

OPENING TIMES



The FREE CAMRA Regional Magazine covering Stockport; Central, East & South Manchester; Tameside; N.E. Cheshire & Macclesfield

CHESHIRE RING NEW BEARTOWN PUB – OPEN AT LAST!

THE CHESHIRE RING in Hyde finally opened its doors on Friday 26 September with the official opening the following day.

Delays with the legal processes had held up the opening of this latest addition to the Beartown Brewery estate for some months but it is fair to say that the wait has certainly been worthwhile. The pub itself has a honourable history as an outlet for cask ales with at one time over 20 handpumps on the bar. This large number of beers brought quality problems in its wake and for many years it had been something of a backwater until Beartown came on the scene.

Guest beers will also feature as Beartown arranges 'swaps' with other micros – Duncan is looking forward to RCH beers being available shortly. The range is completed by traditional cider and perry – it is hoped that both will be available and stored in the cellar to ensure cool pints. Food will become available in stages as trade increases and in common with the rest of the operation, the emphasis will be on quality using only freshly cooked ingredients. A large blackboard in the main



As we featured in June's Opening Times, the tenants are Duncan and Rachel Ward who come to the pub with an enviable record of running good pubs and selling fine beers and wines (the wine cellar at the Cheshire Ring will also be something special, we hear). They have been joined in the operation by newly recruited beer enthusiast bar manager Stephen Wyllie and our photograph shows the team behind the bar at the newly opened pub.



Of the pub itself, a surprising amount of the original layout and fittings remain intact, with particular noteworthy tiling on both walls and entrance corridor floor. There are two rooms to the left, a pool room at the back and a large no-smoking room at the front. The main bar counter serves large right-hand room (part of which is also no-smoking) and currently boasts six handpumps dispensing the Beartown range along with the quality draught and bottle foreign beers that are part and parcel of the Beartown operation.

room will give details of beers and food which becomes available. To date it has been available at lunchtimes and Saturday evening – reports are that the Friday lunchtime trade has been brisk.

Decorated in a traditional and comfortable style, the Cheshire Ring should be a smash hit – it's certainly the best thing to hit Hyde since Geoff Oliver opened the Sportsman. The pub is on Manchester Road close to the junction with Clark Way. It's only a short walk from Hyde town centre, bus 201 from Manchester runs past the door and Hyde Central station is only a couple of minute's walk away – so you've no excuse not to pay it a visit.

CIDER & PERRY MONTH



Members of the Campaign for Real Ale this month launched a campaign to boost the market for real ciders and perries from Britain's largely unknown independent producers. National Cider Month began on 1 October and the consumer group is calling for pub owners to offer their customers a real cider or perry during the month.

Mike Benner, Head of Campaigns and Communications said, "It's a matter of choice. The biggest two cider producers have about 90% of the market while over one hundred independent producers share the remaining 10%. CAMRA wants to see more real ciders on sale in local pubs and is calling on pub companies to make it a policy to allow their pub tenants to stock at least one real cider or perry throughout the month of October."

CAMRA believes this will lead to a greater knowledge and appreciation of real cider amongst drinkers weaned on the usual mass-produced national brands.

Mike Benner added, "Real ciders and perries are a natural living product made using nothing more than fruit and water. It is the different methods and varieties of fruit which give each one a unique and distinctive taste and aroma which cannot possibly be matched by the bland pasteurized national ciders."

"We want people to be able to try a real cider or perry in their local pub. We think they'll be bowled over by how good they taste and urge the landlord to stock them on a regular basis. Small producers can't compete with the huge national producers and it's up to consumers to demand the real thing in their local."

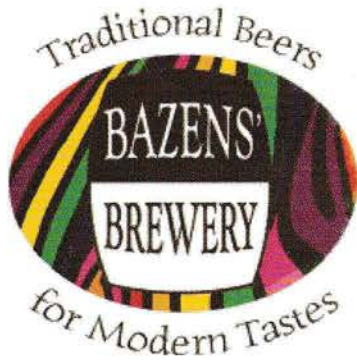
CAMRA locally has arranged for a wider than usual range of ciders and perries to be available in the four Stockport outlets that regularly stock them – see details of our 'Cider Circuit' inside on pages 16 & 17.

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FlatbaC 4.2% (Beer of the Festival, Stockport, 2003)
 Esd 4.4% (Sept/Oct) Freshers' Special 5.5%
 Blue Bullet 4.5% Black Pig Mild 3.6%
 (Bronze Award for Mild, Champion Beer of Britain, 2003)
 Pacific Bitter 3.8% Best 4.3% (New recipe)

Regular outlets include
 The King's Arms, The Albert Vaults & The Crescent, Salford,
 The Trackside, Bury, Waters Green & The Sun Inn, Macclesfield,
 Corbieres, The Marble Arch, Knott Bar & Bar Centro, Manchester,
 The Marble Beer House, Chorlton-cum-Hardy,
 Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar.

For more info, please see www.bazensbrewery.co.uk, phone
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PUB OF THE MONTH OCTOBER 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
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The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for October 2003 will be presented to the Old Star Inn on High Street, Cheadle.



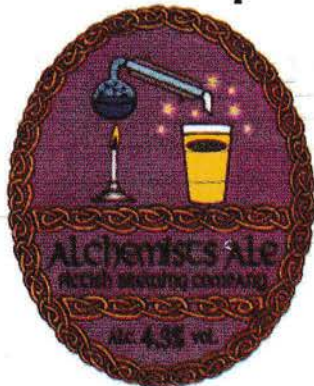
The fortunes of the Old Star in Cheadle changed last November with the arrival of Mary Nastari and her partner Tony Hughes. Mary had previously worked as an assistant manager in the Victoria in Withington where she had tuned her management skills under the exacting eye of Edgar Ambrose. The Old Star is Mary and Tony's first pub; in which they had chosen a pub that was badly in need of improvement and much hard work. In need of immediate attention was the cellar, which was thoroughly cleaned with particular attention being paid to the beer lines to ensure that good beer; from now on, would be guaranteed. These changes marked the start of a continuing programme of improvements; which have included the re-painting and decorating of the pub, new carpets, improved lighting, new beer engines and new beer lines, and the extension of the pub into the old kitchen. Whilst we are on the list of improvements made, not let us forget the re-siting of the lamppost that the council inadvertently positioned almost directly outside the entrance to the pub. Thankfully, common sense eventually prevailed and the lamppost has been moved, albeit after much tortuous negotiation. Impressive though these changes are, they are in themselves not enough to merit a pub of the month award. The extra ingredient that singles out the Old Star as a winner is the way in which Mary and Tony have hauled the pub up to become one of the very best locals' pubs in the area. Special attractions such as the race day out to Haydock park; the pensioners Christmas party, live entertainment and a particularly warm and very friendly welcome have seen customers return to the pub in droves. Add to this the huge improvement in the beer quality and range of beers sold, and you are on to a winner. Mary told Opening Times that in less than twelve months both beer sales and turnover have doubled. Speaking of beer, the Old Star now sells Hydes Light, Bitter, and Hydes seasonal craft ales in superb condition. In every respect, this is a pub that is much improved, and that the award of CAMRA pub of the month is well deserved. So why not join CAMRA to celebrate this richly deserved award which will be presented to Mary and Tony on Thursday 30th

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



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IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

For over a decade, October has been a special month for cider lovers. Thanks to the environmental group Common Ground, Apple Day has become a national success, with events all over the country that, in most cases, have allowed the public a rare glimpse of traditional cider and perry.

What's interesting about Apple Day is that it isn't a PR-driven pseudo-event backed by promotional millions, but a genuine coming together of ordinary people who have found something real to celebrate. Now CAMRA has named October its own Cider Month. It's a great opportunity not just to promote a product but to proclaim a whole way of life that is free from hype, artificiality, and manipulation. For what could be more honest than real cider or perry? You pick your fruit; you mill it; you press it and you ferment the juice. It's as simple as that. While some have suggested that CAMRA should abandon its cider and perry campaigning, locally we have always been strong supporters of these most traditional of products. And by so, doing we have demonstrated that there is demand for real cider and perry in perhaps the most unlikely locations. Stockport is a long way from the West Country, cider's traditional heartland, and yet we have four pubs regularly stocking traditional draught cider and perry, we boast the only cidemaker in the north west, and the ratio of cider to beer sales at Stockport Beer Festival is perhaps the highest anywhere.

There is still much to do, in particular we need to persuade our local family brewers that they, too, could make real cider and perry available to those of their pubs that want it.

In the meantime, let's all work hard to make Cider Month a success and in particular, I hope that many OT readers will visit the pubs on our Cider Circuit, all currently flying the flag for tradition and quality. Out thanks go to all the participating pubs for supporting this initiative.

★ ★ ★ ★

This month, Opening Times spreads its wings again and we welcome new readers in the Trafford area. If you haven't seen Opening Times before, I hope you like what you see. If you don't, then please let us know. And please remember, news, views and articles are always welcome.

John Clarke

★ ★ ★ ★

Many of our readers and advertisers noticed a change to smoother paper in our last issue, and no doubt many of you will have noticed the introduction of colour on eight pages this month. (Sharper eyed readers will also be aware of new typefaces and masthead). Whilst we intend these changes to be permanent, it all depends on the continuing support and generosity of our advertisers. Let us know what you think. We will also be publishing later each month, at the end of the second full week, until January.

