends Fullers in London increasing their profits by nearly 10%. Here's to you.

Paul Hutchings

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 230

OPENING TIMES is published by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA - The Campaign for Real Ale. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the campaign either locally or nationally. Editors: John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD. ☎ (0161) 477 1973; Paul Hutchings, 8 The Green, Heaton Norris, Stockport Cheshire, SK4 2NP. ☎ & Fax (0161) 432 8384. News, articles and letters welcome. All editorial items may be submitted in most popular WP formats or preferably ASCII on IBM-PC format 3.5" disks (which will eventually be returned!) or CD-R, or via e-mail to johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com. Adverts or photos should be "hard copy" or in CorelDraw 3,5 or 7 (*.cdr) format or TIFF or EPS files (submit printed proofs for checking and ensure that any "include all fonts" options are on). All editorial items © CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged. All Advertising images are copyright the respective design sources (Largely CPPR, but all other copyrights and trademarks acknowledged).

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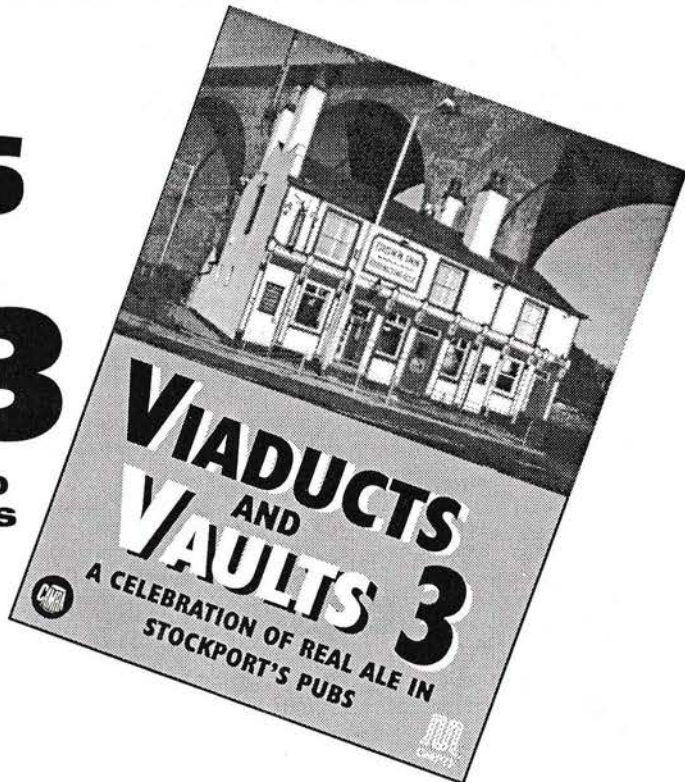
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The Lloyd's Hotel, Chorlton

The Lloyd's Hotel, has had a chequered history. I don't know how long it's been a pub - it might well have started out in the hands of one of Manchester's long-gone breweries - Hardy's Crown Brewery in Hulme perhaps? Or the Cornbrook Brewery, maybe. I say this because it ultimately fell into the hands of Bass who did lots of silly things with it, none of which were very successful. Luckily, they have now done the decent thing and sold it to JW Lees, a brewery company that certainly knows how to run pubs.

Lees in turn appear to have spent a small fortune on the place - it was certainly closed for long enough while the builders were in. I didn't know the pub before, after all there was simply no reason to visit it, but now it's very airy and spacious. In fact it's pretty much what you'd expect from a traditional pub reinvented in a modern idiom - you know, polished floors, light décor, a combination of open spaces and more intimate alcoves, and a restrained use of bric-a-brac. Naturally there's a no-smoking area and board games are available should the urge take you.

Apart from the main bar area, there's a restaurant at the back, and upstairs 'The Boardroom' which can be booked for small functions. At the back a bowling green has miraculously survived the pub's various incarnations and hopefully will now gain a new lease of life. Yes it's all very good...and yet. Perhaps it's the sheer newness of everything but the Lloyds certainly lacks the immediate charms of, say, Rain Bar, Lees' highly successful City Centre flagship. My companion for the evening, who we shall call The Brewer, put his finger on it - "It's really well done, really well laid out but it holds no charm for me." Indeed.

The beer range added to the slight air of disappointment, too. While there were plenty of posters advertising the Lees seasonal range, only GB Mild and Bitter were available on handpump. Well, actually the mild had run out, so it was bitter or nothing. This was OK.

So, to the food. This is available either in the restaurant or at your table in the pub proper and comes from an extensive menu which presents quite a skilful blend of pub grub favourites with rather more adventurous dishes. It covers the whole gamut from snacks, sandwiches ("served in ciabatta or country multi cereal bread"), hot panini sandwiches, hot wraps, grills, 'tradition with a twist' and a small range of puddings.

Something for everyone really, and as we had essentially just called in for a mid-evening bite during a tour of Chorlton, it's a shame we were unable to do this justice. We did pick two very different dishes, though - I chose 'posh fish and chips' from the 'tradition with a twist' menu, while The Brewer had a main course sized chicken and bacon salad. I think he came off best.

The posh fish and chips is described as "white fish, salmon coated in batter and lobster tails coated in breadcrumbs, served with chips". Well, it didn't exactly do everything it said on the tin, so to speak, as all three components came battered (and pretty ordinary batter it was, too) with a reasonable heap of fries. Not bad, I suppose, but not that posh either and, at £7.25, only average value.

The salad, though, was a much better bet. The menu says this comprises "chargrilled chicken fillet and thin strips of bacon on a bed of mixed leaves with croutons, parmesan and caesar dressing". This really did live up to expectations and made for an impressive plateful with plenty of well-cooked chicken and bacon, surmounting a large heap of well-dressed leaves. Better value at £6.95.

Time constraints meant we had no time for pudding, not even the intriguingly described Raspberry Splodge, which sounded just my type of dish.

Perhaps it needs time to bed down. Perhaps we caught it on an off night. The Lloyd's ought to be a real asset to the Chorlton drinking scene and it certainly adds some additional variety but at the moment, well to me at least, certainly falls a little way short of being a 'must visit' if you're in the area. A return visit in a few months time will probably show which way it's going to go.

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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for June, the Arden Arms (Millgate, Stockport) is a classic pub by any definition. Apart from a sensitive alteration to bring an old kitchen into public use, this Grade II listed building has remained essentially unchanged for 150 years or more. So, it was with considerable sadness that local drinkers watched as the pub entered a spiral of decline, culminating in the eviction of one set of tenants by Robinson's. Happily those days are now firmly in the distant past and the pub has been restored to its former glory – a much used cliché which just happens to be true in the case of the Arden Arms.

Those responsible for this transformation are Joe Quinn and Steve King who took over the pub in late 1999. They made an immediate start with a thorough redecoration and spruce up, and followed this with a comprehensive programme of restoration which now sees the pub gleam and sparkle much as it did during its heyday under the long-term tenancy of Jack May.

Joe and Steve made their names when they owned That Café in Levenshulme, which became something of a gastronomic oasis under their tenure. Unsurprisingly then, a high-class food operation was introduced where well-cooked and imaginative food, 'restaurant food at pub prices', now adds to the pub's many attractions.

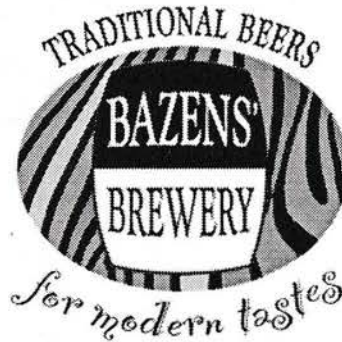
Foremost amongst those attractions has to be the superbly kept Robinson's ales. Best Bitter and Hatters Mild are the mainstays, although these are joined by Old Tom for the winter months and the current seasonal is also usually available. All the beer is invariably in immaculate condition and it is no surprise that the Arden Arms is once again a fixture in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide. Joe and Steve's efforts in rescuing one of the town's classic pubs was recognised with a previous Pub of the Month Award in December 2000. They have gone on to create a flagship for quality and excellence on all fronts. It is this unflagging commitment and dedication to making sure the Arden stays at the very forefront of the local pub scene that a second award is now being made.

This very well deserved award will be presented on Thursday 26 June from 8.00pm onwards. An excellent night is in prospect – get there early to bag a seat.. JC.

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

CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 230:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Butler, Jim Flynn, Peter Edwardson, Phil Levison, Rhys Jones, Mark McConachie, Anthony Firmin, Phil Booton, Frank Wood, Dave Hallows, Tom Lord, Brian Taylor.



