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# OPENING TIMES



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

## NEW BREWERY FOR STOCKPORT THREE RIVERS ON STREAM AT LAST

**S**TOCKPORT'S long anticipated new brewery, Three Rivers in Reddish, finally brewed its first beer in mid-November.

Their current business commitments mean that we can't at present reveal the identity of two of the three men behind the brewery, including the award-winning head brewer, but the sales director is Stockport man John Tweats, who has been charged with getting the beer out into the local free trade. What we can, say, though, is that the project has been talked about for several years but only came together in August, since when progress has been rapid to say the least.



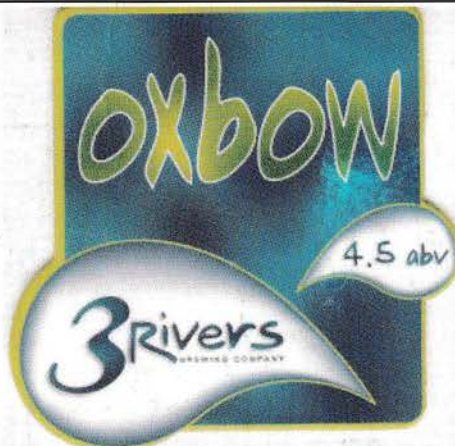
Not that it's been an easy ride – it was originally intended to locate the brewery in Offerton but those premises fell through. Luckily a new and more suitable location was found in Reddish and the brewery is now located on the Vauxhall Industrial Estate.

The brewing equipment was largely obtained from the new George Wright Brewery in Rainford and is currently capable of producing five barrels of beer at a time, although there are already plans to increase the brew length to 10 barrels.

Two beers have been produced to date. GMT (that's Goyt, Tame and Mersey, the three rivers in question) is a 3.8% easy drinking session beer with a good dry finish that makes for a very moreish pint. It's brewed with the classic Maris Otter pale ale malt together with a little carapils malt, and hopped with Styrian Goldings. Its big brother is Oxbow at 4.5%, a fuller-bodied beer with a good smack of hops. Here the Maris Otter malt is complemented by lager malt and the hops are Pilgrim, a new dwarf variety with a good bitterness.

There's a third beer in the pipeline, too. This is Old Disreputable, a 5.5% strong

Christmas beer that was bubbling away in the fermenting vessels when Opening Times visited. Here the Maris Otter is accompanied by chocolate and crystal malts and two hop varieties are used – Northdown for bittering and Whitbread Goldings for aroma. Other beers are planned and the aim is to have a new beer every other month. These are likely to include a wheat beer and a stout or porter. The stylish pumpclips are already finding their way on to the bars of local pubs such as the Crown, Heaton lane; Olde Woolpack, Brinksway; Olde Vic, Edgeley and the Railway, Portwood. Anyone wishing to sell these excellent new beers should contact the Three Rivers Brewery on 0161 477 3333.



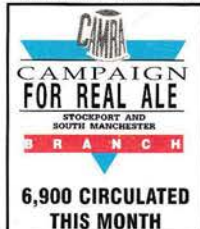
### A NEW ONE FOR GLOSSOP, TOO

The new Glossop Brewery will be up and running soon into the New Year, based in an industrial unit in nearby Hadfield.

The man behind it is Don Pape, formerly long serving captain at Glossop Rugby Club and well known in the Glossop area. He was made redundant recently and has decided to do something he had formerly been involved in at UMIST. He left Manchester Poly with a BSc Hons in Biological Science, involving Microbiology & Biochemistry, then from 1978 at UMIST as a Post Graduate Research Assistant in Chemical Engineering. His work at this time involved studies of fermentation processes. The department had a Pilot Plant Brewery at Boddingtons Brewery for three years where his group used "novel biomass particles-pan scrubbers" to host yeast in the fermentation process and therefore reduce the use of finings in the brewing process. Here he came away with a MSc in Pollution and Environmental Control. More news on this venture as it takes shape.

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**A MERRY CHRISTMAS...  
AND HAPPY NEW YEAR !**

To all our readers, advertisers, contributors,  
and (not least) the beasts of burden...  
from the editors of Opening Times



Tel/Fax: 01706 522227 Mobile: 07970 177 306

**Beers for December**

Brewers gold

a.b.v. 3.8%



A refreshing thirst quenching pale golden session beer. Malty undertones and a powerful spicy hop aroma combine to produce a dangerously moreish beer.



celtic warrior

a.b.v. 4.2%

A full bodied mid brown premium ale. Malt flavours dominate the palate with delicate hop aromas in the well-balanced finish.

pictish porter

a.b.v. 4.4%



A marvellously complex black beer. A mellow bitterness and subtle hop aroma balance the robust amber and roast malt flavours.

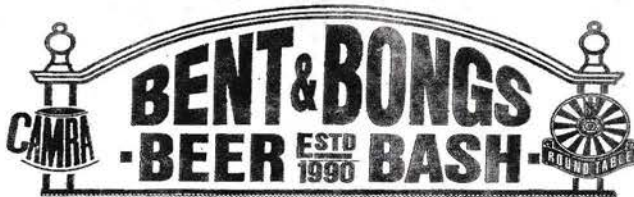
Available from November until end of March.

UNIT 9, CANALSIDE INDUSTRIAL ESTATE,  
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[www.pictish-brewing.co.uk](http://www.pictish-brewing.co.uk)







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29th, 30th & 31st of January  
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	Thursday 29th January	6-00 pm - 11-00 pm	£4-00
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	Saturday 31st January	12-00 noon - 4-00 pm	£3-00
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**IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..**

This month, I can do no better than quote the words of Ted Bruning, Editor of CAMRA's national paper, What's Brewing... "Guardian readers were treated last month to one of the ghastliest pieces of ignorance, snobbishness and condescension ever to disgrace the pages of that newspaper. We refer to the Guardian's wine columnist, Malcolm Gluck, of "Superplonk" fame.

One of Gluck's columns is his "Ten Quid Tipple" in which he is challenged to find three wines to accompany a dinner menu for under a tenner. A Ten Quid tipple column last month drew the entirely reasonable suggestion from the highly respected beer writer Martin Cornell that, given a limited budget, Gluck might care to opt for beer rather than wine.

Describing Mr Cornell as "a beautifully confused reader" (how patronising!), Gluck dismissed it as "a disgusting idea." "Beer does little for most food, especially spicy, complex dishes...and even less for the digestion," Gluck went on. "Perish the thought". Apart from revealing his own ignorance by describing Fuller's Golden Pride barley wine as "my favourite bitter", Gluck's hissy fit laid painfully bare the smug narrow-mindedness of the broadsheet wine-writing community as a whole.

Britain's brewers are knocking themselves out not only to produce better and more adventurous beer but also to devise new ways of enjoying them. There is now an amazing variety of beers of all style and strengths on the market; to dismiss them en bloc as unsuitable for the dining table is manifestly absurd and displays an intellectual poverty and a disregard of disagreeable truths unworthy of the Guardian"

Actually I think the Gluck drivel is absolutely typical of the Guardian, but I digress because I can report a small victory for common-sense, and the Scotch industry. Last month I described how Diageo were branding a blended whisky as Cardhu pure malt, the name of a long established and popular single-malt brand, so as to sell an ersatz blend to undiscerning Spaniards at premium prices. Well, in a very small victory they have agreed NEVER to do it to any other malt brand, and to change the 'Cardhu' labels to highlight its bastardised origin. The Islay brands are safe.... for the moment. Merry Christmas.

*Paul Hutchings*

**OPENING TIMES ISSUE 236**

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](mailto: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).

**OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT**

Due to three major factors, our increasing circulation (again), the fact that we have upgraded the paper to a smoother high quality stock (to near universal approval) and the extra costs associated with higher quality photographs and the use of process colour, we have had to put some of our advertising costs up (for the first time this millennium). Existing advertisers on runs will be generally unaffected until 2005. NEW ADVERTISING RATES FROM JANUARY 2004: 1/8 page (60mm x 85mm): £30 (£60 colour); 1/4 page (120mm x 85mm): £55 (£90 colour); 1/2 page (horiz: 174mm x 120mm; vert: 250mm x 85mm): £90 (£150 colour); Full page (175mm x 240mm) £150 (£250 colour). Surcharges may apply for back page. Generous discounts available on adverts of 1/4 page or above for runs of insertions. Advert design & origination usually free of charge unless large costs involved. Ring 0161 477 1973 for details. Artwork should be submitted as hard copy (positive bromide) or PC COMPATIBLE (NOT MAC) \*.jpg, \*.eps, \*.tiff or \*.cdr (Corel Draw versions 3, 5 or 7 - please state which AND you MUST include hard copy back-up). For colour adverts please ring for details first.

## ROBBIES' BEST KEPT BAR & CELLAR AWARDS

**ALMOST CLEAN SWEEP FOR PUBS IN OT AREA**  
**YE OLDE ADMIRAL RODNEY** at Prestbury, near Macclesfield has secured first place in Robinson's annual Best Kept Bar and Cellar Competition. The award made by the Stockport's family brewer is now in its sixth year and involves a comprehensive, top-to-bottom, inspection of 330 public houses throughout the North West and North Wales.

"We are absolutely chuffed to have been awarded the first place in the competition," said licensee Pete Brady who runs the house with wife Gail. "We actually scored a perfect 100% for both our beer quality and the standards of our cellar, and dropped just one point for the presentation of our bar area. Overall we are extremely pleased and have to thank our staff for all their hard work."

Pete and Gail were presented with The Unicorn Shield as part of their prize which included a celebration evening, buffet and beer at the Admiral Rodney on Tuesday 2 December. The shield was engraved with their names and will be proudly displayed in their bar area for the coming year. At the presentation, Brewing Director David Robinson paid tribute to the Admiral Rodney as a 'barometer house' - if they get a complaint about the beer from Peter then they know they have a problem! The competition was organised by director Oliver Robinson and head brewer Chris Hellin, who also made the final judging by paying surprise visits to the sixteen top scoring houses, which were selected by four district managers.

"Since we started the competition in 1998 the standards have consistently risen, this year there was just one point between the winner and runner up which made the judging extremely difficult," said Oliver. Second place went to the Lawton Arms, Church Lawton, were Neville, Maureen and Martin Brereton lost out by the narrowest of margins. "This is not the kind of competition that can be won without putting in the hard work all year round. We didn't know when the judges would be coming or what they would be looking for, so it really does reward the licensees who deliver consistently good results," said Neville. Competition veterans Billy and Denise Parkin of the King William, Wilmslow picked up third place. The couple won the competition in its first year and have rarely been outside the top three since. "It is important to remember that it is not just the judges who appreciate good beer and a well kept bar and cellar, the biggest reward comes from loyal customers who come back to us time and again," commented Billy.

A special award has also been made to the Bay Horse at Newton, where Roy and Betty Williams have been rewarded for having achieved the greatest improvement since last year. "We have made a significant investment this year and renewed much of our cellar equipment, as a result our beer sales are up 33% so we have no doubt that our excellent beer quality is bringing in the rewards," said Roy.

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### OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

Advert Column Widths, single 84mm, double 172mm. Image height 26cm. NB Advertisers who supply camera ready artwork designed for another publication that cannot be resized to our standard sizes will be charged the equivalent column/centimetre rate plus a surcharge of at least 30%. Adverts that require unusually large amounts of design work will have the extra work carried out by a studio at full commercial rate.



