



OPENING TIMES



Distributed throughout Stockport; Central, East & South Manchester; Tameside; N.E. Cheshire & Macclesfield

Volume 19 Issue 9

SEPTEMBER 2003 No:233

6,500 CIRCULATED THIS MONTH

FREE

CASK BEER WEEK

Major Event For Local Family Brewers



HYDES THE MANCHESTER BREWER



Greater Manchester's four family brewers, Robinson's, Hydes', Lees and Holts are joining forces in two major promotions for cask beer.

The springboard for these major events is the Independent Family Brewers Of Britain (IFBB)-organised Cask Beer Week, running from 19-28 September, and will be followed by another promotion during the Manchester Food & Drink Festival the following week.

This is the third year that the 33 members of the IFBB have organised a nationwide promotion of real ale, a product whose health is essential to the survival of these firms, producing as they do 50% of the country's cask beer. Luckily, they are collectively bucking the long-term decline of cask ale in general, and have reported a 9.5% increase in their cask ale production over the last 12 months.

To publicise the event the four local brewers are teaming together to take part in a tour to the four breweries on the World's Largest Bike on September 16th. The bike, which is a 26-man contraption, will follow a route visiting the four breweries throughout the day, with the cyclists stopping for a 'pint' in each. The suggested route is Lees to Holts to



Local head brewers gather in Manchester for last year's promotional week

Hydes to Robinson's, finishing up at the Gateway, Wilmslow Road in Didsbury at 1.30pm for the Press Launch. The total distance is around 21 miles. Each brewery is supplying 13 members of staff to 'man' the bike, with the first 26 going from Lees to Hydes and the second 26 going from Hydes to the Gateway.

Pubs Take Part

Many of the family brewers pubs will also be running events to support the initiative. Details haven't all been finalised yet, but Lees will be running in-house promotions and encouraging their pubs to give out samples of cask ales. There may also be a mystery customer scheme with the aim of getting bar staff to recommend cask ale as the drink of choice, effectively becoming cask ale champions. Hydes will be organising the "South Manchester Beer Festival", where five Hydes pubs will be serving 30 very special British cask Beers during the week. The main event will be taking place at the Horse & Farrier, Gatley, where 10 guest beers will be on show. Mini festivals will be taking place at the Gateway in Didsbury, Friendship in Fallowfield, Nursery, Heaton Norris and The Star, Cheadle, the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA pub of the month for October. Each will be serving six different beers over the week on rotation with no two pubs will be serving the same beer.

Food & Drink Week

These events will be supported by further activity on October 3rd and 4th when the Brewers will be attending the Manchester Food & Drink Festival, offering the public the opportunity to sample their beers. Between 11am and 3pm on both days, the four brewers will be manning a large stall in Albert Square, Manchester and offering free quarter-pint samples of their beers. The aim will be to introduce these excellent local beers to people who may not be familiar with them - and also meet the people who make them. The brewers have also commissioned a booklet from brewery historian Alan Gall. This will include a brief rundown of the history of local brewing, pen pictures of the local family brewers and vouchers for two free pints in local pubs. Each booklet will include eight vouchers, two of which will be redeemable in 10 pubs nominated by each of the brewers. The booklet will be available at both the Albert Square event and also during the Bike Ride publicity event. The full list of pubs hadn't been finalised as we went to press.

THANKS TO HYDES



This year's Mild Challenge concluded in fine style with a visit to Hydes' Brewery in Moss Side. More than twenty people who had taken part in the Challenge were invited to the event on August 20th. An introduction was given by Hydes' Tony Phillips and Paul Jefferies before a very unusual and enjoyable half-hour tour hosted by an ebullient Tony. This was more of a one-man stand-up routine than a brewery tour - plenty of gags, wit and anecdotes made what can be a very dry subject more than interesting; well done Tony.

To round off the evening we were treated to the hospitality of a well-stocked bar and an excellent buffet of sandwiches and such. The entire Hydes range of cask ales was on offer including the three milds they produce - Dark, Mild and Light. Three milds being produced is, apparently, unique amongst British brewers, so well done Hydes. Other beers on the night were Bitter and Jekylls - all were in tip-top condition and enjoyed by everyone present. Mild Challenge organiser, Mark McConachie, gave a small speech thanking people for getting involved in the Challenge and thanking Hydes for their generous hospitality and what was truly an excellent evening that was enjoyed by all attendees. Thank you Hydes.

September's OPENING TIMES

Editor's View	..... 2	Tasting Panel	..... 11
Pub of the Month	..... 3	CAMRA Calling	..... 12
Brewery News	..... 4	Five Years Ago	..... 13
Champions	..... 5	Curmudgeon	..... 13
Stagger	..... 6	Heatons Heats Up	..... 15
Sth Cheshire Fests	..... 7	Peak Pub News	..... 16
Letters	..... 9	Mcr. Matters	..... 18
Pub News	..... 10	Lloyds Re-Visited	..... 18
Macc Pub News 10	Bottled Beer 19
The Arbitrator 10	Membership 19

NEW - THE TASTING PANEL - STARTS ON PAGE 11



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IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

The main event this month must be the Independent Family Brewers' Cask Beer Week. I hope every reader of *Opening Times* will support this important initiative and at the very least pay a visit to their local Family Brewer's pub during the week.

We are lucky in the *Opening Times* area that we have four family brewers dedicated to maintaining their independence and producing quality cask beers. We must never forget that as much as we may love our new micro-brewers and the astonishing range of beers they produce, it is the family brewers who remain the backbone of our real ale tradition. Without them and their steadfast commitment to real ale, it is doubtful if cask ale would have survived the dark days of the 1970s and it certainly wouldn't have survived the wholesale move to smooth beers by the national brewers over the past 10 years or so. They both need and deserve our continuing support - let's all make sure they get it.

★ ★ ★ ★

Signs of the cask ale revival are now all around us. We have already seen the Family Brewer's figures showing a 9.5% increase in volumes over the past year, and most recently Greene King released figures showing impressive growth in volumes of their cask Abbot Ale, Old Speckled Hen and even their lacklustre IPA. Micro brewers continue to open and many are brewing at full tilt to keep up with demand. A recent survey carried out by *The Publican* newspaper showed cask ale moving up as one of the 'must stock' products in the licensed trade. Now comes Interbrew and their re-launch of cask Boddingtons. They have seen cask Boddingtons decline at a rate faster than the national trend and have decided to try and reverse this. The decline is hardly surprising - many cask Boddies outlets have switched to smooth amid anecdotal reports that the Boddingtons cellar teams were actively encouraging pubs to switch from cask to keg. Let's hope they will get the message and be equally keen to encourage a switch the other way. But let's not be churlish - this move from Interbrew is good news for Boddingtons in particular and cask ale in general and must be heartily welcomed.

★ ★ ★ ★

Next month is CAMRA's Cider & Perry Month. We'll be running a 'cider special' with several articles and features. Locally CAMRA is also hoping to organise some sort of cider event - more next month.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 233

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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COPY DATE FOR OCTOBER ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS SEPTEMBER 26

PUB OF THE MONTH SEPTEMBER 2003

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	25	26	27
28	29	30				



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for September 2003 will be the Circus Tavern in Manchester city centre.

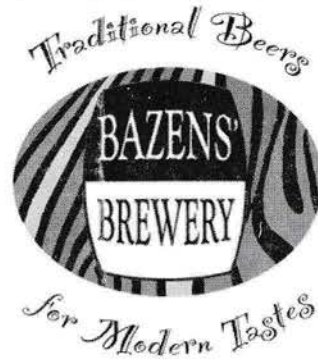
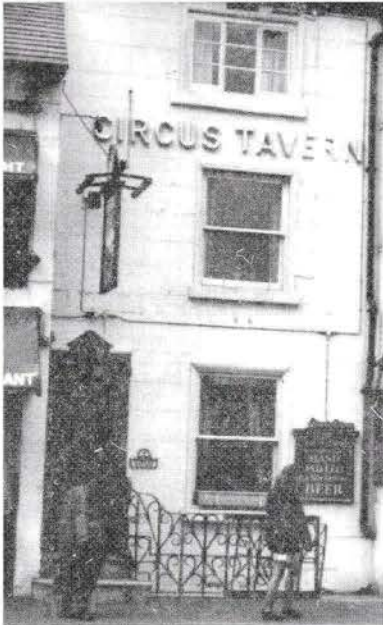
The Circus is Manchester's smallest public house by far - merely two small panelled rooms with a corridor bar with the tiniest counter you will ever see serving them. Following the retirement of well-respected and long serving licensee, Terry Corless, George Archondogeorge took on the tenure of this Grade II listed house in January of 2001.

George has been in the licensed trade for many years with stints in pubs around Victoria Station and what is now the Printworks area - some of the friends he made during that era can be seen in the many photos adorning the wall of the front lounge. George (universally known as 'Greek George') had a difficult act to follow when Terry and Kath Corless retired, but to his credit the pub is little different yet much improved. The sole cask beer in this Tetley Heritage inn has always been Tetley bitter, yet George has widened the appeal of pub to women and others by adding draught lager and stout; he now has Greek spirits such as Mataka and Ouzo and even ice is now available!

A totally new initiative is the addition of waitress service on the evenings of Thursdays to Sundays to improve the flow of customers in the often crowded lobby and corridor areas - OT can attest as to how well and efficiently this system and the two girls who staff it works when calling in at the end of recent Stagger. Opening hours have been lengthened too, they are now all permitted hours - 11 to 11 Monday to Saturday and 12 to 10.30 on Sundays so that even more people may enjoy this city centre gem. A renaissance of this type is well worth celebrating - join us (early to reserve a seat) when we present this well deserved award on Thursday 25 September, from 8.00pm.

