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OPENING TIMES



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

LIES, DAMN LIES AND... CASK ALE PRODUCTION STATISTICS DISPUTED

REAL ALE'S SHARE of the beer market is far bigger than statistics claim, says marketing expert Martyn Cornell in the 2004 CAMRA Good Beer Guide. While leading industry analysts AC Nielsen claim cask beer represents only 8% of the total beer market at around 2.75 million barrels in 2002, and is declining, many regional brewers report increased demand for their beers.

Martyn Cornell, managing editor of Martin Information, leading supplier of news and analysis for the leisure industry, says Greene King's volumes of Abbot Ale have risen by 20%, with Old Speckled Hen up 13%. Wolverhampton & Dudley is investing millions in the Burton-on-Trent plant producing Marston's Pedigree; Fuller's of Chiswick saw 2003 brewing profits rise by 18% & Shepherd Neame of Faversham, report sales of Spitfire bitter up 20%. Hardy's & Hanson's of Nottingham have seen a substantial increase in sales, while sales of Youngs of Wandsworth's Bitter were up 6.6% and Winter Warmer climbed 21%. Adnams of Suffolk reports Bitter sales rising by 11% and Broadside increased 15.5%. The reason for the gap between statistics and brewers' own figures lies in the retreat from cask beer production by the national brewers: Scottish Courage, Interbrew, Coors and Carlsberg-Tetley. ScotCo now owns the French lager brand Kronenbourg, Interbrew concentrates on promoting Stella, Coors owns leading lager Carling, while C-T brews Carlsberg in Northampton. ScotCo and C-T own the two biggest ale brands in Britain - John Smith's and Tetley Bitter - but put the overwhelming bulk of its advertising spends behind the "smoothflow" nitro-keg versions of the beers, not the cask versions. The declining amount of real ale brewed by the

nationals, who are responsible for eight out of 10 pints brewed in Britain, distorts the overall market statistics and seriously under-reports the real ale revival enjoyed by regional and micro-brewers. Martyn Cornell points out that AC Nielsen works closely with the British Beer and Pub Association (the former Brewers Society) which is funded mainly by the big brewers and pub companies. An independent statistical company, CGA, has drawn a startlingly different picture of real ale's share of the beer market. CGA's survey shows that cask ale sales are actually around five million barrels a year, and that cask in reality is more than 20% of total on-trade beer sales, making it the second biggest category after heavily advertised standard lagers.

Nielsen says the nationals' brands account for nearly half of UK cask ale sales but CGA claims the Big Four sell much less, only 27% of all the cask beer drunk in Britain, with 40 regional brewers accounting for 57% and 400-plus micros mopping up the final 15 or 16%. "Despite gloomy talk about a declining market overall, the number of outlets for cask ale is actually increasing," Cornell adds. "CGA found that compared to 2001 there were another 1,160 pubs stocking cask ale, a 2.9% increase, which means that 63% of pubs now sell at least one cask ale."

LOCAL BREWERS FIGHTING BACK

GREATER MANCHESTER'S four family brewers manned at stall in St Anne's Square, Manchester, as part of the Manchester Food & Drink Festival. Open between 11am and 3pm on 3 and 4 October, this had all the appearances of being a huge success with crowds thronging to sample Holts Bitter, Hydes' Jekyll's Gold, Lees Bitter and Robbies Best. As well as the free samples, the brewers had commissioned a leaflet that included a pen picture of each company together with vouchers for a free pint of each brewer's beer in 10 selected pubs from each of them. This

was a clever move which should attract new people into their pubs, sampling their beers.

THE INDEPENDENT
FAMILY BREWERS
OF MANCHESTER
AND STOCKPORT



FIGHT TO SAVE BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL SUCCESSFUL?

POSTAL BALLOT THREATENS STOCKPORT'S BIG EVENT

In early October Stockport Council informed Jim Flynn, the Organiser of the Stockport Beer and Cider Festival that the 2004 Festival at the Town Hall was in serious jeopardy. He was told that it was likely that 'the Government will decide that the European and Local Elections will be run on a postal basis in the North West' and that 'the Chief Executive as Returning Officer, ... has to make contingency plans for such an eventuality.' The Festival is to be held 3rd to 5th June, the week before the elections and the Council say they have the Town Hall ballroom available to store the returned postal ballot papers if postal ballot.

Jim Flynn told Opening Times 'we were obviously very disappointed and concerned about the news and asked the Council to come up with another solution that would meet their needs but allow the Festival to go ahead. We pointed out that not only was this the largest event held each year at the venue but it was one that attracted many visitors to the town and provided income for the Council itself. Unfortunately they were unable to come up with an alternative or to give us a definite decision until December which is too late for us to successfully organise things.'

That was the bad news but since then the determined Festival organisers have spent much time and effort in trying to find an alternative. Discussions are well advanced with Stockport County Football Club to hold the event there and optimism is again to the fore. Jim Flynn again 'while negotiations are not concluded I am very hopeful. The venue does not have the splendid decor of the Town Hall but does have a far larger fire limit which will prevent the queues we have been suffering from in recent years and will allow for al fresco drinking, a real plus for customers in early June.'

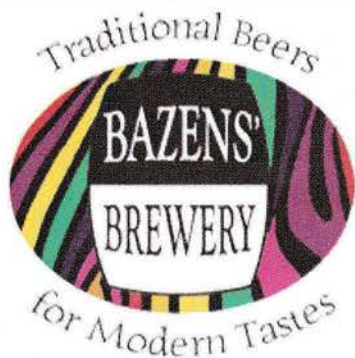
So put the Festival dates, 3rd to 5th June 2004 in your diary and Opening Times will keep you up to speed with all the Festival news.

November's OPENING TIMES

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CAMRA 2004 GOOD BEER GUIDE - OUT NOW - PAGE 19



Stinger 4.7% (October/November)
 FlatbaC 4.2% (Beer of the Festival, Stockport, 2003)
 Blue Bullet 4.5% Black Pig Mild 3.6%
 (Bronze Award for Mild, Champion Beer of Britain, 2003)
 Pacific Bitter 3.8% Best Bitter (new recipe) 4.3%
 Freshers' Special 5.5% (October-January)

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, The Knot Bar, Bar Centro &
 The Smithfield, Manchester, Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar,
 The Marble Beer House, Chorlton-cum-Lardy.

For more info, please see www.bazensbrewery.co.uk, phone
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 or email info@bazensbrewery.co.uk

PUB OF THE MONTH NOVEMBER 2003

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
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The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for November is the Victoria on Wilmslow Road in Withington.

Sited in the centre of Withington, the Victoria, which has had a slightly chequered history in the not too distant past, has now very much found its role as the 'village' local. This welcome period of stability and all-round improvement to the pub is down to the arrival of Edgar Ambrose and Janice Oliver over four years ago.

Janice and Edgar took on the pub after a short period of closure and immediately set about changing its fortunes. Their background helped of course - Janice is very experienced in the trade, having worked at the Cross Keys in Adswold, and Edgar had previously worked in finance - but it has essentially been down to sheer hard work and determination that has seen the pub so markedly transformed.

The atmosphere is hugely better and, despite the mainly open-plan format, the pub is nicely broken up into a number of different areas giving the feel of a multi-roomed pub. Naturally, plenty of real ale is sold, too with Hydes' Mild, Bitter, Jekyll's Gold and the various seasonal beers all available on handpump and of top quality. Indeed such is the high standard of the beer that not only has the pub gained a 'Cask Marque' award, it has become a regular entrant in the national Good Beer Guide.

All in all, the Victoria is a tremendously improved pub and this very well deserved award will be presented on Thursday 27th November when an excellent night is promised.

Being on Wilmslow Road, the Victoria is well-served by public transport. From Stockport bus number 42 runs frequently and from Cheadle and Cheadle Hulme buses 157 and 45A run hourly.

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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CHRISTMAS PRESENT IDEAS - PAGE 19



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The Pub That Time Forgot

IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

While the doom and gloom merchants who produce real ale statistics constantly predict its terminal decline, out here in the real world, business appears to be booming. Certainly, there seems to be no end to the number of new micros setting up. Millstone has already had beer in the pubs, Three Rivers has just started brewing and there will soon be new ventures in both Miles Platting and Glossop. All producing cask beer - a product the statisticians will tell you no-one wants to drink any more. Perhaps the best news, though, is that the big producers are once more turning back to cask. This is particularly relevant here in the north west where Interbrew this month launch a new version of Boddingtons Bitter. It is important that this is a success and all credit to Interbrew for putting some advertising spend behind this. This time next month you won't be able to get the old version of Boddies on handpump and it will be interesting to see how the new, stronger beer is received.

Make no mistake, it is potentially a very good beer indeed. Pre-launch tasting at the brewery were very well received and justifiably so. The new beer is fuller-bodied, but still 'sessionable' with a good dry bitter finish. All they have to do now is make sure it tastes like that in the pubs - in most cases it would probably benefit from about a week in the cellar before being served. It remains to be seen how many licensees will invest that amount of time and effort, but if they do then Interbrew could be on to a winner.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Many thanks to those who have been complimentary about our new look. We will improve and refine this over the coming months, although this will depend to some extent on the continuing support and generosity of our advertisers. Thanks to one and all - and please do get in touch if you'd like a colour ad!

John Clarke

Sorry, this is about whisky not beer.... What is it about big drink companies? The latest idiocy is being perpetrated by Diageo, who have created a **blended** 'all-malt' Cardhu whisky (formerly a 12 year-old single malt). Same name, same price, but adding in God-knows-what barrels of anonymous whisky they can produce 200,000 cases a year, and apparently the (mainly Spanish) consumers don't know/care they're being guiled. Personally I never liked Cardhu much, but these blasphemers also control Talisker and Lagavulin - and those I care about very much indeed.