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## MORE CHOICE BETTER BEER

International Brewing Awards



1998  
Wobbly Bob  
Silver Medal



2002  
Wobbly Bob  
Gold Medal

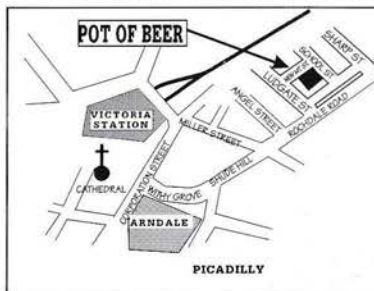


2002  
Navy  
Gold Medal

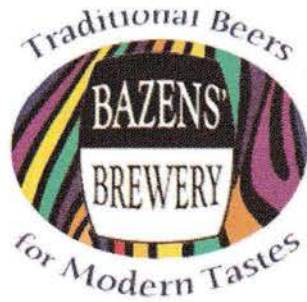
## POT OF BEER

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- Draught Leffe Blond
- Black Rat Traditional Cider
- Continental Bottled Beers
- Wide Selection of Wines



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MONDAY TO SATURDAY



**Centaur** 4.2% (November/December)  
**FlatbaC** 4.2% (Beer of the Festival, Stockport, 2003)  
**Knoll St Porter** 5.2% **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  
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 The Trackside, Bury, Waters Green & The Sun Inn, Macclesfield.  
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## PUB OF THE MONTH DECEMBER 2003

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



### The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for December is the Grove Inn on Ashton New Rd, Clayton.

Being the nearest pub to the Eastlands, City of Manchester Stadium where the real stuff is available is just really a matter of location, as the pub under the experienced hands of manager Patricia Heathcote, who took over the pub in summer 2002. Pat is a very experienced licensee over many years in pubs around East Manchester. Under Pat's leadership the pub, always known for a good pint of Holt's Bitter, has brought back the handpumped mild and introduced the seasonals, Paterson's being the latest. What is unusual is the vault is far larger and far busier than the lounge and is one of the best in the area. It is a shrine to Manchester City FC, now a short distance away and is always lively and busy. Also of note is the war memorial to regulars who fell in the First World War. The quieter lounge is ideal for the punters checking the racing form in the national daily or to have a quiet chat, though it can be just as lively at weekends when the vault is full. It goes without saying that the beers are on top form and service is good and friendly.

The Grove is very much an East Manchester pub for locals. Stockport & South Manchester branch has always had a soft spot for the furthest outposts in the branch area - Beswick, Clayton, Openshaw and Gorton. Every visit on a Stagger to this much improved and well-supported pub has always been memorable and highly enjoyable. So, come along to enjoy another memorable evening on **Monday 15 December**. Kick off 8pm.

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

**PLEASE NOTE EARLY DATE - AND DIFFERENT WEEKDAY OF THIS EVENT!**

**CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 236:**  
 John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Butler, Paul Moss, Robin Wignall, Andy Jenkinson, Dave Hallows, Phil Levison, Mark McConachie, Stuart Ballantyne, Peter Edwardson, Jim Flynn, Steve Bray, Dave Platt, John Hutchinson, Tom Lord, Brian Taylor, Ken Birch.

4



### 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](http://www.camra.org.uk) Tel: **01727 867201**  
 or use the membership form on page 22

**COPY DATE FOR JANUARY ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS DECEMBER 31**

## WITCHWOOD

### NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR ASHTON FREEHOUSE

THE WITCHWOOD in Ashton has a reputation as a live music venue. It was also one of the earliest multi-beer free houses in Greater Manchester, and if Pauline Town gets her way its reputation for cask beer will be in the headlines.

Until August, the pub was owned by Inventive Leisure, the company better known for its chain of Revolution vodka bars. A dedicated cask beer outlet sat uneasily in this environment and, as Pauline admits, the company focus was on the 'venue' side of the Witchwood's business with the cask ale operation being somewhat neglected and tied to deals with the bigger suppliers. Pauline arrived at the pub in 1988, working as a glass collector to give the pub a lift for a couple of weeks. She stayed on and became manager in 1990 and three years ago she struck a deal with Inventive whereby in return for her staying on as manager, they would sell her the pub in three years time. All credit to them they kept their word and so in August Pauline and her two assistants Ben and Dan Marshall bought the Witchwood.

Thus the pub is once again completely free of tie, which suits Pauline, a self-confessed cask ale fan, just right. "I'm in my element now I've got the freedom to buy what I want", she told OT. There are eight or nine handpumps in regular use, with the permanent beers being John Smith's Bitter ("I know," says Pauline, "but it's a cheap house beer"), Holts Mild and Bitter (introduced at the locals' request) and Moorhouses Pendle Witches Brew. When OT called, Pauline had just ordered 60 beers for the pub's month-long beer festival, kicking off on 4 December.

The response has been "brilliant" with customers who had missed the cask ale range returning to the pub and an impressive increase in volumes since the changeover. All the beer is ordered in nine-gallon containers, thus ensuring turnover and on Thursdays there is the Cask Club with all the cask beers retailing at £1 a pint in rotation over the night.

Regulars can pick up a Collectors Card - five stamps will get you a free pint of cask ale and entry into a prize draw.

The pub side of the operation opens 12 noon-11pm but the music side of things remains as good as ever, too. Not only that but the venue bar is open until midnight on Wednesday and Thursday, and 1.00am Friday and Saturday. Well worth a visit. JC



## Dave and Sue Welcome You To THE QUEENS ARMS

HONEY STREET, CHEETHAM

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

CITY LIFE Food & Drink Festival

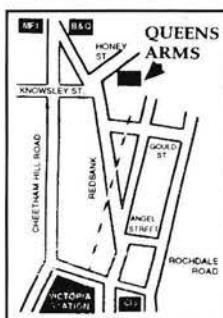
PUB OF THE YEAR 2002-3

**Bantam Bitter £1.40 a pint,  
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6 Ever Changing Cask Ales**

VLAAMSCH WIT & St LOUIS KRIEK on draught  
*Bottled Beers from Around the Globe*

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Open: 12 noon - 11.00 p.m. Monday - Saturday  
12 noon - 10.30 p.m. Sunday



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9.30pm start

Beer Garden with  
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*We're in the  
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☆ *Huge Car Park*

☆ *Traditional Vault Area*

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☆ *Licensed Friday & Saturday till midnight*

☆ *Singles night - Sunday - over 25s - Late Bar till midnight*



LOCAL CAMRA PUB of the Month APRIL 2002

Fine Cask Ales including the NEW Boddingtons and Ever Changing Guest Beers



## LICENSEES

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

£10 gets your pub into this successful campaign.

**I DID IT... MILD WAY  
Due to demand, a limit of 86 pubs has been set this time.**

The prizes have been changed, too.

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

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

Challenge Ultra (Pewter Tankard) for all of the pubs

Contact Mark McConachie

0161 429 9356 for details.



# NEW BODDIES CASK LAUNCHED IN THE PUBS



**T**HE NEW BODDINGTON'S BITTER was going out into the trade as this edition of Opening Times was being put together. Initial impressions seem favourable. Next month we'll be running a feature on the new beer to see how it has been received. The push now, of course, will be to get into those outlets that have gone keg in recent years.

## FAMILY FAVOURITES

Lots of news this month from our family brewers with new beers in the pipeline.

**Robinson's** - have plenty of changes afoot. The premium Frederics is relegated to the seasonal programme as from the end of December. It is being replaced by Double Hop, also 5%, which will now become a permanent beer. Snowdon has sadly failed to replicate the success of Cumbria Way and has been axed. Next year's seasonal programme has been announced and this includes several new beers.

The full list is: Jan/Feb: **Enigma** 4.7% ABV "A new beer for a New Year. Traditionally brewed using only the finest of raw materials this chestnut brown premium cask ale has a distinctive citrus hop character perfectly balanced by a strong crisp bitterness."

Then two very popular beers repeated - March/April: **Young Tom** 4.0% ABV; May/June: **Northern Glory** 4.4% ABV; July/August: **Sunny Jim** 3.8% ABV "A light, thirst quenching summer ale specially designed to refresh and relax. Brewed from a recipe incorporating and interesting blend of pale and light roasted malts, this perfectly round and smooth light golden beer has a subtle but distinctive tang of caramelised demerara."

September/October: **Kick-Off** 4.2% ABV "Specially brewed to celebrate our national game of football, this full bodied, light mahogany coloured beer has a perfectly balanced line up of award winning flavours. An all malt recipe for added fullness and flavour; matched by a generous addition of hops for bitterness and aroma. This beer also has added spice late fire power and a grandstand finish."

November/December (currently the case this year): **Robin Bitter** 4.5% ABV.



Hydes have also announced next year's programme. This is based on the theme "Feeling Fine with Hydes Beers in 2004". The beers are: Jan/Feb: **Hunky Dory** 4.8% ABV "This highly moreish premium ale is brewed using choicest bittering and aroma hops providing a peasant warming after palate"

March/April: **Fine & Dandy** 4.2% ABV "Featuring a luxury blend of the finest malts this distinctive Spring beer is full flavoured and enticingly aromatic"

May/June: **Cloud Nine** 4.4% ABV "Carefully selected best malts & hops combine to provide a classic beer with a silky smooth finish"

July/August: **Tickety Boo** 4.1% ABV "Ultimate refreshment and flavour are the key qualities emanating from this light, crisp Summer beer benefiting from the subtle use of the Liberty hop"

September/October: **Over the Moon** 4.5% ABV "Mellow Autumnal flavours characterise this rather special warming seasonal ale, brewed with just a hint of natural berry juice"

November/December: **Seventh Heaven** 5.0% ABV "This delicious fruity flavoured Winter ale is crafted from rich roasted malts blended with a hint of seasonal spice"

We will bring you news of the Lees range next month although we understand the first beer is 'Vulcan'.



## MIGHTY MICROS

The region's micros continue to supply a range of new and interesting beers. Here is our monthly round-up—as usual apologies to those we couldn't contact this time.

**Bank Top** - John Feeney's Bolton brewery has just brought out its first bottled beer. A batch of **Smoke Stack Lightning** (5%) has been bottled by the Sulwath brewery and will be available in two local off licenses as well as some pubs. The powerful (5%) **Santa's Claws** is now available, too.




**Bazens'** - New beers available in December are **Centaur** - 4.2% (The Sagittarius beer), a traditional pale bitter using only UK produced Northdown Hops. **Santa's Reinbeer** returns for the festive season and this year it has been strengthened from 4.3 to 4.6%. **Knoll's Porter** 5.2% returns for the winter months. The name has been slightly modified to **Knoll St Porter**. This year they have been able to replace the small amount of smoked malt missing from last year's version with malt smoked locally for the Salford Brewery Syndicate. **Wass Ale** 4.5% returns as the new year special and January sees the launch of the new strong bitter, **XSB** at 5.2%. This will be a permanent addition to the range.

**Greenfield** - several new beers are currently available. **Dovestones Bitter** is a 4% mid-amber beer while **Uppermill Ale** is a 4.2% golden brew. Seasonal beers include **Rudolf's Tipple**, a 5% porter, and **Icebreaker** a 4.2% light, golden hoppy beer. Also look out for **Celebration** at 4%. This is not only to mark the seasonal festivities but also brewer Peter Percival's wedding at Christmas. It's a light bitter and very, very hoppy with lots of Cascade hops in it. The brewery also has a good outlet in Oldham where the Ashton Arms always sells two Greenfield beers and takes the entire range.

**Leyden** - the seasonal beer is **Rudolf** a 3.7% bitter beer using a brand new hop variety, 'Pam'. Also out is **Sinister** a 3.8% mid-brown beer.

