

APRIL
2004
No:240

Volume 20
Issue 4

OPENING TIMES



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

WITCHWOOD – UNDER THREAT?

AWARD JOY CLOUDED BY DEMOLITION PLAN

The Witchwood, Ashton's premier music venue and free house, has scooped double gold in *The Publican* newspapers annual trade awards. The celebrations have however been overshadowed by a threat to the future of this popular pub.

First, though, the good news. Licensee Pauline Town and her two co-owners of the pub, brothers Ben and Dan Marshall, knew they had done well to be finalists in four categories of *The Publican's* prestigious trade awards and were over the moon to scoop two first places and one highly commended spot. A celebration was held at the pub on Monday 29 March to mark the pub being named Marketing Pub of the Year and staff member Leanne Barlow winning Barperson of the Year. The pub was highly commended in the Music Pub category and Pauline herself was in the finals of Businesswoman of the Year. All this is hardly surprising to those who know the pub well, as it has made its name over the years as a perhaps unlikely, but nevertheless successful, combination of multi-beer freehouse (Holts beers are regulars and there are always guest ales available), live music venue and community local.

What no-one has been expecting though is the threat to the pub's future. This is all down to something called the Henry Square Redevelopment Plan which will see most of the area around the Witchwood cleared and the erection of an office and business park. Three pubs – the Witchwood, Red Lion and King William – are affected with the only planned survivor being the nearby Friendship (Robinson's).

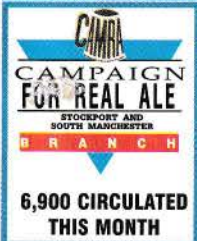
Pauline and Dan told *Opening Times* that while they supported the rejuvenation of the area, they saw no reason why the plans could not include the Witchwood rather than flatten it. Given the pub's national and international reputation as a music venue, no-one seems keen to kill it off. The developers have been talking about a relocation and the council have held back with the CPO (a fate which has already befallen many nearby premises). A relocation seems out of the question though, not only for emotional reasons but also for the simple fact that any new site will probably be near residential areas and the Witchwood can be a noisy pub! The regulars, of whom there are many, have rallied to the pub's support and objections have been lodged with Tameside Council's Planning Department (*OT* readers may wish to add their weight to this) and there have been many promises to be dragged out kicking and screaming. "I've been really touched by the amount of support we've had. It's been quite amazing, really", Pauline said. Straws in the wind indicate that a strong enough fight may well be successful. A further meeting was due to be held with the developers as we went to press. If they aren't successful, though? The scheme itself is a seven-year project but nearby building are already emptying so failure could mean perhaps less than a year of good beer and good music remaining. Get down there and enjoy it while you can. JC.



Mild Challenge
Pull-out and card
(Centre pages)



More details of
Stockport Beer
Festival on page 5



MASSIVE THREAT TO CIDER & PERRY



It's stupid enough to be an April Fool, but sadly it isn't. News of quite the most bizarre edict to issue from Margaret Beckett's sinister Department has sentenced nearly 50% of the cider orchards in Somerset to a bonfire this winter. The situation in Hereford & Gloucester is believed to be a little better, though Kent is to suffer similar depredations.

Under (UK) changes to the way EU farm subsidies are paid from January, a flat rate of £230 a hectare is to be paid out for mainstream agricultural land (though only £65 for hill farmers who need the money more!) but NOTHING AT ALL for land planted with Apples, Pears, Plums or Cherries. If the farmer destroys his trees, however, and lets the ground rot, he gets the £230.

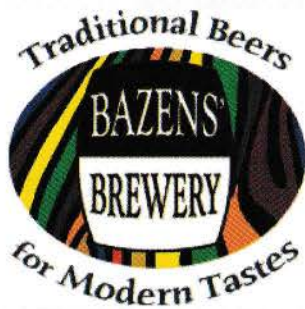
Local surveys in Somerset suggest that more than 50% of trees will be cut down after this year's harvest. All the work of the last few years, encouraging smaller producers to invest in new orchards will be undone at a stroke, and it will take 20 years to undo the damage. Needless to say, other European countries are doing nothing of the sort. So if you like

our traditional fruit-based drinks, and their popularity at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival suggests many of you do, start hauranging your MP immediately - after all Anne Coffey (Stockport, Lab.) was a judge in the National Cider & Perry competition when it was held in Stockport. More next month.

Many Cider Presses may fall silent in 2005

In APRIL'S OPENING TIMES ...

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The Newun 4.2% (April-June)
 eXSB 5.5% Blue Bullet 4.5%
 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 4.3%

Regular outlets include
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PUB OF THE MONTH APRIL 2004

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



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for April 2004 is the Sidings, Broom Lane, in Levenshulme, and it is a pub that serves the district well!

Being a late eighties built Holt's emporium, the pub was first put on the map by Manager Bob Smithies, who is now doing sterling work in the popular Holt's Duke of Wellington in Blackley. Sandra Booth and partner Mike took over the Sidings more than three years ago, and have turned the pub into a well-run, hospitable, neat and tidy, happy ship. Both bitter and mild are on handpump along with a seasonal from Holt's, when available. There is a large traditional vault, where there are the usual games and TV, and a larger separate comfortable lounge with a great community feel. Somewhere you can take your significant other, grown-up family and friends in for a drink. The pub has not looked better since its refurbishment last year. Also, it is one of the few pubs in Manchester to have full access for disabled people in all areas. There are special good value lunches/dinners on Friday to Sunday and a thriving Social Club. Without doubt the lounge in the Sidings is one of the best in the Holt's Estate. Levenshulme needs more pubs like this one, so why not give it a try on Thursday, 22 April from 8pm. onwards to give Sandra & Mike, staff and customers of the Sidings a well-deserved pat on the back. Time for a toast, I think! **DH.**

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

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 240

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

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IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

This month we feature mild in a big way. No apologies for that – real, cask mild was once the mainstay of the British brewing industry but now it is a faint shadow of its former self.

The reasons for its decline are essentially twofold – quality and image. Quality was the first to suffer – in the days when bad cellar practices were far more commonplace in our pubs, it was usual for the slops to go back in the mild as these were easily disguised in what were usually very dark beers. Lighter bitters were less susceptible to such obvious adulteration and came to be seen as a better drink.

Too many brewers, for too long, seemed to go along with this 'second class drink' image. Many years ago, most brewers would produce a whole family of milds, of all strengths, to sell alongside their bitters. Latterly, those brewers still, producing milds came to regard them as low-gravity 'tail end Charlies' tacked on to the bottom of their beer range.