Paul Hutchings

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 235

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
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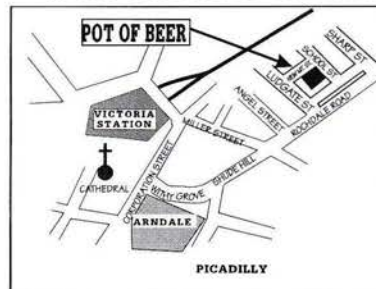
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FOCUS ON PHOENIX BREWERY

LOCAL MICRO COMES OF AGE

BEERS FROM PHOENIX BREWERY are a familiar site in the local free trade and guest beer market. They have a name for reliability and quality, too. But what of the company and people behind Phoenix?



Former Bass engineer Tony Allen moved from the big time to the tiny time when he took voluntary redundancy from Bass's giant (and now closed) beer factory at Runcorn to set up his own Oak Brewery at Ellesmere Port in 1982. In those days Ellesmere Port was something of a beer desert and Tony found most of his beer sales were in Greater Manchester and Yorkshire. A move seemed inevitable and in 1991 came the move to Heywood and the former premises of the old Phoenix Brewery which ceased brewing in 1939. In 1996 came a name change from Oak to Phoenix. Thus Oak/Phoenix is the oldest established micro in Greater Manchester and the second oldest in the north west, beaten only by Moorhouses who started real ale production three years earlier. And of course, 2003 sees the brewery come of age with 21 years of brewing history behind it.

The brewery itself must occupy one of the most impressive premises of any micro. While the old Phoenix plant was stripped out for the war effort in 1939, the rest of the complex remains substantially intact and is dominated by the old brewery tower with 'Phoenix Brewery' emblazoned in white tiles on all sides. This year has also seen considerable investment in the old buildings with roofs replaced and walls rebuilt. Indeed construction work was still underway when OT called in early November - we were shown two mummified cats 'Scared' and 'Stiff' found under floorboards as work proceeded!

Much of the complex is now given over to industrial units, with Phoenix Brewery occupying the former offices and workshops. Sadly the impressive brewery tower is now out of use. Production however is booming with annual production running at about 6,000 barrels a year and 11 people employed in the brewing operation. The Phoenix range consists of 13 regular beers, 24 seasonals and numerous one-off specials. Some of the specials have a habit of



becoming permanent - Black Bee honey porter was first brewed as a one-off for the St Albans Beer Festival, while White Monk was produced for CAMRA's National Winter Ales Festival.

Each beer is very much a separate brew, evidenced by the brewery's use of no less than 10 hop varieties, from the UK, Slovenia, Germany, New Zealand and the USA (including the popular Cascade variety). Malt is basically Maris Otter, the classic pale ale variety, supplemented by darker malts where necessary and wheat malt, too. Much of the Phoenix range consists of pale and (often very) hoppy beers, basically, say Tony, because that is what people want to drink. Tony himself says he has an eclectic taste in beer with preference for no particular style.

The old Phoenix Brewery supplied about 120 tied houses. New Phoenix has about 400 regular free trade accounts and Tony says, has no problem selling its beer. The problems with pub companies buying up the free trade luckily isn't an issue as far as Phoenix is concerned. This is hardly surprising when the consistency and quality of Phoenix beers is concerned - the dedicated Phoenix pump in Stockport's Crown is testimony to that. In Manchester the Knott and the Marble Arch are also regular outlets.

Phoenix beers to look out for in the next few weeks include the superb Phoenix Porter (5%), Christmas Kiss (4.5%) and Golden Glow (6.5%). A particular treat for the festive season is the powerful Humbug (7%) which has already been brewed and is maturing at the brewery for release to the trade in December. So, raise a glass to 21 years of brewing history - the next milestone will 25 years in 2007, we're sure Tony is already planning the celebration specials!

The regular range of Phoenix beers includes:

- Bantam (3.5%)
- Navy (3.8%)
- Monkeytown Mild (3.9%)
- Best Bitter (3.9%)
- Arizona (4.1%)
- Pale Moonlight (4.2%)
- Black Bee (4.5%)
- Old Oak (4.5%)
- White Monk (4.5%)
- Thirsty Moon (4.6%)
- Double Dagger (5%)
- Double Gold (5%0
- Wobbly Bob (6%)



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CAMRA INVESTMENT CLUB GETS EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW - ROBIN PENDRAGON WAS THERE

PERHAPS the first outside the brewery to taste the new Boddington's Cask Bitter were a group of Stock Exchange investors, also members of CAMRA Investment Club (CIC), who went on a tour of the brewery on Friday October 3rd.

Despite the fact that brewery shares have not been doing too well of late, a crowd on 21 CIC members turned out for the occasion, some having travelled from strange alien places like London and Bath.

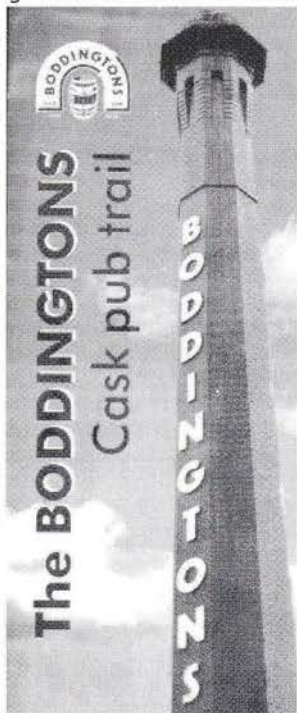
The tour itself was strangely truncated, most of the works being deemed to be out of bounds by the guides of 'Health & Safety' or 'Work in progress'. From what the Club members saw, the main difference between Boddington's and other craft breweries is that much of the process is computer controlled, rather than progressed by large chaps hauling on valves and suchlike. In addition the colossal fermentation vats are lidded to vent away the otherwise asphyxiant CO2 fumes courtesy of electrical fans whilst smaller breweries just open the windows. Finally the yeast separation process, also computer controlled, is a very careful operation featuring much cycling through sequences of stainless steel reactors at Boddingtons. The reason? The processed yeast ends up as the Marmite on your toast in the mornings!

A big surprise for many was the quality of the 'ordinary' Boddington's Bitter at the Brewery Tap pub in Strangeways, where the tour started and ended. Often the last choice in many pubs, given the frequency with which the beer appears as a tired, warmish, bland offering relative to the others available, the bitter at the Tap was excellent, bursting with life and very tasty.

The Club members were treated to a light buffet at the end of the tour and to samples of the new version of Boddington's Cask Bitter, which, from the end of this month, will be the norm for cask Boddingtons. The chief differences are a move to making the beer an all-malt brew (the 'old' version contains some wheat malt) and an uprating of the strength from 3.8% ABV to 4.1%.

The improvement in the beer for such apparently small changes is remarkable, the new product being drier, more bitter and detectably stronger than the earlier version. It really does deserve the adland appellation 'a bit gorgeous'. The CIC members were happy to continue sampling until 5.00pm whereupon many of the visitors went back to their hotels to recover before discovering what other beery delights there might be found around Manchester City Centre.

One highlight of the tour was when one delegate naively asked how many types of mild Boddington's produce these days, keeping his face perfectly straight as the other CIC members fell about laughing and the poleaxed guide struggled for a reply. Perhaps he made his point though? Boddingtons have produced a 'cask pub trail' leaflet - buy a pint of Boddies Cask at each of the 12 participating pubs, getting the leaflet stamped in each one, and then present it at the Brewery Tap to receive a pint of Boddingtons Cask and a trail t-shirt for £2.50. The trail runs until 31 December.



Buy one pint of Boddingtons Cask at each pub have this leaflet stamped then present it fully completed at the Brewery Tap to receive a pint of Boddingtons cask and a Trail t-shirt for £2.50. THIS OFFER ENDS 31st DEC 2003 or whilst stocks last



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DETAILS ON PAGE 19



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NEW BODDIES CASK LAUNCH THIS MONTH



November 24 sees the launch of the 'new' Boddingtons Bitter throughout the North West. The new beer completely replaces the 'old' version so, from the end of this month if you ask for cask Boddies (as you should) then the new beer is what you will get. It's slightly fuller bodied than the old version with a long, dry bitter finish. Pre-launch tastings would certainly indicate that it should once again be a beer worth seeking out.

To coincide with the launch, Interbrew UK is giving Boddingtons a boost in the North with two pieces of activity - Boddingtons Darts Championship and a new Boddingtons TV advertising campaign - as part of its £14 million marketing support package for the year.

The second year of the darts tournament is bigger and better than ever with more than 900 teams - 200 up on 2002 - competing for a place in next year's final and the chance to win a total of £11,600 in prize money. The tournament is also proving a winner for pubs in terms of extra business: last year's event generated an average volume sales increase of 25% over the five months of the tournament.

Boddingtons is offering participating pubs the opportunity to host an exhibition night with the world professional darts champion, John Part. Licensees have to submit photos and stories of their personal highs and lows of the second round of the event. Interbrew UK is also launching new cask Boddingtons with a heavyweight TV campaign aimed to raise awareness and generate sampling. A new, 10-second cut-down of the existing *Pillow Talk* TV commercial has been produced featuring a topical end message - "Cask 4.1% Coming Soon" - to remind viewers of the arrival of new cask Boddingtons, which will be available to consumers from November 24th. The campaign is running for four weeks in and around Boddingtons' regional heartland of Granada plus Tyne Tees, Yorkshire and Border ITV regions and the Channel 4 North TV region. Colin Pedrick, Managing Director, On Trade Sales at Interbrew UK, says: "We are ensuring that as many people as possible know about the arrival of new cask Boddingtons. We want to encourage drinkers to sample the new brew which retains the traditional brewing methods but now has greater appeal to a broader range of cask ale drinkers."

FAMILY FAVOURITES

All four local family brewers have new beers out this month. The latest in their seasonal portfolios.