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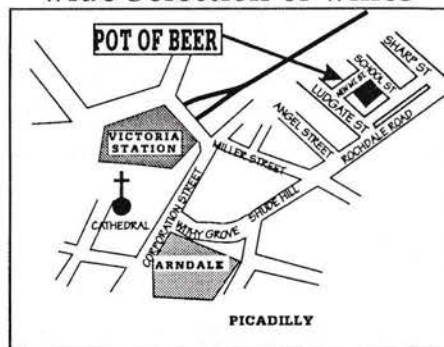
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5



STAGGER

with Jim Flynn

West Didsbury & Withington Wander

The pub scene in West Didsbury was not well known to me and therefore when I joined a sizeable group of fellow staggerers at the **Woodstock** on Barlow Moor Road, I was looking forward to the evening with more than the usual interest.

This first pub used to be the headquarters of the British Council, and with the wood panelling, large rooms and high ceilings it still has that feel about it. The pub is in three levels with an upstairs and downstairs bar, although there is no real ale upstairs. It was at this pint that my bank manager had to be resuscitated with the very ordinary Old Speckled Hen selling at £2.50 a pint and the only marginally superior Boddingtons Bitter at £2.40.

Walking past the now gaudy and keg-only **Barleycorn** we found our way to the **Four In Hand** on the corner of Lapwing Lane and Palatine Road. They certainly go in for barn-like pubs in West Didsbury, with this pub almost as big as the first. On the bar was certainly my first sighting of a keg Marstons Pedigree font. When will these breweries learn that when they produce a keg version of their real ale brands they are in great danger of confusing the public and damaging the brands themselves. The cask ales available were Banks's Bitter and Marston's Bitter, both considered more than reasonable.

Moving down Lapwing Lane we arrived at what must be the smallest pub in West Didsbury, the **Railway**. At one time it must have been a really small place because as can be seen from the frontage it has been extended into the shop next door. It's an impressive conversion, though, and you can well see why it has recently picked up a prize in CAMRA's national Pub Design Awards. Ignoring the smooth lager on handpump (why oh why do Holts do this?), I tried the Holt's Mild but had to ask for it to be

exchanged for the Bitter. We found both this and the seasonal Blackwell (at a huge £2.05 for Holts - and in a tied house, too!) both disappointingly indifferent.

Across the road is the **Metropolitan**, another huge pub. Previously the notorious Midland, it had been transformed into what must be a real goldmine. The pub and the restaurant area, with its high vaulted ceiling, were incredibly busy. It was a very pleasant spring evening and we sat outside under the veranda heaters. Most of us tried the Taylors Landlord, which was the best beer thus far into the Stagger. The Black Sheep and Marstons Pedigree were also well received. I normally prefer small and cosier pubs, but for once I have to say that on this night I found the **Metropolitan** the best pub in West Didsbury.

Down Burton Road we moved into Withington and the **Old House At Home**. The L-shaped pub was comparatively quiet and I have to say that in my eyes it isn't the most characterful of pubs. It was however the home of the best received beer of the night. Skinnners Cornish Blond, a lager-style hoppy wheat beer at 5%ABV. Almost as well received was the Boddingtons Bitter.

Further down Burton Road is the **Orion**, a stereotypical street corner Holts pub (although one they bought off Whitbread a good few years ago). The pub's slightly worn textures give you the feeling that perhaps it has seen better days and needs some investment. It may be that the Withington drinking public feel the same because I have never seen it so quiet on a weekend evening. There was a mild handpump in the vault but when mild was ordered the bar staff reached for the smooth pump. I thought Holts had banned this practice. The Bitter however was pleasant enough.

Turning the corner on to Wilmslow Road we bypassed the new very sad **White Lion** (keg) and also the unfortunately keg-only **Albert**. Our destination was my favourite pub of the night, the **Victoria**. From the etched windows to the pictures of Hydes Brewery in the past to the unique 'bum rests' around the bar (do you sit or stand?), this traditional pub has character. Of the four Hydes' beers on sale, Mild, Bitter, Jekyll's Gold and the seasonal Copper Hopper, we tried the Mild and the seasonal and found both on good form.

Retracing our steps we went back down Wilmslow Road, past the **Turnpike** (why do Sam Smiths have so many keg pubs?) we arrived at our final port of call, Marston's **Red Lion**. We aimed for



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the vault only to find the door locked. Thus we fought our way into the very crowded lounge - you can certainly see why this was the biggest volume pub in Marston's entire estate. Bitter and Pedigree were ordered and both found to be very enjoyable, although in truth the pub was perhaps just *too* busy to really relax and enjoy either it or the beer. Still, it was good to end the night in a thriving pub obviously selling large quantities of real ale.

And so ended a mixed and ultimately enjoyable Stagger. I didn't know all of these pubs but none totally disappointed, although the combination of high prices and very ordinary beer perhaps made the Woodstock the least enjoyable pub of the night.

Of course, this report can only be a snapshot of what one group of people found on one particular night. It can't be taken as a once and for all judgement of either the pubs or their beers - as ever why not visit some of them yourselves to see how much you agree...or otherwise!



BOOK REVIEW

Viaducts & Vaults 3, CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester, 96pp, £4.95

It's fortunate that the Stockport pub deemed visually striking enough to feature on television ads for the 2001 census has also been one of the town's best pubs for many years. That's good enough reason for the Crown on Heaton Lane to feature once again on the cover of the latest edition of CAMRA's guide to Stockport's pubs.

The guide's previous edition, in 1996, came at a high point of real ale availability in the town's pubs. Today, though real ale is still easy to find in Stockport, there has been a disturbing increase in the number of pubs selling only keg or smooth beers, with, for example, only four of Reddish's nine pubs offering the real stuff. CAMRA, of course, is dedicated to the cause of quality beers in quality pubs, and a splendidly passionate article by editor Alastair Walker acts as a rallying cry against "artificial beers from corporate, soul-less tyrants" and in favour of the craft-made beers that make it worthwhile going to the pub.

A range of thematic articles, scattered amongst the pub listings but easily found from the table of contents, covers every aspect of Stockport drinking, from mild to Robinson's export trade. All have clearly been written expressly for the guide, rather than recycling "standard issue" CAMRA publicity; I was particularly taken by the organisation of the breweries section, which can all too easily turn into a straight alphabetical list. I did wonder, though, whether there might have been scope for a piece in real ale in the off-trade.

While the articles are important, a pub guide is ultimately judged by the quality of the pub listings and descriptions, and Viaducts & Vaults 3 scores highly here. Logically arranged in district order, every pub gets a basic name and address listing, with the stern warning "NO REAL ALE" appended to the keg-only establishments. Everywhere that does sell real ale, though, gets at least a listing of opening hours, beers available, and a couple of lines description, while the highly recommended pubs get an extended description, a photograph (or one of Rosemary Wignall's excellent pen and ink drawings) and facilities denoted by an extensive range of symbols (they even distinguish between large and small car parks!). The descriptions are clearly written by people who know the pub, and have been skilfully edited into a consistent and readable style.

The practical side of the guide has not been ignored, with clear maps, public transport information, and that too often neglected necessity, a comprehensive index. The design is crisp, clean, and logical, even the blank pages provided for notes at the end being enlivened by delightful photographic cameos from some of the town's most characterful pubs. And while the book had been some months in gestation, the details have been revised until the last possible date, so that, for example, the Vine in Cheadle appears under its strange new name Barsh. (Admittedly the renaming of the Moss Rose in Heaton Norris has not been caught, but this did take place only days before the guide hit the streets - and indeed the possibility of the pub changing its name is mentioned).

If you are a regular OT reader, you may think you know Stockport's pubs well enough not to need a guide to them. Believe me, you couldn't be more wrong! There's a nugget on every page, from the pub write-ups to the boxed descriptions which humour the book's name by detailing Stockport's many viaducts. One of the very best guides CAMRA has produced in recent years, this is an essential purchase for anyone who ever drinks in Stockport whether regularly or occasionally. Very highly recommended. **RPJ.**

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CAMRA FESTIVAL BEER & CIDER AWARDS

One of the highlights of the Stockport Beer & Cider Festival is the customers' votes for their favourite beers and ciders. It is traditional for the votes to be very close and this year was no exception, despite a higher than usual number of votes being cast.

In the beer categories the winning beers were:

Mild - Wentworth Gun Park Dark, from Rotherham.

Bitter - Bazens' Flatbac, from Salford

Premium Bitter - Whim Cascade, from Hartington, Derbyshire

Special Beer - Abbeydale Redemption, a real ginger beer from Sheffield

Stout/Porter - a tie between RCH Old Slug Porter from Somerset and Wentworth Oatmeal Stout, from Rotherham.

Strong/Old Ales - Robinson's Old Tom, local favourite, of course.

Total votes cast for each of the category winner were compared to establish the most popular beers. There was a tie for second place between two very different beers - the powerful Old Tom and the very modern and hoppy Whim Cascade, made entirely with Cascade hops from the USA. The overall winner, though, was Bazens' Flatbac, a pale, citrusy, hoppy beer, very much in the modern style. Congratulations to all concerned.



In the Cider and Perry competition there was an even closer race. The winning cider, though, is an old favourite from Ted Jones in Herefordshire. Ted doesn't sell his cider commercially but always donates us a tub each his cider and perry for which we make a donation to a local hospice in Herefordshire.