Paul Hutchings

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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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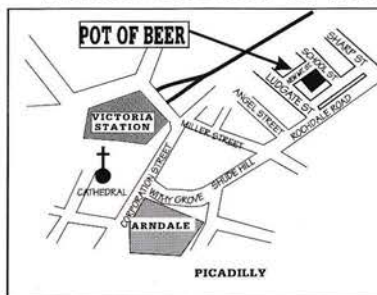


2002
Navy
Gold Medal

POT OF BEER

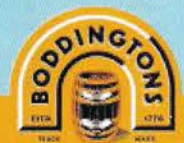
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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CIDER MAKER

SEIDR DAI'S DAVE MATTHEWS INVITES YOU TO JOIN HIM FOR A GOOD, HARD PANK.

8am Sunday morning, November. The alarm goes off. Think: 'Bloody stupid idea, this cidermaking'.

9am. Six or so friends and family arrive at my house in suburban Cardiff. With a collective hangover, we all think: 'Bloody stupid idea, this cidermaking'. But we all set off, nevertheless, in a rag-tag car convoy.

10am. Arrive at Oak Farm, with its ancient and tranquil orchard. More enthusiastic now, we descend upon one tree, and take it in turns to shake the apples off with an elongated hook called a 'panking pole'. The same old jokes are trotted out, 'you're a top panker', 'well panked', etc, etc. Points are scored for panking fruit that hits your 'friends' on the head. Sound fruit is hand-picked into buckets, and thence poured into net sacks.

11am. Time to refuel with coffee and choccy biscuits, which gives us a chance to take in the panorama of rural Monmouthshire, with its rolling hills and circling buzzards. Jennifer, the orchard owner, arrives on her quad bike. Apples and children are loaded into the trailer, and the squealing load is bumped and rattled up to the farmhouse. The fruit-human cargo is transferred to car boots, and we hit the road once more.

12 noon. Arrive at Broome Farm, where we are met by genial, smiling Mike and his extended family. Unload the fruit at the Pressing Shed, and then repair to the Old Orchard for lunch. Packed lunches are eaten on straw bales, and a bottle or two of last season's champagne-style perry is shared around.

1pm. Like a well-oiled machine (we wish!) the Seidr Dai crew take up their positions in the Pressing Shed. First the fruit is washed in a steel trough, and any dodgy apples are picked out and discarded. The mill is tractor-powered, so 'Larry the Loader' is started up, and apples poured into the hopper at the top of the mill are soon coming out of the bottom as gloriously sweet-smelling pulp. Next, the pulp is ladled onto the press, and wrapped in a porous cloth to make a flat, square parcel. Once a dozen or so layers are piled up, Larry again provides the muscle to power the hydraulic press, and apple juice pours out through the cloth, draining away into a line of waiting buckets. From the buckets into 7 gallon drums, which are stowed safely in the car boot. Watching the juice pour from the press is mesmeric, and a spare glass catches some for a quick taster. Clear and golden, rich in fermentable sugar, but with balancing tannin and acidity. Nectar indeed.

4pm. Finished at last, we sit knackered but happy in Mike's cider cellar. Our host pours samples of exquisite cider and perry from his rows of wooden barrels, and we murmur our appreciation. Walking to the cars the sunset sky is banded gold, orange and purple, and we think to ourselves: 'Bloody good idea, this cidermaking!'

Seidr Dai is one of eleven cidemaker members of the Welsh Cider Society. To find out more, see www.welshcider.co.uk

THE CIDER CIRCUIT

To celebrate CAMRA's Cider and Perry Month and also to mark Apple Day on 21 October, Stockport & South Manchester Branch are promoting the Stockport 'Town Centre Cider Circuit'.

Running from 18 to 26 October, the initiative aims to increase the range of ciders available in the town centre and also promote the product in general. The four participating pubs will feature promotional material including a fact sheet with 'Cider FAQs' as well as, in some cases, an enhanced range of ciders and perries available.

The participating pubs are:

- ★ **Crown, Heaton Lane** – one cask cider or perry available
- ★ **Navigation, Lancashire Hill** – up to five ciders and perries will be available for the Circuit
- ★ **Olde Vic, Chatham St, Edgeley** – the regular handpumped Westons will be joined by an additional cider and a perry
- ★ **Railway, Portwood** – the regular cider will be joined by an additional draught cider or perry along with a number of bottled ciders.

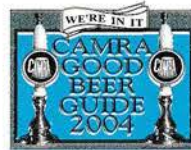
This means that during the week no less than eleven different draught ciders and perries will be available to try. If you are already a fan, then this is a treat not to be missed. If you are a novice, then this is the ideal time to try one of these superb traditional drinks.

Our thanks go to local cider maker and supplier John Reek for sourcing these additional ciders. If this year's event is a success then next year we will be aiming to make it bigger and better next time round.

OTHER LOCAL CIDER OUTLETS

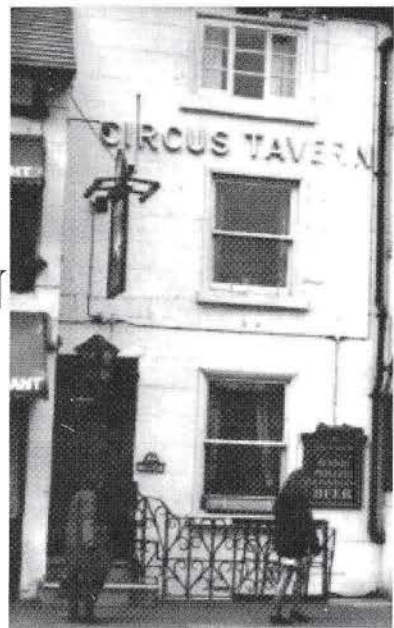
Apart from the four Stockport pubs mentioned above, there are a number of other pubs selling real cider and perry. These include:

- ★ **Stalybridge Station Buffet**
- ★ **Ramsays Bar, Burlington Road, Buxton** – two available with one always on handpump.
- ★ **Wye Bridge (Wetherspoons), Buxton** – Westons Old Rosie.
- ★ **Navigation, Buxworth** – Saxon Cider from West Yorkshire
- ★ **Globe, Glossop** – a new outlet where cider is selling well
- ★ **Cheshire Ring, Manchester Rd, Hyde** – this new Beartown pub will have both a cider and a perry available
- ★ **Sportsman, Mottram Rd, Hyde** – usually has a guest cider available
- ★ **Marble Arch, Rochdale Rd, Manchester** – one real cider usually available
- ★ **Pot Of Beer, New Mount Street, Manchester** – one guest cider, often Moles Black Rat, available.
- ★ **The Knott, Deansgate, Manchester** – always has one and often two real ciders available
- ★ **White Hart, Market St, Mottram** – a changing guest cider
- ★ **Waters Green, Macclesfield** – usually has a guest cider available



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PUB OF THE MONTH - SEPTEMBER 2003

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NEW TENANTS
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LENNETTE
SHENTON
Welcome All

**BODDINGTONS BITTER,
TETLEY BITTER
& DARK MILD IN CASK**



THEAKSTONS BUY BACK MASHAM BREWERY



The big news this month, of course, has to be Theakstons. Unbelievably, one of the most famous names in British brewing is to return to family ownership almost 20 years after it lost its independence. The 176-year old Theakston's brewery in Masham, North Yorkshire, was taken over in 1984 by Matthew Brown of Blackburn, which in turn was sold to Scottish & Newcastle. One member of the founding dynasty, Paul Theakston, split off in 1992 to found the highly successful Black Sheep Brewery which continues to operate just across the road from the old family firm.

But others stayed put – and now brothers Simon, Nick, Tim and Edward Theakston, great-great grandsons of the founder, and Colin Wood, a former MD of Theakston's are to buy back the brewery. The deal, set to be completed early this month, will see S&N keep a minority shareholding, and continue to distribute the company's portfolio of cask ales. It will also continue to brew Theakstons beers in Newcastle, although neither side is saying how long that arrangement would last.

While CAMRA has welcomed the creation of a new force in independent brewing, it says this must throw more doubts on ScotCo's long-term commitment to the sector. Brewing Industry Campaigns Director John Holland welcomed the deal but sounded a note of caution: "Perhaps of most importance, this sell-off means that ScotCo is abandoning a major cask brand and we must question even more its commitment to the future of real ale as a mainstream product."

FAMILY FAVOURITES

The local family brewers also have some new beers out this month, the latest in their seasonal ranges.

The current seasonal from Robinson's is Cooper's Bell, a 4% session beer, back for the third time. Next month will see the return of another favourite, Robin Bitter, a 4.5% full-bodied beer that has been one of the more successful of the company's seasonals. Last month also saw the start of the annual Old Tom season – this classic barley wine will now be with us until next May.



Lees current seasonal is Razzmatazz, a 4.4% beer brewed with a mixture of British and American hops. Unusually, it's a dark beer with complex liquorice and chocolate notes from a generous use of chocolate malt. It really is very good indeed and arguably the best of Lees 2003 crop of seasonals. Next month, though, sees the return of another favourite, Plum Pudding, a 4.8% rich, dark beer brewed with a hint of fruit – an excellent beer for the festive season. Check out both these beers in outlets such as Rain Bar in the City Centre and the Lloyds Hotel in Chorlton. Hydes have gone all fruity, too. The current craft ale, Kirkin Fruity is a 4.5% beer



with the addition of raspberries, and has been very well-received. Next month brings the last in the 'Fine Beers in the Making' series of craft ales. Rompers Rein at 5% promises to be a treat with a combination of roast barley, black malts and hints of fruit and spice. Look out for it in pubs such as the Nursery, Heaton Norris and the Victoria, Withington.