The Circus Tavern is at 86 Portland Street, very close to its junction with Princess Street in Manchester city centre, a five minute walk away from either of Piccadilly rail or bus stations. **MMc.**

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



- FlatbaC 4.2% (Beer of the Festival, Stockport, 2003)
- Blue Bullet 4.5% (August/September)
- Black Pig Mild 3.6%
- (Bronze Award for Mild, Champion Beer of Britain, 2003)
- Pacific Bitter 3.8% Best/Flying Zebra 4.5%

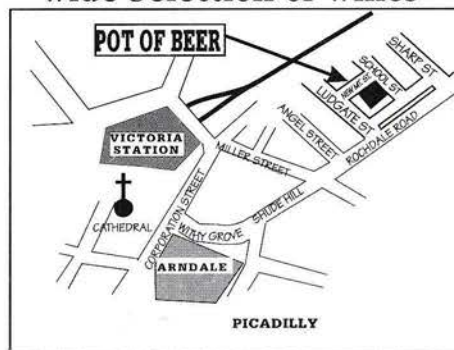
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New Look For Boddies

Interbrew has unveiled radical changes to Boddingtons in a determined attempt to halt and reverse the decline in sales of the cask version of "Manchester's finest".

The changes include a new name, higher alcohol strength and a smart new handpump to be supplied at all stockists. The new "Boddingtons Cask" will rise in strength from 3.8% to 4.1% with a slight recipe tweak to include extra malt in the brew. There won't be a price-rise, though, as the company is to absorb the extra duty costs the higher ABV will incur.

Interbrew's Graeme Mitchell explained the move thus: "This is a significant change for Boddingtons Cask and one that heralds an exciting new phase of development. Although the existing beer scored well in consumer research the clear message from cask ale drinkers was that it could be improved. After long consultation with our brewers at Strangeways we have come up with a better tasting, fuller-bodied ale that is very refreshing."

He went on to admit that Boddies had lost drinkers over the years and the relaunch was intended to retain existing Boddies drinkers, salvage lost drinkers and also gain new converts to the brand. The changes are only being made to the cask version of Boddingtons - all the other versions will remain unchanged.

The new-style Boddingtons is due to be launched into the trade this autumn. Opening Times will of course let you know when and where it becomes available.



Family Favourites

The local family brewers all have new seasonal beers out this month. Robinson's are reprising Cooper's Bell, the popular session beer from the past three years, while the other three have brand new beers on offer.

Lees new beer is Razzmatazz, a 4.4% beer described as a spicy, malty ale brewed with a combination of British and American hops. Look out for it the City Centre's Rain Bar and the Lloyds in Chorlton, both of which are regular outlets for Lees seasonals.

Hydes latest beer in their 'Fine Beers in the Making' range of craft ale, is Firkin Fruity, a 4.5% premium brew brewed with Fuggle hops to produce 'a classic berry red ale for autumn.' Many Hydes pubs will be stocking this including the Nursery in Heaton Norris and the Victoria in Withington.

The next seasonal beer from Holt's Derby Brewery will be Patterson, the name reflecting the connection between the Holt family, the Christie Hospital and the Patterson Research Institute at Withington. For every pint of Patterson sold, 20p will go to the Christie Hospital charity. The new beer has been tested and the recipe finalised, but its launch has been delayed owing to problems with the design of the pump clips. The 4% beer will be reddish in colour, brewed with Challenger hops and a touch of honey.



CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 233:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Butler, Phil Levison, Peter Edwardson, Mark McConachie, Tom Lord, Brian Taylor, Paul Moss, Steve Bray, John Tune, Jim Flynn, Frank Wood



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New Micro For Stockport

We hear that Stockport is in line for a new micro brewery. The Three Rivers Brewery is to be based in Offerton and hopes to have its beers available in the Crown, Heaton Lane by the second or third week in October barring unforeseen setbacks. They are still dotting the I's and crossing the T's on the contract for the premises but plant has been purchased so it should soon be all systems go. The initial plans are for two beers, both pale and hoppy, at session and premium strength, with a strong 'un for Christmas. Hopefully, more news next month.

More Micro News

As usual here is our monthly round-up from some of the local micros. The usual apologies to those we couldn't contact this time.



Phoenix - Major refurbishment work on the brewery is now two-thirds complete and should finally be finished this month. Opening Times hopes to run a major feature on the brewery in the next couple of months. Beers out this month include White Tornado, a 4.3% clear wheat beer and Struggling Monkey, a 4.7% premium brew.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

GBBF Joy for Local Micro

Salford-based micro Bazens' Brewery was the sole standard-bearer for the north west in the medal table in this year's Champion Beer of Britain Competition, held last month at CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival at Olympia. The brewery's Black Pig Mild picked up a bronze award in the mild category, much to the delight of Richard and Jude Bazen who run the brewery as one half of the Salford Brewery Syndicate. This was something of an early birthday present for Bazens', coming as it did just over a week before the brewery's first anniversary. There was another birthday present for Bazens' - Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA visited the brewery on 15 August, their first anniversary, and presented Richard and Jude with a certificate marking the Stockport Beer of the Festival win for Flatbac, the brewery's premium bitter - our photo shows Richard and Jude with their certificate. They told Opening Times:



quality of our beers."

"We are delighted to have received such a prestigious award in the first year of trading. This, together with the award for Flatbac at the Stockport Festival, has already boosted sales and helped to establish a good reputation for the

The Winners

Here are the Champion Beer of Britain winners in full:

- ☆ **Mild** - Gold: Lidstones Rowley Mild (Suffolk); Silver: Brains dark (Cardiff); Bronze: Bazens' Black Pig.
- ☆ **Bitters** - Gold: Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted (Scotland); Silver: Daleside Bitter (North Yorks); Bronze: Triple iff Alton Pride (Hants) and Caledonian Deuchars IPA (Edinburgh).
- ☆ **Best Bitters** - Gold: Crouch Vale Brewers Gold (Essex); Silver: West Berkshire Full Circle (Berks); Bronze: Slaters Supreme (Staffs) and Roosters Hooligan (North Yorks).
- ☆ **Strong Bitters** - Gold: Adnams Broadside (Suffolk); Silver: RCH East Street Cream (Somerset); Bronze: Oakham Bishops Farewell (Peterborough).
- ☆ **Speciality Beers** - Gold: Cheriton Village Elder (Hants); Silver: Daleside Morocco (North Yorks); Bronze: Oakham White Dwarf (Peterborough).
- ☆ **Bottle-conditioned Beers** - Gold: O'Hanlons Port Stout (Devon); Silver: Fuller's 1845 (London); Bronze: RCH Old Slug Porter (Somerset).
- ★ **Overall Champions** - Supreme Champion: Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted; Silver: Crouch Vale Brewer's Gold; Bronze: Lidstones Rowley Mild.

Pictish - this month's special is Staddlestone, a 4.5% tawny ale with a strong hop aroma and a good bitter finish. The superb strong IPA, Blue Moon (6%) has also been brewed and some should still be available in the free trade. Brewers Gold has won Beer of the Festival at Kingston for the second year running.



Porters - last month saw a surprise welcome return of Triticum, the cask cloudy wheat beer. The refreshing beer belies its 5.4% strength and has only appeared once before. Dave Porters has also installed yet another micro and beer from the Edale Brewery has been on sale in Stockport's Railway. Look for a feature on this new venture in coming months.

Boggart Hole Clough - there is just one special from Boggart Hole Cough this month. Branch is a 5% rich brown beer with a smoky but citrus taste and will only be available at Bar Fringe on Swan Street in the City Centre. The usual Boggart summer beer makes a reappearance - Summer Sun (4.4%) is pale and fruity.



Bazens' - This month's astrological beer is based on an old Bridgewater Ales' recipe - Inglewood Ale and uses Green Bullet hops. It is 4.5% and is called Blue Bullet (blue being the colour most associated with Virgos - apparently). The Freshers' Special 5.5% will be coming back at the end of September/beginning of October.

Facer's - Dave Facer will be bringing out a new beer every two months themed around seasonal references to the greats of English literature. The first one, celebrating autumn, will be called Keats and is inspired by his ode 'To Autumn' - Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness. Others envisaged in the series are, eg Dickens for Christmas, Shakespeare for winter, Wordsworth for spring etc.

Salford Brewery Syndicate - Also in the pipeline is another joint Facer's and Bazens' beer using green (unroasted) hops. This will be some time around the middle to end of September.

Beartown - The presentation of the Pub of the Year regional winner for Merseyside, Cheshire & North Wales to the Beartown Tap will be on the 25th October 2003. Combined with this, Beartown brewery, having recently moved to new premises within Congleton, will also officially open the new brewery on the same day.



HYDES

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STAGGER

with Paul Moss

June's stagger took us to a number of pubs in Stockport town centre - home turf for your correspondent. As this was almost the longest day of the year, and a pleasant evening to boot, I resolved to be on the lookout for what our stops offered by way of outdoor drinking areas.