**Facers** - this new brewery is going great guns and David Facer tells us that October and November were the best months since he started. Look out for **Smoked Ale** (4.1%), a less smoked version of **Smoky Guy** - when sampled in Stockport's Crown this was on superb form. The Christmas seasonal is **Scrooge** at 4.1%. The Dickens reference continues the literary theme of Facers seasonal beers and this has cinna





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mon and cloves in the copper to add a spiciness to the palate. David is also considering a limited edition of something quite strong (5-5.5%) for the New Year.

**Boggart Hole Clough** – the festive seasonals are North Star (4.6%) and Bog Sleigh (5.3%). No brand new beers are planned although Rocket Fuel, living up to its name at 14%(!) will be available at Christmas.

**Shaws** – another new-ish micro which is brewing full tilt. They also have several new beers out and these include Santa's 80/-, a 4.2% dark beer brewed with chocolate malt; Hartshead Pike Ale a light 4.3% beer generously hopped with Northdown hops and look out too for Golden Globe a 4.3% beer brewed using Challenger hops and to mark the brewery's good customer, the Globe in Glossop. The brewery now produces a new beer every two weeks so there's always something new out.

**Marble** – the wonderful Chocolate Heavy (5.5%) is now back and on top form. Generous quantities of chocolate malt and a hint of roast barley make it smooth, stouty, and dangerously drinkable with huge depth of flavour. Another classic.

**Pictish** – you might be lucky to see this year's brew of Winter Solstice but only one brew length has been made as brewer Richard Sutton has run out of all the ingredients and doesn't have time to get some more. So there's going to be an extra, as yet unnamed beer, a 4.5% pale and hoppy brew. Also out this month is Rudolf's Rocket Fuel, the Pictish winter warmer at 7.3%.

**Phoenix** – not many brand new beers from this respected micro but still enough to keep everyone happy. Look out for Pictish Porter (5%), Snowbound (4.3%), Christmas Kiss (4.5%), Golden Glow (6.5%) and the powerful Humbug at 7%. The end of January will see the return of Jovian (4.2%) and Massacre.

**Khean** – at Congleton's 'other' brewery, Ken Newsome tells us that he has bottled his first beer. This is the stout, Caught Behind, and it is also bottle conditioned. Anyone interested in stocking this should contact the brewery on 01260 272144. The Christmas seasonal Jungle Bails back this year. A 5.2% dark, heay beer with a good biter-sweet finish.

Coverage of Ramsbottom Brewery is on page 18

## MILLSTONE BREWERY



**MOSSLEY'S** new Millstone Brewery is the 15<sup>th</sup> micro-brewery in Greater Manchester and brings the county's total number of operating breweries up to 21, of which all bar one produce real ale. Thus it could be said that with this new venture, our local brewing industry has come of age.

The names behind the brewery are Nick Boughton and Jon Hunt, and speaking to them the first thing that strikes you is that they are anything but local lads. CAMRA members both, Nick and Jon hail from the West Midlands, Nick from Dudley and Jon from Birmingham itself.

So, how did they come to set up a brewery in the north west? It was Nick who moved north first, with a job at Liverpool University but living in Mossley. Jon still 'commutes' to the north during the week, returning to Brum at the weekends, although he too plans to relocate here. Both were old friends and also 'keen imbibers and home brewers' and it was while they were holidaying in France two years ago that the idea of actually brewing commercially was born. They followed this up with a brewing day at Mark Dade's Boggart Hole Clough Brewery to see if they actually enjoyed brewing on a larger scale and the fact that they did was a real turning point for them.

By this time Jon had been in the same job for 18 years and was looking for a change while Nick was tiring of the daily commute to Liverpool; throw in the Chancellor's duty cut for small brewers and the die was really cast. They trained with Jim Wonders at the Cannon Royall Brewery near Droitwich, who has in many ways been their mentor, and also worked with Sara Barton of the Brewer's Brewery near Melton Mowbray. At the same time the search for premises was underway and at one stage they were looking at a unit in the same building as the nearby Greenfield Brewery. However



Nick Boughton & Jon Hunt of Millstone

the current premises became available and were obviously suited to their needs. The plant was installed by Dave Porter of Porter Brewing Co and is 8-barrel capacity although the installation of a second fermenter will give a maximum output of 16 barrels a week if necessary. The brewery is spacious, well laid out and has a real feeling of permanence about it.

The aim has been to produce full-bodied, bitter beers, with perhaps some residual sweetness to underpin the bitterness. Three Shires is a 4% pale, hoppy beer with fruity aromas derived from three hop varieties, First Gold, Goldings and at the end of the boil, 'loads' of Liberty, an American variety. Malt is Maris Otter pale ale malt. It made an early appearance at Stockport's Railway and proved to be a superb, full-bodied bitter beer with a lingering dry finish.

The second beer 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, "it's loaded with Fuggles" say Jon and Nick. Again Maris Otter is the malt, supplemented by some crystal malt for extra colour and depth. Both beers have sold well and the third brew of Three Shires was in the fermenter as we went to press. The third beer, out as you read this, is the seasonal brew, Christmas Ruby a 4.7% ruby/copper coloured beer but generously hopped to give a fruity taste and aroma. This should be a very hoppy beer that is also dry hopped (with Willamette hops) for good measure.

Future plans include beers at 3.8% and 4.2% along with some specials, although these won't appear on a regular basis. Deliveries will be kept local but expect to see Millstone beers in the local free trade and at festivals. The level of commitment and enthusiasm displayed by both Jon and Nick is impressive. They have clearly thought this through and hopefully Millstone Brewery will be a feature of the local brewing scene for many years to come. Millstone Brewery is at Unit 4, Vale Mill, Micklehurst Road, Mossley, OL5 9JL. Phone 01457 835835.



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# STAGGER

with John Clarke

## CLAYTON & HIGHER OPENSHAW

**THIS STAGGER took place several months ago, when daylight hours were longer and the nights rather warmer. Just as well when you consider the amount of walking involved...**

East Manchester has suffered grievously from pub losses over the past 10-15 years and of those pubs that remain, few offer cask ale. Having said that, though, the cask ale outlets that survive tend on the whole to be pretty good pubs.

The first one up was the **Grove** on Ashton New Road, the only surviving cask ale outlet on that road between the City Centre and city boundary. A Holt's house, this was redecorated in the not-too-distant past in that brewery's traditional style and both lounge and vault were both very busy when we called - much busier, in fact, than a previous visit when the lack of trade had made some of us fear for the pub's long term future. The lively vault is the true heart of this pub and of particular note is the war memorial commemorating those regulars who fell in WW1. Mild and Bitter were both available on handpump and both were in good condition - a fine start to the night.

On leaving the Grove it was the first of several long walks, this one to Crabtree Lane and the **Strawberry Duck** on the banks of the Ashton Canal. This free house has had a great deal of money invested in it over recent years, with a spectacular new extension complete with exposed roof trusses and comfortable sofa-type chairs. Old photographs of the area show the pub in its former Wilsons ownership. Outside there's a brand new beer garden, well laid-out and landscaped, it overlooks the canal at lock 13 and our drink was accompanied by the sound of the weir stream. There's an interesting menu with a good kids' option. The one cask beer is Holts Bitter, and again this was on good form.

Now came an even longer walk as we made our way down to Ashton Old Road and the **Legh Arms**, just across the road from Openshaw College. This is a rare survivor as most other pubs in the area have long-since closed. Even more remarkably the pub still sells cask beer in the form of two changing guests, of which one is usually a mild. Again, it's a pub that has benefited from some investment and now has a split-level, open-plan interior, and gives the impression of being busy and well-run. The two cask beers tonight were Tetley Imperial and Mansfield Dark Mild, both of which were more than acceptable with the mild just having the edge. There were bottles of Moorhouses Black Cat in the chiller and a promotional sign for Westons Old Rosie cider, so this certainly seems to be a pub that's not afraid to experiment..

We hopped on a bus to travel out to the next pub, the **Pack Horse**, again on Ashton Old Road. The pub was formerly a Greenalls house subsequently purchased by Holts and ultimately closing down. Bucking the trend in the area, though, it has now re-opened. When we called it was pretty basic and noisy and would certainly have benefited from a lick of paint. Having said that we'd all been in worse and the licensees seem to be doing their best in perhaps difficult circumstances. Holts Bitter remains on handpump and it was pretty good - the best we'd had so far in fact.

Closer to Openshaw crossroads is a Robinson's pub, the **Forresters**. It's basically open-plan but it always has a good lively atmosphere and is clearly both a well-run and well-liked boozier. Of some note is the tiled exterior promoting the long-gone Kays Atlas Ales. The beer on sale these days is Robinson's Best Bitter and tonight it was on very enjoyable form.

Heading out of town, the next real ale pub is the **Oddfellows** on Abbey Hey Lane. This is the last survivor of what was once a good collection of Boddingtons pubs in and around Openshaw. Of the rest some have been demolished (Locomotive, Wrexham) while others only sell keg beer (Concert, Hare & Hounds). The 'Oddies' remains though as a good old-fashioned boozier with vault, lounge and separate snug. There's a good atmosphere and some nice old etched glass remains, too. Boddies Bitter is the one cask beer and again was enjoyed by all of us.

The last real ale outlet on the main road before the city boundary is the **Albion**, a good lively two-roomer with lounge and vault. A karaoke was in full swing and both sides of the pub were very busy - as often seems to be the case when we call here. Two cask beers were on handpump - Holts Bitter and Boddingtons Bitter. We didn't try the Boddies and all went for the Holts. This again was above average but perhaps marginally the least good example we had had all night.

It was Holt's again for the very last pub - the **Railway** on Manshaw Road. Complete with huge decorative lamp outside, this is a classic Holts house with a large lobby and three rooms off. Again it has had a thorough redecoration is recent times and really does look a treat. Both Mild and Bitter were on handpump and despite jaded palates by this stage, were easily the best beers of the night.

Believe it or not, this Stagger encompasses every cask ale pub in Openshaw and Clayton, an area formerly awash with both pubs and cask beer. There are still quite a few pubs remaining but none of the others offer cask beer. It was interesting to see that while the real ale outlets were almost all very busy, the keg outlets seemed deserted by comparison. There's clearly a moral there, I think.



*Steve, Johanne, Molly & sometimes Jess welcome you to*  
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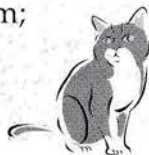
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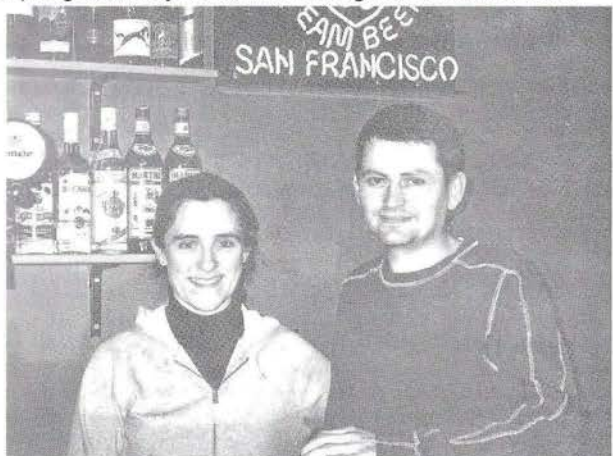
**IDAHO, 99 MANCHESTER ROAD, CHORLTON**  
**THE BEER scene in Chorlton has improved out of all recognition in recent years with innumerable new, and very good, places to drink opening up. The food scene is good, too, with establishments like the Bar and the Lloyds Hotel combining great beer and top notch food. Idaho is another such place, although it sells no cask conditioned beer. Why then is it featuring in Opening Times?**

The answer is still beer. There may be no cask, but Idaho boasts a list of about 80 bottled beers from around the world, together with half a dozen draught, the latter including German, Belgian Czech and often, American specialities.