This also fed into the image problem, with mild increasingly seen as a cheap drink for old men, ideally complete with cloth cap and whipper in tow.

Nowadays, most of the remaining family brewers who produce a mild (and in the Opening Times area they all do) are taking steps to improve its image, even if it means dropping the mild tag, as with Robinson's and Hatters. Add in some increasingly impressive milds from the micros – some true to the style and some pushing back the boundaries, and there is no reason why these tasty beers shouldn't start making a come back.

Our readers can help – take time to try a pint of mild. Better still, take part in this year's Mild Challenge. It really isn't that difficult – the least you need to do is try 12 halves of mild in 12 different pubs over a five week period. Let's make this year's Challenge the best ever – and repay the faith of the many local pubs which continue to stock it, and those breweries which produce it. Over to you.

John Clarke

Just as you think you're making progress and improving choice, along comes a politician. In this case Margaret Beckett, who has presided over quite the most asinine Agricultural cock-up since the mad cow fiasco. Aptly dubbed Britain's Rosa Klebb by Private Eye, her department has decided that under the new Farm Support rules, Apple and Pear (together with Plum & Cherry) orchards are not agricultural land(?), and so qualify for precisely no subsidy whatsoever. Grub up and burn the trees, however and leave brambles and weeds to run riot and you get £230 per hectare. After five years where some planting of cider apple and perry trees has happened, now within a few months up to 50% (according to a survey of growers in Somerset) will be grubbed-up and lost forever. The Chancellor rightly uses his budget to help small breweries, his colleague sets out to destroy small cider makers. It makes me weep with frustration.

Paul Hutchings

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OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING

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.

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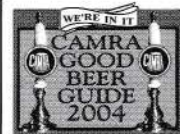
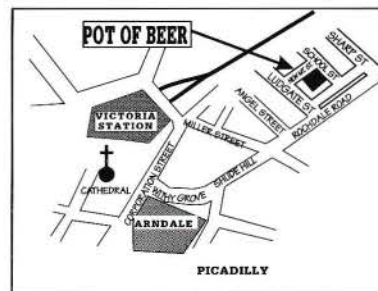
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OT ABROAD

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE

While some parts of the Opening Times area are always in the news, pub and beer-wise, others can be overlooked, despite having a wealth of good pubs. This occasional series aims to partially redress the balance and will cover some of the pubs that don't often get a mention in these pages. We start off in Tameside and some of the pubs in Ashton-under-Lyne.

We started off on Warrington Street in the town centre, and the **Caledonia**. This Robinson's house is one of those pubs that seems to do everything well, from the well-kept beer, good value-for-money food, well-appointed letting rooms and a first class beer garden during the summer months.

It was substantially refurbished some years ago and is now basically open-plan although nicely divided up into a number of areas - our party sat in the snug at the front. In common with the rest of the pub there is some nicely mismatched furniture and wealth of bric-a-brac which gives it a comfortable, lived-in feel. Food is served both lunchtimes and evening, and we all chose from the large menu, none of us being disappointed by our choices. There's a wide range of Robbie's beers on sale, and the range usually comprises Hatters, Best Bitter, Cumbria Way, Double Hop (replacing the now-defunct Frederics which the Caledonia stocked from its launch) and the seasonal. We all stuck to Hatters and Best, both of which were very enjoyable.

Down the road is the **Station**, a long-established free house, originally owned by John Hesketh of Stalybridge Station Buffet fame. While the beer range here has never recaptured those glory days, there is always a decent selection of cask beers available and so it proved today. Shaws Best Bitter, Boggart Hole Clough Boggart Brew and Hydes Bitter were the guests alongside Park Parade, a house bitter brewed for the pub by Phoenix Brewery, and named after the nearby long-defunct station. We enjoyed them all and made particular note that the pub was supporting local brewers. The pub has several rooms and areas plus a large conservatory overlooking a well-appointed beer garden. We sat in the conservatory enjoying our beer while the hail beat down pitilessly on the roof.

Luckily it had dried up by the time we departed for the multi award-winning **Witchwood** on Old Street. This is another famous free house which has also made its name as a music venue (a forthcom-

ing tribute band was the wonderfully named Ironically Maiden). There are just two rooms - a bar at the front and the large music venue at the back, and there's a very relaxed atmosphere about the place. When we arrived the range comprised John Smiths Bitter (untried) plus Holts Mild, Bitter and Patersons (all very good) and a number of guest beer pumps with their clips reversed, although several beers came on shortly including brews from Coach House, Rudgegate and the new Glossop Breweries. Of course, this meant we had to stay for another...

Just down the street is the **Friendship**, a large Robinson's house close to the site of the old Schofield's Portland Brewery, bought by Robbie's in 1926, and inside there is some memorabilia of the old company. It's a fairly basic bikers pub today, but none the worse for that with a friendly atmosphere and well-kept Best Bitter. It's been opened up a bit but still retains much of the original layout and features.

Next was Robbie's **Buck & Hawthorn** on Katherine Street. Truly a pub of two halves, well certainly for the architectural buffs. The left portion that contains the open bar, is a somewhat austere affair with locals clustered around the counter enjoying a chat and the TV. The frugality of it all is happily broken by the walls which are decorated to picture-rail level in a splendid wheatmeal tile, topped off with a fanned, petrol-glazed motif. The right-hand portion has a lovely snug with matchboard, fixed seating, a period fireplace and the makings of a fine water-jug collection. Back from this is the 'Card Room'. Its original door has been removed to this gem of a space, no more than 7' by 11' with a single central table; all of this is lit by natural light coming in through an etched pane featuring a rather grand-looking Buck. Finally, to the back of this, is the games room that includes a pool table and a very good quality 30's fireplace. Beers on sale were Robbie's Hatters, Best and Old Stockport, all were found on good form.

Across to the north east of the town centre and opposite the busy market and the multi-sided council office building is the **Ash Tree**, a JD Wetherspoon house. This is a bustling operation, that is set on two levels - low at the front, then up steep steps to the bar and the no-smoking lounge-cum-dining area to the rear. The lower area has plenty of seats to view the busy scene of Wellington Road and attracts a lot of weary-looking shoppers, probably waiting for their buses too. The rear area has some booths and a regimented set of tables, all of which were full with people enjoying the value food and beers. The décor here is augmented with monochrome photos of the Ashton of yore. We found the beer temperature to be a tad on the cool side, but the beers were in a satisfactory condition - Boddies, Spitfire, Theakston Best Bitter, Directors, Abbot Ale and Highwood Bomber Country.