After a short delay caused by problems with the pumpclip design, Holts new seasonal beer is out the third week of this month. Patersons is named after James Ralston Paterson, the founder of the Paterson research laboratory at Christie's Hospital, and will be on sale in many of Holts pubs. For every pint sold, 20p will be donated to the hospital. The 4% beer is brewed with Challenger hops, a touch of honey and has a reddish hue.

NEW MICROS

Stockport's new Three Rivers Brewery has suffered a set-back in that the proposed premises in Offerton have fallen through. The good news is that a new site has been found in Reddish but this unforeseen hitch has set plans back a few weeks and the





IT'S BACK!

THE CHESHIRE RING...

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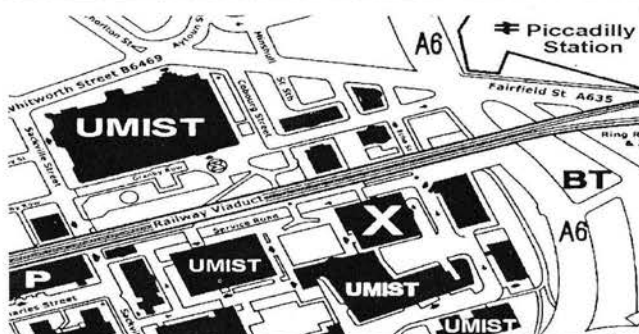
Weds 22nd - Sat 25th October
Open 4pm till 2am every day

50 Cask ales, milds and porters plus a selection of cider, perry and imported lagers.

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beers are now unlikely to be available until early November. But still they come. By the time you read this, the new Millstone Brewery in Mossley will be in production. The first two beers are planned to be Three Shires, a 4% light, hoppy beer, and Millstone Edge, a 4.5% fuller-bodied, copper-coloured brew. Look for a full report on this new venture in next month's Opening Times.

MORE MICRO NEWS

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

Phoenix – the work on the Heywood brewery is almost complete (so OT will be paying a visit in time for next month's issue). There are several new beers out this month including Last Leaf (4.5%), Firecracker (4.7%), Rip Rap (4.1%) – this was superb when tried last year, Spooky Brew (4.7%) and Uncle Fester (4.5%). Look out for all of these at the Crown, Heaton lane with its dedicated Phoenix pump (as well as dedicated Bank Top, Whim and Pictish pumps).



Pictish – last month saw a new beer from Pictish. Black Shiver was a 6% stout and was, frankly, gob-smackingly good. It's all gone now, and brewer Richard Sutton doesn't know when he'll be brewing it again. Fear not, though – he's currently brewing Samhain, his 5% dry stout and this will be followed up by the welcome return of Pictish Porter for the winter. The standard special this month is Alchemists Ale, a 4.3% straw-coloured beer with the familiar Pictish hop-attack in the finish.



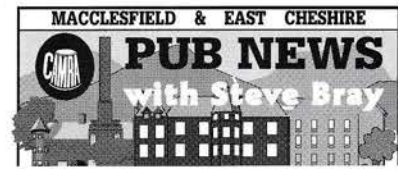
Ramsbottom Brewery – has a new beer out soon to mark the brewery's first anniversary. Brewer Paul Robinson hasn't thought of a name yet but tells us that it will be a 4.2% light, straw-coloured beer brewed with a combination of Fuggles, Challenger, Cascade and Mount Hood hop varieties.

Leyden – demand for Brendan Leyden's beers is such that he has had to buy a new 5-barrel fermenter and extend the copper to double the brewery's capacity. A new honey beers is in the pipeline, too. Nangreave Nectar will be a about 4.5% and should be out by the time you read this.



Bazens – the new monthly special is going to be called £sd (pounds, shilling and pence which has some relation to scales/Libra). It will be available from Monday 13th October. The single hop this time is Brewers' Gold and it will be 4.4%. Also, the Freshers' Special is available again until January and such has been the popularity of Blue Bullet this 4.5% beer will now be brewed on a regular basis. Finally, the new recipe Best Bitter (4.3% instead of 4.5%) is available now. Richard Bazen has changed the recipe to one based on Holt Plant & Deakin's Entire, which he used to brew in the Midlands. The first batch has gone down really well, we are told.

Boggart Hole Clough – this month's special is Sunlight a 3.6% light pale ale with hints of rye and lemon citrus. The next brew of the powerful Rocket Fuel is also in the pipeline, with a projected strength of 15%!



To start we'd just like to wish a speedy recovery to Barry Gilpin of the Queens in Bollington, who has been taken seriously ill and is hospital at the time of writing, and to John Lythaby who has broken his ankle and is stuck in a hospital on the Isle of Man.

The Ship at Wincle had a successful beer festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend, was voted Pub Of The Season and now has Black Cat Mild on all the time. The St Dunstan's in Langley has recently changed hands and has been redecorated. It is also selling guest beers - Roosters on a recent visit.

Beartown Brewery has now moved and the grand opening of the new brewery is to be held late October.

The Railway in Handforth is reportedly changing hands soon, although this did not appear as a vacancy on Robinson's web site so we can only assume that they already have someone in mind to take it over.

The Redway Tavern, Kerridge saga continues - a further planning permission application has been submitted to convert it into 2 dwellings, with 'a wild flower meadow' in place of the car park.



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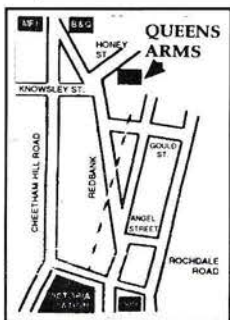
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STAGGER

with Karen Wainwright & Mark McConachie

CHEADLE HULME

The starting point of the stagger was the **Kenilworth** on Cheadle Road, a Scottish and Newcastle John Barras branded pub. Dating back to the 50's, it is a family dining estate pub with a varied food menu. It is very large pub, "v" shaped, plushly furnished with mellow lighting and very comfortable surroundings with a pool playing area to one end. It also sports a no smoking area. The two beers on, both being declared as excellent, were Jennings Cross Buttock and Everards Equinox. The licensee here keeps his beer extremely well. The Kenilworth was considered an excellent start to the stagger. On an amusing note one of our party on a previous occasion asked for a pint of Bass but was served a pint of Labatts as the bar staff miss heard him! He only realised this after tasting it and promptly returned it!

Next on the itinerary was the **Hesketh Tavern** on Hulme Hall Road. Named after the Hesketh family, and an ex Watneys Pub, it is a twin gabled property with two large raised drinking areas front and rear. It was fairly quiet in here at 8.15pm. The beers on offer were Theakstons Best Bitter, John Smith's and a guest beer, Jennings Cross Buttock. The latter being "fairly good" but was not on as excellent a form as at the Kenilworth. The John Smiths though was very poor, smelling strongly of vinegar. When one of our party took it back, rather than replace it willingly, he was informed by the bar staff "That's how it is meant to smell" - not a good exercise in customer relations! No one sampled the Theakstons.

We then continued to the **Church Inn** on Ravenoak Road. This was the August 2003 Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA pub of the month. An excellent pub with a mixed clientele. It was extremely busy and the fact that we were only just able to grab some seats in the vault is a testament to its popularity. Beers were from the

Robinson's range: - Best Bitter, Hatters Mild & Old Stockport. All on good form especially the mild. Externally the building looks just like a country cottage. It is low ceilinged, very cosy, with wood panelled front bar rooms. There is an excellent food menu and the back room, which doubles up as "Edwardo's Restaurant", serves food until 8pm daily. Earlier finishing time on a Sunday.

Next pub directly across the road was the **Governors House**, formerly the Ravenoak hotel. A large country house type building set in its own grounds. This is the only Hardy & Hanson's outlet in the Stockport area, acquired by them in late 2000. It was extremely busy almost full to bursting point. We were glad to be able to make use of one of several attractive outdoor drinking areas. Internally much use has been made of dark wood, panelling, and screens. Extremely tastefully furnished. There is a very popular food menu served till 9pm apart from Sunday's when there is a carvery served until approximately 7pm. The beer was Hardy & Hansons Olde Trip, Kimberley Classic, & Boddingtons. The Boddingtons wasn't sampled. Both the Olde Trip and Classic were on good form. The school uniform-style outfits worn by the female bar staff certainly captured the attention of some of our party...

After the males in the party had calmed down we headed up to the **Cheadle Hulme**. The pub is situated next to Cheadle Hulme Station. Having suffered from a fallow period following the opening of the Kings Hall a Wetherspoons pub just down the road it now seems to have found it's feet again. The mixed clientele was described as "an eclectic crowd from pool playing youngsters to grizzled war veteran mild drinkers"! I wonder if the mild drinkers in our gathering could identify with that description? The beers were Holts Bitter and Holts Mild. Both scored well. Two members of the party rating the Mild as excellent. Internal decoration is very Laura Ashley. The food menu is good and varied.