There was little to chose between the top two perries so, unusually, a runner-up award is to be made. This will be going to the relatively unknown Newtons Court in Herefordshire, for their organic perry. The champion perry though, was another old favourite from Brian Browning of Gloucestershire. Brian is the uncle of well-known cider maker (and multiple-Stockport award winner) Dennis Gwatkin, so quality obviously runs in the family.

Macclesfield

There have been some other major beer and cider contests recently, too. The Macclesfield Beer Festival in early May hosted the Champion Beer of Cheshire competition. The beers submitted were: Beartown - Kodiak Gold & Wheat Bear; Burtonwood - Bitter & Top Hat; Coach House - Honey Pot & Dick Turpin, Khean - All Rounder & Village Green; Storm - Windgather & Silk of Amnesia; Weetwood -

Eastgate Ale & Oasthouse Gold. The result is as follows 1st Weetwood Eastgate Ale, 2nd Khean All Rounder, 3rd Beartown Wheat Bear, 4th Burtonwood Bitter & 5th Coach House Honey Pot.

National Cider & Perry Champions

CAMRA's National Cider & Perry Championships were held at the Reading Beer & Cider Festival at the beginning of May. The winner were:

Perry - Bronze - Barkers Dry; Silver - Impaired Vision Medium; Gold - Hartlands Sweet

Cider - Bronze - Hecks Hang Down; Silver - Gwynt y Ddraig Medium; Gold - Summers Medium.



VIADUCTS & VAULTS 3
DETAILS PAGE 3
REVIEW PAGE 7

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GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL

Held at London Olympia every year, the Great British Beer Festival is Britain's biggest beer festival and has much to offer you. Why not catch up with friends or unwind after work with a good quality pint? There is also live entertainment and music, traditional pub games and a fine selection of food including many pub favourites. Drop in and enjoy all the fun at the Great British Beer Festival from 5th-9th August.

The festival brings together the widest beer range from around the country with a handpicked selection of over 700 real ales, ciders and perries. Our enthusiastic bar staff are also happy to advise you on the wide-ranging international choice of beers and real lagers including beer from Germany, Belgium, Italy, USA, Russia and the Czech Republic.

Cider drinkers will find a wide choice of real ciders on offer at the Real Cider and Perry Bar and there is also a large range of bottled real ales for you to enjoy at the Bottled Beer Bar. There are dozens of different bars at the festival and you will find many of your favourites as well as some of the newest beers available. What's more, to truly appreciate the tastes on offer, you could attend one of our tutored beer tastings hosted by our international team of beer experts.

CAMRA welcomes families to the festival and provides a Family Room with entertainers and games which is open until 9pm every night. Children must be supervised by a family member at all times. You can also bring along your work colleagues as we provide corporate hospitality, please visit the festival website, www.gbbf.org for further details or telephone CAMRA on 01727 867201.

2002 saw a record 44,000 visitors from around the country through the door over five days. Between them they downed 200,000 pints as well as bottled beers, cider, perry, and a selection from our international beer bar. Visitors enjoy the unique festival atmosphere and nearly 90% of visitors rated the festival as excellent or good.

The Great British Beer Festival is open every day from Tuesday 5th August to Saturday 9th August and full details of opening times, prices and live music can be found at www.gbbf.org or on our Information Line 0900 525 2525 (calls to this number cost 60p per minute). Tickets can be booked online or by telephoning 01727 867201; discounts are available for CAMRA members. Remember to leave your car at home as London Olympia is easily reached by public transport.

Thrills & spills
 At the
 Great British Beer Festival



London Olympia
 5th-9th August 2003
www.gbbf.org



THAI ME TO THE ELEPHANT TUSK!

Anthony Firmin writes from exotic parts

My partner and I decided to celebrate Christmas and New Year in a hotter and sunnier climate. A last minute holiday deal was found and off we went to Thailand.

Much has been written of the four micro-breweries in Bangkok and plans were made to visit a couple of these - one of which served food and featured a couple of shows of traditional Thai dancing every evening. However, our visit to Bangkok didn't go quite to plan and as we were only there for 3 days the micro-brewery visits had to be postponed for future times.

The rest of our Thai holiday was spent at the resort village of Cha-Am about 120km south of Bangkok which was pleasant and relaxing. The only beer the hotel could offer was Singha which as most people know is nothing to get excited about.

Most evenings were spent in the small town of Hua-Hin about 15km south of our hotel eating in the ever so cheap cafes and restaurants, and drinking in the bars which were not obvious pick-up places for the local girls. We also spent time visiting the night markets and shops in search of high quality fake goods for presents.

It was during one of these endless shopping excursions that something caught my attention. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the words "Brewing Company" and all further thoughts of shopping were lost, much to my partner's disgust, and a bee-line was made for the "Hua-Hin Brewing Company".

The building itself has been made to look like it is a run down ramshackled collection of shacks and huts all conjoined with a myriad of steps as if it is on the harbour. It is connected to the Hilton Hotel, which dominates the centre of this small town. The decision was made - we were going for a drink so up the steps we went! There was a band playing inside, which made conversation impossible so we opted for an outside table in the warm evening air.

The beer menu was reviewed and I was not disappointed!! Three beers were on offer from the brewery - so they were all to be tried. All the beers appear to be of keg type dispense. The beers were...

★ Sabai Sabai Wheat Ale (4.5%): a smooth yet cloudy wheat beer with a slight lemony taste. A nice beer to relax to. Very morish.

★ Dancing Monkey Lager (5.0%): a pleasant lager, nothing exceptional about it although you couldn't tell it was 5.0%! The pub's description says "have a few glasses of Dancing Monkey and we guarantee you will make a fool of yourself on the dance floor". You will be relieved to hear I didn't!!!

★ Elephant Tusk Dark Ale (6.0%): This was stunning. There were lots of roast malt flavours combined with cascade hops to give this beer an interesting taste, the hops were not too overpowering. Very moreish and very dangerous - you couldn't tell it was 6.0%. Again their description says "Have a few glasses of Elephant Tusk and impress your girlfriend". I did and she wasn't!!

All the beers were the same price...0.3 ltr £1.70, 0.5 ltr £2.45 and 1 ltr £4.40. Compared to the local Singha beer these were very expensive indeed. They also offered beer by the metre at £9.25, I presume this is their equivalent of a yard of ale which maybe the future of things to come?

The smell from the outdoor barbecue was enough to convince my other half that we should eat here. The menu comprises mostly of freshly caught sea-food and is reasonably cheap although quite expensive compared to other cafes in the area. The food was succulent and fresh and was the perfect accompaniment to the beer.

After much asking I was able to obtain some information about the history of the brewery. The Hua-Hin Brewing Company started in 1923 on the docks of a small fishing village 20km from Hua-Hi. The founder was local fishing tycoon Sopchoke Chulasughandra Sr and he originally served his Moonshine beer to local fishermen. The beer was often swapped for the catch of the day, however Sopchoke soon realised that beer was a lucrative business and opened to the public in 1937. The business was passed to his playboy son Sopchoke Jnr. in 1963 and pictures of his many girlfriends adorn the walls of the bar.

The Hua-Hin Brewing Company is renowned in the area for the high quality of the beer that it serves as well as the sea-food (the catch is still provided by local fishermen). The beer is 100% natural and is now brewed by the great grandson of the founder. There are some copper brewing vessels behind the bar but as these contained a number of holes they obviously were not part of the brewery. What I gathered from the bar staff the beer isn't brewed on the premises and I was unable to find out where the brewery was located.

After finishing our meal we went inside to watch the band play - they sounded very good from outside. The inside of the pub is large arranged on two floors with a long bar on the ground floor. There is also quite a large stage and a dance floor for when you have had too much Dancing Monkey!!

Many bars in tourist areas are pick-up places for local Thai girls (I am sure you know what I mean) and the Hua-Hin Brewing Company was no exception. It was amusing, yet embarrassing, to listen to a couple of guys trying to negotiate a price for the night with a couple of Thai girls with the obvious language difficulties and the loud music. You have been warned!

We visited the brewpub on several more occasions and the beer and food were excellent every time. The pub advertises a happy hour from 18:00 - 20:00 when a singer and pianist plays and the beer is half price. There were only about a dozen people in the place and for us this was a better time to visit.

There is a shop in the pub selling t-shirts, polo shirts, baseball caps and a few other bits and pieces. Not surprisingly, compared to all the shops on the street, it is relatively expensive.

So if you have had a hard day at the beach you at least know that there is some decent beer waiting for you in Hua-Hin.

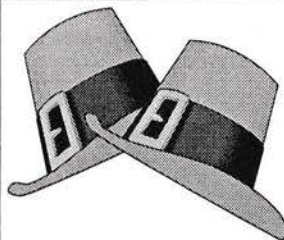
Hua-Hin Brewing Company, 33 Naresdamri Road, Hua-Hin 71100, Thailand. Tel: +66(0) 3251-2888

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2003 MILD CHALLENGE ROUND-UP

This year's Mild Challenge was another great success, writes Mild Challenge Coordinator, Mark McConachie. For those not in the know, this is a 'passport scheme' whereby participating pubs stamp a drinker's mild card when they have a pint or half-pint of mild in that pub.