First call was Robinson's Unity, on the corner of Wellington Road South and Wellington Street opposite the station approach. This used to be a favourite Saturday lunchtime haunt of mine, for a couple of pints and a bite to eat before Stockport County's home games, in the days when it was run by June & Peter Bennett. My match-day routine has changed since then, but the pub looks essentially the same. It is still the small, one-roomed affair it always was, but the deep blue walls I remember are now painted cream, and the paintings of dark windblown seas I used to admire have been replaced by subtler prints. This all gives a lighter feel to the place, but I'm not sure what purpose is served by the twinkling fairy lights and glitter ball. You can still see where the dart board used to hang in the cosy front corner of the pub, but the fruit machine in front of it means there's no chance of a game. Never mind - you can instead admire the glossy photographs of attractive young ladies in revealing sporting-theme poses - all very tastefully done, of course. Enough of the reminiscing, though - what about the beer? I went for the Hatters and had to send it straight back. The barrel was changed immediately, but the unanimous verdict was that the beer was still a little average. The one person who tried the Best Bitter thought it to be about the same. As we left, I spotted one single upturned trestle table outside the back door - no al fresco drinking here tonight.

A few steps further down Wellington Road to Cobden's, also Robinson's, on the corner of St. Petersgate. Fondly remembered by many in its former incarnation as the Manchester Arms, this was gutted a few years back and refitted in a more modern style to

appeal to the younger crowd that the Grand Central development attracted. Nevertheless, it has continued to offer Best Bitter to the cask ale drinker. Cobden's is quite spacious and airy, and this was emphasised by the complete lack of people in the main bar area. There were a few customers, but these were all crowded into the small front room. We ordered our drinks at the long bar on the left and moved outside to the paved terrace to enjoy the evening air. In keeping with the modern theme, the tables were of stainless steel with machined tops. No problems with the beer here - we all found it to be pretty decent.

Moving down St. Petersgate, we paid a quick visit to the Blarney Stone, an Irish-style pub which sometimes sells real ale. Tonight, there was a handpump advertising Charles Wells Bombardier Bitter, but sadly there was no cask at the other end of the pipe.

A walk up Lord Street brought us back to Wellington Street, this time to visit Little Jack Horner's. As we approached, we noticed that the brickwork appeared to have been recently cleaned and repointed. Since the pub is long and narrow, the interior is much bigger than a first glance would suggest, and we found a cosy, bustling atmosphere. The jukebox was playing at the easy-listening end of the pop and rock spectrum, but this seemed to fit with the mellow ambience. From the small front room there are steps up to the bar area, and more to reach the comfortable lounge at the back. This has red bench seating on two sides matched by the upholstery on the stools and chairs. Between us, we tried all four of the cask ales - Marston's Pedigree, Tetley Bitter, Cameron's Strongarm and Worthington Bitter - and found them all well kept. The pints were all served in appropriately branded glasses - a nice touch.

Back to St. Petersgate for our next two pubs. First, the Stockport Arms. Smiling wryly at the John Smiths promotional posters on the door ("Beer tasters wanted"; "Buy it because it's lovely"), we went inside to find loud music being played by a sullen-looking young lady DJ at the far end of the L-shaped interior. On the real ale front, Greenall's Bitter is accompanied by a rotating "guest" from Tetley Bitter, Tetley Imperial, Marston's Pedigree, Cains Bitter and - tonight's offering - Old Speckled Hen. Both beers were tried, and both rated average.

JD Wetherspoon's Calvert's Court next, a conversion from a bed shop to create a long, narrow pub fitted out in 1920's retro style. This being a Friday night, the place was extremely busy and noisy, and, the time being after 8.00, the lighting was subdued. No fewer





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than eight cask-conditioned ales were offered. Of these, I believe the Theakston Best Bitter, Boddington's Bitter, Greene King Abbott Ale, Shepherd Neame Spitfire and Courage Directors are all regulars. One of our number was something of a Spitfire fan, and therefore chose this, to find it fell short of his expectations. The rest of us went for the guests and found them to be good - Butcombe Gold, Exmoor Gold and Brain's (formerly Crown Buckley) Reverend James. In the past, there have been tables available outside at the back of the pub, but as we left we noticed that for some reason this is no longer the case.

Emerging on to High Street, we came next to the Royal Oak (Robinson's), which I'm told was completely rebuilt in the mid-1980s. We sat in the small drinking area on the left in front of the bar, musing as to the significance of the row of flags above the seryery. From here we could see a game of pool in progress in the other front room, behind which lies the lounge. The beers here used to be served from metered dispensers into oversize glasses, but this has now been replaced by freeflow dispense into brim-measures. Both beers were sampled: the Hatters was felt to be okay, and the Best Bitter pretty good.

Back up to St. Petersgate, next, and the Egerton Arms. This is one pub I'd passed many times (often noting a Karaoke in progress) but never been inside, and I found it surprisingly homely. We drank in the comfortable front lounge, which has a stone floor.

Passing to the left of the horseshoe bar brings you to the wooden-floored back room containing a pool table and a well-stocked trophy cabinet. Most of us sipped a decent drop of Tetley Bitter whilst we enjoying (well, I did) the sound of Coldplay on the jukebox. Those who tried the other cask ale, Boddington's Bitter, thought it rather ordinary.

We now dropped down onto Chestergate and across Mersey Square, passing the keg-only **Chestergate** and **George**, to reach Heaton Lane and our last two watering-holes. First up was the **Pineapple**, an excellent, cosy, and too often overlooked Robinson's house with impressive etched windows. You can generally expect a warm welcome and good beer here, and tonight was no exception. Both the Best Mild (sorry, Hatters) and the Best Bitter were on excellent form, with the mild taking the title of best beer of the evening. We found good company, too, not least in the form of Mich and Lorraine taking time out from running the Church in Edgeley.

Finally, we crossed the road to catch last orders in the **Crown**. This will need no introduction to many readers, as the range of well-kept cask ales - normally ten at a time - is second to none in the area (except when the beer festival is on, of course). Indeed, by the time you read this, the Crown will have been presented with July's Pub of the Month award. As well as the five rooms inside - lounge, vault, smoking and non-smoking snugs and the bar area - there is a large yard-cum-beer-garden at the back which often hosts live music. I went for an Ossett beer, which just managed to deliver a pint before running out. Unfortunately, this also meant that absolutely all the sparkle had gone from the beer - a rather odd experience, but I'm told this can often be the case with the last one out. Not a problem, as the pint was willingly exchanged for something else. I shan't list all the beers - suffice to say that all those we drank were in excellent condition.

Thus ended an pleasant evening enjoying a variety of pubs and beers. Don't forget that the foregoing represents the impressions of a small group on one night - why not try for yourself those you don't already know, and see what you think.

STH. CHESHIRE FESTS

Records were broken at Wrenbury during the Paradise and Bhurtspore beer festivals. A total of 704 passengers arrived at Wrenbury station during the festivals.

Special stops on the 11.33 Piccadilly-Cardiff express saw 35 arriving on 5 July and 75 the following week. A total surprise were stops on the 10.33 which saw a further 10 arrivals on 5 July with another 20 on 12th. It total, Saturday 12 July saw 289 arrivals by train and the local Crewe & Shrewsbury Passenger Association would like to thank all visitors as it does wonders for the loading figures at this obscure rural station.

New Era At Paradise

Brewing has recommenced at Paradise Brewery where John Wood has planned a new range of beers plus the ever-popular Marbury Mild. The new range of beers will be launched during the Nantwich Beer Festival on 26 and 27 September. They will only be available at Paradise Brewery, just a 7-minute trip by train and one way of passing the time during the 4-6pm closed session. Trains leave Nantwich at 14.54 and 16.54, returning at 16.24 and 18.40. The new beers sound very interesting.

Nantwich Food & Drink Festival

This interesting event will be held on Friday and Saturday, 26 and 27 September. There will be a Regional Food Fare on Mill Island, opening at 10am on each day of the Festival and entry will be free. On Friday 26 September, a Made In Cheshire Produce Fair will be held in the Town Square.

Alongside will be the 2nd CAMRA Nantwich Beer Festival featuring 60 locally produced beers and a range of local ciders. A feature of the Festival will be "Ales of the Lake District". Opening hours are 6-11pm on the Friday (admission £3) while Saturday hours are 11-4 (£2) and 6-11 (£3). Admission prices include a glass. For more details there is a Festival Hotline on 01270 610983.

On Saturday 27, a special stop at Nantwich has been arranged on the 10.33 Manchester Piccadilly-Cardiff train. A return service will leave Nantwich at 17.13 for Crewe, Wilmslow, Stockport and Mcr.

VIADUCTS AND VAULTS 3

A Celebration of Real Ale in Stockport's Pubs
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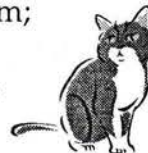
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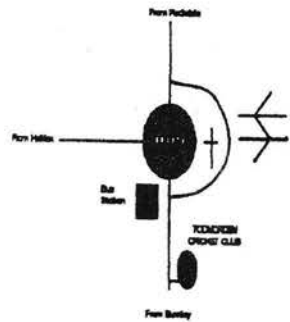
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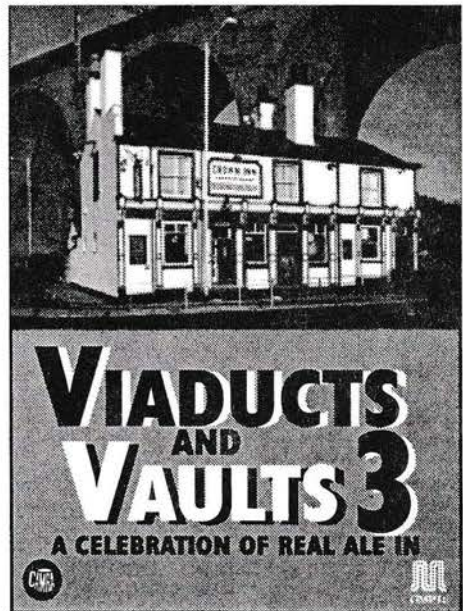


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LETTERS OPENING TIMES

From Smokin' Joe (name and address supplied)

With reference to the current debate on smoking in pubs, here are a couple of suggestions that your readers might not have previously considered.