The next pub on the stagger was to have been the **Kings Hall**. (J D Wetherspoons). However an advance recce discovered that it was ten deep at the bar and only had two real ales available despite advertising delights such as Ringwood Forty Niner, Courage Directors, Green King Abbot Ale, Spitfire and Boddingtons Bitter. Possibly the crowds had drunk it dry but either way it was decided it would not be worth the effort to visit here.

From here the party bifurcated the conclusion of the stagger. Some went on to the **Conway** on Turves Road. Previously this was a very below average pub. However since its acquisition by Hydes in 2002 and under its present management the pub has come on by leaps and bounds. The large, open-plan pub is due for major refurbishment shortly. It has recently run a well-received mini beer festival and there is a very friendly atmosphere with clientele of all ages. The offerings here were Hyde's Bitter and their current seasonal ale, Firkin Fruity. The Firkin Fruity was on excellent form and was a superb beer to end the stagger with.

The other half of the stagger went onto the **March Hare** on Mill Lane, just off Ladybrook Road via a handy footpath that runs parallel to the railway line. This takes you past horses grazing placidly and also gives you a good view of Seven Arches viaduct; this latter piece of architecture now features in new lamppost adornments that herald the beginning of the village. When you get to the March Hare (formerly the Old Mill), you can easily imagine yourself being in the country as it so peaceful, with the only sounds being the occasional passing train and the burble of running water from the adjacent Ladybrook stream. The pub is very much in the style of 'posh rustic' with a strong emphasis upon food, it isn't in the 'family dining' bracket, however. It is definitely more staid and a class above the type of venue where raucous children make a nuisance of themselves. The kitchen had closed as the hour was well past ten, so there were only a few people remaining. Boddies bitter and Draught Bass were the liquid offerings; all of us plumped for the Bass which we found to be quite agreeable. Settling ourselves at a large round table, we could admire the pleasant and comfortable surroundings that the Hare offered. We had thought of ending the crawl at the Cross Keys but time was against us.



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BELGIAN BEERS

Belgium is famous for producing some of the world's finest and most idiosyncratic beers, many of which are also extremely strong. For our second round of tasting, we chose some of the better-known Belgian brews which are available in local supermarkets. As before, the beers were all tasted blind, with only the person who bought them knowing what they were in advance.

Beer 1 - Leffe Brune 6.5% ABV (£3.00, 75 cl)

A fairly dark beer, with the typical strong carbonation of Belgian top-fermenting ales, although this one was not bottle-conditioned. A toffee smell, leading to a rich flavour with caramel notes and a hint of banana, and a dry aftertaste. Although a pleasant beer, this was felt to be a little lacking in body and not really drinking its strength.

Beer 2 - Hoegaarden Grand Cru 8.7% ABV (£1.60, 33 cl)

A pale and intentionally cloudy beer. A complex mix of flavours, with a distinctly sweetish, fruity character, including hints of orange, apricot and candied peel, and some spicy notes, but also much hoppier than the first beer with an underlying dryness. It had a noticeable "alcohol kick" but was surprisingly drinkable for its strength. This is the "big brother" of the familiar Hoegaarden wheat beer, and like all the remaining beers was bottle-conditioned. An excellent beer that was highly thought of by all the panel.

Beer 3 - Liefmans Kriek 6.0% ABV (£2.29, 37.5 cl)

A dark beer with a distinctive, reddish hue. The strong cherry fruit aroma was initially offputting to some, but in fact in this brew the cherries are used as part of the fermentable material rather than simply used as flavouring, and it is hard to imagine anything further from cherryade. Based on Liefmans Goudenband brown ale, it has an underlying sourness which is offset by the refreshing tartness of the fruit. This was very well liked by some of the tasters, although others felt it was a beer they would perhaps respect more than enjoy. The "Best Before" date on the bottle was an impressive End of 2013 - obviously a beer for laying down.

Beer 4 - Chimay Premièrè 7.0% ABV (£3.59, 75 cl)

A mid-brown beer with a large head and very strong natural carbonation. It had a more subtle flavour, rich and malty, with a hint of bitterness and astringency coming through. Again this impressed all of the panel. This beer - brewed by a Trappist monastery - is basically the same as Chimay Red which is available in 33 cl bottles, but the secondary fermentation in a bigger bottle is believed to impart a different character to it.

Beer 5 - Westmalle Dubbel 7.0% ABV (£1.49, 33 cl)

Another Trappist beer, very dark, with a particularly dense and rocky head. It had a malty, almost chewy mouthfeel, with hints of spice and a long, dry finish. "A beer to be respected" was one comment made. This was thought to be the most complex beer tasted so far and was very highly rated by all of the panel.

Beer 6 - Duvel 8.5% ABV (£1.40, 33 cl)

"Duvel" is Flemish for "Devil". This beer was lager pale, with another impressive head. However, the flavour was quite unlike any lager, with a strong hop character balanced by fruity notes including bananas and peardrops. The high alcohol content was more noticeable than in some of the darker beers. Another complex and impressive beer.

Thus ended a very enjoyable evening's sampling, although with so many strong beers it was perhaps a rather rich diet. Don't imagine that we had more than a small part of each bottle each, though, otherwise we would have ended up under the table! The beer of the night was undoubtedly the Westmalle Dubbel, with all the others apart from the slightly disappointing Leffe Brune being highly rated, although the Liefmans Kriek was maybe something of an acquired taste. If you've never sampled the delights of Belgian beer, why not give it a try - and don't forget that these beers are available in many local free houses and specialist beer pubs as well as in the off-trade.

CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 234:
 John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Butler, Phil Levison, Peter Edwardson, Mark McConachie, Stuart Ballantyne, Frank Wood, Steve Bray, John Tune, Dave Platt, Karen Wainwright, Robin Wignall, Paul Formby, Rhys Jones, Dave Hallows, Dave Platt.

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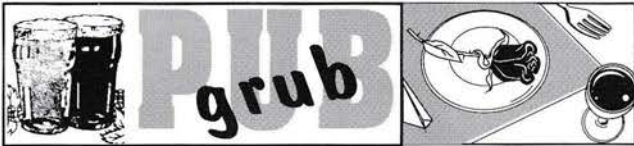
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THE CHURCH, RAVENOK RD, CHEADLE HULME
APART from quality real ales, the Church Inn, Cheadle Hulme also has something of reputation for the food available. The occasion of the Pub of the Month presentation in August provided the perfect opportunity to sample the extensive menu.

The pub itself is highly traditional attracting a very local clientele drawn to the pub by the combined attractions of good ale and fine food. It has been in the hands of Simon and Rosemary Bromley for the past 17 years and little has altered in that time in terms of the levels of service, quality and welcome apart, that is, from the addition of Edwardo's Restaurant (managed by Carol and Eddie Sumner) about two and a half years ago.

Food is served both lunchtime and evening, with the same menu available at both sessions (subject to dishes running out). The choice available is extensive to say the least. There's a set printed menu; a 'Table D'Hote' which sees three course available for £10.95; a fish selection (eg, sea bass, sole, red mullet) headed 'Catch of the Day' and a specials menu to boot.

The table d'hote was tempting, with a good choice available - five starters, four mains plus choice of dessert, including salmon and cream cheese terrine or kidney au poivre among the starters, and scrumpy pork lamb loin and gilled salmon among the mains.

The party chose widely. My starter was a large, crispy tartlet filled with goats cheese complemented very well by a redcurrant dressing and a mixed leaf and cherry tomato salad with balsamic dressing. All very filling - almost too filling perhaps, but of top quality. Also tried was 'soup of the moment' which today was Thai vegetable and was greeted very appreciatively. The large bowl of vegetables in a spicy oriental broth was swiftly demolished.

For mains, I chose Lamb Tagine Casablanca, described as a rump of boneless lamb in a tagine of north African spices, apricots and garlic, finished with fresh mint and cous cous. It certainly lived up to its description with tender lamb set off with a spicy but not overpowering sauce. Luckily the size of this wasn't on a similar scale to my starter or I really would have been overfaced.

Luckily, the others had either passed on starters or had something of a more modest size then myself as they were presented with huge portions of food. Chicken Rogan Josh, mushroom and pepper stroganoff and penne bake all came in large, tasty and well-presented portions. The arrival of side dishes with extra vegetables and thick chips was unexpected (that's what comes of not reading the menu properly) but we coped! Unsurprisingly, we passed on what was a very tempting pudding menu.

Prices vary across the menus - my tartlet was £3.50 and the lamb £10.95 and with portions of this size and quality this was very good value. The table d'hote at £10.95 is a snip.

We washed all this down with Robinson's finest, for despite the professional food operation, the Church is first and foremost a pub - uniquely in Cheadle Hulme it even has a separate vault. On handpump are Hatters, Old Stockport, Best Bitter and the seasonal, all on top form. Not for nothing is the pub a regular in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide. Highly recommended on all counts.

The Church is at 90 Ravenoak Road at its junction with Church Road and Ack Lane, Cheadle Hulme. Telephone 0161 485 1897.

JACK BAGSHAW

Local CAMRA activist and real ale campaigner Jack Bagshaw died at the end of August. Ill health had curtailed Jack's activities in the Branch over the past year or so but before then he had been a keen and committed real ale man, noted especially for his love of Robinson's Old Tom.