Obtaining twelve or more different stamps gets that drinker a variety of prizes - free entry to this festival, free pints of mild at this festival, a commemorative T-shirt, a commemorative Sweatshirt, a personally engraved pewter tankard or a combination of the aforesaid prizes.

This year's Challenge ran for five weeks from April 5th to May 11th with a mammoth 81 pubs taking part from as far afield as Salford and the city centre in the north, to Glossop in the east and Whaley Bridge in the south. Final results show that just under one hundred people returned their cards (many more will have started, but not completed a card for whatever reason). Although a slight drop on last year, more entrants have visited more pubs and sampled more mild by dint of entering the Mild Challenge Super - 36 pub visits needed - nearly a third of entrants took this option. Thirteen hardy souls managed to complete the challenge in its entirety by collecting stamps in all 81 pubs.

This is great news for mild sales and great news for the publicans who supported CAMRA in this important campaigning issue. On Mark's travels he encountered many licensees who told him that interest in the Challenge and mild were both up, additionally many people had travelled to pubs they had never visited before. All round a great effort and a huge success; Mark would like to pass on his grateful thanks to all of the publicans who took part, all of the people who entered the challenge, and to all those in CAMRA who assisted in distributing / collecting the mild challenge material.



PRAGUE REVISITED

Local member *Phil Booton* has been to Prague, armed with the two-part guide that appeared in *Opening Times* last year. He found one or two gems that we missed...

Pivni Galerie, U Pruhonu 9: The best find of the trip! This is a beershop in the inner suburb of Holesovice, selling a wide range of beers from small and medium-sized Czech breweries. The good news is that it has a small bar area with two beers on draught. Any of the bottles can be drunk on the premises. The owner speaks excellent English and English language beer lists are available. A host of beers available nowhere else in Prague. Also lots of beer mats for the tegeologists amongst you. Opening hours are 10.00-20.00 Monday-Friday, 10.00-13.00 Saturday, closed Sunday. It's a fair way from the centre near the old Mestan Brewery - but trams 3 or 14 will get you there. A must visit if in Prague.

Kyvadlo, V Jame 5: A rare outlet for Bernard beers, with three being available on draught. A smart bar just off Vodickova near the Novomestsky Pivovar. Also does good food.

Hlucna Samota, Zahrebska 14: Local bar some way south of Wenceslas Square. Rather food-oriented with an extensive menu. Does Hoegaarden and Kelt, a dark, Guinness like beer, which was unfortunately rather undistinguished. Very attractive bar staff!

U Svatcho Tomase, Letenska 12: Tavernous beer hall aimed at the tourist trade. A misleading list of beers on a blackboard outside which were not actually available. Interesting for the decor but for no other reason.

XXX, Senovazne Namesti 2: Bare boarded bar in a small square near the Powder Tower. No pornography in evidence! An outlet for Krusovice beers. May close early if no custom.

These details have been added to the previous articles which now available as an on-line guide to Prague. For your copy, e-mail Edl at johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com.

TAKING UP THE CHALLENGE

Chris Walkden took up the year's Mild Challenge - here's how he got on...

Congratulations to the organisers and all the publicans that have taken part in this year's Mild Challenge. In particular, I was pleased to see that the Mild Challenge Super had been introduced with a target of 36 pubs which gives you something to aim at in between the minimum target of 12 pubs or all 80-plus. I did visit the whole lot a couple of years ago and it was hard work. Last year, time constraints did not allow this, so I did the only other challenge (12 pubs in 12 different areas) in one day- and with 12 different milds to boot -and no Robbies. This year again I had little time, so the "Super" was an ideal and achievable challenge whilst leaving some time for my other interests (as well as a full time job !!).

I tried to sample as many different milds in the 36 pubs I visited. Eventually I notched up 20 different milds from 18 different breweries. Some of the pubs with Guest Milds, such as the Stalybridge Station Buffet, actually had two milds on during my visit (Cropton Barmy and Titanic Mild at 4%) but only one stamp was allowed !!, I caught up with the Titanic at The Knott as there was no Ginger Marble available whilst the Marble Arch was also out of stock so I had to make do with an excellent Highgate Dark. The Crescent in Salford had Archers Keene Special at 5% - a real treat and the strongest mild encountered on my travels - and it was at the start of a day out in Manchester Centre!

Many local breweries were represented including the LAB micro in Denton although Lees only had one pub and Holts only two pubs in the Challenge. By contrast, there were 15 Hydres pubs in which to sample their Mild or Light. I later discovered that the rare (for these parts) Welsh Dark was on in the Conway, Cheadle Hulme after I had already got all my stamps - but I did make the trip to try it anyway.

After managing to do the Challenge last year without a pint of Robbies, this year I visited 12 Robbies pubs in 12 different areas. The Blossoms in Heaviley provided me with the best pint of mild of the whole challenge (but only just) whilst the worst was also Robbies in a pub outside our area. It was nice to see that their Dark Mild has now been rebadged as Hatters Dark with new pump clips - perhaps it may become more widely available? Robbies prices do seem to vary tremendously - I paid £1.90 for a pint of mild in one pub and £1.45 in another.

The 36 pubs I visited were in 25 different areas and included six I had never visited before. One of these was The Nelson in Didsbury where a pint of M&B Mild was only £1.40. The cheapest price was as usual the Porters Dark Mild in the Railway at £1.20, the most expensive the guest in the Olde Vic in Edgeley (£2.00) which was Slaters Monkey Magic at the time of my visit. Generally speaking, the pubs with guest milds were charging the highest prices, but they do not have the economies of scale of tied pubs. What they do do, though, is give us an excellent choice of beers- including milds- from right across the country.

So there is plenty of variety of mild beers in our area if you look for them. Milds are not always weak beers and they certainly cover a wide variety of flavours. So if you completed the Challenge, congratulations- if you didn't just try a pint of mild next time you come across one- you may be pleasantly surprised at what you find.

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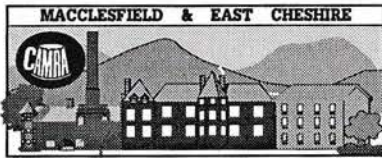
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**PUB
CLOSURES
SWEEP AREA**

A wave of pub closures has swept through the Macclesfield area in recent weeks with pubs either shutting or shop or, for some already closed, facing conversion to other uses.

Two historic buildings in a town centre conservation area could be revamped into a development of apartments and shops. The two former pubs affected are the **Three Pigeons** and the **Old King's Head** which run parallel along Chestergate and King Edward Street. The original facades would be retained but everything else swept away in the development.

Meanwhile the **George Hotel**, a distinctive black and white landmark pub on the corner of Jordangate and Hibel Road is also set to become flats if the current owner has his way. It was bought in the late 1980s by Arthur Bailey of Hall House Farm, Rushton Spencer, who has now had to close the pub operation there as trade was so slow. A bed and breakfast business continues in the upper rooms. Mr Bailey has now applied for permission to turn the Grade II listed building into seven flats and build four new ones on land adjoining the pub.

Things are no better out in the country, either. Last orders have been called at the **Dixon Arms** at Chelford, which is facing demolition to make way for flats. Macclesfield Council's south area planning committee has approved proposals for the demolition of the building and the erection of a three-storey apartment block. The pub, on Knutsford Road, was put on the market last year after being empty and boarded up for many months.

It's also curtains for one of the borough's oldest pubs, the **Redway Tavern**, the only pub in Kerridge, near Bollington. A notice inside the pub's front door simply says "Sorry, we are now closed." Local fears that the pub was to close were confirmed when the owner admitted defeat in keeping it running as a viable operation. Gaynor Qualter, who bought the 150-year old pub two years ago plans to turn it into two cottages after losing money since she bought it

Other News

In Macclesfield, Eric and Ann Fox are retiring from the **Boarhound** in September, after running pub for 39 years. During their tenure at the Boarhound, Eric and Ann have run a thriving local with a real community spirit and the pub has been a regular in CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide. They have been god friend to Macclesfield CAMRA and we will be sorry to see them go, although they do of course have our best wishes for a long and happy retirement.

While the **Redway Tavern** might not be able to make a go of it, the other pub in Kerridge, the **Bulls Head**, is doing very nicely thank you. The pub has been run by the Dickens family for 66 years and current licensee, 70-year old Dorothy Dickens runs it with the help of her family, just the way it always has been. The **Bull's Head** dates back to the late 1700s when it was still a farmhouse and opened up one end as a pub. It was refurbished by Robinson's in the 1980s.