If you are a disgruntled non-smoker who is fed up with your favourite pub atmosphere being polluted by intransigent smokers, here is a wizard wheeze that might help you to get your own back. Simply idle up surreptitiously to the offending party and fart in their beer and food. This is unlikely to produce a "Roy Castle" effect on them but might at least make you feel a bit better. Alternatively, perhaps the government should pass legislation to protect the rights of smokers to wreck their lungs in public buildings as long as they zip themselves into a hermetically sealed bubble suit whilst doing so. This would have the double advantage of keeping the non-smokers off their back whilst also protecting them from any vigilante farters! Just a suggestion.

From David Newton, Clifton:

It's nice to see that some of the old traditions die hard. But at times one wonders whether some are just trying too hard. I am, of course, referring to Mark McConachie's long running campaign in aid of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Words (SPAW). Why only in last month's edition we were treated to the delights of "mammoth pantechinons" (big lorries to most people) alongside pubs "packed to the gun-wales" with "sundry merry looking individuals" staring at "drinking ephemera" (perhaps trying to work out what they were staring at?) whilst making a "nice nod to the history of the local" (presumably in genuflection) in the "verdant scene of Ardwick Green" (where were the Editors, for God's sake?).

Perhaps some of us are just a "tad young" to appreciate all this olde worlde verbiage and I should "scamper" off to the bar fronted by the "lovely Laura", a "bubbly blonde", a "luscious lovely" and try to remember which of my grandparents last spoke in such a modern manner. (Yea, verily - Ed(1))

DAVID HALL

David Hall died on Saturday 23 August 2003 aged 58. He suffered a first stroke in July 2001, made a 90% recovery but was stricken with a second one in December 2003 which left him able to move only his eyes and right foot.

Dave was the ideas man and founder chairman of the South Manchester branch of CAMRA (now Stockport & South Manchester) in November 1973. The idea followed a meeting with co-founder Graham Lees on the Save Joule's Brewery March in Stone a few weeks earlier. Dave was also very much influenced by the "Boston on Beer" articles in the Saturday editions of the Guardian.

The branch was formally inaugurated in January 1974 at a celebrated meeting in the garden of the Printers Arms, Cheadle, Cheshire when over 70 members attended and drank the pub dry! Dave produced what was probably CAMRA's first newsletter for branch members, 70 to 100 of whom used to attend the monthly meetings.

Dave organised a coach for 40 branch members to attend the 1974 CAMRA AGM in York - the first AGM where the numbers were in the 100's. He persuaded all the Manchester independent brewers to deliver their beer on a Robinson's dray for the AGM beerex - quite a feat at the time! In 1976 Dave became a member of CAMRA's National Executive and was one of the signatories of the Articles of Association when CAMRA became a Company limited by guarantee later that year.

He continued to follow his passion for real ale right up to the time of his second stroke and also, until that occurred, he continued to follow his other dream, Manchester City. With a great deal of co-operation from Macclesfield General Hospital, his family and Manchester City FC he was able to attend the last match ever at Maine Road.

Dave is survived by his wife Sandra and his three sons Dan, Jim and Matt. It is purely an apocryphal tale that his three sons were named after Daniel Thwaites, James Shipstone's and Matthew Brown - or..... perhaps it isn't.....!

Neil Kellett

Founder Treasurer of the CAMRA South Manchester branch.

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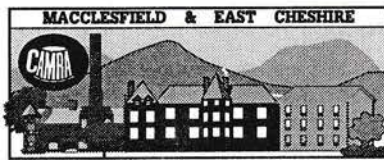
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PUB NEWS

with Steve Bray

In Macclesfield, the Oxford has been purchased by Jennings which will bring beers we don't normally see into the town. Also in Macclesfield it is all change: the Britannia, the Durham Ox, the Plough (Prestbury Rd), the Albion all changing hands. The Navigation is shut after the licensee filed for bankruptcy following a rent increase to the ridiculous sum of £400 per week - how on Earth can a backstreet pub make a living with that kind of rent?

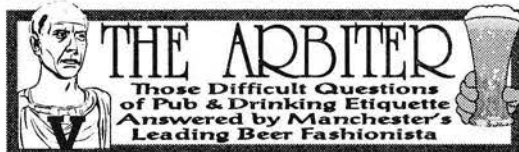
Elsewhere, in Rainow the Rising Sun is now closed following a dispute between the owners and the licensee but as OT went to press we heard that the pub is to be taken over by a new couple of licensees and may in fact be open by the time you read this. In Bollington the Spinners lease is still for sale, the Meridian pub is for sale and the Dog and Partridge tenants are leaving before the end of the year.

Another piece of Pubco lunacy has occurred at the Crown in Bollington where Avebury Taverns have demanded the licensees sign a new 3 year contract (and part with substantial sums of money) while Avebury still have not completed work to the pub that was promised last year. In Kerridge there is still no further news on the future of the Redway Tavern which remains closed. Robinson's are currently refurbishing the Bull in Macclesfield and we hear that it will re-open with a new name - the Merchant's House. More news as we get it.

Terry and Carol Costello were licensees of the Brewers Arms, Bridge Street, Macclesfield, 10 years ago, before leaving to start a new life in Tenerife. Three years ago they paid what they thought would be a nostalgic visit to their former pun - and were so shocked by its run down condition that they decided to take it back. Their efforts have paid off as owners Enterprise Inns have named the Brewers as their best pub in the north west for 2002-03. The couple have no regrets about giving up their life in the sun as they say both the pub and Macclesfield itself have always been with them.

A quick look at the Robinson's web site reveals that the tenancy of the Dog & Partridge, Bollington, was up for grabs.

And finally I would just like to wish a happy retirement to Eric and Ann from the Boarhound in Macclesfield. They have been running a superb pub for many years. A very hard act to follow.



Dear Arbiter,
Recently we have read in beer circles that cask ale, although a niche product in the market place, exercises power beyond its market share. This is because, so we are told, if a group of friends want to go to a pub and even if only one of their number drinks real ale, the rest will meekly follow his preference in order to 'humour' him. Not having any friends who don't like decent beer (must make me a statistical freak) I'd like to know how this works in practice.

Well of course it doesn't. I only know of one major real ale pub where they don't serve anything for morons - the splendid Navigation in Heaton Norris, currently CAMRA Regional Pub of the Year, where only draught Belgian & German and Belgian & Czech bottles are served to complement the mighty range of ciders and Beartown brewery beers offered. Porters Railway in Stockport comes close - offering Sam Smith's brewed Ayingerbrau Lager & Wheat (which though British brewed is nearly indistinguishable from the original) alongside David Porter's splendid brews. No, pubs everywhere sell c*** Brit-fizz lagers, gassy apple chemical drinks, and often 'smooth', proper beer that is killed, gassed up and so cold all the flavour is removed. The lemming-like moronic mass taste is supported everywhere. If they're too afraid and guilty to order what they prefer, when faced with a discerning and tasty option selected by one of their number, so be it. Real ale is a drink for real people. You'll be telling me next that if this 'peer group leader' also orders prawntikka flavoured crisps, they will all follow suit as well. I believe it not.



A few improvements are planned at the Crown, Heaton Lane. Licensee Graham Mascord tells us that he is planning to install two further handpumps bringing the total to 12. This will enable further guest beers to feature at what is already the town's top pub for variety - the cider will be dispensed from the cellar, too, ensuring a cool pint at all times. Graham is also hoping to stock a small range of bottled German and Czech beers, too which will only add to the pub's appeal.

Despite our report to the contrary a couple of months back, it looks as though the Bowling Green, Charles Street, off Hillgate, is still keg with no sign of the promised handpumped Boddingtons Bitter.

In the same area, the Crown, Hillgate looks as though it is about to reopen. Just as we went to press the decorators were in amid much activity. Despite its keg-only status in recent years (coinciding with the downturn in the pub's fortunes, as it happens), the Crown was for many years known for a good pint of cask beer - let's hope the new licensees have the foresight to reinstate it. Close by the Big Lamp looks closed, again.

Staying on Hillgate, the Bishop Blaize has reopened after a refurbishment. The uninviting entrance passage has been transformed by a coat of bright paint and the whole pub looks to have been spruced up. Some of the fixed seating in the main lounge has been taken out and a stage installed. Sadly this means that while the pub perhaps looks more welcoming now than it has done for a long time, its position on CAMRA's National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors may now be in some doubt. Burtonwood Bitter is on handpump and was in good condition when OT called.

Stockport's newest bar, the Abbey Bar on St Petersgate was 'opening soon' as we went to press. It will be interesting to see what is on offer here - as an independent operation, let's hope they don't pass up the chance to offer some decent, interesting beer, if not in cask, at least in bottle. There's another new bar in prospect, too. Zaheer Shafi had applied for a license to turn the empty shop at 36 Castle Street, Edgeley, into a bar to be known as 'The Edge'. You have to ask whether Edgeley really needs another pub.