During his short time of active involvement with Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA he had made many friends and had devoted much time and effort to the real ale campaign, always willing to role up his sleeves and get stuck in. Our sympathy goes to his friends and family.

DAVENPORT ARMS (THIEF'S NECK), Woodford



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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

OCTOBER 2003

Thursday 16th - Presentation of Jim Bowden Award to the Davenport Arms, Woodford by Macclesfield Branch. From 8.00pm.

Friday 17th - Stagger - East Manchester Minibus. Depart Crown Heaton Lane 7.30pm; first pick-up Waggon & Horses, Hyde Rd, Gorton 7.45pm. Book with Paul Formby on 0161 612 0759 (after 6pm)

Saturday 18th - Stockport Town Centre Cider Circuit: 8.00pm Olde Vic, Chatham St, Edgeley; 8.30 Crown, Heaton Lane: 9.15 Railway, Portwood; 10.00 Navigation, Lancashire Hill.

Thursday 30th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Star, Cheadle.

Saturday 1st November - BeerMonster™/ Opening Times Pub of the Season Award: 3pm Crescent, Salford (During the Crescent's Autumn Beer Festival!)

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

Monday 13th - Branch Meeting: Stalybridge Station Buffet. Starts 8.30pm.

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

OCTOBER 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:

Thursday 16th - Presentation of Jim Bowden Award to the Davenport Arms, Woodford. From 8.00pm.

Monday 20th - Campaigning Meeting: Admiral Rodney, Prestbury. Starts 8.00pm.

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:

Thursday 9th - Social at Trafford Social Club, Moss Lane, Stretford. Start 8.00pm

Thursday 23rd - Manchester Survey. Meet City Arms, Kennedy Street 7.30-8pm

Thursday 6th November - Branch Meeting: Orange Tree, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm

The Regional U-26 Group will be having the following events All in association with Salford Uni. Real Ale Society:

Friday 7th November: 1st.Birthday Bash. Centro, Tib St, Northern Quarter, Manchester. Starts 8.00pm

Wednesday 12th - Hyde's Brewery Trip at 7pm. To book contact Dave Hallows on 0161 708 9151.

Saturday 22nd - Visit to Bury Beer Festival in the Met, Town Centre, at 1pm. Contact Ian Kenny on 0161 728 3642

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA Planner

12

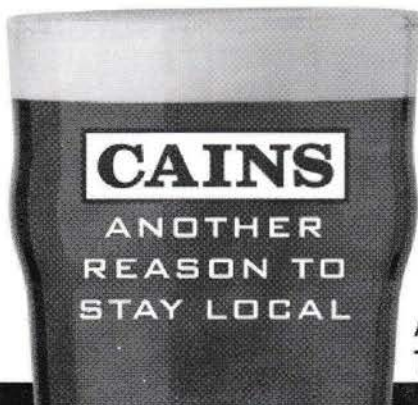


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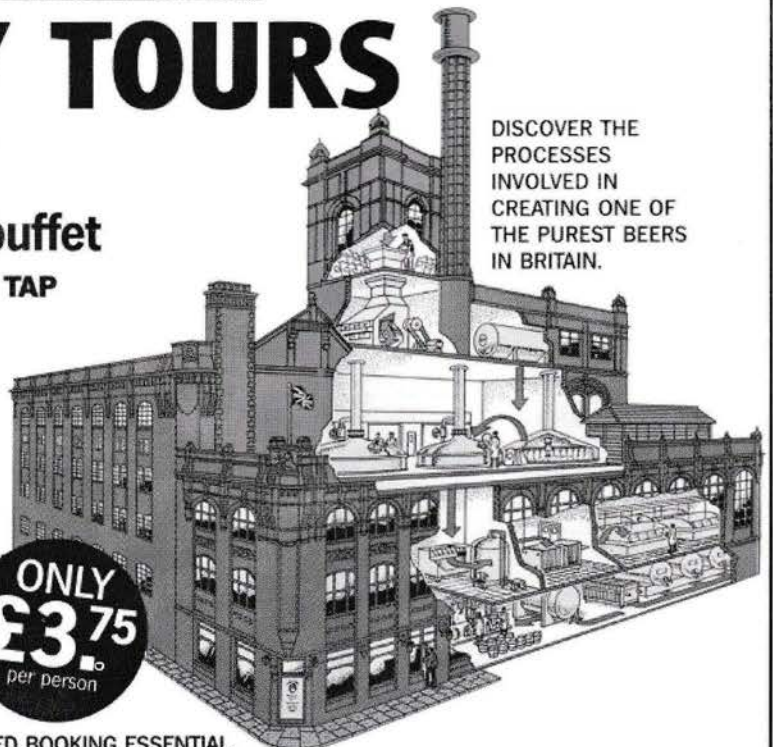
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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison **OCTOBER '98**

The ongoing convulsions in the brewing industry had spread to the regional sector - Vaux and Morrells both announced they were to quit brewing, and Marston's sparked gossip in the financial markets by clinching a fundraising deal with the Japanese merchant bank Nomura, who were already Britain's pub owners.

Vaux were to concentrate on pub retailing, with the breweries and the tenanted pubs being sold as a package, whilst the other pubs and the Swallow Hotel chain were to remain with the slimmed down Vaux. There were hopes that there would be a successful management buyout, led by Vaux MD Frank Nicholson.



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The closure of Morrell's Oxford brewery was confirmed, and it seemed inevitable that only the pub estate was wanted, as it was claimed that the city centre site was uneconomic. There had been a surprise bid for the company, from the USA-based former owner of the Magic Pub Co.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

After the rather gloomy preceding items, there was some good news as Whitbread's Castle Eden Brewery, instead of closing, looked set for a new lease of life under the ownership of a consortium of local businessmen, also a return to the old name of Nimmo's, a surprise addition to the portfolio was the range of beers from the Butterknowle micro brewery, whose equipment was to be moved into the brewery as a pilot plant producing the award-winning Butterknowle beers. Sadly, though, Castle Eden appears in the RIP column in 2004's Good Beer Guide).

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

After a gestation period longer than an elephant's, Holt's finally opened Winters to the public on 1 October. For much of its life this listed building had been occupied as a jewellery shop, later converted into Winter's Wine Bar, which seemed to open and close on a regular basis and which sometimes sold cask Tetley Bitter. The new layout had almost become Holt's trademark for new pubs, with two floors furnished in traditional style. The handpumps dispensed Mild and Bitter at the bargain price of £1.03 and £1.09 respectively. Still with Holts, it had been reported that they had bought the former Tetley pub, the Sun & Castle on Hillgate, and although work was required on the interior, it was expected to pen early in the New Year. Now, five years later, the new Viaducts & Vaults 3 describes the pub's décor as a good example of Holt's 'traditional' style of décor.

★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

The King's Hall, the new JD Wetherspoon pub in Cheadle Hulme opened for business - it had previously been a cinema and a Chinese restaurant. How quickly time passes - the King's has already been refurbished twice - the first time followed a fire, after which some subtle alterations were carried out, and then later it was extended at the rear to incorporate a children's area.

★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Robinson's had introduced a 'smooth' version of some of their beers - Best Bitter, Old Stockport and Hartley's XB. This 'smooth' beer came from the same cask as the real ale, via a double headed rap, and additional gas was added on the way to the bar. The 'smooth' of course was not real ale, due to the addition of gas from an external source, but the Opening Times editor reported that the equipment suppliers tried their best to wheedle some positive comments from him. This writer happened to be in Robinson's California on Anglesey whilst the 'smooth' equipment was actually being installed, and the fitters said that someone in Stockport had told them that the 'smooth' was real ale. I was able to assure them that it was certainly *not* real ale!



THE APPLE OF MY EYE

This October sees CAMRA's first National Cider and Perry Month. Cider-making has a long and honourable tradition in this country, and cider has a strong claim to be our second national beverage, after beer. A high-quality, traditional cider is well worth drinking, and I've been known to enjoy the occasional pint myself.

But, unfortunately, cider has an image of being consumed by those who want to get drunk for the minimum outlay. On the supermarket shelves, the cheaper ciders offer the most "bangs per buck" of any alcoholic drink. On the other hand, the traditional ciders sold in local free houses are rarely below 6% ABV, often much more, which limits their appeal to regular drinkers, particularly when the corresponding high price is taken into account.

There's a growing consensus that traditional beers appeal most to a wider market at a strength in the region of 4.1 to 4.5% ABV. The makers of keg ciders such as Strongbow know very well that, while the cans may be over 5%, the draught version sells best at a more moderate 4.5%. The same is true in those areas of the West Country where cider hangs on as an everyday drink.

Currently, real cider is scarcely found outside specialist beer pubs. To get into a wider range of outlets, most of which will never have offered it in the past, it needs a champion brand positioned at a moderate strength and affordable price level. But I see no signs of that happening, and unless it does traditional cider will never break through as a mainstream product in the same way as real ale.

DRAWING IN YOUR HORNS

Reading through the excellent new edition of "Viaducts & Vaults", I was struck by the growing number of pubs that no longer bother opening at lunchtimes during the week. Of course there's no point in staying open if there are no customers, but presumably all these pubs used to find it worthwhile, and the trade they once had has melted away. Many are in residential areas where there must be many retired people and others who would be in a position to call in. Indeed there's one particular pub that I recall doing good business selling lunches to workers from nearby factories and offices - the workplaces are still there, but the pub doors are now firmly shut.