Robinson's welcome back Robin Bitter, the 4.5% full-bodied session beer that has to date been one of the best selling of their seasonal ales. And of course, the powerful Old Tom is now back on draught and making a welcome sight on local bars - a recent visit to the Blossoms, Heavily, was greeted by the sight of the traditional cask on the end of the bar. Robbies Bar & Cellar Competition is now moving into its final stages and we hope to have details of the finalists and, possibly, the winners next time.



Hydes have two new beers out this month. The latest, and last, in their 'Fine Beers In The making' range of craft ales is Rompers Rein. This 5% dark beer promises to be a seasonal treat with a combination of roast barley, black malts and hints of fruit and spice. Also from Hydes is the second appearance on draught of Manchester's Finest, a premium 4.7% beer, usually available only in bottle. Only once before has this beer been produced on draught in cask conditioned form. That was in spring this year and was overlooked by many, as its availability was not announced and it was produced in tiny volumes for a few free trade customers only, most of which were outside the OT area. Any of you that like trying rare cask beers should not miss this opportunity.

Lees welcome the return of Plum Pudding. This rich dark beer with a hint of fruit is a potent 4.8% and has featured as their Christmas seasonal in the past. A very moreish beer and an excellent choice for the festive season. Check out Rain Bar in the City Centre and the Lloyds in Chorlton for these beers.



Lastly **Holts** have now launched Patersons as their latest seasonal beer. It has the same strength as their bitter

and the price is the same, too, at £1.34 a pint. For each pint sold, 20p will be donated to the Christie Hospital. While Holt's Bitter is known as a very bitter beer, Patersons is very much the opposite, having a pleasant, 'sweet' taste, possibly deriving from the touch of honey used in the brew.

MORE MICROS

And still they come. There are plans to open a brewhouse at the Ace of Diamonds on Oldham Road, Miles Platting, early next year. Derek Adams, the owner and licensee and his brewing consultant, Julian Taylor of the Saddleworth Brewery, are setting up the Diamond Brewery. Derek is building a new brewhouse on the side of the pub which, incidentally, us a first time entry in the 2004 Good Beer Guide.

Following hot on the steps of Millstone Brewery at Mossley, Glossop will shortly become the fourth town in the High Peak Branch area to have a microbrewery (the others being Shaws of Dukinfield and Lowes Arms at Denton). The Glossop Brewery as we believe it will be known, hopes to start brewing early in the New Year and will be run by a local man who has a degree in microbiology. The plant is currently being assembled and the premises have been found. We will bring more news on this venture in next month's Opening Times.

MORE MICRO NEWS

We are running features on some of our local micros this month and next and you will find the latest news from Phoenix on page 4 of this issue. Also the usual apologies to those breweries we were unable to contact this month.

Bank Top - no new beers out this month but they have produced their first beer to be bottled. A brew of the 5% Smokestack Lightning is to be sent up to the Sulwath Brewery to be bottled, although this will not be a bottle-conditioned beer. The powerful Santa's Claws (5%) will be available next month.



AN ARTICLE ON CHANGES AT PHOENIX BREWERY CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 4.



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12 - 10.30 Sun

FOOD SERVED ALL DAY





Bazens' – the next beer in the astrological series is Stinger (for Scorpio). This 4.3% beer is a pale gold brew made using Mittelfruh hops

from Germany. The plans for another joint beer with Facers have fallen through. This was to be a 'green beer' using new seasons hops but unfortunately the package of hops was mislaid for a month by the courier service and they were rotten on arrival!

Boggart Hole Clough – The special for November is Boggart Light at 4.5% and is described as light and fruity. A one-off special (Clough Brew – 4.1%) was also brewed for the beer festival held at Bar Fringe on Swan Street.

Facers – all the seasonal beers have a literary connection, hence the autumn beer is Keats ('...season of mists and mellow fruitfulness') at 3.9% - and very good it is too. The Christmas beer will have a Dickens connection and there has also been a bonfire night special, Smoky Guy brewed using a hint of smoked malt to give the appropriate flavour.

Leyden – the latest beer is Fore (or Four, depending on the pub).

This is a 4% beer and was brewed to mark both the fourth annual beer festival at the Hare & Hounds at Holcombe Brook, but also the fourth anniversary of brewing at the Lord Raglan. The beer itself is pale and bitter and is brewed with Challenger hops.

Marble – two beers make a welcome return this month. Out now is Uncut Amber (4.7%) an excellent red-brown beer with a full-

bodied taste and dry roast finish. In the pipeline is the superb Chocolate Heavy (5.5%), a rich full-bodied beer with dark and chocolate malts making for a very satisfying beer – this will be available until January. Marble are also celebrating getting all four of their tied pubs in the Good Beer Guide – the Marble Arch, the Knott, Marble Beer House and the Bar all feature in the 2004 edition. Is this a record?



Pictish – last month saw the return of the superb Samhain Dry Stout (5%) as a one-off brew. Catch it if you still can. This month's seasonal is Z-Rod, a 4.8% pale gold ale with full-bodied

flavour and a good balanced bitter finish. Very drinkable indeed.

Porter – this month sees the welcome return of the superb Porters Stout. A pitch black, bone dry beer, and dangerously drinkable at 5.5%, there are some who say this is the best of the Porters range.

Three Rivers – Stockport's new micro started brewing on 8 November. The first two beers, both pale and hoppy, will be GMT (named after the three rivers, Goyt, Tame and Mersey), a 3.8% session beers, and its premium stablemate Oxbow at 4.5%. We will be running a feature on this new venture in next month's OT.



IN NEXT MONTH'S SPECIAL MICRO FEATURE...



MILLSTONE BREWERY Mossley's new Millstone Brewery is the 15th micro-brewery in Greater Manchester and brings the

county's total number up to 21, of which all bar one produce real ale.

The names behind the brewery are Nick Boughton from Dudley and Jon Hunt from Birmingham. The aim is to produce full-bodied, bitter beers and two should be available by mid-November. Three Shires will be a 4% pale, hoppy beer with fruity aromas the second is Millstone Edge at 4.4%, a more copper coloured best bitter, again with three hop varieties – First Gold and Goldings as before, but this time with Fuggles as the third. Plans include beers at 3.8% and 4.2%. along with some specials.

RAMSBOTTOM BREWERY

The Ramsbottom Brewery came on stream late last year and is located in the back of an old kitchen showroom, occupying the premises of the old Ramsbottom Industrial & Provident Society. It is the work of Paul Robinson ("I couldn't really call it Robinson's!").

The core Ramsbottom range comprises the following beers: Old Ground Mild (3.8%) – a dark, rich beer, Holcombe (3.8%) - A light golden beer, Rammy Mile (3.8%) – a pale beer using pale Optic Malt - soon to change its name, Freefall (3.8%) - first brewed for a charity bungee jump, Tower Bitter (4%) – probably the main (bitter) beer, Provident (4.5%) – the premium bitter and Rammyversary (4.2%) A light golden beer.



...FULL DETAILS OF THE BREWERS, BREWERIES & BEERS



Leyden – the latest beer is Fore (or Four, depending on the pub).

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Marble – two beers make a welcome return this month. Out now is Uncut Amber (4.7%) an excellent red-brown beer with a full-



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STAGGER

with Dave Burston

THE 'THREE' HEATONS!

ON AN uncharacteristically rainy night in August, about a dozen of us gathered to check out some of the pubs in three of the Stockport Heaton, starting in Heaton Chapel and moving on to cover all of Heaton Moor and then the western side of Heaton Norris.

We met in the **George & Dragon**, an impressive brick and stone building on the corner by the traffic lights on Manchester Road in Heaton Chapel. It has a large lounge with a number of separate drinking areas including a raised no-smoking area, and was very busy for the time of night (around 7.30). Two cask ales were available - Charles Wells' Bombardier as a guest bitter and the regular Boddingtons Bitter, and both were rated above average. Bypassing the **Chapel House**, which had no real ale (though it may have by the time you read this - see September's *Opening Times*), we strolled through the rain into Heaton Moor, and our first stop was at the **Elizabethan**. This was formerly a young persons' keg-only pub, but a recent colourful refurbishment by the Orchard Pub Co. has turned it into the main outlet for cask beer in the village, complete with a Cask Marque accreditation. No expense has been spared in the refurbishment (a fact reflected in the beer prices), which seems to have used all the latest trendy ideas from those TV house design programmes you love to hate, including state-of-the-art gas fires. On this night these weren't required as it was very hot and humid inside and also very crowded for the time of night. We would have liked to make use of the benches outside at the front but it was still raining, so we found a few seats in the relatively large no-smoking area. There were 5 cask ales on offer, but the Green King IPA went off just as we arrived, so most of us settled for the Adnams Broadside, which was rated above average to good. No

one tried the Boddingtons Bitter here and the few who tried the Bombardier (again) and the Old Speckled Hen rated them ok. By now the rain had just about stopped, and we crossed the road to the **Crown**, the only traditional pub in Heaton Moor and the only one with a separate vault. Here our ranks were swelled by the addition of some members of CAMRA's Manchester Under 26 group, who had met elsewhere earlier and were now joining their first ever mainstream CAMRA event. The only cask ale on sale was Boddingtons Bitter, which got mixed ratings from the assembled company, some people rating it poor while others rated it average or above. It just goes to show that beer is an emotive subject and you can't even get a group of CAMRA members to agree on it!

A few doors away is the **Plough**, and this was our next port-of-call. This is another predominantly young persons' pub, although it has always been a real ale outlet and a few years ago had several on offer including a guest beer. Now it only sells Tetley Bitter, and we were also unable to agree about this, giving it mixed ratings from good, down to most around average.