The Robinson's website was showing the tenancies of one or two local pubs up for grabs as we went to press. Those available include Cobdens, Stockport; Crown, Great Moor; Waterloo, Stockport and the Royal Mortar, Hillgate.

The Conway in Cheadle Hulme closes for eight weeks this month as it undergoes a £400,000-plus refurbishment by Hydes. The public areas are to be extended and substantially upgraded - the plans on display at the pub indicate a very impressive end result. Work is also underway at Millington Hall in Cheadle Hulme. While we understand that Hydes have had to alter their initial plans, it is good news that they have seen off the 'nimby's' who ridiculously suggested that the opening of this Heritage Inn would result in Cheadle Hulme becoming a sort of home grown Faliraki. If recent performance is anything to go by, and Stockport man Ryan Nelson achieves his ambition, he looks set to be among the country's youngest pub managers. Nineteen year-old Ryan is currently assisting his father Paul, who has been manager of the Dog & Partridge, Great Moor, for the past two years. But Ryan holds the long-standing ambition of running his own pub so has set about gaining the necessary experience and qualifications to realise his dream.

Ryan already works very closely with his father in running the Robinson's house and has provided relief management on several occasions. "I'm fully involved in all aspects of the business from cellar management to book keeping, but before I take on my own house I would like to build on the experience," he said. Having recently passed an intensive five-day licensee training course at Robinson's has certainly strengthened his position and now, back at the Dog & Partridge, Ryan is passing on his new-found skills to other members of staff.

VIADUCTS AND VAULTS 3 - OUT NOW!





This month we introduce a new regular feature. While the pub is always the best place to try real ale, more people are drinking at home more often – and there are plenty of tasty, traditional beers you can try at home, too. Each month the Opening Times Tasting Panel will sample of selection of the best, and sometimes very much not the best, bottled beers available locally. So, next time you're planning a night in let our experts point you in the direction of some bottled beer treats...

Real Ale in a Bottle

For the first of these monthly articles, the Tasting Panel met to sample five of the most commonly available British Bottle-Conditioned Ales (BCAs). That is, beers that are sold widely in local supermarkets and specialist beer shops. Our aim is to sample five bottled beers each month and for the panel to report upon how much enjoyment (or otherwise) the beers gave. Apart from the person buying the beers, the beers sampled by the panel were sampled 'blind', that is, we did not know the beer's name or the style of beer that it was until we had all sampled it and made our deliberations.

Beer 1 – Brakspear's Live Organic 4.6% ABV (£1.59)

A mid-brown to copper coloured beer, toffee on the nose and a slight caramel in the palate. A good aroma, but perhaps a trifle thin in the body we thought. A long aftertaste followed, slightly lacking in hops though, with a sweetish finish. The panel was divided on this one as to whether they would have this beer again by choice. For those in the know on such things, this was the Burtonwood brewed version.

Beer 2 – Hopback Summer Lightning 5.0% ABV (£1.59)

Golden to the eye with a fair condition to it when presented to us. Cleaner to the taste but with a light bitterness in the finish; a tangerine-like element was noted in the taste too. Again the panel were split on this one – some preferring its better hoppiness to that of the first beer, whilst others didn't think the beer really worked that well. When the beer was eventually revealed as Summer Lightning, many were surprised as to how different this bottled version was from the taste of the widely acclaimed cask version. Some of the panel had tried this beer on previous occasions and expressed how variable it could be from batch to batch. Incidentally, this was the only beer to be sampled on this occasion that had a cask ale equivalent available.

Beer 3 – Young's Champion Live Golden Beer 5.0% ABV (£1.69)

Even paler than the first two sampled ales, much more distinctive in the aroma too. A fruitiness of grapefruit, citrus, even bananas was detected on the nose. In the taste, two of our number sensed a slight metallic or mineral note. It was generally thought to be less bitter in taste and in terms of flavour was not 'punching its weight'. Overall, we thought that this could well be a beer that would grow on you, perhaps.

Beer 4 – Morland's Hen's Tooth 6.5% ABV (£1.90)

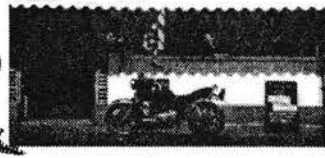
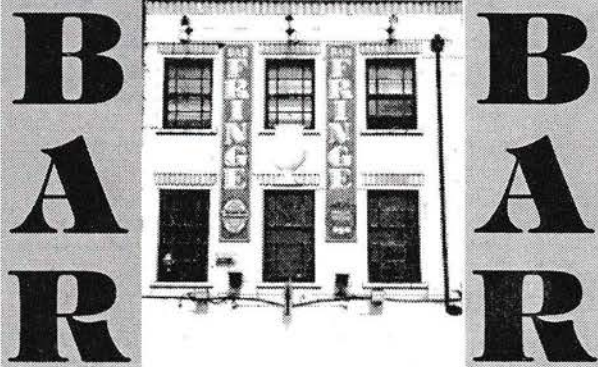
Good looking in the condition, a lot of hops on the nose then something entirely unexpected upon the tongue – marmalade (Seville oranges, perhaps) with other notes of toffee and ripe bananas being perceived. Were we getting in to our tasting stride here? Whatever, the beer was very flavoursome, full-bodied with a sweetness that was balanced by a good hop and tart-fruitiness. One of us questioned whether, perhaps, it even had a slight Belgian air to it? An interesting one this, for all of the panel. Classed as a Strong Ale, this was well liked by a couple of our party.

Beer 5 – Fuller's 1845 Ale 6.3% ABV (£1.95)

Our final beer was not the strongest of the night but proved to be the most pricey. This is a dark brown ale with a big aroma that introduces one to a very rich Christmas cake array of flavours. For a beer of this gravity, this is a wonderful balance of malty body with a lasting hoppy finish – to your author's mind, British brewer's brewing a strong gravity ale at its best!

In conclusion, the panel, although somewhat sceptical at first, found it all worthwhile – we warmed to the task in the end. It appeared to us that bottle conditioning is of much greater benefit to beers of a higher strength or gravity. Throughout the tasting we enjoyed the accompaniment of some splendid light classical music.

As for a 'Beer of the Night', Beer 5 (the Fuller's) was judged the winner with Beer 4 having a bit of 'wow' factor to it; Beer 3 was favoured by two of the party. Next month's panel will focus their attention on tasting mainstream Belgian beers.



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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

SEPTEMBER 2003

Saturday 6th - Trip to Eastwood & Sanders brewery. Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton Lane at 10.am. Book with Paul Formby on 0161 612 0759 (after 6.00pm)

Thursday 11th - Branch Meeting: Waldorf, Gore St, Manchester City Centre. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 15th - Social: Railway, Great Portwood St, Stockport. From 8.30pm (will include informal presentation of National POTY runner-up certificate)

Friday 19th - Stagger - Cheadle Hulme: 7.30 Kenilworth, Cheadle Rd; 8.30 Church, Ravenoak Rd.

Thursday 25th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Circus Tavern, Portland St, Manchester City Centre

Saturday 27th - Minibus to Burton Beer Festival. Departs Crown, Heaton Lane 10.00am. Book with Paul Formby on 0161 612 0759 (after 6.00pm)

Thursday 2nd October - New Members Trip to Bank Top Brewery. Minibus will leave Crown, Heaton Lane 7.30pm.

Thursday 9th - Branch Meeting: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.00pm. Guest speakers from Hydes' Brewery have been invited.

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 8th - Branch Meeting: Cheshire Ring, Manchester Road, Hyde. Starts 8.30pm. (We have been assured that it will be open by then)

Saturday 13th - Sponsored Walk cheque presentation night: Kinder Lodge, Hayfield. Starts 8.00pm

SEPTEMBER 2003

Saturday 20th - Paul (Internet) Marsden Greater Manchester Memorial pub crawl. Meet Piccadilly Railway station at 10.00am by the train indicator board.

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:

Tuesday 9th - Congleton Pub Crawl: Counting House 8.00pm; Bulls Head 8.25; Leisure Centre Bar 9.30; Beartown Tap 10.15.

Tuesday 23rd - Campaigning Meeting: Robin Hood, Buglawton. Starts 8.00pm

The Trafford & Hulme Branch cover 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 20th - Survey & Social: meet Railway, Hale 1.00pm.

Thursday 2nd October - Branch AGM: Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Written nominations and motions should be sent to Branch Secretary, 1 Gloucester Drive, Sale, M33 5DH not later than 20 September. After formalities there will be a social evening with Grand Raffle, Quiz and refreshments.