It's been open five years this month and is one of the smaller bars in the area with perhaps no more than a dozen tables. The bright airy décor and the large shop-style windows mean that this is anything but claustrophobic, though..

The menus is short but well thought out, with six starters, seven mains and seven puddings. Starters range in price from £2.50 to £4.25 and include soup, nachos, bean burrito, ribs, and mussels in red chili broth. Mains run from £6.50 to £12.50, starting with pasta with pesto and ricotta, via sausage with lentils & chili butter (£7.25), blackened tuna (£8.25) right up to New York steak with roquefort sauce.

The sausages come in both meat or veggie options and made for a filling dish, served with lentils, tomatoes and cream, all topped with chili butter and served with mashed potatoes and salad. A modern and successful take on an old favourite. The pasta dish was excellent, too. Al dente tagliatelle was dressed with a white wine, pesto, capers, sweet red peppers and ricotta cheese. This was topped with tomato and a generous serving of parmesan and set off by a small dressed salad. A substantial plateful – so much so that to have a pudding as well wouldn't have left much room for the beer. That's not to say that the likes of oreo cookie bash (£2.95) and chocolate lovin' spooncake (£3.40) weren't tempting. Oh, they were, but then again, so was the beer.



Idaho is run by Ruth and Matt Taylor, and Matt is something of a beer nut. He started off with 10-15 beers and the list has just grown and grown. As he told me, his rolling programme of sourcing more different beers can get out of control at times but what you do get is some very interesting beers indeed, with an increasing emphasis on American craft beers – there are 20 or so of these available. I accompanied my meal with a bottle of Rogue Hefe Weizen (4.5%) from Oregon, and followed up with East India Pale Ale (6.9%) from the Brooklyn Brewing Co. There are a sprinkling of Belgian and German beers, and other beers from just about everywhere – Morocco, Uganda, Vietnam, Cuba,

BOTTLED BEER THERE ARE ONLY 10 BOTTLED BEERS AND COGS PLEASE CHECK MENU

MANHOLE (SPAIN)	2.25	5.5	NEW BEER	
LISH STOUT (IRELAND)	2.40	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
MADRID BEER (SPAIN)	2.25	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
MARSH'S WELSH (WELSH)	2.40	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
BROOKLYN LAGER (USA)	2.40	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
MODELO ESPECIAL (MEXICO)	2.25	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
SINGAPORE (SINGAPORE)	2.25	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
TELEGRAM (SPAIN)	2.25	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
ST. PETER'S (GERMANY)	2.25	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
BRANHA (BRAZIL)	2.25	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
COLUMBIA (INDONESIA)	2.25	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
ZWISSEL (GERMANY)	2.25	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
ANCHOR LIGHT (USA)	2.25	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
PILSENER (GERMANY)	2.25	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
SUBTERRANEAN (USA)	2.25	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
THUNDERBOLT (USA)	2.25	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40
FRANKENSTEIN (USA)	2.25	5.0	WITBOER BEER (SOUTH AFRICA)	2.40

Argentine, the list just goes on. OK, some of these are only pilsner variants, but some sound pretty interesting such as Pietra from Corsica, a 6% beer with chestnuts. There is also cider, both French and British, wines from around the world, coffees, teas, juices etc etc, together with a small range of nibbles. Something for everyone and well worth a visit. JC

Idaho is open for food, drinks or both every day from 6.00pm. Last orders for food are 9.15pm (9.45 Friday and Saturday). They can't cater for parties of six or more. Check out the website at [www.idahobar.co.uk](http://www.idahobar.co.uk).

## PEAK PRACTICE

THE PEAK DISTRICT PUB GUIDE first published in 2002 has fairly recently been reprinted, and so is again available. At the time of its publishing OT's reviewer commented very positively on this valuable volume, and it is certainly one for the bookshelf, or for the pocket when out and about (Johnson Publishing, £4.99)

Three of Whaley Bridge's ten pubs feature in the Guide, one of which is the Goyt Inn, in the village centre on Bridge Street, across the main road from the railway station. A former Wilson's house, and more recently Vaux owned, the Goyt is currently a Pubmaster pub, but with the recent Punch buyout of Pubmaster this situation will change.

The Goyt is a fine local's local. Once multi-roomed but now multi-alcoved, there seems to be numerous nooks and corners. Darts and dominoes are played and the pub is one of those supporting the local cricket club. Local pictures, photographs and memorabilia provide interest, the canal history theme dominating.

One of the pubs on the 2003 Stockport and Manchester Mild Challenge, the Goyt was recognised as selling a good pint of Tetley Dark Mild. The Tetley Bitter is also consistently good. Alongside these are Greene King IPA, with its malt bitterness, and premium beer Greene King Abbot, both well kept. Readers who missed the Goyt on the Mild Challenge will certainly find a visit worthwhile. RW.



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CAMRA's second National Pubs Week kicks off on 21 February and tens of thousands of pubs are set to support this important event.

The objectives of National Pubs Week are simple; to encourage people to visit pubs more often.

The event is in response to a number of factors affecting the pub trade such as the alarming number of local pub closures and changing patterns of pub-going. It's important that pubs across the land take the opportunity National Pubs Week offers to remind people just how great pubs are and overcome common objections such as 'pubs are too smoky', 'too full of leary blokes' and 'serve poor food' all myths which threaten to keep today's consumers out of pubs.

CAMRA is keen to stress that Pubs Week is not just about real ale pubs. Mike Benner, CAMRA's Campaigns Head says, "CAMRA is well-known for campaigning for beer and for real ale pubs, but National Pubs Week goes much further than that. It's a partnership with the pub trade to attract people back into pubs by creating a week of special attractions and events."

10,000 pubs got involved in the last National Pubs Week in February 2003. Participating pubs ran a range of promotions and events during the week such as themed party nights, food and beer promos, quizzes and charity darts matches.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP**

If you are a publican you should get involved. NPW is all about increasing footfall in your pub. Call CAMRA on 01727 867201 or visit us at [www.camra.org.uk/pubsweek](http://www.camra.org.uk/pubsweek) to order a support pack. If you are a pub-goer, you can encourage pubs in your area to get involved. If you are not a pub-goer, why not make a date in your diary to do something special and visit a few pubs in your area. If you don't use your local, you risk losing it forever.

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10



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**BEER FESTIVALS**

Bury Festival was interesting, if as much for the conversation and gossip as the beer, but it was good to try a few brews from the local Manchester/Lancashire micros, some new, some I'd simply missed. It gave me another chance to sample the 'new' Boddingtons. Here though it had clearly not been stillaged long enough, and the 'dry bitter finish' I'd previously sampled was missing in action. So, landlords, Lesson 1 is: leave it for three days after its been dropped. Lesson 2: maybe a few more late hops... It is, nevertheless, a BIG improvement. Dudley has moved fairly successfully into the main town hall (rather than the Netherton one), and I gather Old Tom was joint winter/old ale winner. Sadly I got it into my head to obliterate most of the remaining Oktoberfest Bier so recollections are a tad hazy (apart from a desperate trip back on Branson-rail). A week before, a rare visit to Cumbria saw me at the Prince of Wales, Foxfield for its estimable Winter Ales Festival. A long chat with the wise and humane Rev Bracegirdle (the male one, probably not quite so wise as his wife), was further enlivened by some delicious black beers. A very good pub indeed, the only slightly sad thing being that I knew two thirds of the people in there...

And on to London, to Pig's Ear, which was so over-staffed I was largely unnecessary, and was forced to relieve the tedium by drinking most of a tub of my other beer of the month. As always, excellent, though I fear I may well be rather busier at Battersea in mid-February. The main thing going locally this month is probably the Witchwood's Winter Festival (throughout December) in Ashton.

**BEERS OF THE MONTH**

Again one of each this time. For once I've had a lot of stouts/porters/old ales, and the pick this year by a large margin has been Fullers London Porter. Now at 5.4% you'd expect some body, but this has more body than Arnold Schwarzenegger. The best pint I had was at Foxfield but I did track some down in London (the Fullers houses there are all selling the blackberry infused Jack Frost - which while very good, isn't in the same class) and so was able to compare it to the magnificent Dublin Plain Porter at the Porterhouse in Covent Garden (yes I know its not cask). The result is probably even. The Plain is a better session drink, but Fullers is a better 'drink' in the sense of one or two. Ok, foreign beer time. There was some (I think) truly amazing Dutch stuff at Pigs Ear, but as I was too blotto to appreciate it my vote goes to that all-time perennial favourite, Keesman Bock (a pale strong winter brew) from the Bamberg (Franconia) brew-pub. It still says 6.9 % on the (large) tub, but this was certainly about 7.5% to 8%. It does vary a lot, brew to brew. Magnificent, golden, dry, malty and hoppily aromatic at start and finish. It reminded me (as if I needed reminding) why I like Franconian beers.

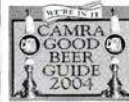
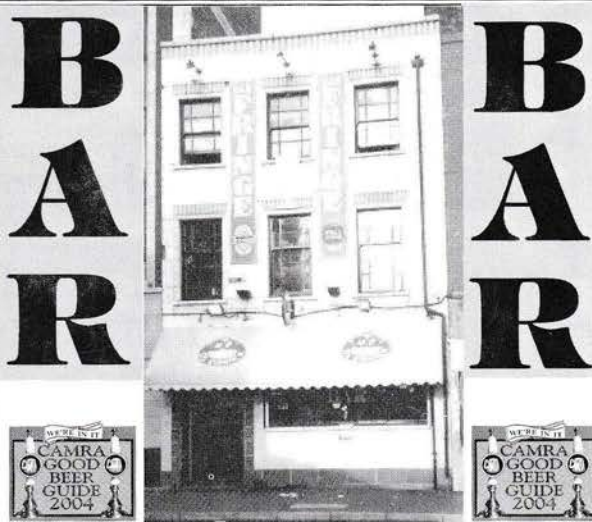
**SEASONAL BOCK, NO, SORRY, BOOK!**

Further to the above - 'Bamberg and Franconia - Germany's Brewing Heartland a guide to beers, breweries and pubs by John Conen' - self-published at £9.99. Based on his small pamphlet of (several) years ago but completely expanded and updated into a V&V3 sized book (with slightly more pages). Two nice sets of colour photographs, listing of the major Bamberg beers, the main breweries of the immediate region - and all of Bamberg - and where to drink the stuff (and very importantly WHEN!). Good extra sections on brewing history, Bavarian/Franconian menus, and a fairly useful section on public transport. Sadly there are no proper maps (well one of the city) but I think copyright issues play a big part. This one moan apart is is not merely excellent but indispensable if you ever think you might go there, and an interesting read even if not. John is to be congratulated for putting it together then taking the risk of publishing a fairly substantial piece of work. CAMRA HQ in St Albans will sell you a copy by mail. Go on buy it! Given the exquisite prejudices (actually bigotry) of some members of a certain Festival Committee, I don't think it will be on the shelves at Stockport next year!