Walking up Penny Meadow on the road to Mossley, we encountered another Robinson's house, the **Albion**. We found this to be selling very decent Hatters and Best; we were told that apparently the pub is under threat from a proposed bypass of some kind. At times, a big football house (well, TV wise anyway), otherwise a very comfortable locals' pub. Two rooms at the front, one with TV and fixed, matchboard seating, the other a well-presented snug. The main point of interest on our visit was the Pakistan vs India cricket match on the box. The road to the side of the pub leads to the **Seven Stars**, a one-time JW Lees pub now advertising Hydes beers. There are Hydes beers on sale, but they are of the keg variety, I'm afraid. Continuing further up Mossley Road (probably a ten-minute walk out of town towards Hazlehurst) to very near to its junction with Queens Road (and the nearby Tameside General Hospital) got us to the locally-recommended **New Inn**. Few people may be aware that this pub retails two Saddleworth beers - Saddleworth More and Shaft Bender stout. Both these beers were sampled and found to be in good nick. These beers really set this pub apart from its quite unusual interior décor - there is plenty of white painted, stone-clad walls and archways, so if you are into the Vera Duckworth look, and even if you aren't, get here for the beers anyway! Popular with students from the nearby college.

To end our journey we went back to the bus station via the long-time Good Beer Guide-listed **Oddfellows** on Kings Road. This is a superb little Robinson's pub that evokes an air of the country even though it is set amidst streets of dense terraced housing. Advertising itself as a family concern since 1914 when the Lucas family took control, an award in the Tap Room attests to its long Good Beer Guide tenure. It's all very well appointed, comfy and cosy, and obviously, lovingly cared for by the staff - do have a look at the Tap Room door, it's a hoot! Why, the place even has its own branded glasses. The very good beers were Hatters and Best. The Mike Evan's Pork Scratchings sold here were the best this writer has tasted in a long time. If you don't fancy the walk to the Oddies, bus 38 will get you there and bus 39 will get you back to the bus station. MM





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MAKING Music

DETAILS OF THE ENTERTAINMENT on offer at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again sponsored by the Stockport Express, have now been released and we are able to bring you this exclusive preview. Along with some well-established Festival favourites,



this year we are again bringing you some bands new to the event, all well-established musicians and sure to make the event go with a swing. This year we are also able to split the bar from the music, which will be in a separate entertainment suite.

On Thursday night we start off in restrained mood with **String Serenade**, a very versatile string quartet. The String Serenade can play a large selection of music with classical favourites from Bach, Mozart, Tchaikowsky and all the great composers through to Cole Porter, Gershwin, Scott Joplin and the Beatles. They are able to provide musical entertainment for festival visitors with a light-hearted soiree of classical and popular favourites

The Friday lunchtime session will be in the hands of the **Veya Saxophone Quartet**. The Veya Saxophone Quartet was formed at the Royal Northern College of Music in 2000 and takes their name from 'Veya' - the ancient god of wind. The quartet have a versatile repertoire, reflecting the diversity of the saxophone and have been involved in the premieres of works by British (Graham Firkin), Australian (Gerard Brophy), American (Elliott Schwartz) and Cuban composers. They have also appeared in master classes with some of the worlds leading musicians, including John Harle, Simon Haram, Ken Radnofsky and the Apollo Saxophone Quartet.

The entertainment for Friday night will be the ever-popular **Soul Bandits**, the classic 1960's/1970's soul band. The Soul Bandits were formed in 1987 and have been playing on and off together ever since. They play a mix of Stax, Atlantic and Motown songs. They includes classic songs such as Mustang Sally, Sitting On The Dock Of The Bay and many others. Artists covered include James Brown, Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Sam and Dave, Edwin Starr, the Blues Brothers and the Commitments. The music is fun, party, dancing music. It is very popular with a tight rhythm section, and a great bass section, which together cannot fail to entertain. Miss this band and you have missed a great opportunity to party.

Saturday lunchtime is again the quiet drinkers' session which has proved very popular over the years but on Saturday night it's back to party time with the **Blues Blasters**. We can do no better than let them describe themselves: "If you are looking for a GOOD TIME.....for RED HOT R&B and Rock n' Roll...for a SIZZLING MIXTURE of classic blues boogies and TOE TAPPIN' home grown tunes.....and a RIP-ROARIN' barrage of harp, guitar and keyboards in a SIX PIECE BAND....look no further than...THE BLUES BLASTERS...!!!" They will be performing a mix of original material and classic blues tracks, so if you love blistering guitar riffs, soulful harmonica playing and dazzling keyboard brilliance then you are going to love the Blues Blasters.

Next month we preview some of the highlights from the beer, cider and perry on offer - and there are certainly some treats in store! Don't forget those important diary dates - June 3, 4 and 5 at Edgeley Park.

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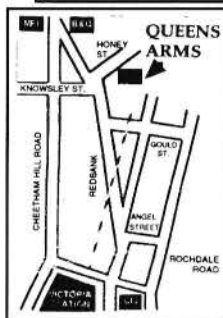
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Our Monthly Round-up of News from the local brewery scene!

FAMILY FAVOURITES

There are new beers in prospect from three of our family brewers next month. **Robinson's** are following up the successful Young Tom with their next seasonal. Running during May and June this is a welcome return of the 4.4%ABV Northern Glory. This is a beer brewed using a blend of pale dark and roasted barley and wheat malts and is a refreshing light oak coloured ale. **Robbies** have also announced a major rebranding exercise which, among other things, will see Best Bitter renamed 'Unicorn'. We will have a full report on this next time. The current seasonal from **HYDES** is **Hydes is Fine & Dandy**, a 4.2%ABV tasty Spring ale – it's certainly been very enjoyable when we have tried it in outlets such as the Nurse, Heaton Norris. Next up for May and June is **Cloud Nine** at 4.4% ABV. The brewery says "carefully selected best malts and hops combine to provide a classic beer with a silky smooth finish" Sounds good to us.

JW Lees are also in the frame with a new beer. The current seasonal is the American-inspired **Brooklyn Best** at 5% ABV, not quite with the same hop smack as the original version a couple of years ago but still a very tasty beer indeed. There's a brand new beer for May and June, and this is **Maypole Madness** at 4.5% ABV. This is described as "a thirst quenching ale...brewed with amber malt to give a biscuity crispness, complemented by the sharpness of the Northdown and Fuggle hops". Look out or this in outlets such as **Rain Bar** in the City Centre and, of course, the **Lloyds Hotel** in Chorlton. The new bottled beer from **Holts** going on sale in Tesco stores throughout the North-west (as reported in *Opening Times* last month) will be called **Humdinger**. The name has been chosen to reflect the ingredients, in particular, the Mexican honey. The 3.5% ABV brew will be sold in 500ml bottles (not bottle conditioned) and will be available in June.