This trend is a clear symptom of the narrowing appeal of the pub trade. Large numbers of people, who once went to pubs during the daytime, for whatever reason no longer do so. More and more pubs seem to have given up any attempt to market themselves to a wider clientele and have drawn in their horns just to cater for locals. The pub listed in the guide that only opens in the evening, but has a daytime-only bus service, is an especially striking example. However, not everyone takes such a pessimistic view of the prospects for daytime trade, as Wetherspoons have successfully obtained permission for their outlet in Buxton to serve alcohol from 10 am onwards, and apparently are doing very well out of it.

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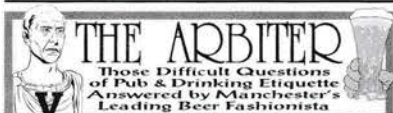


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At Woolley Bridge, near Hollingworth, the Riverside (formerly the Spread Eagle) as you cross the border from Tameside to Derbyshire, two miles out of Glossop, has been sold at auction by Christies. A statement from them, made to the local press, said that the new buyers are Chinese people who were applying to convert the building to a restaurant.

Further towards Glossop, the same source at the press tells us that the Junction on the A57 as you hit the town, seems to have closed its doors for the last time by current owners Enterprise Inns. The bar staff apparently all got their notice and they pulled their last pints there on Saturday 6th September. On my travels, this appears to be the case as I have passed several times since and the curtains are shut and the pub in darkness.

Continuing the gloom, the Talbot, in Hyde is being knocked down. The pub is located in a quiet area across the M67 from the Sportsman, not far from Newton railway station, and is the third and last pub in that little dipped area, to close in recent years.

In Marple, the Jolly Sailor has now been flattened, after a campaign earlier this year locally, to preserve the building. In Haughton Green, the Shakespeare was also recently demolished. A pub that apparently never sold cask ale, twice failed at auction to be sold.

Marple Conservative Club has taken out its John Smiths handpump, favouring the smooth version. This gives Marple town centre the strange claim to fame of being the only sizeable town in High Peak Branch (and many other branches I don't doubt) that only have one brewery represented in the town selling cask ale. Robinson's have now no competition at all.

Maybe of interest to darts fans in the area, Droylesden firm Perigold have stopped producing Manchester Log End Dart boards due to lack of demand for them. I am told they are still produced elsewhere but this counts as yet another loss.

The Palace Picture House in Stalybridge recently closed its doors. Right in the middle of the area increasingly known as "Staly Vegas", you guessed it, it is to be converted by Christmas into a bar/club, similar to those already in the area no doubt. In Ashton, it has now been announced in the press that what would have been Tameside's last remaining Picture House, is also to close. Again it has fallen victim to the large city complex cinemas that have taken over in recent years, more of the quaint English tradition that will have been lost for ever in the area.

So far there has nothing positive in this months pub news and I am scraping to get any. However, can I mention the fairly reasonable success at the Glossop Beer Festival last month when the event was not far from being sold out. Of particular note was that the Beer Tickers were out in force at the event, with many new beers made available, notably two from Eastwood & Sanders, one from Shaws and one from Kheanes of Congleton. However, it was Whim Arbor Light that was quickest to sell on the Saturday tea time. A good time was had by all and once we have sat down and met Glossop Labour Club's committee, who let us hold the event on their land, and we have discussed where we went right and wrong with the event, we will decide if it is a 'goer' again for next year. That being the case, the theme will certainly to be a 'Microbrew' Festival, with as many new beers as we can attract.

Finally, those pubs selling Kelham Island beers were offered a treat in early September, as the Brewery have done an exchange with a Swedish Brewery (The Swedes love Kelham Island beers apparently). I sampled the Nynashamns Angbryggeri Summer Ale (5%) at the Globe in Glossop which was much to my liking, with a very full flavour.

A couple of miles out of the High Peak Branch area, but close enough to be of interest, is the Queens Arms at Taddington, a few miles along the A6 out of Buxton towards Bakewell. The owners have had a local referendum concerning the name of the pub. Originally the Miners Arms, until it was changed to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, there has been much local interest in the suggestion to return the pub to its original name. However, with over 250 villagers, voting, it remains the

Queens Arms. Interestingly, landlord Nathan Gale has applied for planning permission to build a small brewery in the pub's car park. If approved, he plans to brew just 72 gallons per week, which he plans to sell in the pub.

Geoff Oliver from the White Hart at Mottram, had a nice 50th birthday present from Plassey Brewery, for whom he is one of the largest customers, in mid September. They presented him with a firkin of "50 Years Young", a special brew of 6% that had a bottle of whiskey in the barrel, that was on the bar for his party in the pub.

Whilst on the subject of the White Hart, they have recently introduced a Privilege Card. Anyone who pays a £5 returnable deposit for a swipe card, gets a 6.3% reduction on all drinks and food in the pub. The customer can put money on when convenient, thus not needing to carry money around with them when they go in. Advantages are quickness of service, the card is simply swiped, no change needed and a print out can be obtained by the customer if he wants one. Over 80 customers have signed up in the first few weeks. It is apparently the only pub in the North West running such a system, the only other known is the Plassey Golf Club at Wrexham. The pub has also now got a Cuban Chef, Louis, who has added new dishes to the menu.

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

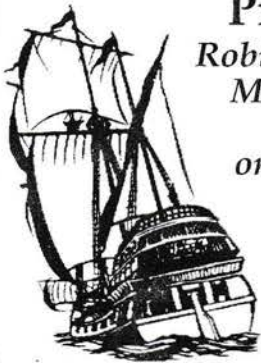
PEAK PRACTICE

Moving to Whaley Bridge in mid-August, I had little knowledge of the local pub scene. I had called in at the Goyt Inn and the Shepherds Arms on the Mild Challenge, and had anyway heard of the Shepherds by reputation, as a fine local and regular Good Beer Guide entry. However, the late August Holiday weekend featured the Annual Beer Festival at the Dog & Partridge at Bridgemont.

On a wet Friday night eight out of nine beers had arrived and were served in the festival tent in the garden. An interesting range of beers were available, from Riddleys IPA to Harviestoun Schiehallion, and Arundel Little Willie to Titanic Farmers Half. All had jacket coolers, which seemed to work well and the quality of the beer tried made for enjoyable drinking, perhaps tempered by a £2 fits all price tag. By Monday teatime most of the festival beers had run out, and the event had been a success, helped by good weather after Friday's damp start.

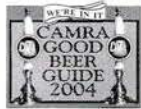
The Dog & Partridge is not just about a beer festival. It is a popular pub with locals, road trade and canal users. It has a good reputation for food, with separate dining room, and there are five resident cask beers, Tetley Bitter, Old Speckled Hen, Abbot Ale, Cains Dark Mild and Caledonian Deuchars IPA. I enjoyed the last two on another visit, and they certainly lived up to expectation. The D&P used to be on the old A6. These days it can easily be missed, on a cul-de-sac off the Whaley Bridge road from the 'new' roundabout at Bridgemont, but it is well worth visiting. **RW**

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How to MAKE CIDER & PERRY

Cider is made with apples; perry is made with perry pears. Both are made in same way. In the West of England they use cider apples, which are grown specifically for the purpose of making cider and are identified as bittersweets and bittersharps.

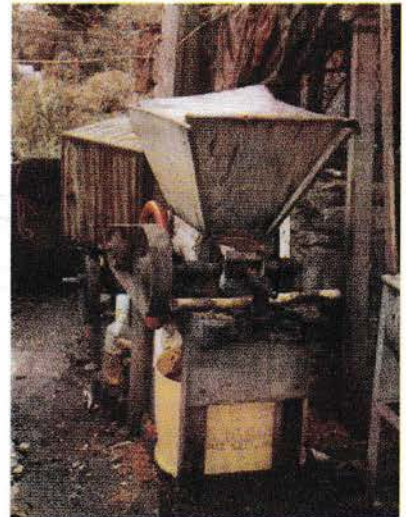


The apples or pears are crushed or milled into little pieces either by hand or using a machine called a scrapper. Juice is extracted using a press. If a traditional screw or hydraulic press is used the pulp is wrapped in fine mesh cloths, like parcels, to keep the pieces of fruit from scooting out of the press when under pressure. About eight of these are used to make one pressing - called a cheese. Originally, the milled fruit was pressed through layers of straw and there are still some producers who do this. Using straw adds an extra element of flavour to the cider or perry. The natural yeasts in the fruit start the fermentation and several months later you have cider or perry. The cider at this stage is dry, and a sweetener can be added to produce a sweeter product. All of this takes place from late August to early in the New Year and depending on ambient temperatures; fermentation can take until the following spring. In the Eastern Counties - Sussex up to Norfolk (& including Kent) - the

tradition is to use a mixture of eating and cooking apples. However a number of producers in Norfolk are now growing cider apples and Camra's Pomona Award winner 2002 Paul Johnson of Sheppy won the award for planting over 50 standard cider apple trees.

Yeast wise, some producers kill off the natural yeast and add their own, often champagne yeast, to try to get more consistency; other producers just let the natural yeasts do their work. A number of the larger producers will add sugar at the fermentation stage, enabling the cider to reach 12-14%abv, and then it is diluted down before it is sold (the legal limit for cider is 8.5%abv).