**BEER BELLIES & THE (BOUNCING) CZECH'S**

An article that escaped much scrutiny some weeks ago in the Times, reported that a team led by Martin Bobak of UCL have decided - based on a study of 891 men and 1098 women who were either abstainers or beer drinkers that (comparing body mass index and waist/hip ratio) women who drink beer are thinner than those who don't and with men there's no difference, so the beer belly is a myth. Other lifestyle factors are involved. I'm putting a piece together for OT that will seek to explain this. Yes, heavy (sic) sience in OT. Whatever next... oh, here we are...!

**Next Month** - the review of cask ale week has been spiked by the officious editors, and I'm giving my kidneys a break, so, for a month, and largely to stop him whinging, I'm being removed to make way for a big agony column by the Arbitrator. So if you need guidance on any pub or beery issue write to OT before the end of December! See you in February.



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**Early Bird daytime Menu**

**Evening a la carte**

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**MANCHESTER ROAD, HEATON CHAPEL**  
**STOCKPORT, TEL 0161 431 9301**

*Recommended in CAMRA's New Pub Food Guide*

# OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Graham Mascord, The Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport:

I write to express my disappointment with CAMRA both locally and nationally apropos a glaring error in the 2004 Good Beer Guide which credits us with 9 handpumps. At local level no-one seems to know (or care) how this has come about, and when I contacted St Albans I had a very cool response and I was advised that it is a matter for the local branch.

Let me set the record straight: since the year 2000 we have had 10 handpumps. In October this year we increased this to 12 handpumps - a lot more than 9. Our dedicated pumps continue to support local micros - Bank Top, Phoenix, Pictish and whim, and we also stock a mild. We have moved the cask cider into the cellar to be dispensed from a small handpump on the back bar and we stock a range of continental lagers, Belgian, Czech and German at competitive prices. The house beer has now changed to Black Sheep Best Bitter.

Together with tasty bar snacks and a spectrum of music to match the range and quality of the beers on offer we are sorry to say we feel we are not getting a fair shake-down from CAMRA, of which, ironically, we are members.

(Yes, grovelling apologies are in order here - we've no idea how this mistake came about. The Crown of course continues to excel on all fronts and continues to be very well patronised by local (and not so local) CAMRA members - Ed(1))

## GOODBYE TO THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH

FOR MANY drinkers in Wales, the referendum held every seven years became a way of life, but gradually, "dry" districts were going "wet".

At the poll held on 13 November 1996, the one remaining "dry" district, Dwyfor, voted on favour of allowing alcohol to be sold on a Sunday, thus allowing drinking across the whole of the Principality for the first time in 115 years.

This was when John Redwood was Welsh Secretary, and he stated categorically that this would be the last referendum. But no action was taken to repeal the relevant section of the Licensing Act, and so the rule allowing polls on closing lingered on. It was as recently as July 2003 when the Welsh Sunday Opening Polls were finally cancelled, as part of the government's Licensing Act 2003.

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<http://mywebpage.netscape.com/openingtimes/>



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Each Month

## CHRISTMAS NEWS LETTER Entertainment

Saturday 29th November  
60s & 70s Disco

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 Broadbent  
Male Entertainer

Saturday 13th December  
Simon E  
Vocalist

Sunday 14th December  
Quiz Night  
9.30 pm Start

Friday 19th December  
Debbie Leigh  
Vocalist and Fest of  
Zodiac Paracke

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 Hot Pot Supper

Sunday 28th December  
Quiz Night  
9.30 Start

New Years Eve  
Fancy Dress Party  
Movie Theme  
Prize For Best Dressed  
Comedy Disco with Mad Martin  
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CAMRA  
CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

# CAMRA CALLING!

**Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries**  
Here are the monthly branch event diaries, starting with Stockport and South Manchester, followed by High Peak and Macclesfield

Diary

**DECEMBER 2003**

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup>** - 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.

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup>** - Annual Hillgate Stagger. 7.00pm Queens Head (Turners Vaults), Underbank; 8.30 Bishop Blaize, Lower Hillgate. **This is the longest running event in any CAMRA branch! Let's have a really good turnout this year and get the festive season off with a swing!**

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup>** - Social: Thatched Tavern, Stanhope St, Reddish. From 9.00pm.

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January - Branch 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meal:** Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. 7.30 onwards. Giant prize raffle, Guest speakers Roger Protz and Paula Waters, CAMRA National Chair. Book with John Clarke (0161 477 1073) or Paul Formby (0161 612 0759 after 6.00pm).

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>** - Branch Meeting: Boars Head, Market Place, Stockport. **NB Branch Pub of the Year will be decided at this meeting - a good turnout, please.** Starts 8.00pm. *The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:*

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup>** - Branch Social - venue to be decided.

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup>** - Branch Social - rail trip to Paradise Beer Festival (it might be a bit difficult as the line is being dug up - check!)

**DECEMBER 2003**

**Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January** - Committee Meeting: Palatine Hotel, Hadfield (opposite railway station). Starts 8.30m

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup>** - Branch Meeting: Ramseys Bar (Buckingham Hotel), Buxton, Starts 8.30pm *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 26<sup>th</sup> January** - Branch AGM - Beartown Tap, Congleton. Starts 8.00pm. **Will all members please try and attend this important meeting**

*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:*

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup>** - Branch Christmas Curry at Essence, Broadheath (Contact Joan on 962 2396)

**Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January** - Branch Meeting: Orange Tree, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm.

**REGIONAL EVENTS:**

**CAMRA U-26 Group: Fri 9<sup>th</sup> January**, 8pm onwards - Social in the Knott Bar, Deansgate (opp. Deansgate rail/GMEX tram stations) Sample an up-market modern bar with real ale, cider, genuine continental beers. In CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2004 for the first time ever **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup>** - Regional Meeting: Waldorf, Gore St, Manchester (next to Malmaison Hotel). Starts 8.00pm.

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA Planner

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## CAINS

# BREWERY TOURS

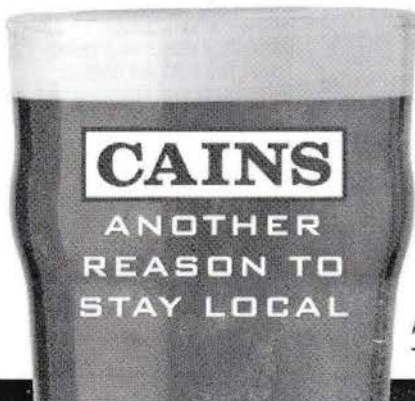
INCLUDED IN TOUR:

**2 FREE PINTS & finger buffet**

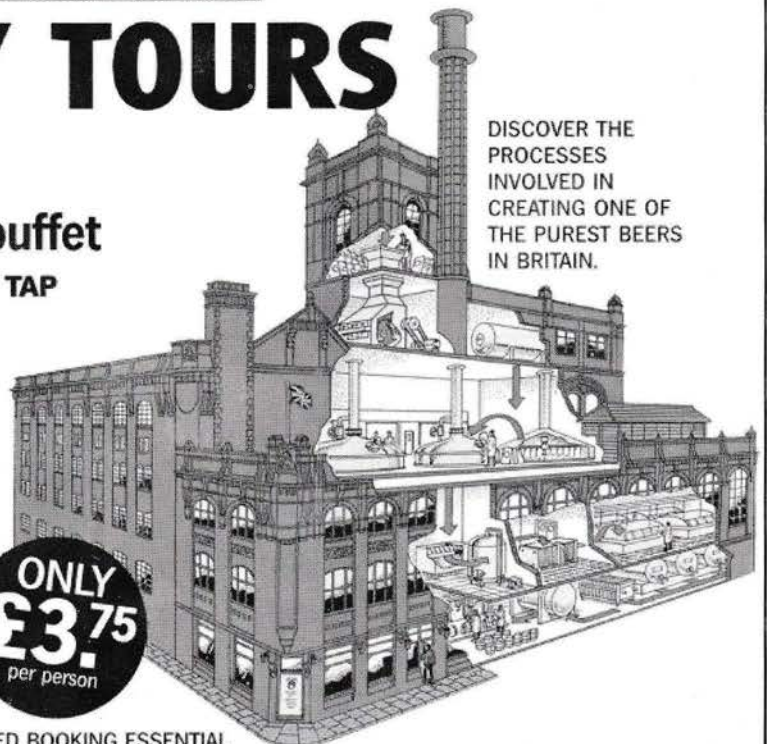
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# 5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison **DECEMBER '98**

**B**anks's Stalk Marston's' was the headline - merger-mania had returned to the brewing industry, when Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries launched a £262 million bid for Pedigree brewer Marston's.

The move had been rejected by the Burton-on-Trent brewers, and condemned by the Campaign for Real Ale. Marston's had rejected the offer of a friendly merger, and the hostile bid had been timed to prevent Marston's proposed 'securitisation' of its 549-strong tenanted pub estate. This was a complicated arrangement seeing some pubs converted from management to tenancy and vice-versa, with the revamped tenanted estate 'parked' with a new set-up called the Premier Pub Co. Marston's would have exclusive supply rights to the new company for four years but, in another twist, after 24 years the pubs would revert to another company in which Marston's held a controlling stake. This new situation could be described as a fancy way of raising £137 million, some of which would go back to Marston's shareholders, with the balance invested in new managed concepts such as Pitcher & Piano and Via Vita.



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

CAMRA's third Great British Winter Beer Festival, also including the Champion Winter Beer of Britain competition was to move from its original home in Glasgow to Manchester. It would be housed in the historic Upper Campfield Market, a Victorian market hall in Castlefield. The Market had been home to the newly launched Manchester Beer Festival in 1996, although it had been taken over by the Royal Exchange Theatre following that summer's IRA bomb blast. The theatre had now left its temporary home and CAMRA was delighted to mark the city's ongoing regeneration by hosting a national event as prestigious as the National Winter Ales Festival.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Burtonwood, now in effect a pub company, as part of the Thomas Hardy Burtonwood operation, had unveiled a £20 million pot of cash to buy another 50 pubs in the north west. They also planned to get rid of about 20 of their worst performing houses. Sadly, one of the early decisions of the new operation was to slim down the real ale range, with Top Hat lined up for the chop, together with Mild. But now in the 2004 Good Beer Guide, whilst Mild has gone, Burtonwood Bitter and Top Hat are still available, and the beer list has expanded by three beers brewed for Morrell's of Oxford, and Brakspear's Bitter and Special for Refresh UK.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

There were some City centre changes. Sam's Chop House had closed after serving the city for 126 years, when owners Scottish & Newcastle were unable to agree new lease terms with the building's owners. The closure was described as a tragedy by regulars and the feeling was that S&N hadn't tried too hard to renew the lease. Sam's wasn't lost forever, though. Early in 2001 the site suddenly became a hive of activity - the building had been gutted before reconstruction commenced - and in April Sam's reopened in its former basement situation. "A very impressive job" was Cityman's opinion. Apart from the very traditional décor, there were two banks of handpumps dispensing Landlord, Boddingtons, Wadworth 6X and a house beer from Coach House Brewery.

The Sawyer's Arms on Deansgate had reopened after conversion into a John Barras 'community' pub, perhaps an unlikely choice for a City Centre site. The beer range was restricted to Theakston's Bitter, Webster's Bitter and Marston's Pedigree. Now though, the offering is just wall to wall keg and smooth.



## BACK STREET HEROES

**ON KENNEDY STREET** in Manchester City Centre there are two smallish pubs right next door to each other, the City Arms and the Vine. Nothing special about that, you may think, but not too long ago the presence of two adjoining pubs was something unusual enough to be remarked upon. But, less than half a mile away, lining the Deansgate Locks on Whitworth Street, there are no less than seven spacious modern bars occupying consecutive railway arches. This sharp contrast illustrates how city centre drinking has changed in recent years.