CAINS The other family brewer with a tied outlet in the area is **Cains** of Liverpool. Cains Brewery's decision to proactively label its beers with a responsible drinking message has been highlighted in a Government report on the UK's so-called "binge drinking" culture. The Liverpool-based brewery is the only drinks company singled out for taking positive labelling action in the heavy-weight report, which has a foreword by Prime Minister Tony Blair urging the drinks industry to help the Government tackle the £20bn a year problem. Cains took a leading stance on the controversial issue last year, highlighting the number of alcohol units in each bottle or can it produced, stating: "Robert Cain supports responsible drinking. Excessive drinking can cause harm. Observe the daily guidelines for sensible drinking. Do not drink and drive."

MICRO MAGIC

As ever our local micro brewers continue to entertain and delight with their beers. This is our usual monthly round-up and again apologies to those we didn't contact this time (which is more than usual due to time constraints) – next month we aim to have a complete round-up of the all the region's micros.

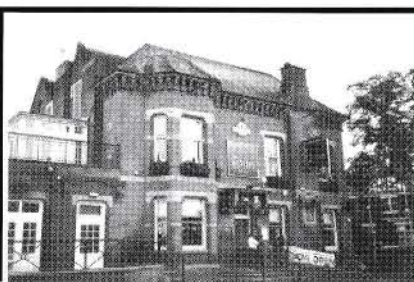
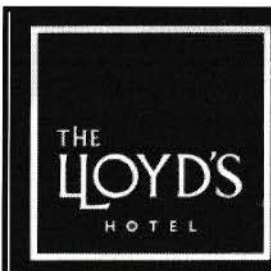
Bank Top – no new beers for the immediate future but something rather interesting is in the pipeline. This will be a 5-5.5%ABV version of the superb **Dark Mild** with 3 or 4 bottles of port added to the fermenting vessel. The new beer, as yet unnamed, will be launched at **Stockport Beer & Cider Festival**.

Bazens – the next new beer was available from the beginning of April and is called 'The Newun' (4.2% ABV). It is a golden, hoppy beer well suited to Spring/early Summer drinking and so will be brewed through to June. The big news is that **Bazens'** have won a medal at the **Brewing Industry International Awards** for the **Flatbac**. **Jude Bazen** told *Opening Times*: "This is a huge honour for us espe-

cially as we were up against many of the much bigger and longer established breweries worldwide. We will be attending the ceremony in the Guildhall, London on May 25th where we will find out whether we have won the bronze, silver or gold medal!" **Bazens'** have also been commissioned to brew the **Festival Special** for **Stockport Beer & Cider Festival** – this will be a 4.1% beer, pale (or pale-ish) gold and aromatically hoppy.

Beartown - brewing has now been increased from 40/45 barrels to 60 per week with further production planned, such is the popularity of the beers. The brewery is still looking to expand the tied estate. Further pubs are being looked at with a minimum of two more being purchased during 2004 but no firm news is available at this point in time as to where these pubs will be. A new beer, **Scouse**, was brewed for the **Liverpool beer festival** that was held on at the end of February. **Blarney Bear** was again brewed during March in time for **St Patrick's Day**. Another new beer will be brewed during April called **St Georges Bear**. This will be a 4.2% bitter, further details of this beer were not available as we went to press. **Beartown** will be supporting the **Macclesfield beer festival** again this year, the festival is due to be held on the 7th & 8th May and they will be brewing a one off special beer. Again, full details are not available at this point in time but it will be one of the strongest beers brewed by the brewery.

Facers - The bottled **Landslide** is excellent and is currently on sale at the off-licence nearest the brewery, the **Cliff Newsagency** on **Great Clowes Street**, **Salford**. **Wordsworth** is selling well and the expanded brewlength of the brewery is a real boon. **Dave Facer** is currently trialing **Rhapsody** as a dry-hopped beer. The dry hopped variant has a special pump clip asking for comments by email, text or phone and he has delivered casks to the **Smithfield**, **Kro 1**, the **Kings Arms** (**Salford**) and the **Grappenhall Community Centre** (near **Warrington**). **Dave** awaits responses with interest. The next special will be available at the beginning of May and the **SBS** will be brewing **Cliff Bier** again at around the same time (and once again this will be available at **Stockport Beer & Cider Festival**).



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Glossop Breweries - are continuing to grow the Dexter's user base in Glossop and district with very good feed back. They have sold the first Fletchers Campaign Bitter and are very happy with this brew. Boggart Hole Clough are distributing the beer further afield and Glossop's Don Pape has been particularly grateful for the help from Mark, Mary and the crew at Boggart.



Millstone - are continuing to expand with sales now at seven barrels a week and many repeat orders coming in. The current range is A Miller's Ale (3.8%ABV), Three Shires (4%), Millstone Edge (4.4%) and the new Grainstorm (4.2%). This latter is a full-bodied, quaffable ale generously hopped with Green Bullet and Pacific Hallertau hops and will now form part of the core range along with Three Shires and Millstone Edge. The excellent and refreshing A Miller's Ale will become more occasional as, inexplicably, it seems it's just not strong enough for much of the guest beer market. All four beers were sampled when Stockport & South Manchester Branch paid the first official CAMRA visit to the brewery in early April. Jon and Nick, and their partners, were extremely hospitable and informative about the brewery and its background. It certainly seems to have got off to a flying start with beers of the highest quality. Two Millstone beers, including the brand new Windy Miller, will feature at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival.

Phoenix - is another local micro picking up a gong at the Brewing Industry International Awards. Phoenix have



won with the superb Wobbly Bob (6% ABV) surely one of the classic strong pale ales brewed today. Forthcoming beers include Resurrection (4.7% ABV) for Easter and later in the month St George's Flag (4.3% ABV) a pale, hoppy beer 'strong enough for Englishmen to drink' says Phoenix's Tony Allen. The end of the month will see the return of Mayfly (4.4% ABV), a pale favourite, and the excellent Black Shadow (4% ABV), a traditional dark mild for May.