Regional Event - U-26 Group

Friday 3 October - 'Session in the Jolly', Social in the Jolly Angler, Ducie St, by Piccadilly Rail Station. From 8.00pm. Contact Dave Hallows on 0161 708 9151(daytime) - davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk

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12

CAMRA
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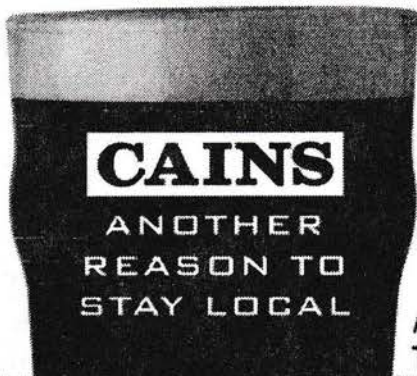
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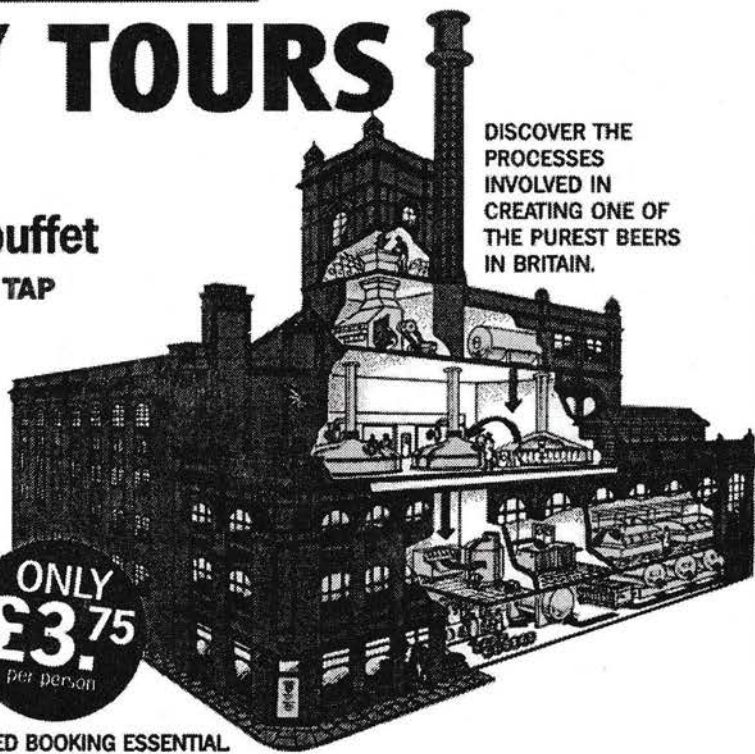
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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison **SEPTEMBER '98**

The Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport's premier free house, had finally been sold after several false starts. Each 'sale' had been reported in *Opening Times*, but each one had fallen through. The new owners were the "Ale House Pub Company", a Southampton-based pub chain, formed it was believed, by former employees of Labatts, itself a pub chain taken over in 1996. The Crown was one of forty or so pubs bought from Greenalls but was the only one operated as a genuine free house with a constantly changing range of guest beers. It now remained to be seen whether the new owners would allow the Crown to keep its complete freedom of beer choice. Today of course, the Crown retains its position as the best pub in town for a combination of choice and quality.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The likely demolition of the Plough, Hyde Road, Gorton, had been reported in the previous issue, but no sooner had it gone to press, news came through that it was no longer under threat. It had been a misunderstanding - Manchester City Council had said they wanted to occupy the Plough, but it transpired that all they needed was the bingo hall behind the pub. Today the Plough is about to have a refurbishment which will see upgraded toilet facilities and a gentle restoration of the largely intact, and listed, Victorian interior.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Burtonwood Brewery had just formed a new joint venture company with the Dorset based Thomas Hardy Brewery, although for the time being at least, brewing seemed likely to continue on both sites. The new company, Thomas Hardy Burtonwood, would have its headquarters at Warrington and would be 60% owned by Hardys. The Burtonwood plant had had about £8 million invested in it during the previous decade, and was one of the most modern breweries in the country, with plenty of spare capacity.

★ ★ ★

MP Dennis Turner's "Fair Pints" Bill finally bit the dust the previous month - when it came up for debate in Parliament it was objected to and did not proceed. Even if a debate had taken place, the measure faced a formidable list of amendments from Tory MPs Eric Forth and David MacLean. It was also unfortunate that one of the proposals greatest supporters, Consumer Affairs Minister Nigel Griffiths, was sacked in a Government reshuffle.

★ ★

There was news of the Kings Arms on Bloom Street, Salford. It had been sold in May by Greenalls Owl Inns, and then bought by City Centre based property company Swan Properties, who had granted licensee Tom Jones a 40-year lease, thus guaranteeing the pub's future. Ken Birch had introduced a new menu, featuring beer and cider based dishes, as well as more mainstream bar food. There had already been a refurbishment, and up to eight cask ales would be on offer.

THE BEERMONSTER RETURNS NEXT MONTH



Wot No Pubs?

Every beer drinker in Britain has heard of Boddingtons - the so-called Cream of Manchester. And anyone who knows much about the subject is aware that the Manchester area is home to the biggest concentration of established independent breweries in the UK. So the visitor approaching Britain's premier brewing city by road from the south along the M56 and Princess Road may be surprised that he doesn't pass a single functioning pub between the Greater Manchester boundary and the Mancunian Way - although he will pass a large brewery that produces no decent beer.

The Mersey Lights is long gone, replaced by a petrol station and a drive-thru McDonalds; the Royal Thorn (latterly "Royals") has been flattened for an office development, as was the Oaks some years ago at the Barlow Moor Road junction. The Princess, a striking 1930s building, is currently closed, boarded and burnt-out, and highly unlikely ever to reopen. Large communities on either side of the main road are now more than half a mile from the nearest pub.

These pubs were not in blighted inner-city areas, and their demise goes against the widely-held belief that all that is needed for a pub to succeed is a lot of customers living within walking distance. Patterns of pub-going have never matched that stereotype, and have increasingly tended to concentrate on clusters of pubs in town and village centres. To either side of Princess Road, in Chorlton and Didsbury, the pub scene is booming and new bars are opening.

Plenty of pubs do thrive in residential areas, but they cannot afford to take a captive market for granted. These oversized, echoing drinking barns probably never gave anyone much of a positive reason for visiting them and have now paid the price.

Drink to Success

There was cheering news when researchers from Stirling University revealed that, on average, moderate drinkers earned over 17% more than their teetotal colleagues. Even those defined as "heavy drinkers" consuming more than 50 units of alcohol a week still took home 5% more than the abstainers. Clearly people who are sociable and have a flexible attitude are likely to be more effective workers than those who apply principles rigidly regardless of the circumstances, a lesson that employers who wish to crack down on even very light drinking by their staff would do well to heed.

The research also suggested that going to the pub with colleagues after work can help people's career prospects. However, this finding really has less to do with alcohol consumption as such, than with the fact that the worker who stays behind to brown-nose the boss is more likely to be promoted than his colleague who needs to get away promptly to pick up the kids. In any case, while after-work drinks can become a way of life in city centre offices, in most workplaces they're simply not on the agenda except on rare special occasions.

Curmudgeon Online:

<http://members.lycos.co.uk/curmudgeon>

13



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Celebrating British Beer



HEATONS HOTTING UP

The pub scene in Heaton Moor and Heaton Chapel has hotted up with a considerable level of investment across the area.

The greatest investment has been spent on the **Elizabethan** on Heaton Moor Road. The Orchard Pub Company has not only spent money on the very tasteful refurbishment (stained wood, pastel shades, stylish lighting) but also made a major commitment to real ale. Advertising this under the banner of "Real Ale - Real Taste", the pub has attained a Cask Marque accreditation and the array of handpumps has room for up to seven cask beers, although only Cain's FA, Greene King IPA and Wells Bombardier were available when OT called.

This is all part of a move away from the youth ghetto it had become. Apart from the beer, there is a real effort on the food front, which is available from 12 noon until 9.00pm every day, and there's also a new no-smoking area at the front of the pub.

The only criticism OT could make was the inexperience of some of the bar staff who didn't seem to have been made aware of the difference between cask beer and John Smith's smooth, although this is early days and can easily be sorted out. Overall this is a huge improvement and deserved support, especially as a cask ale festival is promised next month.

Going To The Chapel

Down in Heaton Chapel, the perennial poor relation of the local pub scene, the Chapel House, has been taken over by new tenants Wayne Burney and his partner Lorna Ennestine. The pub has been pleasantly refurbished in traditional style, and the seedy, down-at-heel atmosphere of recent years has been laid to rest.

Again, there is a new emphasis on food (available 12 noon to 2pm, and 4-8pm) with Wayne a trained chef. With sensibly priced food and also a children's menu, the couple are clearly aiming to attract more of a family crowd than before.

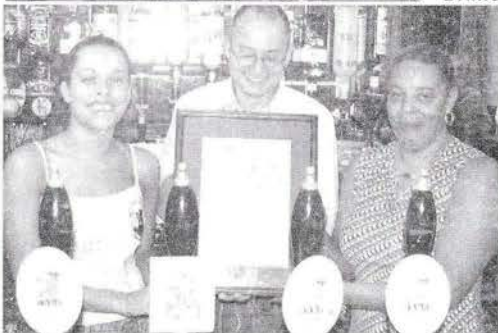
The pub will be selling Boddington's Bitter on handpump. When OT called there had been some teething problems but by the time you read this, the Heaton's should be welcoming another real ale gain. Wayne and Lorna are to be commended on taking on this, their first pub, although local competition is likely to be intense.

There is less good news down at the Moor Top in Heaton Moor, where, despite a refurbishment, and a handpump on the bar, there is still no cask beer on sale. OT was told that this was 'awaiting the company's decision', but gained the impression that this was not imminent. Given the pub's prominent position, this pub does for some reason seem to be one of the local licensed trade's under-achievers.

LOCAL CAMRA AWARDS



Left: Andy and Sue of the Orange Tree, Altrincham are presented with the inaugural and well deserved Pub of the Season award by Neil Worthington of Trafford & Hulme Branch of CAMRA.