At one time, city centre pubs would derive their character and many of their users from the particular area they stood in. So you would have market pubs, business district pubs, shoppers' pubs, railway pubs, theatreland pubs, factory workers' pubs. Visiting a pub was often connected with a particular activity, rather than an end in itself. And the pubs were spread around the city centre to match those various functions.

They could also be rather hard to find. Many councils discouraged pubs on their main shopping and business streets, with the result that they tended to be hidden away in small back streets, just like Kennedy Street, where you would only come across them if you knew where to look. In Manchester, there were at one time none on Market Street and Piccadilly Gardens, and no more than a couple along the full length of Deansgate. In Edinburgh there wasn't a single pub on Princes Street, the prime shopping street, but the narrow thoroughfare of Rose Street at the back of the big stores was famously lined with them. But it was widely felt that these dingy back street boozers represented an old-fashioned, male-dominated hard drinking culture, and hiding them away made pubgoing seem a furtive, almost shameful activity. As we moved towards the 21st century, surely pubs and bars needed to become more welcoming, serve more food and appeal to women, to be places where sipping Chardonnay rather than swilling pints was the norm. So councils, after many years of deliberately restricting the supply of licences, started encouraging new, spacious, airy bars in prominent main street locations.

However, there's nothing so certain in life as the law of unintended consequences. And what actually happened was that the dramatic increase in the overall drinking space in bars, often with large circulating areas and relatively few seats, far from leading to a civilised, café-society culture, ended up with city centres being dominated at weekends by large packs of young people roaming around clutching Bacardi Breezers with the prime intention of getting horrendously drunk. Of course people went on pub crawls and sometimes had a skinful twenty years ago, but if every pub you went in was fairly small, tucked away, hard to move around in and had its own band of regulars, you had to approach the exercise rather differently.

Obviously the changes in the design and location of pubs and bars have not been the only factor leading to our current unpleasant and disorderly city-centre drinking scene - wider social changes have been at work too. But it's hard to believe that these problems would be anywhere near so serious if the pubs were on average smaller, less conspicuous and more spread out, and had more seats and less standing room.

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



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WITH EVER CHANGING  
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Regular Beers include  
Hartington Bitter, Plassey Bitter,  
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## PUB NEWS

First it is congratulations to Peter & Gail Brady at the Admiral Rodney, Prestbury (see page 3) as they have just won Robinson's 6th Annual Bar and Cellar Competition with an incredible score of 299 out of 300. The Admiral sells Robinson's Hatters and Best Bitter both on handpump and can easily be reached by train, the station is only a couple of hundred yards away. If you've never been before why not take a trip to see this lovely multi-roomed pub selling excellent beer. Another pub in our branch area, the King William in Wilmslow came third in competition - well done to them.

We would also like to wish a warm welcome back to pub tenancy to Peter & Ann Stacy, who have just taken over the Railway in Handforth. Peter & Ann used to run the Barnfield in Macclesfield where the Robinson's Best Bitter was always very good.

In Macclesfield the Bull and Gate has just been sold by Pubmaster, unfortunately I don't yet know who has bought it. Hopefully a change of ownership will improve the pub as it has not been selling real ale for a couple of years now. Also in Macclesfield, the Dolphin has sold its last pint of Robinson's Snowdon. It seems that the brewery have simply decided to stop brewing it, which is a shame as it made a nice contrast to the Best Bitter.

During work to decorate the George and Dragon, Higher Hurdsfield an original internal stone wall has been exposed. The wall is believed to be 400 years old, has interesting alcoves and demonstrates the building techniques used all those years ago. Ancient timbers, wattle and daub building materials and shards of old pottery have also been discovered. Now the intention of the owners is to leave the wall uncovered as a feature to show customers. The G & D is a free house selling a constantly changing range of cask beers from three handpumps, it can be reached by catching the Rainow bus from Macclesfield - well worth a visit.

In Macclesfield, the Swan with Two Necks has changed hands, the Beehive changes on 15th December and the Puss in Boots changes hands as soon as the owners can evict one of the last licensees!



## KEN COOKS AGAIN

**KEN BIRCH**, former chef at the Kings Arms, and author of the 'Ken's Kitchen' column in Opening Times, will be holding a course on cooking with beer, starting in February 2004. However, as a start, a *taster session* will be held at the Kings Arms, Bloom Street, Salford, on Tuesday 13 January at 7.30pm.

To cover the cost of ingredients and some sample accompanying beers, a charge of £3.50 will be made. All are welcome, but it would help planning if you could confirm your attendance to Ken on 0161 705 0836.

## The Waters Green Tavern

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Merry Christmas to All our Customers  
from Brian and Tracey  
Bar Meals Served Mon to Sat Lunch  
**This is not a free house**





# ANTWERP OR ALTRINCHAM?

## LE TRAPPISTE REVISTED

GREENWOOD STREET is a small pedestrianised thoroughfare behind Altrincham's market hall. An unlikely setting perhaps for what is certainly the best Belgian bar in the north of England and arguably the best in the country. That, though, is Le Trappiste's claim to fame.

Wayne Reece, the man behind Le Trappiste, made his name locally as licensee of the nearby Old Market Tavern, a multi-beer freehouse with which he has now severed all connection. Belgian beer is his real love and initially the plan was to turn a disused cellar bar at the Market Tavern into a Belgian bistro.

The pub, though, was leased from a pub company and the chance to be fully master of his own destiny led Wayne to acquire 40 Greenwood Street and lovingly turn it into his very own outpost of the low countries.

When Opening Times first visited just after opening, the bar was in its formative stages but, 18 months later, it has now really taken off – it was recently runner-up in the *City Life* magazine bar of the year awards. Like one of the classic ales it sells, Le Trappiste has matured over the past eighteen months and is now a very professional, seriously authentic recreation of the best that Belgium has to offer.

The décor is still mellow shades of yellow, counterpointed by red and orange plus



more available from the cellar on request – these include the superb Girardin unfiltered (black label) gueuze and lambics from Drie Fonteinen. In total there are 120-130 beers available and many of these should feature on the new, more extensive, beer menu that will be appearing shortly.

The bar is managed on a day to day basis by Dee Zube, a American whose husband works locally. Add in an increasing number of Belgian customers from IBM and a good smattering of Dutch drinkers too, and Le Trappiste has a true cosmopolitan feel.

Food is restricted but a fiver or so will get you a huge plate of cheese and meats and a pile of crusty bread to accompany it. In traditional Belgian style table service is the norm and there's no standing. Consequently it's best to book a table, especially at weekends. Phone on 0780 175 8282. Le Trappiste is open from 12-11 on Saturdays but the rest of the week it is 6-11 (10.30 Sundays). Unreservedly recommended. JC.

Check out the website at [www.letrappiste.com](http://www.letrappiste.com)



expanses of bare brick and set off by a wealth of Belgian memorabilia and beer advertising. However, the original bar area on the ground floor has been extended into the former kitchen with the additional room accessed through the bar (a la Arden Arms). In addition there are mezzanine and first floor drinking areas. At night, lights are dimmed and candlelight creates its own special ambience, augmented by a real fire in winter months.

The early experimentation with British cask ale has been dropped as an unnecessary diversion from the main business – instead the bar now boasts ten draught Belgian ales including Chimay Blanche, a surprisingly hoppy Trappist beer, rarely found on draught anywhere (and Le Trappiste was the first UK outlet).

The main business though, is on the printed beer menu with a weekly guest list supplementing the standard range. This latter includes all of the Belgian trappist beers including the very rare Rochefort 6 and the equally rare Westvleteren range, arguably some of the very best beers made anywhere. Apart from the printed lists, which exceed 70 beers, there are over 30



## Witchwood - Live -

THE WITCHWOOD REAL ALE BAR & LIVE MUSIC VENUE,  
152, OLD STREET, ASHTON-U-LYNE, TAMESIDE.  
TEL: 0161 344 0321 [www.thewitchwood.co.uk](http://www.thewitchwood.co.uk)

### CHRISTMAS BEER FESTIVAL

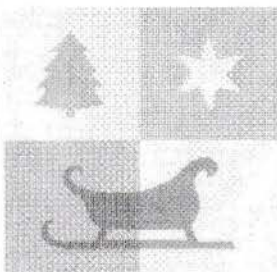
Running throughout December we will be offering a range of over 50 cask conditioned Christmas and winter ales including bitters, porters, milds, stout and old ales.

### Every Thursday is Cask Club Night!

Special offers on cask ales and free prize draw.

### Monday Quiz Night.

Free buffet supper, special drink promotions and win a gallon of beer.



**Live Shows in the Venue Bar include:** 11 December – Aynsley Lister ; 13 December – The Clone Roses (Stone Roses tribute) ; 17 December – Mostly Autumn ; 18 December – LA Doors (Last ever north west gig) ; 20 December – Achtung Baby (U2 Tribute) ; 21 December – Rollin Stoned ; 28 & 29 December – The Jamm (Tribute) ; 30 December – Metalliquor... plus Christmas & NYE Parties & many more.

**For full details or to join our free mailing list simply phone the bar!**

**A very merry Christmas to all our customers old and new, from Pauline, Ben Dan and the team at The Witchwood!**

STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR



A Merry Christmas to All our Customers

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## RAMSBOTTOM BREWERY

ONE OF the newest local micro breweries is the small Ramsbottom Brewery which came on stream in November last year. A visit by Opening Times was therefore overdue.

The brewery is located in the back of an old kitchen showroom, occupying the premises of the old Ramsbottom Industrial & Provident Society in Ramsbottom itself and is the work of Paul Robinson ("I couldn't really call it Robinson's!"), who still runs it as a part-time business.

Like many of the new breed of commercial brewers, Paul has a keen home-brewing background, and also something of a grounding in the licensed trade - his wife Karen grew up in pubs. His home-brew was a proper full-mash operation and he had long thought about scaling up. A conversation with Bank Top Brewery's John Feeney about this led John to pointing him in the direction of some available brewing kit (which came from the Ledbury Brewery but was actually purchased from the Blackpool Brewery, such is the merry-go-round of the micro brewing scene). Paul freely admits that he has found it very hard work since the first brew last November. He enjoys the brewing side but fierce competition for the available free trade makes selling the end products a challenge at times. Hence the part-time nature of the operation at the moment, with the 5-barrel plant brewing just once a week at the moment, producing a range of quality cask ales.



Apart from an increasing number of seasonal and special beers brewed on an ad-hoc basis, the core Ramsbottom range comprises the following beers:

**Old Ground Mild** (3.8%) - a dark, rich beer brewed with Optic Malt (the variety Paul uses in preference to Maris Otter), crystal and chocolate malts, a little torrieffied wheat for head retention, and hopped with Challenger and Mount Hood varieties. This excellent beer has already picked up one beer of the festival award.

**Holcombe** (3.8%) - A light golden beer, floral/spice aromas. Complex fruit flavours, crisp bitter finish.

**Rammy Mile** (3.8%) - a pale beer using pale Optic Malt, hopped with Goldings and Bramling Cross varieties. Soon to change its name, it was named after the local pub crawl. Session beer, dry with hints of blackcurrant and a dry bitter finish.

**Freefall** (3.8%) - first brewed for a charity bungee jump, but it's gone down really well and has now become a very popular regular. Amber coloured session ale, herbal/spice aromas leading to strong fruit flavours with a dry bitter finish.