**IT'S ALL HAPPENING AT
WRENBURY**

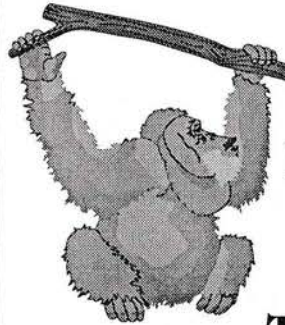
With two beer festivals and a scarecrow trail, Wrenbury is the place to visit in July.

Friday 4 and Saturday 6 July are the dates for the Paradise Brewery Beer Festival. This will feature 30 or so beers from other micro-breweries, plus real cider. The festival will be open 11-11 both days and Paradise Brewery is only a three-minute walk from Wrenbury Station. Saturday 5 July also sees the annual Scarecrow Trail - last year there were 130 scarecrows in and around Wrenbury which made for entertaining viewing on the walk between Paradise Brewery and the Bhurtpore Inn.

The Bhurtpore will be hosting its own annual beer festival from Tuesday 8 July through to the following Sunday, with all-day opening on the Saturday and Sunday. There will be over 90 different beers available here. As usual, the indefatigable Crewe & Shrewsbury Passenger Association has arranged for the 11.33 Piccadilly-Cardiff express to stop specially at Wrenbury on both Saturday's (that's 5 and 12 July), with a return service stopping at 17.05. Stewards from the Passenger Association will be on duty at Wrenbury Station on Festival days (excluding Sundays).

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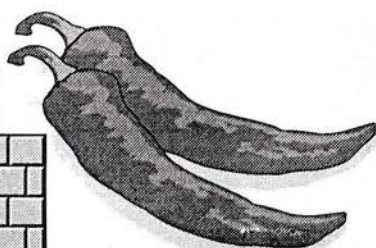
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Good Things Come to Those Who Wait

There is nothing better than seeing a Marketing Man (you know, red plastic specs, bow tie, stripy shirt, braces, shaven-head and/or ponytail (and that's just the girls) get their come-uppance. Especially when the eejut's big idea was to wipe out their brands unique selling point. Well it just happened to Guinness. YOU remember Guinness - the formerly fashionable slow-pouring pint, whose bubbles apparently travel the wrong way. Yes that's the struff, the not-too-bad-tasting nitro-keg stout that still tastes better in Dublin, even though the genuine Irish stuff has been dumbed-down. The stuff that takes 119 seconds or so to pour the perfect pint.

Well, the eejut concerned announced that in the 21st Century, the customer did not have two minutes to spare waiting for his (probably) ice-cold and thereby nearly tasteless pint, so in a panic move followed Murphy's and introduced "Quick pour" Guinness. You turn a tap, and "woosh" there it is. Only 7-9 seconds (if a tad lifeless). Guess what? The customer was NOT impressed, AND it turned out he DID have the two minutes spare. The barstaff liked it even less - they had to put up with "That's not b***** Guinness!" and "Pour it properly, you lazy s*d!". Soooo... Quickpour has been withdrawn. It is deceased, gone to meet its maker. As, assuredly, is the marketing man's career.

The Stockport Perry

One thing that I always look forward to at Stockport Beer Festival is a chance to taste Brian Browning's Perry (from Glos.). Whilst we don't always get any, more years than not the odd 5-gallon tub shows up. This year was no exception, and it was worth the wait. To my mind, everything a perry should be, massively fruity, with a sweetness cut by a sharp acid bite but no hint of acetone. In fact it was the lack of the acid bite that doomed 'new' Coke all those years ago, for without it, all is cloying. My view was obviously shared by a number of others as I note Brian's Perry was Perry of the Festival. I was contemplating making it my beer of the month, but that dubious honour should I suppose go to a beer rather than a fruit based drink... so,

BeerMonster™'s Beer of the Month

It has long been a whinge of mine that there are any number of 3.5%ish beers masquerading as IPA's. Greene King's is a particularly egregious offender, but even Caledonian are guilty as charged with Deuchars. I'm sorry lads, but IPA is a *specific* style - a Pale Ale (hence the 'PA' bit) that was loaded with preservative so it would stand the four month boat trip to India (the 'I'). The two preservatives in question being alcohol (well over 5%) and hops - late, dry, and lots of them.. Without hops (and therefore bitterness) in vast quantity, and the balancing alcohol, it ain't an IPA. Yes its a 'pale ale' but please just call it that. Now at Stockport we were promised a couple of real IPA's, all-singing, all-dancing and strong in alcohol. They did not disappoint and the Dwan Carden IPA (from Dwan of Carlow) was a particular hit being a true exemplar of my favourite style, and as of Thursday night a *certainty* to be my beer of the month. That was until the Saturday lunchtime and my meeting with the 4.2% Dwan Carden's Bitter (and not 5% as previously advertised). Wow. Now I don't normally go a bundle on mid-to-dark brown beers with a pronounced malt dominance, I'm a pale hoppy man, but this was a revelation. It reminded me of my find of 2002 (Heinrichbier from Mahrs in Bamberg) in the bone dry malt, with a hatful of different flavours bubbling underneath, insistently hinting at their presence. Coupled with a slightly aromatic hop nose with a touch of malt, and the dryness of the flavour bittering gradually into a long intense finish, this is without doubt my beer of the year so far. Sadly, it won't be widely available but some should show up in the free trade.

BeerMonster™ Summer Pub

Nearly run out of space before the REALLY important bit.. and no, its NOT in the Northern Quarter. Its going to be the **Boundary** at Audenshaw Rd, Audenshaw a few yards from Guide Bridge station. A pub that does everything right, serves excellent food and tip-top beer AND has beer festivals. The award will be presented to Len and the staff (hopefully) just after lunch (3 ish) on Saturday of their big summer beerfest (Saturday 21 June) which starts on Wednesday 18, and will have 60+ beers plus foreign stuff and is always a great 'do'. A very excellent pub festival in a very excellent pub. See you there.

Dave and Sue Welcome You To THE QUEENS ARMS

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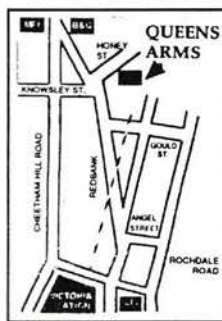
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LOCAL CAMRA PUB of the Month APRIL 2002

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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

JUNE 2003

Tuesday 10th - Social and Social Secretary's Birthday Drink at the Navigation, Lancashire Hill, Stockport. From 8.00pm - all welcome

Thursday 12th - Branch Meeting: Gateway Kingsway, East Didsbury. Start 8.00pm.

Monday 16th - Social: Ash Hotel, Manchester Road, Heaton Norris, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm

Friday 20th - Stockport Town Centre Stagger 7.30pm Unity, Wellington Road South; 8.30 Stockport Arms, St Petersgate.

Thursday 26th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. From 8.00pm.

Friday 4th July - Trip to Titanic Brewery, Busllem. Minibus departs Crown, Heaton Lane at 7.00pm. Book with Paul Formby on 0161 612 0729 (after 6.00pm)

Thursday 10th - Branch Meeting: Armoury, Shaw Heath, Stockport. **NB - brief meeting will be followed by Summer Quiz - lots of great prizes.**

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

Saturday 7th - Sponsored Charity Walk in aid of Glossop and Kinder Mountain Rescue Teams. Buxton to Hayfield with 7 pubs en route.

Saturday 21st - Branch Meeting and AGM: Crown Inn, Victoria St, Glossop 1.00pm followed by pub crawl of Glossop.

JUNE 2003

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:

Sunday 22nd - Knutsford Beer Festival, Knutsford Sports Club. Details from George Symes on 01565 653096.

The Trafford & Hulme Branch covers the Borough of Trafford, Manchester west of the M56/Princess Parkway and a large part of the City Centre. They have advised us of the following events:

Saturday 14th - Chairman Neil Worthington's trip to his old branch's beer festival at Doncaster - all members welcome to join him. Trains hourly from Piccadilly and Stockport.

Thursday 19th - Social Evening at Stretford Cricket Club, Lesley Road. Starts 8.00pm.

Saturday 28th - Canal Walk visiting some of the pubs in the far reaches of the branch. Meet 1.00pm at the Railway, Heatley.

Thursday 3rd July - Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm

Regional Events

Under 26 Members - Friday 4th July 'SOS' Sit Outside Social 8pm. Bar Fringe, Swan St. Northern Quarter, Manchester. Good weather booked. Enjoy Beer Monsters Pub Of The Season!