We now faced a long walk to our next real ale pub, so it was just as well the rain had stopped. Avoiding the **Moor Top**, which has an unused handpump but no cask ale, we walked through the back of Heaton Moor to get to the **Nursery**, on the cobbled part of Green Lane in Heaton Norris. What can you say about the Nursery that hasn't been said already? CAMRA's National Pub of the Year in 2001, virtually unchanged since it was built in 1939 and justifiably on CAMRA's National Inventory of unspoilt historic pubs. Our party split up between the various rooms and some even went outside to stand in the dark by the bowling green at the back. The Nursery is a Hydes house, and as well as the Bitter and Mild (on electric pump, but none the worse for that), it has hand-pumped Jekyll's Gold and the current Hydes seasonal ale, which was called Rack 'n' Ruin. All the beers were rated good, although some found the Rack 'n' Ruin too sweet for their taste.

By various routes we then descended the hill to Didsbury Road in Heaton Norris, and the **Four Heaton**, another Hydes pub, until recently called the Moss Rose. This is a 1970s building with an unusual - even wacky - design. Although it could never be described as beautiful from the outside, it's a good homely locals' pub inside, well laid out with two separate rooms and benefiting from a recent refurbishment. In the far corner of the first room was a large TV screen showing "Sex in the City" which everyone was trying to ignore. The only two beers available were Hydes Bitter and Light, both on handpump, and both were rated pretty good.

It had been decided that our last pub would be the **Olde Woolpack** on Brinksway, which is not actually in the Heaton at all, being the other side of the river and the motorway, close to the



pyramid. This is an enterprising multi-roomed free house which always has some interesting beers from small independent breweries. On this occasion two were on: Summer Breeze - a seasonal from the Crouch Vale Brewery - and a 4% ABV beer from the Cottage Brewing Co. that had 'Ernie Ales' on the clip. Both were well liked, the Summer Breeze especially and was said by many to be the best beer of the night. Two other cask ales were available, but understandably no one tried the Theakston Best Bitter, and the one person who sampled the Marston's Pedigree (on special offer at £1.60 a pint) rated it above average.

As people dashed off to catch lifts or last buses home, everyone agreed it had been a good stagger, but of course these are just the opinions of one group of people on one night of the year, so why not try some of these pubs yourself and see what you think?

8

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THE ARDEN ARMS, MILLGATE, STOCKPORT

STOCKPORT'S ARDEN ARMS has long been something of an institution on the local pub scene, although its history in recent years is an object lesson on how even the best pub can lose the plot with the wrong people behind the bar and, happily, how the right people, with hard work and determination, can restore its fortunes.

Built about 1815, the pub boasts many original features with tiled floors, woodwork and sash windows all dating from Victorian times or earlier. The layout is pretty much unchanged, too, and apart from the opening out of a former kitchen, remains much as it has always



done. Of particular note is the small snug, only accessed by walking through the bar – a very rare feature nowadays. Other features include extensive stabling (horse trams were once stabled in the large yard which now features a superb beer garden) and, in the cellar, a mortuary slab, a throwback to the nineteenth century when, as was often the case, inquests were held at the pub. Needless to say Arden Arms is not only listed as being of historic and architectural interest, it also appears on CAMRA's National Inventory of classic pub interiors.

The décor matches the pub. It's warm and comfortable with many original features, including tables with central bell pushes, a magnificent sideboard and one remaining grandfather clock (there were three but the others 'disappeared' under some previous tenants).

I won't dwell on the pub's history in recent years – let's just say that the arrival of Joe Quinn and Steve King in late 1999 heralded a turn around in its fortunes and the story since then has been one of steady and constant improvement so that today we have a pub as good as it has ever been, Robinson's ales are served at their best, with usually a choice of Hatters, Best Bitter, the seasonal and, in winter, Old Tom. Quality is such that the pub is now a virtual fixture in the national Good Beer Guide. Joe and Steve have a background in the restaurant trade so it was perhaps inevitable that a high quality food operation would be established at the Arden and so it has proved to be. 'Restaurant food at pub prices' is the watchword and this is indeed what you get.

The menu splits into two. There is a regular range of bar snacks and light meals including home-made soup (available in both bowl and cup), sandwiches (bread, ciabatta or hot) from £3.25 to £5.25, a superb premium all day breakfast (three scrambled eggs, smoked salmon and toast) at £5.25 and a range of side orders such as garlic ciabatta, chips etc at prices from £1.50 to £2.25. One of our party, being of modest appetite, chose a cajun chicken ciabatta and was almost overfaced by the large, well presented sandwich, bursting with spicy chicken and accompanied by dressed salad leaves.

The Specials Menu, really does live up to its billing here. There are usually about five main dishes to choose from, invariably including a vegetarian option. Today the range included pork loin with cider sauce, Red Thai chicken curry and seared salmon fillet with white wine and parsley sauce, at prices ranging from £5.95 to £6.95. The remaining two options proved irresistible, though. Lincolnshire sausages (meaty and well-seasoned) came on a pile of mash and a generous serving of mushroom and ale gravy, garnished with parsnip chips.



Presentation and quality were top notch and this was good value at £5.75 The veggie option was even more impressive. Two large roasted onions came stuffed with sun-dried tomatoes, goats cheese and pesto and accompanied by a rocket salad and well sauced with a warm red pepper coulis. It was one of the best vegetarian dishes I have seen in a pub for a long time.

Sadly we had neither room nor time for pudding. A shame as the choice of four (all at £.25) included sticky toffee pudding, Dutch apple crumble, chocolate fudge cake and banana and toffee sponge, all with either vanilla custard or cream.


Very highly recommended – and in December there is a special Christmas menu available 12-2.30 Monday-Friday and 12 noon-4pm Saturday and Sunday. It's also available from 5.00-7.00p, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, too. At £15.95 for two courses and £18.95 for three this is a snip.

The Arden is at 23 Millgate, Stockport Telephone 0161 480 2185.



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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Graham Patient, Unicorn Grocery, Chorlton:

It was good to see the coverage you gave to cider and perry in October's Opening Times.

If I had been more aware, I would like to have pointed out beforehand that Unicorn Grocery stocks a pretty wide range of organic ciders and perry including Dunkertons (five ciders and two perries), Heron Valley (farmhouse cider), Cronos (as recently featured on BBC! - two types, sadly no perry available this year), Westons (bottles and flagons - albeit not farmhouse..), and two French ciders, Cinq Autels from Normandy (brut and demi-sec) and Coteaux Nantais from Brittany (brut demi-sec and doux). I'm planning to stock Sheppy cider when they produce their first organic batch - we don't carry Aspell's or Sedlescombe because they are very expensive (but would listen to any demands) - and have agonised over stocking Minchews who are not certified organic.. an ongoing discussion. Moreover, we stock those all year round (when available), not just for October.

How about an 'off-sales' column in your worthy publication? (I know - you need someone with the time to do it - just a suggestion...)

(Thanks for the update, Graham. Space prevented a list of off sales outlets for cider last time - Unicorn is probably the best around - Ed (1))

From Neil Worthington, Urmston:

Surely your esteemed contributor, "The Arbitrator", is missing the point when he writes in your September number that cask ale "exercises power beyond its market share"?

The scenario is that one person in a group of friends wants to drink cask ale whereas the others want to drink lager/cider/alcopops/spirits/wine/whatever. In order to keep everyone happy, they choose to frequent a pub that offers cask ale along with all the other drinks. This doesn't mean that everyone in the group will drink cask ale - far from it. It just means that everyone gets to drink what they like.

This by the way is the explanation for a number of pubs which offer just one or two handpumps and "national bland" beers, indifferently brewed and indifferently kept. They're token beers, there to placate cask ale drinkers and make sure the whole party - or family - doesn't move on to another pub.

The pub operator doesn't really care how much cask ale gets sold. They're much more interested in overall turnover at the pub - the total wet and dry sales that they can make to a group of drinkers. One pint of cask bitter can make or break a couple of rounds of drinks, plus crisps, nuts and indeed meals.

The Arbitrator, world weary and slightly hungover, replies: "You really don't get out much do you? The point of any agony column is that a 'punter' writes in with a question, and the wise uncle responds. Read it again - t'were the punter said it, not!!"

From Dennis Jones, Woodley:

Do you accept contributions from non-members?

Poor old Smokin' Joe has a real problem. I stopped smoking nine months ago but have never bothered about being in smoky pubs. Let's face it, most pubs these days are pretty well ventilated. But if Joe is really bothered, can I suggest he carries a sign around his neck (or elsewhere) with the following message:

'I enjoy you company, but one of your pleasures is cigarettes. A by-product of your pleasure is smoke which pervades the atmosphere, my hair and my clothes. One of my pleasures is beer. A by-product of my pleasure is urine. Would you object if I pissed all over you?' - it saves having to summon up farts! Now! David Newton's rant against Mark McConachie's use of English. I'm all for plain speaking but remain conscious that we're heirs to a priceless heritage of the most wondrous, expressive language on earth. If Mark wishes to use flowery words to describe his pub visits then more power to his elbow. After all, would we prefer to have Shakespeare having Hamlet say 'Shall I kill myself or not?' or Wordsworth telling us how 'I went for a walk on my own and saw daffodils'?

Long live the English language!

(Contributions are welcome from everyone, CAMRA member or not. Ed(1))

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Saturday 29th November
CGS & ZCS Fisco

Sunday 30th November
Quiz night
9.30 pm Start

Saturday 6th December
Jennifer Faye
Vocalist

Sunday 7th December
Quiz Night
9.30 pm Start

Thursday 11th December
Chris Eccadent
Male Entertainer

Saturday 13th December
Simon E
Vocalist

Sunday 14th December
Quiz Night
9.30 pm Start

Friday 19th December
Ebbie Leigh
Vocalist and Fest of
Zodiac Karacke

Saturday 20th December
Lee Eenshaw
Male Vocalist

Sunday 21st December
Quiz Night
9.30 pm Start

**Christmas Eve
Disco Night with Marshall**

Saturday 27th December
Treasure Hunt
Lee Martin Entertainer
Free F&C Let Summer

Sunday 28th December
Quiz Night
9.30 Start

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CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

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

Diary

NOVEMBER 2003

Wednesday 19th - Membership Night at Bruins, Wilmslow Rd, Fallowfield. From 8.00pm.