Cleanliness is the producers' watchword throughout the whole process and the fruit is washed, checked and discarded if spoiled. The adage "one bad apple can spoil the whole barrel" is heart-breakingly true for producers whose enthusiasm or lack of knowledge has resulted in an infection, which has resulted in an infected unusable product.



Pictures (clockwise from top right) - a mountain of apples!, the Cider Press, and the finished product at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival



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GOOD BEER GUIDE 2004

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, last month launched the 31st edition of their award-winning Good Beer Guide. The best-selling guide highlights the top 4,500 real ale pubs in Britain and offers a unique directory to every brewery in the country, large or small, with details of all the cask-conditioned and bottle-conditioned beers they brew, together with unique tasting notes.

Each pub entry, surveyed on a regular basis throughout the year by CAMRA members, gives a detailed summary of why the pub has been included in the Good Beer Guide and highlights information on the pub's facilities for families and the disabled, history, architecture, food, accommodation, local places of interest and, of course, the beer!

There are almost 900 new pub entries in the 2004 Guide and each entry has been surveyed throughout the year by CAMRA members. Roger Protz, Editor of the Good Beer Guide said, "CAMRA members have spent an enormous amount of time carefully selecting the final 4,500 pub entries and, unlike some other pub guides, there is no charge for entry into the Good Beer Guide. These elite pubs are selected by the real pub goer!"

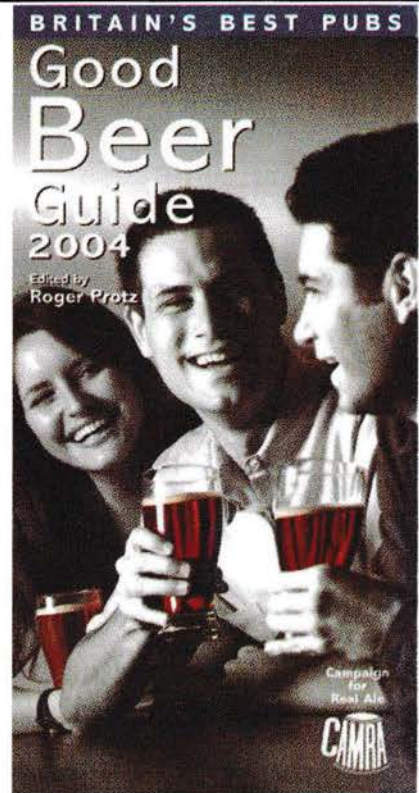
Protz continued, "The pubs that appeared in the previous edition have all been updated with new information for 2004 and

I am also delighted that we have almost 900 new pub entries this year. This just goes to show that this Guide, now in its 31st year, is the most up to date and comprehensive guide to British pubs in today's book market."

The 2004 Good Beer Guide also includes 35 new breweries this year in the brewery directory, which lists nearly 500 breweries. Roger Protz said, "It is great to see 35 more breweries in this year's guide. The majority of these breweries are producing a wonderful range of real ales and as long as these are given the opportunity to be sold in British pubs then this can only be good for consumer choice."

The Guide is an essential buy for anyone interested in pubs and beer.

Get yours for £12.99 (post and packing free) from: Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK2 5XA. Make cheques payable to 'CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester'.



THE RETURN

You go away for a couple of months - and when you come back everything's exactly the same! Well except for the new lurid/dayglo heading for my column, and the fact that Centro's changed hands and had a posh makeover. The handpumps are still there so hopefully the beery offerings will remain eclectic, though on my single visit so far the draught Munich beer wasn't on. Hopefully this will not be a permanent thing. Prices might be on the rise, too. The Good Beer Guide is out (see above), and the articles seem to be an improvement. The thing you immediately notice is how big the micro-brewery section is getting. I can see I am a bit cramped this month so I'd better get on with things...

BEER FESTIVALS

The three most notable local do's in the near future are at the Fringe imminently, the UMIST Rag festival from Wed 22 - Sat 25 October with 50 beers - and usually a sprinkling of relatively unusual ones amongst some 'mainstream' classics, then at the end of the month, the Crescent from the 30th October to the 2nd November. A true rare beer feast. A particularly good reason for going on the Saturday is that its going to be....

THE BEERMONSTER™'S PUB OF THE SEASON

Yes, no sooner does the column return than I'm off rewarding people again. In this case (by common consent) incredibly well deserved - and somewhat overdue. Idy and Sal were a class act when they managed the Beerhouse, and have upped their high standards since taking on the Crescent several years ago. The award will be presented around 3pm on Saturday 1st. There should still be a fairly good choice of rare beers left by then.... I hope!

BEERS OF THE MONTH

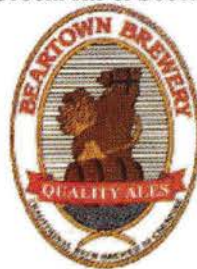
Two foreigners, but one was on handpump - A rather excellent pint of (Belgian) DeKoninck Original (somewhere about/above 5% I seem to recall). This was on offer in the William Stanley (a Wetherspoon pub in Norwood, London) for the gobsmacking price of £1.69 a pint. I was stunned, both by excellent flavour and incredible value. The second (German) is sadly a bit pricier retailing at £2.90 in Manchester. Kuppers Kolsch on draught. Last time I had any outside of Koln or a bottle was at the last

Manchester Winter Ales Fest. Anyway, its now on tap in All Bar One on the corner of King Street, and appears ubiquitous in the bigger All Bar One's everywhere. Although carbonated, its fairly lightly gassed and is very tasty indeed. We might wear everyone off Brit-fizz lager yet! Then its only smoothflow.

NEXT MONTH

I'll be looking at what transpired in National Cask Ale Week and reporting on festivals attended and forthcoming. I'll also be casting an eye on these mega-pub-takeovers. Keep the Faith!

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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

OUT AND ABOUT

Apart from the second instalment of my, at times, soulless trek across the real ale desert that is inner-city Manchester (see below), I have one or two bits of news from round and about. In Chorlton, the **Lloyds Hotel** continues to improve. The slow-selling Lees GB Mild has been replaced by the powerful Moonraker, and sales have taken off. Previously mild sales were about 2 1/2 gallons a week – the Moonraker is shifting 2 1/2 pins (a pin holds 4 1/2 gallons!). Excellent news indeed. There has been another cask mild loss, too, again down to slow sales. This is the **Mawson** in Chorlton-on-Medlock, and one of the few oases in the previously mentioned desert. However, cask Tetley Bitter and a guest from Coach House Brewery remain on handpump. The former **Carrington's** off license in Didsbury is to be turned into a bar by its owner. An application has gone in and barring any problems from uber-nimbys Didsbury Civic Society, this should go ahead in the next few months. The style of operation hasn't yet been determined although I understand that a German beer-hall type bar, with long bench seating and a good ranged of proper German beers is one possibility.

IN THE CITY

At the **City Arms**, Kennedy Street, there's a welcome new face in charge. Sean Piatt, latterly assistant manager at the Lass O' Gowrie and a very keen beer man, has returned to Manchester from a spell down south. He took over at the City in late August and the basic message is that things will carry on very much as they are now, albeit with a slight change to the menu. Guest beers come from the Beer Seller and Carlsberg-Tetley and this gives Sean something like 30-odd a month to chose from. When I called Youngs Special was available and on top form. One innovation is mystery beer day on Fridays – guess the beer and you'll win a bottle of bubbly, guess the brewery and you'll win another. The City Arms is open all permitted hours and is well worth a visit. Elsewhere the **Pig & Porcupine** (Deansgate) and the **Bridge Street Tavern** (Bridge Street – where else?) are both up for

grabs, with a major refurbishment apparently planned at the latter. I also hear the lease of the **Vine**, Kennedy Street, is also on the market for a large amount of money.

I also popped into a couple of pubs I only visit rarely, and was very impressed by both. The **Town Hall Tavern** on Tib Lane has an excellent traditional feel with Bass, Boddingtons Bitter and Deuchars IPA all regularly available. The Deuchars was good but not cheap at £2.20 a pint. A short walk away is **Corbieres** on Half Moon Street. One of the few remaining cellar bars on the city, this has usually sold real ale – on my first visit many years ago, Marston's Owd Roger was on handpump. Today, it's a regular outlet for Bazens' Brewery with Pacific Bitter on handpump.

I also decided to pay a visit to the **Crown & Anchor** on Hilton Street. There have been disturbing reports that cask ale has been notable by its absence together with indifferent and off-hand service. Well, when I called, there was Taylors Landlord and Deuchars IPA on handpump, although my half of Taylors was warm and borderline vinegar. The enjoyment and atmosphere wasn't helped by the raucous noise coming from the pool area, either. This is clearly a pub with huge potential but it clearly needs rather firmer management and attention to detail than it currently appears to have.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

Continuing my quest to re-visit all south and east Manchester pubs in order to ascertain their current status. First off then, was a stint around Gorton. Starting in West Gorton and the Clowes Street area, the **Dolphin** and the **Wellington** offered no cask, though the latter had a redundant JWLees pump. The **Aces**, a one-time outlet for Holts, was closed and up for sale. Crossing Pottery Lane for the Gorton Lane stretch, I was taken aback by the sight of the one-time Birch Arms now painted in a striking silver and grey with a new name - '**Out of the Blue**'. The interior has been gutted to create one vast, open space decorated in light colours with much use of blonde wood. No cask ale, however. Bar one, this was the situation in all pubs on Gorton Lane - the **Crown**, **Steelworks**, **Vulcan** and the newly painted and named **Charles Angel**. The only let-up from the keg was at the Gardeners, where a fairly poor sample of Trophy bitter was tried.