**Tower Bitter** (4%) - probably the main beer (and one that has been seen most in the free trade). A good bitter brewed with Optic malt and a little black malt and using six hop varieties.

**Provident** (4.5%) - the premium bitter made with Optic malt, a small amount of black malt and torrieffied wheat and hopped with Challenger and Mount Hood hops.

**Rammyversary** (4.2%) - to mark the first anniversary of Ramsbottom Brewery! Light golden beer, floral/spice aromas. Complex fruit flavours and a bitter finish.

All the beers use whole hops and are dry-hopped, too. When OT called, we were treated to two new beers on tap - Holcombe (3.8%, pale and well-hopped with Challenger and Mount Hood) and the July/August special, Haymaker (4.1%, pale and fruity, hopped with Challenger and Styrian Goldings). In the pipeline are two specials, one for Bury Beer Festival and the other for a forthcoming Lancashire Beer Festival at the Smithfield Hotel (Swan Street, City Centre). Look out also for the Christmas beer, Santa Special (5%). Named after a train service on the local, private, East Lancs Railway that operates steam engines throughout the year. "A strong beer packed full of Christmas!" Paul tells us. Another new beer, out from 10 November is a straw coloured ('no surprise there then', says Paul), around 4% and brewed with Challenger and Styrian Goldings hops, probably Irwell Vale (but that may change!) There's certainly no intention to quality here and ideally Paul would like to or take someone else on to brew and hopefully exportation. The beers are certainly worth looking out for. Heaton Lane, Stockport, has them from time to time. Ramsbottom Brewery can be contacted on 0773 822 111.



**WINTER WARMERS**

AS THE DAYS get shorter and colder, it is appropriate to take as this month's theme strong ales - winter warmers, if you will. Our buyer and host knew, of course, which beers had been selected, though not always which was in front of them. The other members, me included, tasted completely blind. On this occasion, none of the beers were real ale - that is, none of them contained yeast so that the beer would mature in the bottle. Nevertheless, we set out to assess each beer solely on its intrinsic merits. Our first sample was of a dark brown beer with a definite reddish tinge when held to the light. Taking a sniff, we could discern nothing more than a hint of toffee. We have discovered over these sessions that this is often the case with pasteurised beers, as the heat treatment presumably causes some sugars to caramelise and drives off some aroma. As for the taste, nothing made its presence strongly felt: there was caramel, but this was set-off by a pleasing dryness, and there was a subtle underlying bitterness and hop-character. The overall impression was of a well-balanced beer; our host, who knew which he had poured first, and therefore had some preconceptions, described it as "surprisingly pleasant". When the bottle was revealed, this proved to be Wychwood Hobgoblin, with an ABV of 5.5% (Morrison, £1.59 or four for £5.00). Our second beer was the darkest of the night - but still with a red tinge. This time the head was brownish rather than white. Once we had got past the whiff of carbon dioxide, there was a distinctly fruity aroma, which reminded one taster of strawberries. We found this bottle smoother on the palate than the first, and the first impression was of a sweet, almost vanilla-like fruitiness. This quickly gave way to a chocolatey flavour and a dry character, and, finally, a noticeably bitter aftertaste. The panel enjoyed this beer, again finding it well-balanced, and we all agreed it showed more complexity than the Hobgoblin. This was Theakston Old Peculier, at 5.6% ABV (Morrison, as above).

Our third beer rather split the panel. This was again dark, but much redder than the previous two. On the nose, we found bags of dry, chocolate malt, which followed through onto the palate, accompanied by notes of coffee and an overall roasted, stout-like, flavour. This beer was very dry, but there was some underlying fruit. I really liked this one, but one of my colleagues gave it a definite thumbs-down. This turned out to be Black Sheep Riggwelter, 5.7% ABV (Morrison, as above). Number four was almost as dark as the Old Peculier. The aroma was unusual - we detected malt, but also a distinct sour edge. When we tasted the beer, although it was distinctly malty, we thought it well-balanced. There was a flavour of treacle, but this was offset by the slight sourness we had picked up on the nose. This was a pretty complex beer, a bit "chewy", and packing quite an alcoholic kick. The aftertaste was noticeably bitter, with some slight resinous hop character at the finish. We had been drinking Lees Moonraker, at a hefty 7.5% ABV (Bottle Stop, £1.60). Two to go! The next beer was rather red and not quite so dark. There was very little aroma, but we got a slight berry fruitiness. One of the panel, whilst agonising at how pretentious it would sound, recognised this as earthy strawberries. Once in the mouth, we found this to be the fruitiest beer of the night (those berries, and perhaps some overripe bananas), but again this did not dominate, as the beer also had a dry character to keep it balanced. This was Adnams Broadside at 6.3% ABV (Tesco, £1.79). Last was a deep ruby beer which offered little aroma beside a hint of molasses. This was the sweetest beer of the evening, though not excessively so. Overall, it was a very rich and full-bodied beer giving an impression of strong alcohol. In trying to describe it, one of my colleagues insisted it was "more Christmas cake than Christmas pudding", to which I felt unable to add anything further. The bottle label suggests "try straight from the fridge"; we can't imagine why, as this would surely mask the depth of flavour. We had finished with Marston's Owd Rodger, 7.6% ABV (Bottle Stop, £1.70). This selection surprised the panel somewhat. None of us had expected the variety of tastes we encountered, or, indeed, to enjoy the beers as much as we did. As for the best beer of the night, well, I went for the Riggwelter, but I was outvoted and Old Peculier took the crown. PM.



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## STRONG STUFF

**BREWERS LOVE TO PLAY THE BIG NUMBERS**

**IN THE LAST 10 years, a handful of brewers have redefined the meaning of strong beer.**

Until then Samichlaus was in the Guinness Book of Records as the strongest beer in the world; but at 14 per cent ABV, it was a mere stripling compared to what was to follow. It was knocked off its record-breaking perch in the mid-1990s when Barry Parish at the Parish Brewery in Leicestershire brewed Baz's Super Brew at a staggering (literally!) 23 per cent.

"I did it to get the strongest beer around," admits Barry, whose regularly brewed Baz's Bonce Blower is itself a more-than-respectable 11 per cent ABV. "It wasn't about flavour, it was about getting the strength. There was a thing at the time where people wanted strong beers, and I thought why not? I wanted to get into the Guinness Book of Records for the strongest - and I did."

It was only brewed once and sold on draught and in bottle at the Old Brewery Inn in Somerby where Barry is based. It wasn't a beer to down in pints, and Barry recalls the misadventures of two who did. "this couple lived at the other end of the village and had a pint each," he says. "On the way home they fell asleep in a field and didn't remember much about the evening." After that, others had a go at claiming the crown, among them the Ross Brewery of Bristol which came up with Uncle Igor at 21 per cent.

Since then all has been quiet on the super-strong beer front in then UK, which is not surprising. You need an awful lot of malt to produce a wort sugary enough to yield that kind of ABV. So price is the first barrier, especially when duty is also taken into account. Brewing such monsters also takes time. "I started the boil of Baz's Super Brew at 7pm and finished at 6am," recalls Barry. "I began with nine barrels of wort and it was concentrated to one by the end. It was very thick and the sugars had been caramelised."

Fermentation has its problems too. After reaching 12 per cent, top-fermenting yeasts give up the ghost and the beer has to be re-seeded with a champagne or port yeast. Baz's Super Brew was one such and Barry also had to rouse it every day for the first few weeks. "At 14 per cent it kept stopping," he recalls. "It took 10 weeks to get it to the strength I needed." After all this effort was it worth it? "I was quite surprised by the palatability of it," says Barry. "It drank like a port, while the Mount Hood and Willamette hops gave it a slight undercurrent of fruitiness."

Now the challenge has been taken up in the USA, where Sam Adams regularly produces triple Bock at 17 per cent and also brewed a one-off Millennium Beer at an eye-watering 24.5 per cent, which those who've tasted it say is more like whisky than beer. Then there's Dogfish Head Worldwide Stout which weighs in at a stupendous 22 per cent and is currently being stocked by Safeway in 330ml bottles. Dogfish Head boss Sam Calagione describes the brewing of the beer as "an adventure"

"We boil for about two hours and add some malt extract to the kettle to bump it up," he says. "Primary fermentation takes almost two months and then the beer is aged for another month before it is bottled, filtered but unpasteurised."

"We throw a lot of hops at it. The taste profile is something like the biggest imperial stout you can imagine blended with a fine port. As time passes the beer evolves and become more complex." These super-strong beers may be no more than intriguing sidelines, but they demonstrate to anyone who thinks wine has all the best tunes that beer, as the old posters used to say, is best. I can think of no better experience than spending a cold evening indoors with a glass of Worldwide Stout. And as current events show, where America goes we follow; so I'm looking forward next winter to see what our own micros can come up with.

*The article by Adrian Tierney-Jones first appeared in What's Brewing, the national newspaper of the Campaign for Real Ale.*



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## RECENT CAMRA AWARD

Just one picture this month (the cider awards are still to come) this being the Stockport & South Manchester Branch Pub of the Month award for November 2003 to Edgar Ambrose and Janice Oliver of the Victoria, Withington. The award was presented on 27 November, and a good time was clearly had by all concerned.



## ALE IN HALE

**TRAFFORD & HULME SURVEY WITH ANDY JENKINSON**

HAVING ARRIVED in Altrincham by Metrolink, I had several modes of transport available to reach my destination. I chose the healthy option, by foot and 20 minutes later arrived at the Railway in Hale.

As the name suggests, this pub is very close to Hale station. The lounge with dark wood panelling, red plush, carver-style chairs, has a cosy cottage feel. There is a vault, games room, non-smoking lounge and beer garden. Eventually my drinking companions turned up and the serious business could begin. The Railway stocked three beers on our visit, Robinson's Best Bitter, Hatters and the seasonal Coopers Bell (this was in September). I opted for the Coopers (£1.80) and found it to be well kept, as indeed were the other two beers. We then walked the short distance to the Sam Smiths' Cheshire Midland In contrast, the interior was more open-plan, with light wood and very few adornments giving it a starker feel. The four handpumps all dispensed the one beer, Sam Smiths Old Brewery Bitter. This 4 per cent malty brew at £1.28 split the group between those who thought it decent and those who questioned its taste. We decided to move on and a ten-minute walk brought us to the Tatton Arms in Altrincham. The only beer was Boddies at £1.70 a pint, but it proved to be in good condition, so we stayed and to avoid the rain had a game of darts. The next pub involved a longer walk back into Hale, past the ground of Altrincham FC, to the newly refurbished King George. Part of the Ember Inns chain, it had undergone a complete transformation with the interior described as 'a contemporary twist on traditional pub design' combining a modern colours, wooden flooring, modern art, real fires, cosy nooks and leather sofas. Unfortunately, the beer didn't live up to the standard - Boddies, Tetley and a 'guest ale' - John Smiths(!), all at £2 a pint and all disappointing. We moved on, in the rain. Back into Altrincham, passing through the Goose Green area, we arrived at the Faulkner's Arms. Here we received a warm welcome from the landlord. The Faulkner's is a long thin pub with entrances both from Goose Green at the rear or from Stamford New Road. The beer choice was the best yet, Ruddles County and JW Lees at £1.75, and Richmond Ale from the Darwin Brewery in Sunderland at £1.95. The beer quality was spot on so we decided to settle down and dry off. The pub is a popular meeting place for several groups, including the local chess club, and there is an Irish music night on Saturdays.