Friday 21st - Burnage & Heaton Mersey Stagger: meet 7.30 Rising Sun, Burnage; 9.00 Albion, Burnage Lane.

Saturday 22nd - Informal Social at Bury Beer Festival. Meet at Festival from 12 noon.

Thursday 27th - Pub of the Month presentation to Victoria, Wilmslow Rd, Withington. From 8.00pm.

Saturday 29th - Trip to Anglo Dutch Brewery, Dewsbury, plus other selected pubs. Depart Crown, Heaton Lane 10.00am. Book with Paul Formby on 0161 612 0759 (after 6.00pm)

Monday 2nd December - Committee Meeting: Fingerpost, Hempshaw Ln, Offerton. Starts 8.15pm.

Thursday 11th - Branch Meeting and Christmas Quiz: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm. Lots of great prizes so let's have a good turnout please.

Monday 15th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Grove, Ashton New Rd, Clayton. A minibus will run from the Crown, Heaton Lane at 8.00pm. Book with Paul Formby as above.

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

Friday 21st - Social at Bury Beer Festival. Meet at Festival from 1pm with mid-afternoon trip round local pubs.

NOVEMBER 2003

Saturday 29th - Trip to Haywood Brewery, Calow Top, Ashbourne followed by Social in Leek.

Monday 1st December - Committee Meeting at Shepherds Arms, Whaley Bridge. Starts 8.00pm

Saturday 6th - Christmas Social in Kettlethulme pubs.

Monday 8th - Branch Meeting: Cheshire Ring, Manchester Road, Hyde. Starts 8.00pm
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:

Monday 24th - Campaigning Meeting: Bird In Hand, Knutsford Rd, Mobberley. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 8th December - Macclesfield Pub Crawl: 8.00pm British Flag; 8.45 Ship; 9.30 Castle; 10.15 Waters Green.

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:

Friday 14th - Joint Social Stagger with Stockport & South Manchester Branch. Meet Ducie Arms, Devas St 7.30-8.00pm, then down Oxford Road.

Thursday 4th December - Monthly Branch Meeting: Orange Tree, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA Planner

12



CAINS

BREWERY TOURS

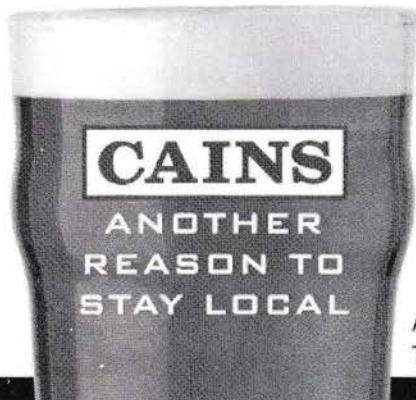
INCLUDED IN TOUR:

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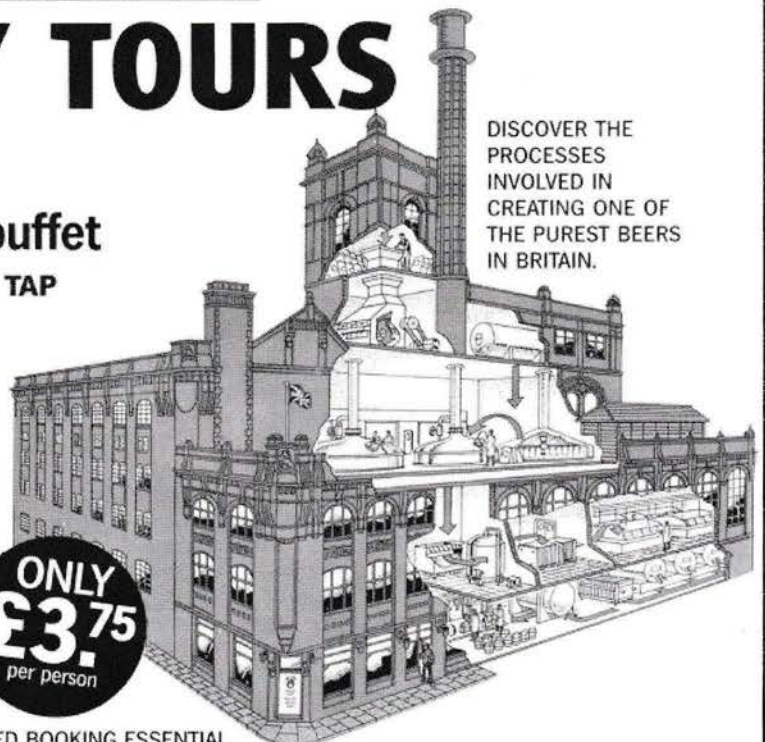
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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison **NOVEMBER '98**

"Fresh Call for Full Pints" was the main front page headline - it is a subject that crops up with monotonous regularity.

Articles headed 'Fair Pints Bill', 'Short Pint Scandal' and 'Full Measure?' had all dealt with this thorny problem during the previous year or so. A "fresh call" had been made when Wetherspoons removed the oversized lined glasses from their pubs - they said that complaints had gone up since they introduced lined glasses. This seemed to indicate that drinkers *do* care about this problem, and they are confused. To complicate the matter, two High Court judges had ruled that a pint of beer must be a full pint, and there was no onus on the customer to ask for a full measure if a pint had not been supplied. This ruling had blown a hole in the licensed trade guidelines that a top-up should be given if requested.



★ ★ ☆ ★ ★

There was more news of the new Bollin Brewery Co of Macclesfield - it had already undergone a name change and had become Storm Brewing. There had been two trial brews, and the first had been named Ale Force (4.2%). It was hoped it would be ready for the forthcoming beer festival at Stalybridge Station Buffet, and an Opening Times visit to the brewery was imminent.

★ ★ ☆ ★ ★

CAMRA had challenged Morlands to come clean over Ruddles. The Oxfordshire brewer was set to close the Rutland brewery in Langham, and was moving production to Morland's at Abingdon. Mike Benner, CAMRA's Head of Campaigns, said the beers were being advertised as 'Country born and brewed' which was a prime example of misleading the public. Also Ruddles County had been spotted in supermarkets with a reduced strength. The 'original' County was 4.9%, but the new version was 4.7%. Morland was subsequently taken over and closed by Greene King. Ruddles County is now brewed at Bury St Edmunds to a further reduced strength of 4.3%

★ ★ ☆ ★ ☆

There was news of a few 'real ale' losses from 'Manchester Matters' by Cityman. Cask beer had been dropped from the Mitre, near the Cathedral; and from Tetleys Square Albert, and the Crown on Cooper Street. But real ale was expected to be retained when the Unicorn on Church Street reopened after its refurbishment. Today cask beer has returned to the Crown and the Square Albert, while the Unicorn thrives with up to six cask beer on handpump, including Lees Bitter.

★ ★ ☆ ★ ☆

The long closed Coach & Horses on London Road, opposite Piccadilly Station, had presented a sorry picture for years, appearing to be on the verge of collapse. It had got the builders in, so what was going on? Now, in 2003, the building looks in better condition than it has done for years, and a huge banner announces 'PC Clarence (sic) Centre' and the ground floor is labelled 'Fast Internet Access'. However, a Compulsory Purchase Order is being served on the entire site with a major commercial development planned so the end appears nigh for one of Manchester's oldest surviving pub buildings.



EAT YOUR TEA

A HOUSE OF COMMONS committee recently urged Britain to adopt a Continental, café-society culture to curb alcohol-related public order problems.

In France and Italy they supposedly spend their evenings in convivial family meals where a fair bit of red wine may be consumed but there's never any trouble, whereas here in Britain groups of lads and ladettes go out and get bladdered drinking strong lager and pre-mixed spirits in establishments where you'd be lucky to get anything more than a packet of crisps. That, though, is at best a gross oversimplification, and surely the message underlying this view is that the people who express it basically just don't like pubs. The disorder has far more to do with the nature of city centre drinking circuits than the fact that bars don't offer food - which, in fact, far more do than was the case twenty years ago.

Pubs have always served a lot of lunches, but evening meals have never had a great part to play in our pub tradition. The British way of drinking, particularly up here in 't' North, has always been to eat your tea at home and then go out later to spend some time in the pub. Very often, people are not just simply drinking, they're playing darts, attending club meetings, doing quizzes, or even simply setting the world to rights, all things you can do over a couple of pints, but not over a plate of dinner. A chance meeting over a drink is also much more informal than arranging a meal which would usually need to be planned in advance. So long may it continue - we don't want our locals turned into trendy restaurants, and we want to keep our distinctive, civilised, informal, flexible drinking culture.

BENCHES TAKE A BACK SEAT

A local pub has recently received a thoroughgoing, expensive refurbishment, including the welcome return of real ale in several different varieties. But one thing this establishment lacks is a "pubby" feel, and one of the key factors leading to that is the total absence of fixed bench seating. This surely is one of the defining features of a pub - if there are just loose chairs and tables, the atmosphere becomes more that of a café or restaurant. This particular pub, despite a strong emphasis on food, also has a number of low coffee-type tables surrounded by sofas, which are very wasteful of space and well-nigh impossible to eat off.

Bench seating is cosy, sociable, flexible and space-efficient. It also adds instant atmosphere to a room in a pub. All of the finest pub rooms around here - from the toplit snug in the Swan with Two Necks to the wood-panelled lounge in the Nursery - are distinguished by fixed seating. Many of the most dismal and dispiriting ones, particularly in a couple of modernised Robinson's pubs that spring to mind, have nothing but loose individual chairs. So why have benches become anathema to contemporary pub designers? It couldn't be that they're actually scared of pubs looking anything like pubs?