Regional Meeting - Wednesday 9th July Crescent, Salford. Starts 8pm

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner

14



CAINS

BREWERY TOURS

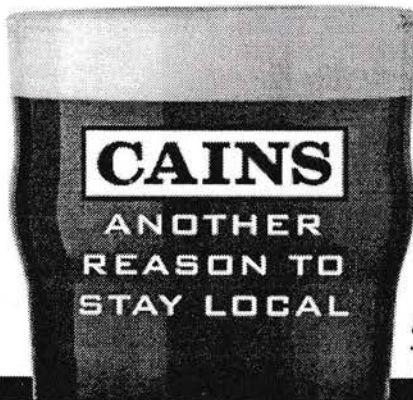
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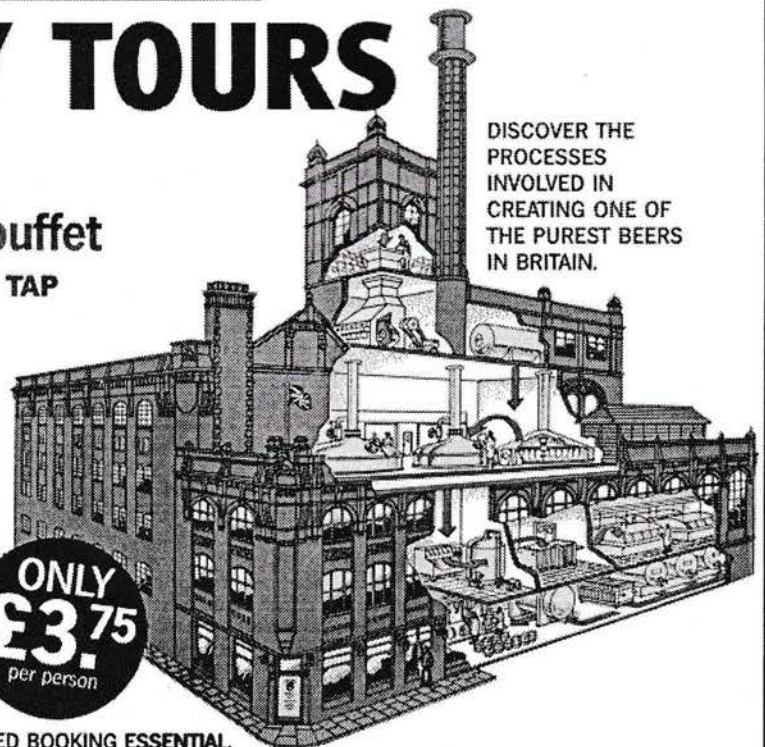
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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JUNE '98

"**C**rown Safe?" was a front page headline – the previous month's item concerning the future of the Crown on Heaton Lane, Stockport, produced a flurry of media activity and a reassurance about its future from the pub's putative new owners, the Olde King Cole Pub Company. However, following an intervention by the Stockport Express, David Coates, chief executive of Olde King Cole, said there would be "no change" in the way the pub was run – the existing managers would be allowed to run the pub as they always had done.

★ ★

The Moss Rose on Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris, a Hydes' managed house, had been voted Pub of the Month by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Branch. The pub had been described as "perhaps the ugliest pub building in Stockport", but it was (and still is) a brilliantly run local where everyone was made to feel at home. More recently the Moss Rose closed for refurbishment on 13 April, to reopen as "The Four Heaton's" on Monday 26 May – see the report elsewhere in this month's OT.

★ ★ ★

The Editorial referred to the Stockport Beer & Cider Festival hosting a national CAMRA event – the National Cider & Perry Championships. But there was even better news – the Royal Exchange Theatre Company was set to move back to their original home, finally reborn after the IRA bomb. This meant their temporary home, the Upper Campfield Market in Castlefield would once more be available to CAMRA for the 1999 Manchester Beer Festival, and this would also include the National Champion Winter Ale Competition. Paradoxically, the venue was subsequently lost again following Manchester City Council's decision to lease it to the Science Museum. The National Winter Ale Championship is currently hosted by the Burton-on-Trent winter beer festival.

★ ★ ★ ★

Local brewers Robinson's had been making news – opening a new pub and getting into the off trade. The new pub was the Mulberry, the company's new flagship pub at Conway – according to chairman Peter Robinson, the most expensive pub ever built by the company. The name came from the WW2 floating Mulberry Harbours, which were built nearby. Robinson's had also obtained a toe-hold in the lucrative supermarket trade, having secured a listing for bottled Fredericks with Safeway.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Much of the Brewery News column was taken up by the seasonal beers which were just beginning to appear. Hydes as producing one every other month, the latest being Mad Ferret at 5%ABV, described as a stronger and richer version of their standard mild. Lees had introduced an 'Ale for All Seasons' range, again appearing bi-monthly, and the latest offering was a cask conditioned Archers Stout at 4.8% - the price of £1.45 a pint had been designed to give drinkers value for money. Finally, Cains had just produced their latest seasonal ale, Sundowner (5%), brewed entirely with Maris Otter malt "for extra body and flavour".



Stubbing Out the Pub?

It was no surprise that the State of California was the first territory in the world to impose a total ban on smoking in bars and restaurants. Earlier this year, New York City followed suit, and the Irish Republic looks likely to join them next year, although what impact it will have in their notoriously smoky pubs remains to be seen.

Now there's a serious chance of the same happening in the UK. Labour MP Gareth Thomas has proposed a private member's bill that would ban smoking wherever food is served. While this bill stands little chance of success, there is a strong possibility that a similar amendment will be tacked on to the Licensing Bill that is currently going through Parliament. A ban anywhere food is served would immediately affect most pubs, and would set a strong precedent for the minority of premises that were not covered.

The main justification for a ban is that it will protect people from "passive smoking". Yet there is no convincing scientific evidence that environmental tobacco smoke has any significant effect on health, despite all the efforts of the anti-smoking lobby to find it. Indeed the renowned medical academic Professor Sir Richard Doll, who first established the link between smoking and lung cancer, has gone on record as saying he personally isn't concerned about it. Other people's smoke may be unpleasant and irritating, but it isn't deadly.

If there's a demand for no-smoking areas, then obviously it's in the interest of licensees to provide them, and a large and growing number of pubs of all kinds offer that facility. But to insist that all pubs must be completely smoke-free is something else entirely. It may not make much difference to chain dining pubs, but there can be no doubt that it would have a dramatic impact on the trade of smaller traditional locals that don't major on food.

Although less than a third of adults in the UK are smokers, observation suggests that they make up a much higher proportion of pub customers, particular amongst regular visitors rather than those who call in once or twice a month. By definition, anyone who is fastidiously concerned about health will not only avoid tobacco but also not spend much time drinking in pubs. Even those who don't smoke themselves will very often go to the pub with smoking friends or colleagues - it's relatively rare to see an entirely non-smoking group. It is impossible to believe that the many regulars who are also smokers will spend anything like the same amount of time or money in the pub if they are prevented from lighting up. On the other hand, the idea that there is a vast reserve army of committed non-smokers who would tear themselves away from the television and rush down to the local every night as soon as smoking was banned is sheer fantasy.

Although the issues involved are not entirely the same, there are many parallels between the campaign against smoking and that against pubs and alcohol, including shared personnel. These are the sanctimonious killjoys who derive a perverse pleasure telling others what's good for them. Nobody who enjoys a few pints in the pub from time to time should lend any support to a total smoking ban. If you do, when the time comes to take a stand in defence of your own liberties, you may find precious few others prepared to line up alongside you.

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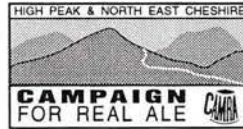


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HIGH PEAK BRANCH RAMBLE

A Saturday in May saw a party of branch members head for Cheshire, Plumley to be exact (near Knutsford), on the Chester line from Piccadilly. Alighting at Plumley station, a 2-minute walk brought us to the Golden Pheasant, a John Willie Lees house, where GB Mild, Bitter, 1828 Anniversary Ale and Moonraker were all on sale in a pub well worth the visit.

A roadside inn, it is a large tiled and wooden floored, multiroomed pub with a separate restaurant, fireplaces, wooden panelling, comfortable chairs and frontal bench seating with lots of tubs and flower beds. En-suite accommodation is also available, with bowling green, conference suite and children's play area. Lees 1828 and Bitter were on excellent form.

We set off on our walk, planning to catch a train back to Manchester from Chelford, 7 miles away. Crossing fields of cows, a golf course, the M6 and more fields, we reached Lower Peover and the Crown. Taylors Landlord, Flowers IPA, Tetley Dark Mild and Boddingtons Bitter were joined by two guest beers, today the Cottage 'Gone with the Whippet' and Ossett Silver King, both in good form. Meals are available here and were tried and recommended by some of our party.

Continuing walking West to East, we reached a famous pub, The Bells of Peover, dating back some 500 years, where the impressive Chinese Wisteria growing all over the front of the pub, and St Oswalds Church opposite, were taken in. It was named not because of the church bells but from the name of a family that kept the pub, previously being called The Warren de Tabley Arms in the Nineteenth Century. The pub is now a Chef & Brewer with an impressive menu, which on a Saturday afternoon was being well patronised. However, despite the brochure stating that 'the choice of hand pulled beers are better than ever before', the beer choice was a little disappointing. The regular choice is Courage Directors, Theakstons Cool Cask and Greenalls Bitter, which we all tried and though it was not offensive, it had no particular flavours that got out and hit your taste buds. Apparently this was a pub used by American Army officers in World War 2.