MORE RECENT LOCAL CAMRA AWARDS IN NEXT MONTH'S OPENING TIMES

Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Chairman, and OT's Ed(1) - John Clarke (grinning inanely again, I see - Ed(2)) - presents Angella (right) and Chantal Lindsay of Beartown's The Navigation, Heaton Norris, with their Greater Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year Award on August 2

Dave and Sue Welcome You To

THE QUEENS ARMS

HONEY STREET, CHEETHAM

Try the fine range of beers supporting independent brewers in their excellent free house!

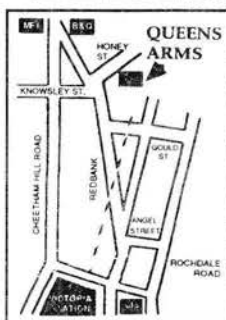
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We reported last month that the Ring O'Bells, Marple, had changed hands. The new tenants are Sue and David Gichero and, having previously kept the Crown Inn, Heaton Mersey, and having been involved with the licensed trade for the past 30 years, the couple bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience.



Susan Gichero with Brewery Director Dennis Robinson

"Most of my background is from having run my own stocktaking business in which I specialised in helping other tenants to run an efficient operation," said David. "I will now be putting those same skills to good use to ensure the Ring O'Bells continues to live up to its well earned reputation." Dave will be working closely with wife Sue who is equally keen to see that the food and drink they provide is of the highest standards.

Jeff and Julie Eccles have proved the case that it is never too late to make a fresh start in life as the couple have just taken up their first full time positions in the licensed trade having taken over as tenants of Robinson's Gardeners Arms, Denton.



Jeff & Julie with Brewery Director Dannis Robinson

For Jeff, the move represents a complete contrast from wagon driving, which has provided him with a living for the past 35 years. "We got our first taste of the pub business when a friend of ours asked us to stand in as temporary managers at the Queens Arms, Cheadle, while they were away on holiday. We thoroughly enjoyed the work which I found was much more sociable than working alone in a truck, so we decided to take a pub of our own," said Jeff. Over the coming weeks they will meet the various teams that represent the pub in local leagues and also start to make some alterations to the pub itself, including a new bar to increase the public serving area and a new kitchen.

The new tenants at the Shoulder of Mutton in Chapel-en-le-Frith are Mark Leech and Dominique Paul. This venture into the licensed trade is a first for the brother and sister partnership and one they intend to develop to the full.

"We have both given up established careers for this move so it represents a big step and lifestyle change for us," explained Dominique. The pair are also joined in the move by their mother Pat who shares their ambition of building a thriving trade. "It is a decision that we have considered for some time and one which we took together. The only real choice was finding the right pub, but when Robinson's showed us the Shoulder of Mutton we spotted its potential

16
 CAMPAIGN
 FOR
 REAL ALE

straight away and our minds were then made up.” said Dominique. Since taking over, the family trio have already made changes having started to serve bar snacks, and in time they would like to extend the menu. Other plans include the return of live music on Saturday evenings.

The new licensee of Robinson's Bulls Head in Glossop is self-confessed beer fanatic, Paul Taylor.

“Many people will know the Bulls Head for its strong tradition of



Paul and Barbara Taylor with David Robinson, Brewer Director

serving genuine Rusholme curries cooked on the premises, but I am going to make sure that we are equally well known for serving a good pint of real ale,” said Paul. To help build the business in which he is supported by wife Barbara, Paul and the brewery have invested heavily in the pub which is reputed to be one of the oldest buildings in Glossop, dating back to the 16th Century. As well as developing the internal layout of the building, two designated non-smoking areas have been provided.

The tenancies of several Robinson's pubs in the High Peak area were available in early August. The pubs where a change of hands is presumably imminent include the Bankfield, Hyde; George, Compstall; Hunters, Chisworth; Masons Arms, Denton (the licensees here will be a hard act to follow, having won the company's Bar & Cellar competition); Sportsman Inn, Bredbury; Vine Tavern, Birch Vale; and the Olde Cheshire Cheese in Longnor.

As we reported last month, movement at the Pinnacle at Crown Point was reported in the form of external decorators working on the pub. Well, it has now reopened, in the form of what seems to be a cut price pub, with various posters in the window, declaring the merits of cheap pints of lager etc. I suspect it won't get many Branch members rushing to do a survey but if you do, please contact the High Peak Branch contact with information.

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Chris Barnes, the long time landlord at the Little Mill at Rowarth, in mid August, a favourite pub of many Branch members and indeed Chris was a friend of many of us. You were always guaranteed a welcome greeting and a chat from Chris and I personally looked forward to calling in the pub on a walk over from Glossop on the way to Hayfield or New Mills. Chris kept the pub as a regular Good Beer Guide entry for many years and the Branch had called in on many walks and several Charity Walks (He always put a £20 donation for the cause in the collecting buckets). He had been elected as a local Borough Councillor in May of this year for Rowarth and part of the New Mills area and his death was a shock in an area where he was a popular member of the Community as well as a licensee. Ron Brooks, the previous owner, and now the landlord at the Globe in Glossop, tells me Chris had had the pub for around 20 years since he purchased it from him. We would like to pass on our respects to all his family at this time. He was, we believe, 57 years old.

STOP PRESS – the Cheshire Ring, Manchester Road, Hyde, will be reopening this month. Great news – look for a full report in next month's Opening Times.

High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch Contact is Tom Lord
0161 427 7099 (h) email: jenni.lord@tiscali.co.uk

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Good Beer Guide listed.

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Seasonal Guest Beers
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Luxury en-suite accommodation. Parking facilities for guests.

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**Robinson's Chef of the Year 1999/2000
– second place and highly commended.**

British Meat Steak Pie of the Year 2001 – second place.

British Meat Steak Pie of the Year 2002 – runner up.



MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman



Beer House Revisited

Another quiet month for City Centre news, so I took myself off to the Northern Quarter for a mooch around and a chance to visit some pubs I'd not been to for some time.

But first the **Beer House**. I'd heard about the changes and had deliberately delayed calling in. So, what's the score? Well, it's been repainted inside and out and still claims, not entirely accurately I think, to be Manchester's No1 Free House. Inside it's bright with a very modern paint scheme, and the huge number of signs advertising all manner of dubious sounding drinks (not to mention the alcoholic slush machine, yes really) will be very off-putting for those who have been familiar with the pub over the years. Having said that, though, it still offers up to six cask beers and a real cider. Only four of the handpumps were in use when I called and these were dispensing Titanic Golden Age, Old Speckled Hen, Phoenix Arizona and Hook Norton Old Hooky. The cider was Adlestones. The forthcoming list also showed a similar mixture of mainstream and micro beers. Quality was good. So, what's the problem? The problem is the pub's history as one of the truly great real ale freehouses. If this was a brand new venture, there would be plenty of encouraging noises – new free house, six cask beers, real cider, so far, so good. But it's not a brand new venture and the Beer House remains a pub impaled on its past – I think it still deserves support but I suspect I may be alone voice among the city's real ale aficionados.

What's Doing In The City Centre

Elsewhere, the scaffolding is down from the **Lower Turks Head** on Shudehill and I'm pleased to see the old Manchester Brewery tilework has been preserved. The ground floor is apparently available to let as a wine bar, so it may well be possible to have a drink in the old pub yet.

Nearby is the **English Lounge**, formerly the Wheatsheaf, on High Street. This remains a civilised place to have a drink and looks to be doing a nice line in food. It never seems to have lived up to its early promise on the beer front, though. Three were on handpump when I called – Taylor's Landlord, Marston's Pedigree and Boddingtons Bitter. The Boddies was on one of the new yellow handpumps and had one of the new clips declaring it to be Boddingtons Cask. I hope it wasn't the new version, though, as this was one of the blandest beers I have ever had under the Boddingtons label. At £1.05 for a half, it wasn't exactly cheap either.

Round the corner on Church Street is the **Unicorn**. I really must hang my head in shame here – I'd not been in for ages and had forgotten what a really good pub this is. It still retains much of the multi-room feel, with a particularly fine little snug at the front right, and the extensive wood panelling creates a cosy, warm atmosphere. There are five cask beers, too. Pumpclips for Stones and Tetley bitters were reversed, but this still left a choice of Bass (the Unicorn is a long-standing Bass outlet), Boddingtons and Lees Bitter. I thought I compare and contrast the Boddies – new pump, old clip, far better (some of the best Boddies I've had for ages, in fact) and only 80p for the half. I certainly won't be leaving it so long before I call in again.

The nearby **Millstone** now seems to be keg after a brief flirtation with cask beer (and pretty duff cask beer, too, on my last visit). Just off Tib Street, **Cord** still offers one cask beer on handpump. This was Phoenix Sticky Wicket when I called and very good it was, too. There are also a few well-chosen bottles available.

Nearby on Tib Street, is **Centro**. This really is one of the best with three cask beers, often real cider, and a good range of bottled beer. When I called, Facers JAS, Phoenix Arizona and Pictish Brewers Gold were on handpump; I tried the Facers and it was excellent. There's a real commitment to cask beer here, as the large pumpclip display testifies. The bottled range includes the excellent Anchor Steam Beer, Liberty Ale and Porter from the UAS as well as a good range from the Continent. You'll get a branded glass where one is available, and the food, music and general vibe are excellent. I wanted to finish in the equally good **Fringe** but time dictated otherwise.