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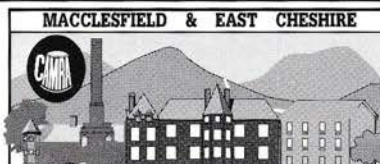
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PUB NEWS

The Redway Tavern, Kerridge saga has finally ended. The owner has got her wish to convert it into two dwellings and the car park into a 'wild flower meadow', Macclesfield Council has 'reluctantly' granted the planning applications. However, the claims made by the owner in the local press have raised some eyebrows locally. The figure quoted for expenditure on the pub over the last two years (£150,000) seems very high when you compare both interior and exterior aspects of the building to what it was before the work was undertaken. Additionally the amount of money quoted as being lost while the pub was open is staggering for a country pub (£35,000 in 2002 & £18,000 for the first 6 months of 2003 until closure). The question is, was the pub a poor investment that was very badly managed or was the intention always to close it down and convert to houses in an area where house prices are soaring? I wonder how long it will be before the 'wild flower meadow' becomes the subject of further planning permission.

A new pub has opened in Macclesfield on the site of the Bull, Buxton Road. It is a Robinson's pub called 'The Merchant's House'. It is obviously designed as an eating establishment (good quality food is served all day) and is decorated to a high standard. The beers on offer are Hatters, Best Bitter and the seasonal ale, however the Coopers Bell was a whopping £2.35 and the Best Bitter was £1.95 (Hatters was not available on my visit and since there was no price list displayed I don't know how much it retails for). The Merchant's House also boasts a large no smoking room, downstairs from the main bar, and outdoor seating - although the view of traffic on Buxton Road isn't exactly picturesque.

Good news from the Storm brewery: two new fermenters are now on site and should be commissioned during November. A new beer called 'Hurricane Hubert' is to be brewed to commemorate the full time start of Hugh Thompson, albeit a little late due to demands on other product lines selling well - particularly Ale Force, Silk of Amnesia and Bosley Cloud. The new beer will be a 4.5% darker beer in colour and uses only Golding hops, the first time that Storm have used Goldings, and should be available by the time you read this.

In Rainow, work continues on the Robin Hood's conversion of out buildings to en suite accommodation. This would be ideal for visiting business people during the week and walkers at weekends. The Robin Hood serves Greenalls Bitter, Black Sheep Bitter and a guest beer from the Pubmaster range.

In Congleton, The Farmers Arms is for sale but is currently boarded up. Dave G., a local CAMRA member comments 'any pub in such a condition is a sad sight' - I quite agree. Another comment from our Congleton member concerns the Ye Olde Kings Arms 'Open and serving an average pint of Pedigree - but at £2.25 a pint! Bearing in mind other Congleton prices, this seems on the high side of extortionate for a pub which hardly falls into the wine bar category. It wasn't very busy.'

Finally, the Navigation in Macclesfield is open again with new management - good luck to them and I hope they get better treatment from the owners than the previous management did.

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Monday 29th September saw the third in our on-going series of tasting panels, albeit with a slightly reduced number of tasters. The theme this month was 'Cask Champions': beers which in their cask form have regularly won CAMRA awards, but which are only available in bottle in a pasteurised form. How would the bottle compare with the 'real' thing? As usual, the tasting was as 'blind' as we could make it (i.e. the tasters were as far as possible unaware of exactly what they were drinking). The bottles had been cooled in a fridge for a couple of hours, but beer temperature may not have been ideal. It was noticeable that in most of the beers, flavours developed as the liquid warmed up slightly.

The first beer was the weakest in strength of the evening, Timothy Taylor's renowned Landlord. As cask form this has been a regular CAMRA award winner, picking up the Champion Beer Of Britain award (CBOB) at both the 1994 and 1999 Great British Beer Festivals. The beer was on the pale side of mid-brown; it had a good head, with noticeable carbonation; it was one of the gassiest beers that we tried. There was some toffee on the nose (something that was found in most of the beers on the evening). Hops were evident, but much more for bitterness than for aroma. Toffee came into the taste partway through, with perhaps a touch of harshness on the finish. This beer displayed the best head retention of any of the bottles sampled (some faded extremely quickly once the initial froth from pouring had gone). The beer is described on the label as a 'strong pale ale', although it isn't particularly strong at 4.1% alcohol by volume (ABV) or particularly pale. It was generally felt that the bottled beer did bear some relation to the cask beer, especially in the character of the bitterness. This was a surprisingly good start to the evening: two of the tasters noted that this was much better than previous examples of bottle Landlord, which had been quite poor: perhaps Taylor's have changed the recipe. But as the back label of the bottle does say, "Now try in on draught!". £1.70 a bottle from Sainsbury's.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The second beer was Marston's Pedigree, at 4.5%ABV. In cask form this is a beer which does cause some controversy: some still swear by it, while others (your writer included) think that it may have been good twenty years ago but I'm not so keen on drinking it now. This one was a little darker than the Landlord, again with strong carbonation and a good head (which disappeared rather more quickly than the Landlord). However, there was little discernible aroma. The initial taste was sweeter, but with a little dryness and hop character coming through on the finish (with very little bitterness until then). Overall, there was not too much flavour compared with the first beer, though again there was a touch of harshness. It wasn't unpleasant, but there wasn't much too it, and the flavour actually deteriorated as it warmed up in the glass. Like it or loathe it, it's undeniable that Pedigree is a distinctive beer in cask form, but the bottled version was something of a travesty, with none of the Burton sulphurous character. Like all the remaining beers, this was £1.59 from Morrison's, but four for £5 (not a permanent deal, but we think more often on than off).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Next came Caledonian Deuchars IPA, a regular award winner in cask form. While the previous two beers were bottled at the same strength as the cask version, Deuchars isn't: in fact, while the cask version is a session bitter 3.8%, the bottled version is jacked up to a best bitter 4.4%. This does raise the question of, is this a form of deception being practised by the brewers? While both of the two beers which had different strengths were stronger in bottle, if they are not the same strength how can they be the same beer (even if you accept that a cask version and a bottled version can possibly be the 'same' beer). This beer had the most powerful aroma of any of the six we tried: on opening the bottle, we were almost assaulted by the beer's floral hoppiness, with lemony citrus notes. There was less carbonation and less head than the previous two beers. For the colour, it's best to quote the label: 'solid gold'. The flavour was dry and (unsurprisingly) hoppy, with a hint of fruitiness. However, yet

again there was the slight harshness in the taste, which turned burnt in the finish. The body of the beer was more suited to a 3.8%ABV: it was a little thin for the quoted 4.4%. The label describes the beer as, 'Distinctive, Refreshing', and the majority of the panel though that was a fair description. The label also refers to the fact that Deuchars is another CBOB winner, although an asterisk is printed next to this claim ('refers to the cask version').

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Fourth was Greene King Abbot Ale, from East Anglia, regularly found in the free trade and as a 'guest from the list' in pub companies' houses. This was a darker, richer beer, copper and amber: a very appealing colour. There wasn't too much aroma, but again there was that hint of toffee. The taste was very different from anything thus far: maltier, softer, with less carbonation. There was an unexpected berry fruitiness. The finish was sweeter and more malty (though not overly so), with some bitterness coming through: well balanced, all rather pleasant. There was none of the burnt harshness which underlay some of the other beers. It tasted distinctively stronger than the other beers, which was borne out by its 5% ABV, the strongest which we tried on the night. The label claims that the beer had a 'distinctive, full flavour', and we agreed with this. We were all quite impressed: having expected something much more malty, gloppy and difficult to drink, this writer was pleasantly surprised.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Fifth was Fuller's London Pride, several times CBOB winner in cask form. The colour was again an appealing copper, though not as much as the Abbot; and as ever, there was toffee in the nose, along with some vanilla. There was not a great deal of flavour initially, a hint of dryness perhaps; and while one of our number found a fair amount of bitterness, he was outvoted by the remainder who couldn't initially discern much bitterness at all, although a touch more did come through as the beer sat in the glass. Overall, this was very disappointing; some had tried the beer in bottle before, with much more enjoyable results. It was felt to be a very poor imitation of what can, on its home patch, be one of Britain's classic bitters. Interesting, this is another beer which is bottled at a greater strength than its cask 'brother', 4.7% in bottle to 4.1% in cask. Not that it particularly drank with the body to be expected from the greater strength.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

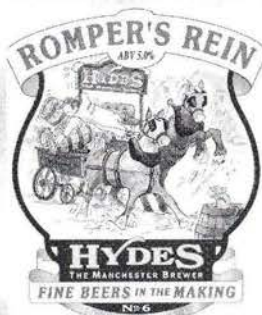
The final beer was Bateman's XXXB, from Lincolnshire, another CBOB winner from years past. This was by far the most attractively packaged of the beers, with a distinctive bottle shape and some thought having gone in to label design for all of Bateman's bottled beers. (The worst presented was undoubtedly the Deuchars, with an uninspiring label made worse by the use of clear glass: the other four used the same kind of bottle and were much of a muchness.) The colour was a touch darker than the Abbot, but the taste was a departure from anything before: very malty, heavy, chewy, thick, with more toffee. It was dry, with a fair degree of bitterness but little hop aroma. One of our tasters claimed to find a degree of seaweed, but the others poured scorn on him for such a ridiculous claim. A slight, not unpleasant (honest) touch of sourness was also present. It undoubtedly drank more than its 4.8% strength. This was the beer that we thought to be closest to its cask form. The reaction of several of the panel was the same as for the cask beer: yes, it's obviously a quality product, and I can appreciate it, but please don't ask me to drink much of it, it's far too heavy and malty for me.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

So: what to make of all this? Most of the beers displayed a greater or lesser degree of harshness and/or burnt flavours, most likely caused by the pasteurisation that the beers undergo prior to being bottled. Generally, while some of the beers did display a 'family likeness' to their cask versions (of which the Bateman's XXXB was the closest), none of them were that close in terms of quality. The XXXB was probably the best beer of the night as well, but its heaviness meant that most of us felt that the Landlord was more likely to be the one we'd have more than one bottle of. And there's the rub: having more than one bottle. These sort of pasteurised beers are arguably okay to drink sat in front of the telly watching a game of football or the big film, possibly even for a second or third bottle, so long as you're not too fussy and you've got something to do other than concentrate on the beer: but viewed dispassionately in a tasting such as this, they ain't 'arf a disappointment compared to a decent pint in a decent pub.