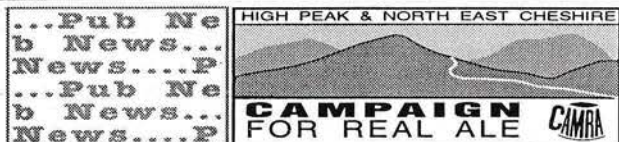
Continuing along the stream, we followed a long bridleway eventually reaching the Whipping Stocks Inn, a Sam Smiths house just off the A.50 road. This was General Patten's local, the famous American General and Tank Commander in the war, when he was stationed at nearby Peover Hall. He and his officers relaxed there in the evenings and he always ordered there to be a bunch of flowers on the table he used. When he left for Normandy, he paid a year's subscription to the local florists to continue this practice and the pub have kept on the tradition to this day. The Sam Smiths bitter was not quite on top form but acceptable.

We then walked through the grounds of Peover Hall, passing the Tudor bricked Hall, which in my opinion was really not the most attractive Hall I had seen. We followed country lanes to the pub what was once the Gay Dog, now been changed to the Dog Inn. Weetwood Best Bitter, Hydes Jekylls Gold, Hydes Bitter and Moorhouses Black Cat were the beers available but all for one, we tried the Weetwood, which was pleasant to the taste. Incidentally, the pub is holding a Beer Festival on Saturday 26th & 27th July with a barbecue and games, then in the evening live entertainment from an Irish band. The pub is situated in Over Peover, around 2 miles along the lanes from Chelford railway station, where we headed next, and the Egerton Arms, another Chef and Brewer pub whose range was Courage Directors, Theakstons Bitter and Rocketeer, then a guest beer which we tried, Frolic Bitter from Gales, which was a reasonable pint to finish the day.

Anyone doing this walk will not be disappointed, it is pleasant, no hills to climb and a fair selection of beers on the day. However, unless you have the Ordnance Survey map for the area, you could go wrong as the area is quiet enough not to be able to ask for directions en-route, apart from in the pubs, and you could well head in wrong directions as the walk does go on several direction changes before heading confusingly back on course.

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 Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch Contact is George Symes 0161
 288 6778(w); 01565 653096(h) email: editor@outinncheshire.co.uk





In Old Glossop the Bulls Head, under new licensees, has added Hatters to Best Bitter and Stockport that were always sold under the previous regime.

Since Stalybridge Labour Club has been elected High Peak Branch Club of the Year, I have tried to call in from time to time. There are still four handpulled beers on sale. Boddingtons Bitter and Green King Abbot Ale are the two regular beers, with two ever-changing guest beers. On my visit on a Sunday afternoon at the end of April, they were RCH East Street and Badger Best, both on at £1.60 a pint.

Over in the Buffet Bar the same day, they were excelling themselves during the Mild Challenge, with Hanby Mild Mayhem 5% and Mightly Oak Oscar Wilde Mild 3.7% both on sale.

In Mottram, the White Hart has added yet another permanent beer to its range, with a further handpump on the bar. The new beer is Pictish Brewers Gold, selling at the reasonable price of £1.65 per pint. For the record, the full range is now: Taylors Landlord (£1.90), Phoenix Bantam (£1.55), John Smiths Cask (£1.60) Moorhouses Black Cat Mild (£1.60), J W Lees Bitter (£1.50), Plassey Bitter (£1.50), Brewers Gold and a pump devoted to a rotating guest beer, selling at £1.90. Trade is such that the beers are always in top form, the White Hart being the only successful pub in the area. However, the Pack Horse across the road, re-opens after a 2 year closure on 6th June. It will be interesting to see if it makes any difference. No news as to what the beer range is to be, but it was previously all smooth flow. They have been advertising for staff during May, including restaurant staff. More news on this next month.

In Buxton, there's good news for cider heads. Current Good Beer Guide entry Ramseys Bar now serves 2 traditional ciders on handpump. One is from the Westons stable - the other a changing guest. A former Robinson's pub, The Devonshire Arms in Ashwood Dale, recently sold at auction, has been burned down. Lucky Buxton drinkers can now get a pint from 10.00am a this was one of the areas where the JD Wetherspoon chain was able to persuade the local magistrates to allow opening at this early hour (*a bit too early in the day for me - Ed(1)*)

A High Peak Branch trip in May, spent a pleasant Saturday evening at the Sair Inn Pub & Brewery, Linthwaite, the Riverhead Brewery Tap at Marsden and the Tunnel End Inn, on Waters Road, a 10-15 minute walk from Marsden village centre, near the eastern entrance of the Standedge Tunnel. The Tunnel End is a welcome addition to the real ale scene in the area, and is worth a visit if you are in the area. Taylors Landlord, Black Sheep Bitter and a rotating Guest Beer, normally from a local brewery are on sale, the licensees Gary & Bev are genuinely pleased to see you and walkers, dogs, children are all welcomed in various parts of the pub. It was formerly the Junction Inn until its closure in 1999 and work and improvements are still going on since the new owners bought the pub in March 2002, opening it in May 2002. It was our first visit and all were very surprised at the quality of the place. I thought it worth a mention, as I am sure many OT readers will be visiting Riverhead and the Marsden area during the coming months.

Former Good Beer Guide entry, the Squirrels Hotel in Chinley, is now the subject of a planning application to convert the building into flats.

JOIN CAMRA (PAGE 19) & DRINK REAL ALE

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Good Beer Guide listed.

Robinson's Best Bitter,
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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

Well, it's been another quiet month for me – what with a visit to Adnams, helping prepare for the Stockport Beer Festival and being laid up with a bug, I've had my wings clipped when it comes to getting out and about on the local scene. Still, I do have one or two snippets for you – and I also managed to get to Chorlton for a good mooch around...

Bits & Bobs

It's belated news but I was horrified to hear that arsonists tried to set fire to The **Grove Inn** at Clayton a few months back. The landlords car in the rear yard was burnt out, and if he had not been awake or it had been 24 hours later when the firemen were on strike, the Grove would have been gone. Then Eastlands really could have been called 'Wastelands'. If the arsonists can be kept at bay, permission has been granted to extend the often overcrowded vault into a rear unused room. This is of course about the only decent real ale outlet close to the new stadium and should get a real boost when Manchester City start playing there in August. I'm also told the **Fox** on Clayton Lane may have closed – if this is true, it will be a sad loss for the area. When I last called cask mild was on sale – a rare sighting for the area.

What's Doing In The City Centre

I do have one or two snippets from the City Centre this month. I had long thought that **All Bar One** on King Street was keg only, but now I find that it does still sell cask beer. However, given that this is only the lacklustre Worthington Bitter, it's hardly worth making a detour for. Further up King Street, I have read a report that **Rothwell's** has closed to make way for a clothing store. I must say this had completely escaped my and I can't help but wonder if the Rothwells building has been confused with the Vivian Westwood shop next door. I'll check this out for next time.

Corbieres on Half Moon Street has always been a favourite of mine, being one of the last cellar bars in the City Centre. I'd not been there for ages but am delighted to report that Bazens' Pacific was on sale last time I called. Well worth a visit, I think.

The **Hogshead** on Deansgate is reportedly down to just two cask beers, generally from the national and bigger regional breweries. This, of course, is in line with national policy for most of the Hogshead chain. Doubtless, 'Hoggers' are already on their way to this one. Further down Deansgate, **Galvins Irish Bar** still does the business on the real ale front, with a decent pint of Lees on the bar when I last popped in.

And So To Chorlton

I'd been meaning to visit Chorlton for some time as it's becoming something of a beer drinkers mini-mecca. Not only is there a collection of good pubs, but three are two excellent places to buy beer to drink at home. On Barlow Moor Road, **Carringtons** goes from strength to strength. There's a huge range of Belgian bottled beers together with one or two Dutch offerings. Over 150 in fact and that's without counting the growing range of UK bottled beers and a small but interesting German selection. The Belgian range

often includes the very rare Westvleteren trappist beers, thus enabling Carringtons to be one of the few outlets in the UK for the full Belgian trappist range. Prominent amongst the Dutch beers is a range for the t'lj Brewery in Amsterdam – a very rare sighting in the UK.



This year there is to also be a concentration on worldwide beers which should see bottles from China to the USA being sold.

The other outlet is the superb **Unicorn Grocery** on Albany Road. This is an entirely organic operation and so sells only organic beers and ciders. Prominent amongst the beers must be the entire range from the Black Isle Brewery of Inverness, and from Belgium, the entire organic range of the highly-respected Dupont Brewery.

Elsewhere, the pubs of Chorlton present a mixed bag. Some, such as the **Beech, Bar** and **Marble Beer House** are well-known, top-class and need little further comment. The new **Lloyds** is, I'm told, reviewed elsewhere (for what it's worth, I think this is a welcome addition to the Chorlton scene although it perhaps needs a little time to bed in). This time, I decided to check out some of the others, pubs that I hadn't visited for ages.