Other Odds & Sods

I'm told that the **Edinburgh Castle** in Ancoats has now closed and is unlikely to reopen. A sad loss, if true. Also disturbing is a report In Longsight, there is a new licensee at the **New Victoria**, the previous incumbents having moved to Mansfield. I'm told. I popped in to have a chat but there was a birthday party in full swing so I didn't get the chance, and I'll have to call back. Cask ale remains, I'm pleased to say, with Oakwell-brewed Barnsley Bitter being

joined by their Old Tom, a rich dark beer. The Old Tom wasn't on when I called but the Barnsley was on very good form indeed.

Further down the road at the **Sir Edwin Chadwick** has had the Wetherspoon signs removed, and that's not the only change. Three televisions now vie with loud music for your attention, the prices have gone up, and the real ale range has gone down. It is now owned by Laurel Pub Company who do seem to be trying hard to bugger things up here – presumably there's some sort of master plan for the pub, God knows what it might be.

East Side Blues

Having some time on my hands of late I set out into the areas just to the south of the city and to east Manchester to see what was happening on the cask ale front and pub scene. First then, to Beswick where I found an area entirely devoid of the real stuff. Although the **Clockface**, **Corner Shop**, **Queen Victoria**, **Crossroads** and **Mary D's** are all still operating, none now sells any cask. The one stalwart that did, the **Townley** on Albert Street which used to sell Holts for a while has dropped that in favour of smooth Boddies. For those of you with long memories, the roll call of pubs gone now includes the **Honeycomb** on Windcroft Close; the **Mosley** on Ashton New Road; **Old House at Home** on Ashton Old Road; the **Crescent** on Bell Crescent; and lastly, the **Metropole** on Rylance Street. The last two named were less than thirty years old for goodness sake!

It doesn't improve much in Chorlton-on-Medlock either. The **Phoenix** at the Precinct Centre is keg, as too are **Scruffy Murphy's** and the **Footage** on Grosvenor Street, with a name change for Scruffys to simply The Pub. Popping in to the **Tilted Falcon** (Banks's) I got a cheery welcome but only smooth beer, whilst the nearby **Plymouth Grove** was on the smooth stuff as well. I promise to bring you some cask beer news from these quarters next time.

Finally to Clayton with yet more doom and gloom for us lovers of living ale. On Clayton Lane everything is keg – the **Fox Tavern** is for sale; the **Bridge** advertised cask ale but none was to be seen; the **Church** is now a hideous opened-out (and empty) bar called the Blue Moon (it may attract City supporters, I guess). On Ashton New Road, the **Sir Humphrey Chetham** was securely shuttered up, but there were signs of workman going to and fro; the **Derby Arms** is now keg too; on the North Road area all of the pubs have gone! They were the **Clayton Arms** (Burtonwood), the **Folkestone** (Boddies) and the **New Inn** (Greenalls); a very sad tale indeed. There's a loss in Hulme, too. The **Little Alex** (Wilson's, then Vaux) is now a heap of rubble.

LLOYDS REVISITED

Opening Times was rather lukewarm about the Lloyds Hotel, Chorlton when we reviewed it for Pub Grub. There's now a new licensee who invited us back.

New man at the helm of this new JW Lees outlet is Nick Baynes, who took over on 23 July, having spent the previous two and half years at the Golden Pheasant in Plumley, Lees' Cheshire flagship. He has a good track record in the trade and is very excited about the prospects for the Lloyds. He has every right to be, too, as there is clearly huge potential for success here.

For those who don't know, the Lloyds was a keg Bass outlet for many years, trading unsuccessfully under a variety of names. Lees bought it and have spent a fortune on transforming it into a spacious airy pub for the 21st Century. They have skillfully married traditional elements with a modern decorative style and a carefully compartmentalised interior which makes good use of the large area available. It's certainly one of the best new outlets in Chorlton for some time, and is head and shoulders above the other mainstream pubs in the village.

Food is available most of the day and includes not only an extensive set menu but also daily blackboard specials – Nick has recruited a trained chef for this purpose. Let's not forget the beer, though. Nick has an obvious care and passion for his beers, currently including Lees GB Mild, Bitter and the seasonal. When OT called both the Bitter and Scorchers were on good form, and this on a quiet Friday afternoon. Nick freely admits that the mild isn't selling well and will probably have to go – he doesn't want low sales compromising the quality. It may be replaced by Moonraker, interestingly enough.

Nick clearly intends to put the Lloyds on the map and aims to be there for at least seven or eight years while trade builds. He has certainly started well and the Lloyds should now be on the itinerary of all discerning pubgoers in Chorlton and beyond.

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



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COPY DATE FOR OCTOBER ISSUE IS SEPTEMBER 26 - AVAILABLE FROM SATURDAY OCTOBER 11

BEER'S QUIET REVOLUTION

CAMRA launch new 'Good Bottled Beer Guide'

If you only listened to the advertising, you'd think that beer amounted to no more than international lagers and 'smooth' canned bitters. The reality is rather different, however, claims the new Good Bottled Beer Guide, published by CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale

Author Jeff Evans accepts that pasteurised, artificially carbonated beers still dominate the market but points to the remarkable resurgence of real ale in a bottle. 'Over the last decade, small brewers in particular have returned to bottling in a big way, partly in response to the way in which the pub market has been closed off to them by giant pub companies, who prefer to buy discounted beer from big breweries. The small brewers have looked for other outlets and discovered that bottled beer is the answer.'

Most of these breweries bottle beer in the traditional way, without pasteurising or artificially carbonating the product. The beers are skilfully brewed then packaged with a little yeast to ensure fermentation continues in the bottle for a full, fresh taste. The process is similar to that of draught real ale, which continues to ferment in the cask in the pub cellar.

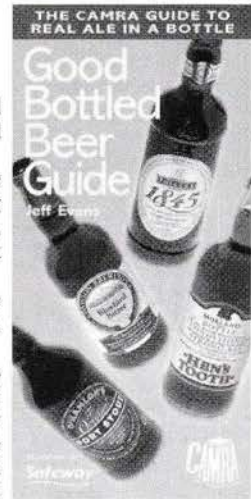
As the Good Bottled Beer Guide reveals, 'real ale in a bottle' can now be found on sale in all sorts of outlets, from corner shops to country craft centres. Many examples are now sold directly at farmer's markets, alongside the freshest local vegetables and the tastiest hand-made cheeses. This not only sums up the drive and innovation of the microbrewing sector but also the quality of the bottled beers themselves. A hand-crafted bottled real ale, made with top ingredients, perfectly fits the ethos of the farmer's market, where the best local produce can be tried and purchased, cutting out the middle man. Such events are an ideal showcase for all that is good in British brewing. People can see how beer is really an excellent example of quality agricultural output and not just about industrially produced global brands.'

Some supermarkets, who appreciate that quality and localness have important sales benefits, have also signed up to the real ale in a bottle revival. Safeway, in fact, is sponsor of the Good Bottled Beer Guide.

The number of bottled real ales has rocketed in recent years. In 1971, when CAMRA was established, there were only five such beers in regular production. Now the Good Bottled Beer Guide lists more than 500, an increase of over 150 since the last edition of the book two years ago.

'I just keep on finding more and more,' says Jeff Evans. 'The brewers may not have the resources to shout about their efforts like the multinationals who dominate the business, but they are clearly changing the face of beer drinking at home. More and more people are seeking out real ale in a bottle. You could say it is a quiet revolution.'

Otherwise known as 'bottle-conditioned beer', real ale in a bottle is not pasteurised or artificially carbonated. Living yeast is left in the beer so that it can mature in the bottle, just as draught real ale matures in the cask in the pub. It is the beer equivalent of a hand-baked loaf of wholemeal bread, a countryfruit wine or a distinctive farmhouse cheese. A little care is needed when pouring, to keep the (harmless) sediment in the bottle, but this adds to the character and experience.



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Forename(s) D.O.B	
Partner Title / Surname (If applicable)	
Forename(s) D.O.B	
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Postcode	
Tel No.	
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Instruction to your Bank or Building Society

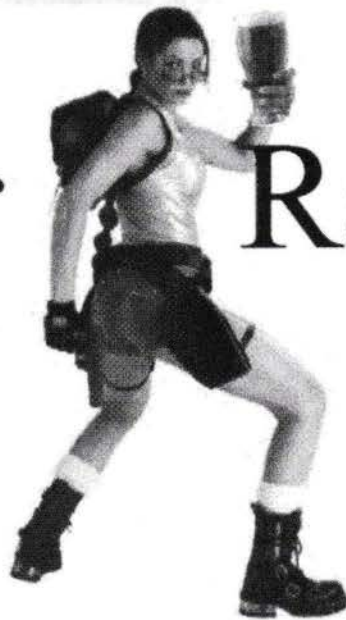
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Beer Raiders

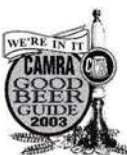


This month we are on a bit of a mission - bringing you some fine ales from Shaws, Cottage, Pictish, Boggart, Salamander and Beowulf amongst the usual suspects, before we close all but briefly (if the contractors get their fingers out!!!) for a bit of a face lift nothing too drastic fret not!! (Planned for the tail end of September for a few days).

We know that most of you think we don't need it but A girl has to look after herself and a quick freshen up does us all the world of good once in a while !!

Don't forget that before and after the cosmetics we will continue to provide
Our exceptional array of bottles, draught and cask -
Home cooked food (including vegetarian options)
Live music and friendly if occasionally vacant staff!!

Look out for details of our revamp in the next issue!!
74 Tib Street, Northern Quarter, Manchester
Tel 0161 835 2863.



"Centro stands out as a café bar with a difference" – Good Beer Guide 2003