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Williams Free House in Ashton, boarded up with metal security shutters over the windows, has sprouted a Sold sign on the building. Members in the locality will keep an eye out as to any progress on this.

The Cheshire Ring in Hyde now has an established line up of beers, with five Beartown beers on all the time (Ambeardextrous Dark Mild and Kodiak Gold always feature) as well as a guest beer. The seventh handpump is dedicated to hand pulled cider, with in addition, a perry kept in the cellar, being brought up in jugs as required.

The Red Lion in Bentinck Street Ashton, is closed and boarded up, as is the Clarendon in Market Street, Hyde.

In Hadfield, the Pear Tree on Woolley Bridge Road has been refurbished by Thwaites and in addition, they have re-introduced cask beers. Our local on the spot went in recently and Thwaites Bitter and Lancaster Bomber were both in evidence.

A surprise over in Buxton, where the Bakers Arms, on West Road, a favourite of many Branch members of High Peak, has been sold to Burtonwood, making it their first outlet in the town (the Dog in Chapel and the George in Hayfield being the other Burtonwood pubs in the area).

The Branch Summer Sponsored Walk in June raised a total of £1,670.00. At an informal presentation recently at the Kinder Lodge in Hayfield, the recipients Kinder Mountain Rescue, based in Hayfield and Glossop Mountain Rescue Team, received £660.00 each, whilst a further £350.00 was raised for Willow Wood Hospice. Five Branch members also raised £128.00 doing the Saddleworth Beer Walk, for the Marie Curie Cancer Care charity.

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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

CITY CENTRE NEWS

This month holidays have prevented me getting out and about as much as usual. I have been able to drop into two of my favourite bars, though – both reopened after refurbishment.

The **Kings Arms** on Bloom Street, Salford, reopened in early October after a much-needed spruce-up. There have been no structural changes but there has been a complete redecoration with maroon and purple the predominant colours. The most noticeable change is to the floor: the old surface has been replaced by wood laminate floorboards and slate tiles in the front of the bar. The upstairs room has been restored and is available for functions. Lunchtime food has also been continued. The new manager is Mike Hayes and the good news is that the pub remains an outlet for Bazens' beers – on a recent visit these included Black Pig Mild and Pacific Bitter plus a range of other guest beers.

Also opening early October after a refit was **Bar Centro** on Tib Street, in the heart of the Northern Quarter. The bar is being leased by the owners of the nearby **Cord** on Dorsey Street. The refurbishment here is more extensive, with a completely new bar in textured black wood and an unusual black striped mirror on the back wall. The decor is in the upmarket, café retro-lounge style: black wooden panels, with cream and dark purple walls. Downstairs has more of the same and a grey slate wall by the food servery – food is still good value and always available. The good news is that the staff remain and the choice of three real ales plus guest cider will continue. On opening night there was Bazens' Freshers Special; Facers Crabtree, Pictish Brewers Gold, along with Janet's Jungle Juice cider.

OPENSHAW AND POINTS SOUTH

Real ale availability in Openshaw is somewhat limited these days – the **Railway** (Holts) is still providing some great mild and bitter, the **Albion** also sells Holts bitter alongside Boddies. That latter beer is also on sale at the **Oddfellows**, whilst the **Forresters** does Robbies Best, and until you get down to the **Legh Arms** with its changing guest beers, that is it! **Abbey Hey** is now entirely keg, all five pubs - **Hare & Hounds**, **Abbey Hey**, **Hamlet**, **Prince of Wales** and **Garibaldi** cannot muster a decent pint of the cask stuff between them.

Longsight and **Levenshulme** has an even grimmer tale to tell. Going along Stockport Road (A6) south from the Apollo all the way to the Heaton Chapel boundary there are only TWO pubs selling cask - the **Sir Edwin Chadwick** (for how much longer, though?) and the **New Victoria**, with the rare **Barnsley Bitter** from Oakwell (and usually in good nick, too); none in **Levenshulme** you will have noted. To drink cask in **Levenshulme** you have to go off the main road to Holt's **Kingsway** on Moseley Road doing their mild and bitter; they have also introduced a food operation there and I would say they pub is on the up. The **Sidings** (Holt) on Broom Lane also offers good mild and bitter, whilst the **Horse-shoe** offers John Smiths Cask. **Levenshulme** news - the **Railway** is no longer a pub, it has been converted to retail use; the **Ceili House** is now dubbed the A6 (and up for sale according to recent editions of the trade press); **Lawrence Hennigan's** **Levenshulme** empire seems to have expanded, as he now controls **Hennigan's Sports Bar**, the **Pack Horse**, the **Union** and, perhaps even the **Fiddlers Green**. The pubs are all very fine and dandy, but come on Lol, how about some cask Boddies in one of them at least? Finally to **Burnage**, where a good spread of cask ale is available. Boddies at the **Victoria**, Hydes mild and bitter at the **Farmers**, no cask at the **Green End**, Hydes Light and bitter in the **Albion**, and lastly **Sam Smith's** OBB at the **Sun** in **September**. My travels will continue and I will be reporting better news next time. Hopefully!

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AWARD TIME

EVERYONE is at it, it seems, apparently there were so many awards presented by bits of local CAMRA recently that some of the pics have to be held over to next time - so room only here for one of **Idy** and **Sal** at the **Crescent**, **Salford**, **BEFORE** their award of the **BeerMonster Pub of the Season** on **November 1**. Presented at their **Festival** where a very good time was being had by one and all.



BEER FESTIVALS

Bury is imminent (21 - 22 November) followed a week later by **Dudley Winter Ales** (27 - 29), which has moved from **Netherton** to **Dudley Town Hall**, a move, literally, in the right direction. **Derek Bishop's** performing **Bavarian Beers** will be there **Friday & Saturday** (for those who like that sort of thing) as will I. A few days later (**Tues 2 - Sat 6 Dec**) is the very excellent **Pig's Ear Winter Ales Festival** in **Stratford Town Hall**, **East London**, for those who fancy a trip to the smoke.

BEERS OF THE MONTH

One of each this time. The **De Koninck Original** (last month's winner) featured at the **Crescent festival**, where I found my **Cask Ale of the Month**, Impressed by both the **Glentworth** beers offered, while trying to decide between them I sampled the truly magnificent **Cameron's Fuggles IPA**, and what an uncompromising hoppy mouthful it was. It even had the right **ABV** for an **IPA** (5.5%) so yet more reason to use the **Trades Descriptions Act** on **Greene King** and **Caledonian** (though the latter's offering is at least pleasant, if woefully thin). **Foreigner** was found at **Bar Fringe** (**Swan Street**) during their **Festival**. **Karmeleit Trippel**. Tasty, smooth, satisfying...and oblivion in a glass. I was drinking halves slowly, trying to get my fill before **Jim** slurped the lot! **Next Month** - Assuming I'm granted a little more space by the editors, I'll finally 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 the local fallout from the recent mega-pub-group takeovers. Keep the Faith!



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MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

MAJOR PROMOTION FOR STUDENTS AND UNDER-26 MEMBERS

In conjunction with Beartown Brewery and Bruins in Fallowfield, CAMRA is running a fantastic membership promotion for students and all prospective members aged 26 or under.

The date for your diary is Tuesday 19th November. The time - 8.00pm. The venue is Bruins, the new Beartown bar on the corner of Wilmslow Road and Moseley Road in Fallowfield, at the heart of the University area. To be featured on the night are:

- ★ Two free pints for all those joining
- ★ Free entry into a raffle for a gallon of Beartown cask beer
- ★ Free tastings
- ★ Talk by Beartown Brewer Ian Burns

Huge discounts on the new 2004 Good Beer Guide for those joining on the night
If you've been thinking of joining CAMRA this is the time to do it - at an event not to be missed!

UMIST BEER BEAVERS

NEW CAMRA MEMBER, student and beer guru Roger Beaver has made this year's Rag Association Beer Fest at UMIST a resounding success, writes *Dave Hallows*. Amongst the 50 real ales, it was obvious that Belvoir Beaver Bitter was a particular favourite along with -and popular at CAMRA festivals- Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild, Taylor's Ram Tam and Orkney Skullsplitter at 8.5% abv.

The festival itself, the 18th was in the basement of the Barnes Wallis building on the campus. Suitably named the Underground, it is a black walled cellar, which doubles up as a rock venue-cum-disco and was already adorned with All-Hallows Eve decor. It reminded me of an old haunt of mine back in the 70's - the Stoneground in Gorton; low ceiling, stage lights and laid back. Somewhere your hair can grow!

Running from 22-25 Oct, I went on the first two nights. It was promising that 45 beers were already on, having dropped in the good cellar-like conditions. Also, there were a number of genuine Continental beers in draught and bottle, notably Fusrtenburg and the excellent Pilsner Urquell lagers on draught. I tried quite a few ales, the vast majority in very good condition and quite interesting -especially Gales GB, Wychwood Goliath, Shepherd Neame Master Brew, Rebellion Red, Felinfoel Double Dragon and Nethergate Umbel Ale. It was good to see some milds on offer - Robinson's Hatters and Hanby Black Magic as well as the rare Taylor's Golden Best. They were brave to try out Cropton Brewery Honey Gold Bitter, which I found too sweet and could of done with a few more hops in the barrel (so, it wasn't their fault!) Purchase of real ale, Continental beers, cider and perry was by £5, £7.50 and £10 books of tokens, that seemed to work quite well, but it was hard to see how a customer could buy a token for just one final beer.