The **Feathers** on Barlow Moor Road is a big inter-wars pub (I would guess) and while it's been knocked about quite a bit it does still retain some semblance of a multi-roomed interior. When I called it was busy and smoky with quite a raucous crowd. The sole cask offering was Boddingtons Bitter on one of the new yellow handpumps.

Beech Road takes you to the heart of middle class Chorlton (where else would you expect to see a newsagent with an illuminated sign for 'City Life' magazine?). Apart from the Beech, there are two other pubs (as well as a proliferation of bars). One is the **Trevor** with a good multi-roomed interior and a bustling, relaxed atmosphere. Three cask beers were available when I dropped in – Boddingtons Bitter (on old-style handpump), Theakstons Cool Cask and Wells Bombardier.

Round the corner on Chorlton Green is the **Horse & Jockey**. Externally, it must be one of the most attractive pubs in Chorlton but within there's a large, open-plan rambling interior that really does look as though it needs a major refurbishment. It certainly wasn't somewhere I felt like stopping for a drink and so I unforgivably forgot to make a note of what, if any, cask beer was sold.

My final quick port of call was the **Royal Oak** near the corner of Wilbraham Road and Barlow Moor Road. Open plan, no real ale and utterly uninspiring are my notes. I didn't have time to call at either the **Spread Eagle** (Holts) of the **Sedge Lynn** (Wetherspoons) although I know by reputation that both of these pubs do exactly what you would expect them to, and do it very well indeed.

So, that's it for this month. Next time I hope to have got round to my long-planned visit to Levenshulme and environs., once described elsewhere (oh, you know where) as one of the "top 10 drinking areas of Manchester". We shall see.

INTERNATIONAL SCENE

"Extreme beer" is a growing phenomenon in the US craft-brewing sector. Brews like Utopias are produced periodically by Boston Brewing Co., makers of the popular Samuel Adams line of microbrews. At 24% ABV, Utopias is the strongest beer of record ever brewed. Meanwhile, **World Wide Stout**, produced by Dogfish Head Craft Brewery, is a close second at 23% ABV.

Beer from US micros has been getting steadily stronger and more exotic. It is being made with un-beer-like ingredients, including wine grapes and chili peppers; it is aged for years in barrels and put away in cellars; and it is blended in the tradition of Scotch whisky. Extreme beer is commanding extreme prices. Numerous US brewers make beers retailing at more than \$20 a bottle.

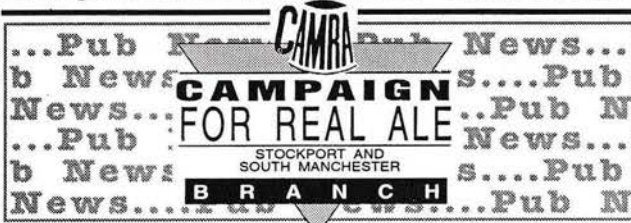
UK consumers will soon be able to get a taste of one of these "extreme beers" as Safeway are about to import the (in)famous Dogfish Head Stout – at 23%ABV your guess is as good as ours at to what it will actually taste like. If anyone out there is brave (or stupid) enough to try it, please let us know.

TREASURE HUNT 2003

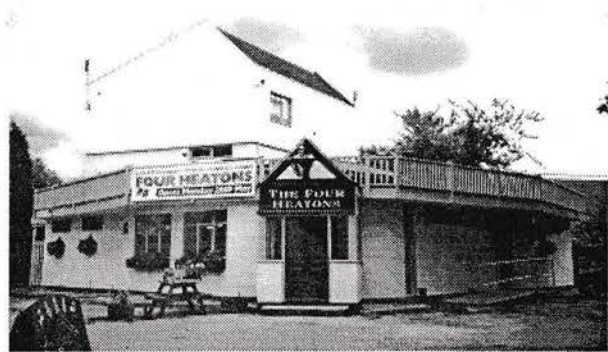
The Annual North Manchester 'CAMRA' Independents Day Treasure Hunt will take place on Saturday 5 July 2003, starting from the Marble Arch public house, Manchester (Corner of Rochdale Road and Gould Street).

If you fancy a fun day out with some good friends in pubs selling excellent beers from INDEPENDENT breweries, then why not join in? £4 entry fee per team. Teams up to five members welcome.

Registration will take place in the Marble Arch between 12.00noon & 13.00hrs (pub doors open 11.30hrs). Teams to return around 20.00hrs (to be confirmed on the day) where quiz sheets will be marked, winners announced. Food (carnivorous and vegetarian) will be provided and is included in the entry fee. The winners will have the dubious honour of setting next year's treasure hunt. This year's event is organised by last year's winning team the 'Castle Knights'. Contact Mark or Elizabeth on 0161-789-5016 if you have any queries.



Hydes' reopened the former Moss Rose on Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris, on Bank Holiday Monday, 26 May. It's the 'former' Moss Rose as the pub has now been renamed 'The Four Heaton's' a name with plenty of local relevance and perhaps indicative of the thought that has obviously gone into the work carried out here. Externally, of course, the Moss Rose was famous as the most ugly pub building in Stockport. While it's all had a coat of paint and is adorned with new signage, an outdoor drinking area, flower tubs and a new 'rustic' wood and rope barrier, it's still a weird building. Mind you, that's always been part of the pub's charm - an ugly building housing a great pub. The contrast is, if anything, even greater now. While Hydes' have done their



best with the sow's ear that is outside; inside it really is a silk purse transformation. The badly laid-out lounge has been sorted out and is now one large room completely refitted with new seating, carpet, upholstery and furniture. The decorative scheme successfully marries traditional pub styling with modern lines and bright but not jarring colours. There's a brand new bar, too, again in traditional style with modern touches.

At the back, the vault has been completely refitted with pool table, panelled alcove for darts and new fixed seating. Again this successfully combines a modern colour scheme with all the traditional elements. Indeed, it's difficult to say which is the most successful room. Unsurprisingly, licensee Lynda Bryan and partner Damien are delighted with the end result. Lynda's just hoping everyone comes back as she wants to make sure the Four Heaton's is a pub with a reputation for having decent customers and a warm welcome. The beer's good too - with Hydes' Light, Bitter, and the seasonal on handpump. Well worth a visit.

New licensee at the Thatched Tavern in Reddish is Duncan Shenton. Duncan is a local man and this is his first pub, although he had been assisting the previous licensee Eamonn O'Neill with the cellar for the last nine months. He has told Opening Times that he intends to keep the current beer range of Tetley Bitter, Tetley Dark Mild and Boddingtons Bitter. The pub will be redecorated over the coming months.

The Elizabethan on Heaton Moor Road should be shut for a 10-week refurbishment by the time you read this. The plan is to move the pub up-market and when it re-opens up to four cask ales should be available for what it is intended will be an older clientele.

A belated welcome to a new licensee at the Queens Head ('Turners Vaults') on Little Underbank, Stockport. Steve Rowland from Rochdale was previously a relief manager for Sam Smiths and prior to that tenant at the Mark Twain for John Willie Lees. Steve has told Opening Times that he intends to stay at the pub for the long term in contrast to more recent licensees.

The old Abbey National office on St Petersgate, Stockport (between the Blarney Stone and Sanjoys Indian Restaurant) is the subject of a licence application. We have no idea as to what is planned, other than that the proposed name is 'The Abbey'.

After a bumpy ride over the past few months, it looks as though the Bakers Vaults (Market Place, Stockport) is now back on track following the arrival of new licensees Lorraine and Sam Fraser. This is the first pub for ex-deputy head Lorraine and ex-theatre technician Sam, but they are already playing to the pub's traditional strengths. Live music is back on at least one night a week and food is available every lunchtime (including Sundays), courtesy of new chef, ex-actress Rachel Suranne.

The pub itself looks better than it's done for years with much-needed redecoration and the sensible uncovering of some of the side windows to make the pub much lighter. The cask beers remain Robinson's Hatters and Best Bitter on electric pumps and when OT called the quality was tip top. Lorraine tells us that after 25 years in teaching she wanted something different, and her philosophy for the pub? "I'm a hedonist, most people are hedonists and I'm here to help people to their nirvana!". We think we can all drink to that.

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*Hot off the press - Mr and Mrs Ritchie
are both fond of a pint or two of ale.
(Jonathan Ross BBCTV)*

That means we at Centro always have to make sure, just in case the Diva and her hubby decide to drop in, that we have a decent selection of quality cask ales and ciders and a cosmopolitan array of lagers and spirits for them to choose from!

Which is great news for everyone else - we always give you a great choice of Beers, lagers and Ciders in fact something from every country that her madonnaness has done a stadium concert in and more - lets face it she hasn't done Rochdale yet!!!!

Additionally there is our fantastic menu with quality home cooked grub to keep Mr Richie happy while Madge sits back and relaxes (none of those yoga poses tho'!) in our convivial atmosphere.

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20

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