Pictish - there's a new beer in the pipeline from brewer Richard Sutton. This will be Aztec Gold at 4.8% ABV. This will be a pale amber beer and 'fairly hoppy'. It won't be quite so 'in your face' hoppy as some Pictish beers, being mainly hopped with the gentler Saaz hops and with the use of Munich and Vienna malts may be a Belgian-style beer. The brewery is still very busy but Richard tells us that if he has time he may revive another of his one-offs this month. He continues to pick up wards too, with Pictish Porter winning the porter class and Blue Moon the Strong Ale class at Bradford Beer Festival.



Ramsbottom - The 'orse's 'ead 'andle is still flying out, with the Crown, Heaton Lane taking deliveries of this, along with Old Ground Mild and Holcombe (3.8%ABV). The 24th April sees the anniversary of the Chatterton riot so a beer of that name will be around hopefully from the middle of the month. Brewer Paul Robinson hasn't finalised details o yet but there's a good chance Cascade hops will be playing a part somewhere.



Three Rivers - Stockport's very own micro continues to go great guns. The new Manchester IPA has proved very successful and the brewer reckons it's the best of the bunch so far. It's certainly very hoppy and refreshing - look out for this and other Three Rivers beers in the Crown, Heaton Lane, which functions as the brewery tap and always has two Three Rivers beers available. Forthcoming beers will include a wheat beer and also a mild for May.



BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL COMPETITION

Hydes Brewers are providing the Stockport Beer & Cider Festival with two casks of bitter with an original gravity of 1060° (roughly a strength of 6% ABV) and we want Opening Times readers to give the beer a name. If you can think of an original name, send it to the Festival Organiser at 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, Ches. SK4 5EG. The prize for the best entry will be 4 pints of FREE beer (up to 1050g) at the Festival.

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RETURN TO DIDSBURY

TONIGHT, our hardy band's task was to discover what Didsbury could offer on a Friday night. We knew it would, as ever, be busy in the village, but what would we find by way of good Real Ale?

Our starting point was East Didsbury and Hydes's large, imposing Gateway at the junction of Manchester Road and Kingsway. This was built in 1935 and originally furnished in splendid art deco style. Now, there is a very solid-looking dark wood bar and bar back in the centre of the pub, which breaks up the otherwise rather cavernous interior to give the impression of a multi-roomed layout. Throughout the main lounge, TV screens advertised past and forthcoming events such as "Pop Hyde'ol" (groan) and "I'm a Regular - Get Me Out of Here". Tonight's handpumped offerings were Light, thought quite good; Bitter, not tried, and Jekyll's Gold, rated below its best.

We crossed to road to the new leisure development to check out the Bell House, complete with Wacky Warehouse, where handpumps had once, briefly, been seen; not tonight, however: no Real Ale was available. A handful of us made a detour to the Parrswood, at the corner of Parrs Wood Road and School Lane. This is another 1930s pub, built in the grand roadhouse style, and is now branded as a John Barras house. The decoration is tasteful: split levels, partitioned drinking areas, much red plush and wood, and one's way from the door to the bar is guided by a tiled path. The effect was rather spoiled, though, by an incongruous tube of twinkling fairy lights. There were few other customers. The sole cask offering was Boddington's Bitter - the new 4.1% ABV version, of course - which we found a little disappointing in comparison with recent examples.

Making our way back to Wilmslow Road, we passed the entrance to Fletcher Moss Botanical Gardens to catch up with the rest of the party at the Olde Cock Inn. This appears to be aiming at the younger end of the market: doormen, loud music, pool,

table football, and a rough-and-ready décor. It all reminded me of the student bars I used to frequent in my younger days. At the back, there is a conservatory with a flagged. Three cask-conditioned beers were available. Caledonian Deuchars IPA was found to be very poor - indeed, one of our number returned it to the bar. Timothy Taylor Landlord was better, though still below par - "lacklustre", opined one staggerer. I fared better, however - the Draught Bass was fine. I gather the licensee was new to the pub, and not experienced in looking after Real Ale, so perhaps the beer quality will improve.

Next door at the Didsbury, we found low beams, unvarnished tables, candles, hops and exposed brickwork; all intended, no doubt, to give the impression of a country pub. This is a Chef & Brewer dining pub, with menus written on blackboards on many of the walls. The atmosphere was relaxed, with the buzz of conversation much more prominent than the subdued background music. The cask ale offerings were Theakston Best Bitter, which was very poor, and Marston's Pedigree, which was OK. Into the village now, and the "Famous" Crown, which was very busy. The interior is dominated by the large central bar which this evening bore leaving cards for Heather, a former member of staff. There is much use of dark wood, along with some floor tiling and wood panelling. Most of us enjoyed the 60s music playing over the sound system, and there was a good atmosphere. Of the three beers available, most of us went for the Boddingtons Bitter, which was found to be in decent form; those who tried Charles Wells Bombardier Bitter thought it equally good. None of us had the Greene King Abbot Ale.

Round the corner onto Barlow Moor Road next, to the Nelson, a classic, basic one-roomed boozier serving Holt's Bitter and M&B Mild. Entertainment was provided by a DJ (with real turntables!) playing Motown. This must have been appreciated, as the pub was very busy. The Holt's was in good nick, though the M&B, perhaps predictably, was rated less highly.

Leaving Barry White behind us, we crossed over to the Clock Tower, where the doorman insisted on searching various of our bags. We found he enjoyed the copy of *Opening Times* we left him! Inside, we found a Marston's Pedigree pump clip turned round, but a decent drop of Boddington's Bitter was available. The interior has been opened out and decorated in the modern style to appeal to the younger crowd, who were very much in evidence.

Crossing to the other side of Wilmslow Road, we made for another modern bar, the Pear Tree. This was packed and very noisy, as the lack of soft furnishings amplified the many animated conversations. At the long bar, which runs along the left-hand wall, we found two hand-pulled beers. All but one of us tried the Timothy Taylor Landlord, and found it in reasonably good condition; the other enjoyed his Boddingtons Bitter.

Time was getting on by now, so we decided to finish off in the Royal Oak, a well-known Marston's pub which was due to be presented with our *Pub of the Month* award the following week. This is a busy, homely local in the traditional style, and this evening offered Bitter, Pedigree and the powerful Old Empire. All were found to be in good form, with the Old Empire rated the best beer of the night.

Didsbury offers a wide choice of pubs and bars - too many to fit into one evening's stagger - though the choice of beers is not so extensive. There's some good beer to be found, though rather too much of it is a bit disappointing. At least that's what one group thought on one particular evening. Would you have a different opinion? You know there's only one way to find out...get out there and try them for yourself!



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NORTH-WEST BEERS

THE NORTH-WEST is home to the biggest concentration of established independent breweries in the UK. However, these firms, with the possible exception of Jennings of Cockermouth, have lagged behind the market leaders in promoting their bottled products.