The group I was with being female in majority, cider and perry was popular. Student Kim Walton told me the best cider was Biddenden Dry and Weston's Herefordshire perry was good value for money and easy drinking. The glowing and glaring thing about the festival was seeing young people drinking and enjoying real ale. Kim and her boyfriend Tim being just 19 and 22, are the future real ale drinkers along with the vast majority of young student revellers at the festival. Something that I get excited about, so how about you?

The Regional U-26 Group will be having the following events in association with Salford Uni Real Ale Society:
Saturday 22nd: At 1pm - Bury Beer Festival visit in the Met, Market St, Bury. Contact Ian Kenny on 0161 728 3642
Friday 5th December: Cider Night. Marble Arch, Rochdale Rd, Manchester City Centre 8.00pm; Pot of Beer, New Mount St (behind Nawaab Restaurant), 9.00pm

JOIN CAMRA - HELP PRESERVE REAL ALE

Use the form on the right to join CAMRA - send it and a cheque made payable to CAMRA to Karen & Chris Wainright, CAMRA Membership, 173 Shearwater Road, Offerton, Stockport, SK2 5XA - or better still, and more conveniently, just fill in the Direct Debit application and send it along

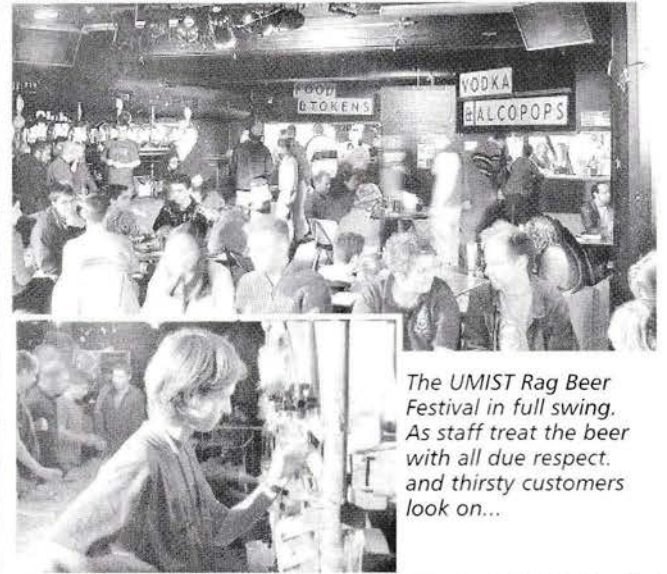
This Guarantee should be retained for your reference.

The Direct Debit Guarantee

- This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.
- If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change CAMRA will notify you ten working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
- If an error is made by CAMRA or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of your letter to us at Campaign for Real Ale Ltd, 230 Hatfield Road, St. Albans, Herts. AL1 4LW



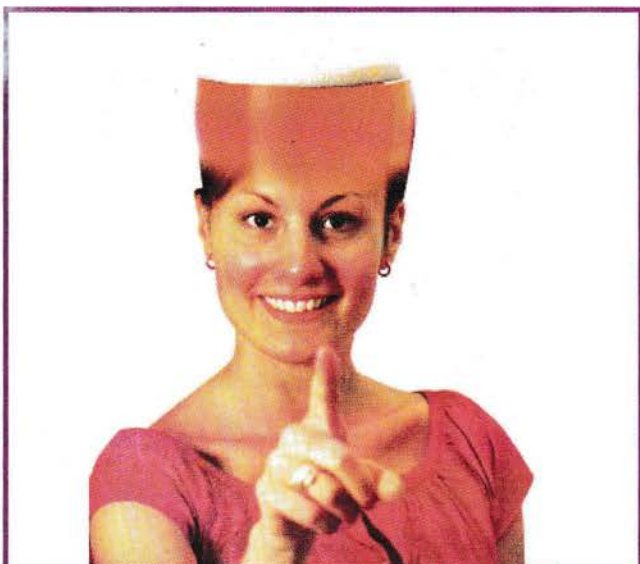
with your form - remember to keep your Direct Debit guarantee.



The UMIST Rag Beer Festival in full swing. As staff treat the beer with all due respect and thirsty customers look on...



<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="width: 50%;">Title</td><td style="width: 50%;">Surname</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">Forename(s) D.O.B</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">Partner Title / Surname (If applicable)</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">Forename(s) D.O.B</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">Address</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">Postcode</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">Tel No.</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">E-mail</td></tr> </table>	Title	Surname	Forename(s) D.O.B		Partner Title / Surname (If applicable)		Forename(s) D.O.B		Address		Postcode		Tel No.		E-mail		<h4 style="text-align: center;">Membership Application</h4> <p>Please indicate below (circle the amount and payment method) which categories applies:</p> <p>Single.....£16 Joint.....£19 Under 26.....£9 Under 26 Joint...£12 Retired.....£9 Retired Joint.....£12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I enclose a cheque, payable to CAMRA, for £ • I wish to pay by Direct Debit <p>Signed..... Date.....</p> <p>If this a gift, to start on which month?.....</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">(origin - VAV 3 - S&SM Branch)</p> <p>Post to: Karen & Chris Wainright, CAMRA, 173 Shearwater Road, Offerton, Stockport, SK2 5XA</p>
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How would you feel...

...if all your favourite pubs closed, or your favourite beer disappeared

from the bar? You could accept it and find another pub or move on to a different beer. Or you could do something about it...

You may not have heard of CAMRA. Or you may have heard the stories of beards, woolly jumpers and sandals. The reality is that we are the biggest single-issue campaigning group in Britain today. All our members are drinkers and pub-goers just like you. We've had many campaigning successes over the last thirty years which benefit you every time you visit the pub or order a pint.

www.camra.org.uk Tel: 01727 867201

RECENT CAMRA AWARDS

To coincide with CAMRA's Cider & Perry Month, a small party from Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA travelled to Herefordshire to present the Cider and Perry of the Festival awards from this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. First stop was Newton Court near Leominster, makers of wholly organic cider and perry who were so close in the voting that they received a runner-up award for their organic perry.

Our photo shows cidemaker Paul Stephen with parents Anne and Tom plus dog Lucy receiving their award from Cider Manager Charlotte Bulmer. After that it was off to Minsterworth near Gloucester to present



Brian Browning with his award for Perry of the Festival. Brian is pictured receiving his award from Charlotte. (Cider awards next month).

Other recent awards include the presentation of the Jim Bowden Award to the Davenport Arms in Woodford. This is an annual

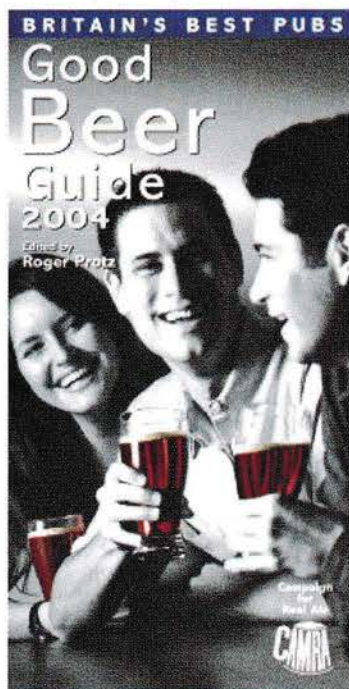
award presented by the Macclesfield Branch in honour of their long-time chairman and activist, Jim Bowden. The award goes to a pub which embodies all those virtues that Jim looked for in a pub - good beer, good conversation and a traditional atmosphere. Pictured is licensee Yvonne Hallworth receiving the award from Macclesfield Branch Chairman Keith Farman.



Finally we picture Mary Nastari and Tony Hughes of the Old Star, Cheadle, receiving their October Pub of the Month Award from branch member Stuart Ballantyne. Another crop of local CAMRA awards next month!

A Beer Guide's Not Just for Christmas...

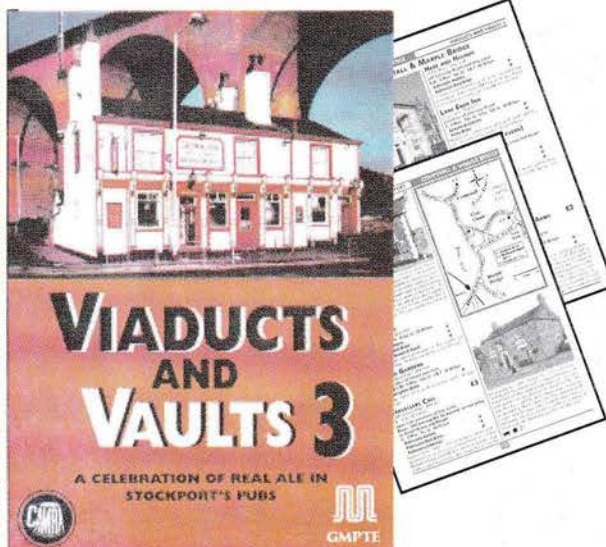
The 31st Edition of the Good Beer Guide highlighting 4,500 of the top Real Ale Pubs in the country, and the nearly 500 breweries that supply them... **ONLY £12.99**



Send £12.99 for The Good Beer Guide 2004 or £4.95 for Viaducts & Vaults 3 (p&p free) to:

Jim Flynn (Xmas), 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG
Make cheques payable to 'CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester'.

THE COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO REAL ALE IN STOCKPORT'S PUBS AND ONLY £4.95



...It's Very Useful the Rest of the Year Too!
Likely to be more appreciated than socks or a woolly jumper... buy for yourself or as a present!



**1888. FIRST PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE
IS SET UP IN THE ROYAL HOTEL, MANCHESTER.**



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CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

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