Moving on with a smile on our faces, we headed into the pedestrianised area of Altrincham town centre. The Bricklayers Arms is a small red-brick pub surrounded by a modern shopping mall. Boddies and Pedigree were in good condition and the pub was busy with Saturday afternoon shoppers.

Heading out of Altrincham along the A56, we ended up at the Wheatsheaf, an imposing black and white pub. Here we also got a warm welcome. The interior was light and modern, with beer garden and secure children's play area at rear. The social calendar includes quiz night on Mondays, blues on Thursday and jazz on Wednesday, and ensures a constant throughput of beers. The beers, Taylor's Landlord (£1.95), Wells Bombardier (£1.95) and Tetley Bitter all proved to be in excellent condition, so we decided to finish our ramble around Hale

and Altrincham here. All had a very wet but enjoyable day; many of us had discovered new watering holes. There were plenty of pubs we didn't get to visit, but they will make an interesting crawl in the future.



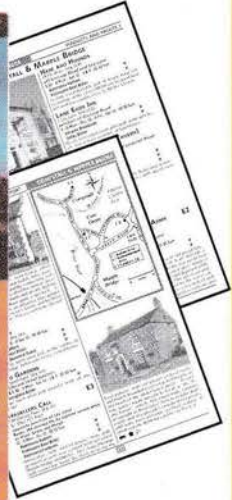
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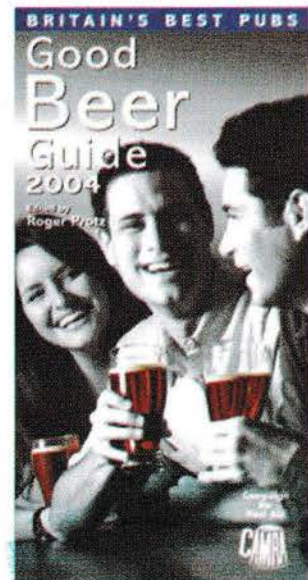
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Apologies to the Crown, Heaton Lane. The recently published Good Beer Guide says the pub only has nine handpumps whereas at the time of publication that should have said ten. Even that has now been overtaken by events, though and there is now a grand total of twelve handpumps on the bar, increasing the range of guest beers even further. In addition the cider is now cellar-cooled, too. Always worth a visit or two.

In Gatley, the Horse & Farrier is staging its second beer festival. This runs from 26-30 December and will feature 10 'yuletide ales', which will be available in the pub's upstairs room. These include Wye Valley - Santa's Delight; Nethergate - Frank - incensed; Coach House - Xmas Pud; Harviestoun - Good King Legless; Moorhouses - Reindeers Revenge; Fullers - Jack Frost; Hardy & Hansons - Rocking Rudolph; Thwaites - Good Elf; Brakespears - Oh be Joyful and Smiles - Holly Hop. If the success of the previous event is anything to go by, the beer certainly won't last long.

**Deborah Homer has taken over as licensee at the Crown on Northenden after nine years serving behind the bar at the pub. She will be assisted by her mother, Ann. Deborah has assured Opening Times that the Crown will continue to dispense cask Boddingtons and that the Crown will stay the fine example of the street corner boozier it undoubtedly is.**

Staying in Northenden, the Tatton, a pub with huge unrealised potential given its riverside setting, is being completely refurbished. Whether this will realise that potential, or whether it will be another in the long line of tacky refits only time will tell. Let's also hope there will be some decent cask beer for a change.

**On Shaw Heath, Stockport, the Swan suffered a major fire a couple of months ago and is now closed and awaiting its fate. We believe it should reopen in due course but whether real ale puts in an appearance remains to be seen.**

In Stockport town centre, the recently opened Abbey Bar on St Petersgate offers nothing in the way of interest to the cask ale drinker. Indeed the range of beers on offer seems remarkably dull and uninspired, with little or nothing of interest even available in bottle. The fact that this appears to be a truly independent operation makes this even more difficult to understand - even the chains can usually come up with Hoegaarden and the odd Belgian bottle.

**Staying in central Stockport, the former Hole in'th' Wall, Briarlys, Castlewood, Bridge Street Wine Bar (how many more names has this place had?) remains closed and boarded but does appear to have been sold. No news of the new owners yet. Not a million miles away the keg-only Chestergate is seeking new licensees.**

Customers at the Cock in Hazel Grove have the chance to show their competitive spirit following the arrival of George Martin as the new tenant of the Robinson's house. George is keen to consolidate the community feel at the pub by setting up a number of sports teams.

"I'm looking to start a golf society and we could also set up sides in games such as pool and darts. It's something I'm very committed to and anyone with ideas should get in touch," said George. "It is very important for a traditional local like the Cock to have a friendly atmosphere where people are happy to call in for a drink and a chat and I've already received many favourable comments since I took over." George has a great feel for the area having lived in Cheshire for many years since his family moved down from Fife in Scotland when he was a boy. He also brings considerable experience to his new role, having run bars in Heaton Norris and Egerton.



George with the Robinsons Licensee Course certificate presented by Veronica Robinson

In High Peak Branch, there is a new tenant at the Sportsman's Rest in Bredbury where Angela Henderson brings a wealth of knowledge to her new role. Angela, who has taken over at the Robinson's house along with partner Scott Longson, has considerable experience of the licensed trade ranging from helping her mother run a Stockport pub to working in a Greek nightclub. Angela is thrilled with her new post, having been a friend of the previous tenant, Susan Bell. "I've visited it a lot in the past so I know all the regulars and am aware of how much potential the pub has," said Angela. "It was extensively refurbished while Susan was here and so it is really looking its best." Angela is keen to build on the pub's community feel and is in the process of setting up a darts team while other attractions include regular quizzes, a disco every Friday evening, Northern Soul Nights on Sundays and live easy listening music on one Saturday each month.



Angela (right) with Veronica Robinson

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# MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

The run-up to Christmas is normally characterised by pub openings but this year the news is more dominated by closures and might-have-beens. But first to Chorlton. The **Lloyds Hotel** continues to impress – when I called last month the new Lees seasonal, Plum Pudding was on top form and I'm told the Moonraker is selling impressively well. The pub is also developing a very interesting music scene which is also worth checking out. Just across the road is the **Belgian Belly**, a licensed shop catering for all things Belgian, including beer of course. I keep hearing good things about this place so look for a report next time. I also bumped into **Graham Patient**, licensee at the **Unicorn** grocery. He tells me that famed Belgian brewers **Cantillon** are going entirely organic – the Unicorn already stocks their first organic beer (a bottle of which is sitting in my cellar as this is typed)

The only significant new opening which I am aware of is that of the new **Lloyds No 1** in Fallowfield. Lloyds are a brand that Wetherspoons picked up from Banks's and essentially are run as Wetherspoons with music and a smaller beer range. I'll get into the new one in time for next month's OT. Let's hope it performs better than the sister establishment in Manchester's Printworks where, I'm told, the handpumps remain but are now out of use. If true, would we have the dubious honour of the sole keg-only establishment in the Wetherspoons empire?

## CLOSURES ABOUND

Speaking of Wetherspoons, the **Sir Edwin Chadwick** in Longsight is now closed and for sale. You may recall that Wetherspoons sold this pub on as it was unlikely to hit their targets, despite being a popular pub. It was bought by Laurel pub company just a few months ago and it beggars belief that they can't make a go of it.

Travelling along Princess Road, I noted that the long-closed **Princess** (ex Whitbread) has now been razed. Another demolition has occurred at the **Midland** on Hyde Road, Belle Vue. Flats are to be built on the site, I am told. Thanks due to **Geordie John** for letting me know about the closure of **Hydes' Denmark** on Moss Lane East in Moss Side on December 11. I popped in there a couple of Sundays prior to its eventual closure, to find it was still quite busy and selling the **Hydes Light** at a cheap £1.20. Quite why **Hydes** are ridding themselves of the pub, I am a loss to explain. Also on the same street, the **Whitworth** (Marstons), is to undergo quite a number of changes to bring it up-to-date and to brighten the atmosphere.

Further down **Wilmslow Road**, I hear a rumour that both the **Huntsman** in Rusholme and the former **Lord Lyon** on **Claremont Road** could be facing closure and conversion to other uses. Neither pub has sold cask ale for donkeys years.

In **Withington**, Wetherspoons have apparently abandoned their plans to convert to old cinema into a pub and down in **Didsbury**, the **Carringtons** people have been refused permission to convert their former beer and wine shop into a bar. I gather it may now reopen as an off license.

## MIXED NEWS ELSEWHERE

Finding myself in the **Victoria Park** area one day, I popped my head into the **Rampant Lion** on **Anson Road**. A large former house set in its own grounds it is pleasingly careworn, if not shabby in appearance but was certainly busy on the Sunday afternoon I was there. **Boddies** and **Tetley** bitters are the offerings, whilst on the food front, I noted this was available 12 - 7 every day. Very many new residences now surround the **Lion** so, perhaps, this is where all the customers are coming from.

A recce around **Ladybarn** was also overdue, so off I jolly-well went. Both the **Mauldeth** and **Peninsula** (former **Talbot**) remain keg. At the **Brewers** on **Ladybarn Lane** they are still selling **Tetley** bitter, whilst round the corner on **Green Street**, **Robbie's White Swan** now sells only their **Best**; the brief spell of also doing **XB** seems to have passed. The former **Greenall's Old House at Home** on **Braemar Road** is now keg too - ignore the handpulls in the vault.

Down in **Chorlton-on-Medlock** on **Grafton Street**, I shall have to get into the **Bowling Green** at some time, as I thought I saw (a

puddy tat, no!) three handpulls with pumpclips on through the closed doors. Next door at **Holt's Grafton**, all is still very well with good quality mild and bitter supplying the staple diet. The former **Hogshead** on **Oxford Road** closed briefly to re-open as the **Oxford**; in so doing they have chucked out all of the cask beer! The logic in going keg escapes me, but they must have some target audience in mind for the new ambience.

## DIDSBURY DOINGS

**Ye Olde Cock** now has a late licence to midnight Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The cask range is currently **Marstons Pedigree**, **Caledonian Deuchars IPA**, and **Taylor's Landlord**. The **Boddies** is keg and they tell me that there are no plans to try the new improved cask version.

In the village centre, **Andrea Chapman** is running a good pub at the **Crown**. I'd not visited for some time and was quite impressed. **Greenalls Bitter** is the permanent beer and this is joined by a variety of guest beers like **Greene King Old Speckled Hen**, **Wells Bombardier** and **Hook Norton Old Hookey**.

I also popped into the **Nelson** where I was delighted to learn that mild sales are booming. **Julie** the manager told me that since this year's **Mild Challenge** sales of the cask **M&B Mild** have doubled. **Holts Bitter** is also going well with six 18-gallon casks a week being sold.

My final port of call was the **Royal Oak** where plans for an international winter cheese festival have had to be put on hold due to the conflict with Christmas activities. Licensee **Hazel** told me that the festival will have to be postponed until January or February next year. This should allow them more time to obtain the special winter cheeses whilst still servicing the busy Christmas period.

Finally an apology, to **Angela**, landlady at the **Seven Stars** (Holt) on **Ashton Old Road, Beswick**. In my **Cityman** piece of Sept. 2003, under 'East Side Blues', I incorrectly stated that the whole of **Beswick** was devoid of cask ale - wrong! The **Seven Stars**, of course, sells both **Holt Mild** and **Bitter**; it gets especially busy during **City home games**. Sorry again, **Angela**, I can only explain it away in that I must have thought the pub was in **Ardwick** (which it is not).



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