There are now signs that this is starting to change as brewers seek a higher profile in the expanding take-home market. For our most recent tasting session we sampled beers from six of the region's best-known independents, including three of the four family brewers in Greater Manchester. As always, the beers were all tasted blind, with only the person who bought them knowing what they were in advance. None of these beers were bottle-conditioned.

★★★★★

Beer 1 had a rich, dark brown colour with reddish hints. There was a toffeeish aroma (very common in pasteurised bottled beers) and a moderate level of carbonation. The taste was malty, with little hop character, but fairly dry, although one of us detected a greater element of sweetness. It was felt to be an enjoyable, moreish brew, described by one taster as "a good quaffing beer". This proved to be **Thwaites Lancaster Bomber** (4.4% ABV, 50cl, £1.59 from Morrisons, or 4 for £5). This beer was originally brewed by Mitchells of Lancaster, with the brand being acquired by Thwaites when Mitchells closed.

★★★★★

Beer 2 was similar in colour to the first, possibly a touch lighter. The taste was sweeter and fruitier, with orange and citrus notes, and there was a slightly higher level of carbonation. There were hints of a roasted flavour and some hoppiness was detected to offset the fruitiness. It had a full, satisfying mouthfeel. This was a complex, well-rounded beer that was generally felt to be very impressive. We had been drinking **Hydes Manchester's Finest** (4.7% ABV, 50cl, £1.60 from Hydes pubs)

★★★★★

Beer 3 was darker in colour, similar to the first beer sampled. It had a strong carbonation on the nose, and a predominantly malty flavour with some fruitiness, particularly grapefruit, but not a lot of hop character. One or two people detected some hints of smokiness in the aftertaste. This was certainly a highly distinctive beer. This was revealed to be **Lees John Willie's** (5.0% ABV, 50cl, Morrisons as above)

★★★★★

Beer 4 was certainly an extremely distinctive brew. It was of similar colour to Beer 2, with a fresh, strongly carbonated nose. The taste was resinous, floral, and almost aggressively fruity, with a basic underpinning of malt and only a slight hint of hop. The unique flavour was compared, amongst other things, to Parma violets, dolly mixtures and cream soda. Some tasters enjoyed this beer, while others felt they wouldn't want a second one, but it certainly couldn't be accused of being dull. This beer was **Cains Fine Raisin Beer** (5.0% ABV, 50cl, £1.39 from Tesco), which, as the name suggests, is actually brewed with raisins in the mash. It will be interesting to see what the recently-released cask version tastes like.

★★★★★

Beer 5 was the darkest of the evening, a rich russet red in colour. It had a fruity aroma, a heavy, malty body and a full flavour reminiscent of toffee and molasses, with some liquorice in the aftertaste. However, some of us felt the body was ultimately a little thin in comparison with the somewhat chewy first impression. This turned out to be **Holts Thunderholt** (5.0% ABV, 50cl, £1.65 from Holts pubs). This was the only beer whose identity most of the tasters guessed correctly before seeing the label.

★★★★★

Beer 6 was the palest of the evening, with a very appealing golden colour. It had a fairly strong carbonation and an initial grassy aroma. The appearance may have suggested a crisp,

hoppy beer, but in fact the taste seemed to be somewhat schizophrenic, as it was essentially a fairly rich, malty brew, but with distinct floral and fruity notes in the flavour. It was felt that, while not unpleasant, the various elements did not really meld together successfully. We had finished with **Jennings Cocker Hoop** (4.6% ABV, 50cl, Morrisons as above)

★★★★★

Thus ended another fascinating evening's sampling. It was perhaps surprising that, although the North-West is known for its hoppy bitters, all of these beers tended towards the malty end of the spectrum. The beer of the evening was undoubtedly the **Hydes Manchester's Finest**, with the highly distinctive **Cains Fine Raisin Beer** dividing opinions, and the **Thunderholt** and **Cocker Hoop** proving a little disappointing. The tasting also underlined the point that, while brewery-conditioned bottles can be very pleasant and enjoyable, they always fall some way short of a well-kept pint of cask beer in the pub.

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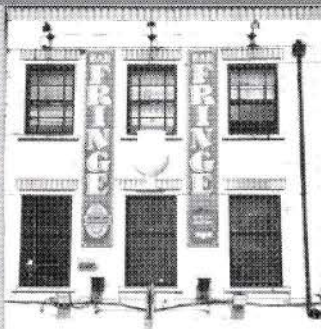
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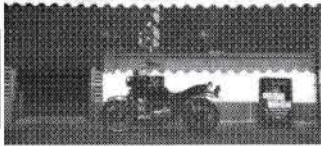
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MILD - WHO BREWS WHAT

While the national brewers seem to have virtually turned their backs on good cask mild, our local companies still produce the real thing. Robinson's in fact still produce two, and Hydes' three! Here we give a run-down on most of the milds available in the Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge area with the alcohol by volume given in brackets. Those marked* are available on the Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge - see how many you can try!

Robinson's: Hatters* (ABV 3.3%) - a light mild with a refreshing dry, malty flavour.

Dark Hatters*: Hatters Mild with added caramel. Fruity, malty and a rare find - although FOUR Challenge pubs (Swan With Two Necks, Stockport; Caledonia, Ashton; and Castle and Smithfield, City Centre) will be selling it.

Hydes': Mild* (ABV 3.5%) - dark and dry, an all malt brew.

'Welsh' Mild - an even darker version of standard mild. Very rare outside Hydes' Welsh estate.

Light* (ABV 3.7%) - lightly hopped session beer. Refreshing and fruity with a dry finish.

Holt's: Mild* (ABV 3.2%) - very dark with a complex taste. Very bitter for a mild with a long and satisfying aftertaste.

Lees: GB Mild (ABV 3.5%) - malty and fruity with a dry, malty aftertaste.

Porter: Dark Mild* (ABV 3.3%) - rich and full-bodied with a roasty aftertaste. Available at the Railway, Portwood.

Bank Top: Dark Mild (ABV 4%) - perhaps the classic dark mild. Dark, luscious and totally wonderful. The Crown, Heaton Lane is a fairly regular outlet.

Bazens': Black Pig (3.6%) - a classic dark mild recipe with chocolate notes predominant.

Beartown: Ambeardextrous* (ABV 3.5%) - dark, rich and full-flavoured.

Black Bear* (ABV 5%) - a rare strong mild with roast and malt flavours and a mellow finish.