Onto Hyde Road next, where the **Plough** is, as ever, providing a very decent drop of Robbies mild together with Best; the **Lord Nelson** remains keg, whilst next door at the **Vale Cottage**, two cask beers are available – a disappointing John Smiths Cask and Old Speckled Hen. I did notice a very pleasant beer garden that I had not previously been aware of. Holt's **Waggon & Horses** was spot on form and doing good business to boot with very good mild and bitter.



The **Friendship** is keg, as is the **Pomona** on Reddish Road. Keg too is the new **Bandstand** (Wacky Warehouse included), a new-build, family pub on Wall Way, by Debdale Park.

Another day saw me doing a mop-up of other Gorton pubs, the **Nags Head** has the builders in and the boards have come off the windows; so it's looking promising there. Lee's **Suburban** was selling a decent pint of bitter; the mild is also on offer here. On Mount Road meanwhile, the **Gorton Mount** is selling Boddies in fairly spartan surroundings, whilst around the corner at the **Haxby**, I found the door closed - bad timing on my part... More next month.



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The recent cheese and pate' festival at the Royal Oak in Didsbury was a runaway success. Licensee Rob told Opening Times "I was very pleased with the way the festival went, in fact it went so well that we are thinking of having another festival at Christmas". Cheese connoisseurs will know that cheeses are seasonal and that in winter many different cheeses are available to those available in the summer. Also at Christmas some producers make special cheeses just for the festive season. OT also asked if there was any chance of the Royal Oak offering its cheese lunches on a Saturday to which Rob added "we may offer cheese lunches on a Saturday once we have made improvements to the kitchen". Watch this space for further details.

There are new faces at the helm of the Cross Keys in Adswold following Hydes' appointment of Glyn and Diane Trigg as managers of this excellent pub. Glyn has extensive experience in the trade, having run a number of pubs in the Greater Manchester area including amongst others the Gardeners in Middleton; Queens, Hyde; and notably the Crown & Anchor on Hilton Street, Manchester. After a short break from the trade he returned as a relief manager for Hydes, culminating in his current position. A keen real ale man, Glyn makes sure his Hydes Mild and Bitter are always on top form. Food is also served every lunchtime and the family friendly nature of the pub is emphasised by the large children's menu and outdoor play area. There is also a well-maintained bowling green, open to responsible members of public during the summer months, match nights excepted.

Not everybody enjoys their work so much that they want to run the business for themselves, but that has been Andrew Martin's long term ambition. And now, after eight years of patient waiting he has taken over as licensee of the Bird in Hand, Hazel Grove. Andrew, who grew up and went to school in the Hazel Grove area, has been a regular of this Robinson's pub for many years, but he has also worked as barman for the past two tenants and many customers will also know that he has provided relief management on several occasions and so knows how much hard work he has let himself in for. He will have the support of wife Karen who like him has been involved with the business for several years, having provided administrative support to previous tenants. "I have worked here since 1995", said Andrew. "But have always known that when the tenancy became available that I would put my name forward for the job, so I was delighted when I got the news that my application had been successful."

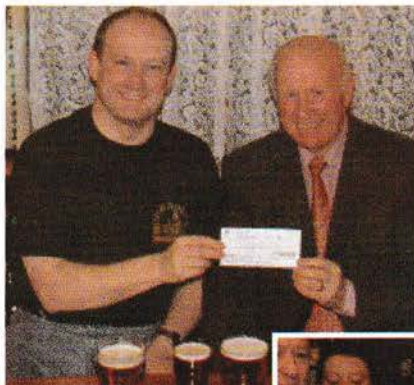
Work is now underway on the long-planned refurbishment of the Strawberry Gardens in Offerton. As far as we can tell, apart from the old snug at the front, the rest of the building is being gutted. It remains to be seen if cask beer returns when the work is complete.

Two Cheadle Robinson's houses have improved their beer ranges. First off, the sometime Pub of the Month recipient, the Queens, has added Old Tom to the staples of Hatters and Best. Down the road at the Red Lion, it's good to see that Hatters has been added (and was on good form, by the way) to what was the sole offering of Best.

Pinball machines in pubs within the town centre area has increased by 100 per cent. Yes, the tally of tables rises from one to two, with the addition of the game 'No Fear' in the Stockport Arms on St Petersgate. The cask beers are Greenalls bitter and Marstons Pedigree. The other 'town centre' pub with a table remains the Blossoms (Robbies) in Heaviley; okay it's not quite town centre... Beers are Hatters, Best and Old Tom. If you know of any further pintables in the area, please let us know here at OT.

The Church, Edgeley, has a bargain offer for October - Robinson's Best and Hartley's Cumbria Way are just £1.19 a pint while Hatters is a snip at 99p. Well worth supporting.

LOCAL CAMRA AWARDS



Pictured left is a presentation of a £300 cheque from Stockport and South Manchester CAMRA to Beechwood Cancer Care, the festival charity of the 17th Stockport Beer Festival. The cheque was handed over by branch secretary Paul Moss (on the left) on October 6 at the Swan With Two Necks on Princes Street, Stockport.

Pictured right is a clearly highly delighted George Archonodogeorge of the Circus Tavern, Portland Street, Manchester City Centre, with his Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month Award for September 2003. A seriously good time was being had by one and all!



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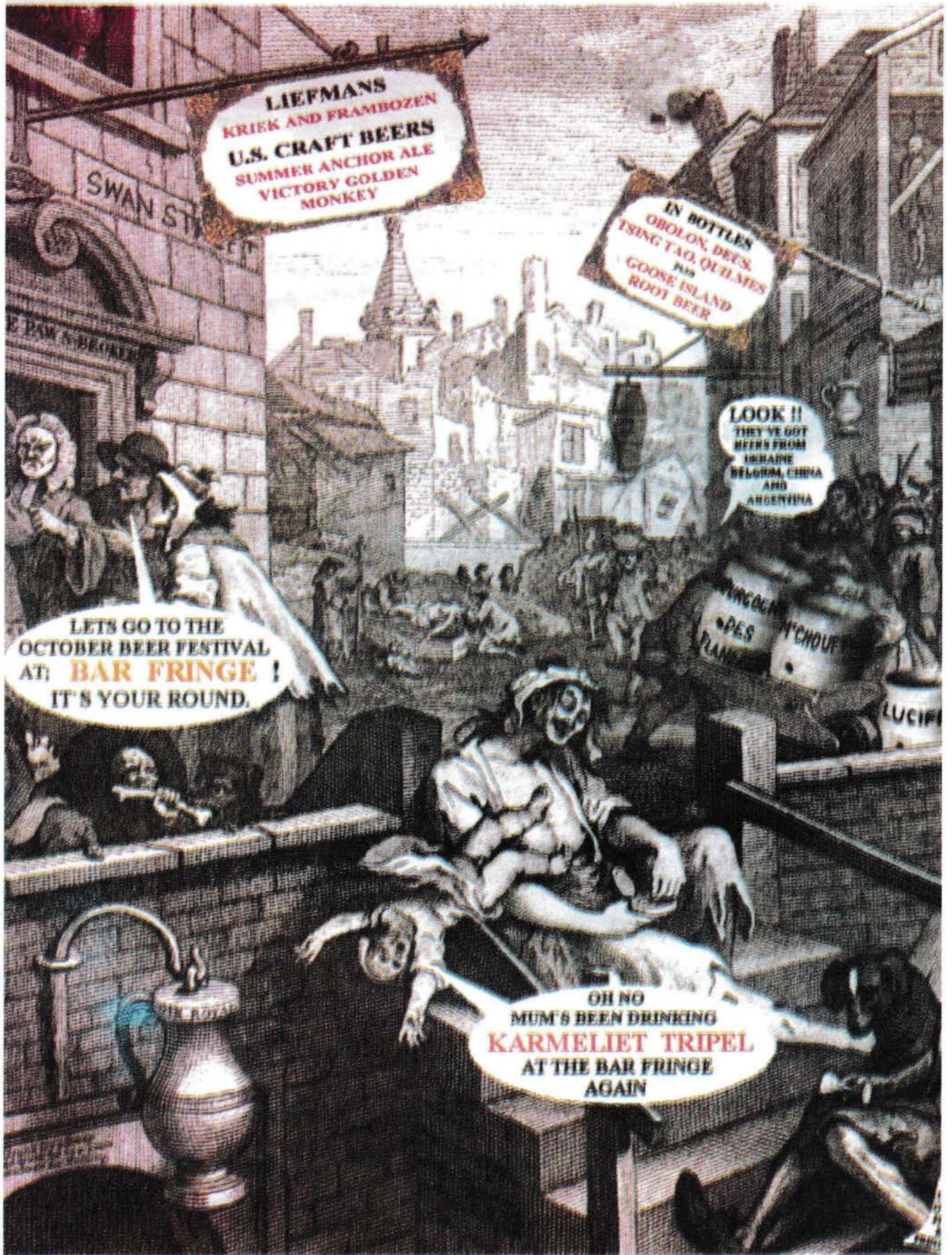
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