Available at the Navigation, Lancashire Hill, Stockport, and the Cheshire Ring, Hyde.

The LAB: Jet Amber* (ABV 3.6%) - a brand new beer brewed specially for the Challenge. Should be deep red with biscuity malt taste and slight hop character. Available at the Lowes Arms, Denton.

Phoenix: Monkey Town Mild (ABV 3.9%) - a dark, 'modern' mild combining a hoppy freshness with the traditional qualities of a true dark mild.

Pictish: Dark Diamond (ABV 3.5%) - dark and tasty, still retaining elements of the trademark Pictish bitterness.

Whim: Magic Mushroom Mild (ABV 3.8%) - well balanced with a complex mix of flavours and a sweet finish.

Cains: Dark Mild* (ABV 3.2%) - smooth, dry and roasty. A superb drink when on form and available at the Dog & Partridge, Bridgmont.

Banks's: Mild* (ABV 3.5%) - often sold as plain "Banks's" or "Banks's Original". Amber coloured and well-balanced. Available at the Shepherds Arms, Whaley Bridge.

Moorhouses: Black Cat* (ABV 3.4%) - dark and fruit with a bitter, roast character that lingers in the aftertaste. A former *Champion Beer of Britain*. Available at the Sportsman, Hyde and White Hart, Mottram.

Marble: Uncut Amber* (ABV 4.7%) - Strong and roasty with a biscuity malt character. The only organic mild on the Challenge. Available at the Marble Arch, Rochdale Road and the Knott, Deansgate.

Ramsbottom: Old Ground Mild (ABV 3.8%) - dark, rich, and delicious full drinking mild. Often available at the Crown, Heaton Lane.

Highgate: M&B Mild* (ABV 3.2%) - thin and sweetish West Midlands mild, brewed under contract for Coors UK. Available at the Nelson, Didsbury.

Coach House: Gunpowder Strong Mild (ABV 3.8%) - full bodied and roasty with a malty aroma and full finish. Another free trade regular.

Carlsberg UK: Tetley Dark Mild* (ABV 3.2%) - fruity and dark. Less distinctive than it was.

Tetley Mild* (ABV 3.3%) - well-balanced taste of malt and caramel with good bitterness.

Ansells Mild* (ABV 3.4%) - famous dark Midlands mild now brewed in Leeds, a sweetish refreshing brew.

In addition several pubs on the Mild Challenge will be offering a variety of quest milds during the Challenge.

STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER MILD CHALLENGE 2004

Following the success of last year's competition, we have once again teamed up with the Stockport Express to bring you another Mild Challenge, and again we have stretched our wings to include parts of Manchester and Salford along with a few other pubs further afield. The previous Challenges have been a great success and if you haven't taken part before, try and have a go this time. It's fun and it's easy. It's also a chance to visit some new pubs, try new beers and, of course, to win some great prizes.

The Challenge runs from Saturday 3 April to Sunday 9 May and offers everyone taking part the chance to win something. All completed entries will receive either a free entry ticket for the 2004 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival or, if you're a member of CAMRA, a voucher for two free pints of mild at the Festival. We are also again featuring the Mild Challenge Extra - visit a participating pub in 12 different areas, using the headings shown on the card, and you will win a special Mild Challenge T-shirt; visit all participating pubs and you will win a specially engraved pewter tankard.

An extra feature this year is the Mild Challenge Super - get 36 stamps from 36 different pubs and you will win a free 'Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge' sweatshirt.

This year we are also especially grateful to Hydes' for enabling us to offer an extra-special prize: every completed entry will go into a draw and the first 10 pulled out will win a visit to the brewery to see how their three milds are made. Too good to miss out on? Definitely! So, what do you have to do? It's easy...

First, get a card. All participating pubs have a stock or you can use the version printed in this issue of Opening Times. Additionally you can get one from the Mild Challenge address: 39 Fox Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9EL

When you buy a pint or a half of cask mild in one of the pubs taking part, ask the bar staff to stamp your card. Remember, though, you can only get one stamp from each pub. When you've filled the card (you'll need 12 different stamps from 12 different pubs) send it to the Mild Challenge address on the card and, after our closing date, we will send off your prizes.

Simple isn't it? Happy Drinking!



I DID IT... MILD WAY

MILD IN STOCKPORT AND MANCHESTER

It was said some years ago that only three strongholds of mild drinking existed in the UK - the West Midlands, South Wales, and right here, in the North West. Well, I don't know if that is true any more. Even those heartlands of mild consumption have been battered in recent times by the onslaught of lager and the so-called 'smooth' beers; and, sad to say, to such an extent that in nearby towns such as Bolton, Wigan and Rochdale, cask mild is indeed a rare beast. Happily, the same is untrue of the mild scene here in Stockport and Manchester.

First, what is mild anyway, I hear you ask? Mild ale (to give it its proper name), is merely a lightly hopped beer; that is, it is not generally as bitter in flavour as a bitter beer, but that's not to say it is a sweet beer either. Its strength is usually lower than that of session bitters too (though there are some notable exceptions). Of course, a lower strength, tasty beer means you can enjoy more of it in a session without succumbing to the effects of its higher gravity stable-mates. As to the colour of the beer, milds range from the light and mid-browns, right through to a deep black. So now you know all that, I suppose you are eager to go out and try some of these delicious beers? Well, with this guide in your hand, you are never very far from a pub offering mild. Our very own hometown brewer Robinson's, leads the pack by sheer weight of numbers - it has the most pubs in Stockport borough and as most of those sell mild, it is a fair bet you will come across a pint if you visit a Robinsons house. Their mild is called Hatters (an allusion to the town's once famous hatting industry) which was born out of Best Mild, this received a marketing makeover some years ago to broaden its appeal. This, together with production improvements have seen its popularity maintained. Hatters is a mid-brown beer, it also has a rarer, almost black sibling Hatters Dark - this is Hatters, but with added caramel to give it the colour some customers prefer.

Moss Side brewer Hydes produce three milds - Mild, Dark Mild and Light. The first two have similarities in colour to the Hatters beers, the Light is much paler in colour with a slightly higher gravity. Without exception, all of their pubs in the south of

Manchester will offer one if not two of these beers. Joseph Holt of North Manchester may only have a smattering of pubs in the area, but its reputation for strong and uncompromising beers means it always 'punches above its weight' in the minds of local drinkers. The popularity of their bitter is undisputed, sales of mild have dropped considerably and in some pubs the beer has been replaced with 'smooth' mild. Almost black and very bitter for a mild, however when found on good form this beer is luscious and very moreish.

Until recently, JW Lees of Middleton sold their unusual GB Mild in their sole tied house in Stockport, the Travellers Call at Bredbury. Poor sales saw the end of it however, so you will have to venture closer to their heartland (such as the Rain Bar) to sample this black, slightly sweet, but roasty beer. Cains of Liverpool made an impact on the town when they acquired Gothic Bar in Gatley, so too did their roasty black brew. The mild is not only to be found at the Gothic, but often turns up as a guest in such pubs as the Dog & Partridge at Bridgmont and in ex-Greenalls houses.

Local microbrewers have made their presence felt in no small way in the area. First on the scene was the Porter Brewing Co. with their very dark and dry Porter Dark Mild (at the Railway, Portwood); more recently, at the Navigation, Heaton Norris, two mild beers from Beartown can be found adorning the bar - Ambeardextrous, a fairly light brew and Black Bear - dark and dangerous at a hefty five percent. Examples of these beers can also be sampled at the Bruins, Fallowfield and their most recent opening, the Cheshire Ring in

Hyde. At the nearby Lowes Arms in Denton, the LAB in-house brewery produces such tasty concoctions as Jet Amber. Established micros like Phoenix, Pictish, Bazens and Facers all produce a variety of beers in the style. Other newer brewery entrants, such as Shaws, Three Rivers and Millstone may soon produce milds too. Of the national brewers products not a lot of mild is to be found in the area; you may see such as Tetley mild (and Tetley Dark), Greene King XX mild, Banks's Original and, perhaps even, Websters Green Label.

To gain an appreciation of these beers and the pubs in which they are sold, your best bet is a local brewers' house or one of the multi-beer free houses such as Olde Vic; Crown, Heaton Lane; and Railway, Portwood (all Stockport); Crescent, Salford; Sportsman, Hyde; Buffet Bar, Stalybridge; Marble Arch, Smithfield and Pot o' Beer in Manchester. Late May of every year sees Stockport Town Hall host Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, there are always a good selection of milds of differing styles and strengths to be had at this prestigious event. We hope you will participate in the 'Stockport and Manchester Mild Challenge' to gain you free entry and pints of mild to the festival, commemorative T-shirts and much more in a campaigning and enjoyable celebration of this most British of beer styles. Happy (mild) drinking. MM



The Mild Challenge runs from Saturday 3 April to Sunday 9 May

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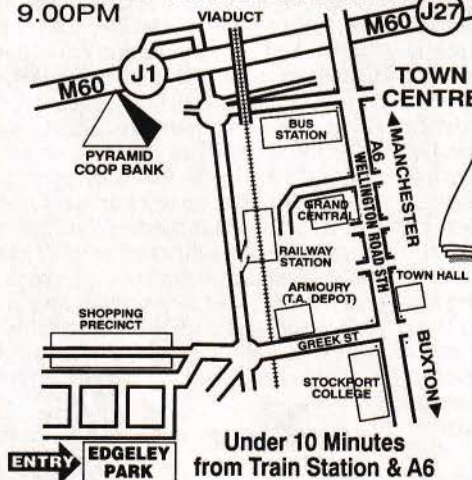
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ADMISSION **£3**
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FAMILIES WELCOME UNTIL
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**SATURDAY
5th
June**

LUNCH
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ADMISSION **£1**
QUIET DRINKING
SESSION

EVENING
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MILD CHALLENGE RULES

- 1) When you buy a pint (or a half pint) of cask conditioned mild in a pub supporting the challenge, get this card stamped by a member of the bar staff.
- 2) Only one stamp from each participating pub.
- 3) When this card has stamps from 12 pubs, complete the section below and send it to: 'Mild Challenge' 39 Fox Street, STOCKPORT, SK3 9EL, by 11th May 2004; it will be included in the Grand Draw (to be drawn at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival). There are numerous great prizes including 10 trips around Robinsons Brewery where you can see how Robinsons Hatters and Hatters Dark are brewed!
- 4) You will be entitled to a free entry ticket (any session but Friday evening) to the 2004 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival (3rd - 5th June). (CAMRA members get two free pints of mild instead) NB if you want a free entry ticket (or two free pints), please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Tickets will be distributed by 15th May, 2004.
- 5) To join the **Mild Challenge Extra** get stamps from 12 different pubs in 12 different areas and you will also receive a free 'Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge T-shirt'. Alternately, for **Mild Challenge Super**, get 36 stamps from 36 different pubs to receive a free 'Stockport & Manchester Challenge Sweatshirt'.
- 6) To complete **Mild Challenge Ultra**, send in cards containing a stamp from every participating pub, you will also receive a free, special-edition tankard with your T-shirt. Otherwise, only one entry per person please.
- 7) The Mild Challenge runs from 3rd April to 9th May 2004 inclusive. All prizes distributed at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival or as soon as possible thereafter.
- 8) The Organisers decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered in to.

This year you can win four pints of mild at the festival by coming up with a slogan of no more than eight words on why you drink mild (NB Entry in to the Mild Challenge does NOT require you to complete this). The winning slogan will appear on next year's Mild Challenge T-shirt. The winning slogan will be announced at the Festival. 'I drink mild because

.....

.....

Complete for the Grand Draw

Name

Address

..... Post Code

Signature Tel. No. (H) (W)

Camra Membership No. (if applicable).....

I wish to enter the 'Mild Challenge Extra/Super' and claim my free T-shirt/Sweatshirt SIZE

I enclose a SAE for my Stockport Beer & Cider Festival ticket (or two free pints)

I am interested in joining the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA)

SEND TO: 'MILD CHALLENGE' 39 FOX STREET, STOCKPORT, SK3 9EL



**CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE
STOCKPORT &
MANCHESTER
MILD CHALLENGE**

(NB Only one stamp per pub- see overleaf for rules)
 Fill this card with stamps from 12 different pubs and you will receive a free ticket to the 2004 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival and entry into a Grand Draw. First Prizes - visits to Robinson's Brewery & Sampling Room!

FREE T-SHIRT/SWEATSHIRT BY ENTERING 'CHALLENGE EXTRA/SUPER' (see over)

Sponsored by ^{Stockport} **Express**

MILD CHALLENGE

PUBS

<u>AREA</u>	<u>PUB</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>BEER</u>	<u>AREA</u>	<u>PUB</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>BEER</u>
ADSWOOD	Adswood Hotel	Adswood La W	Robinson's Hatters	HYDE	Cheshire Ring	Manchester Rd	Beartown Ambeardextrous
	Cross Keys	Adswood Rd	Hydes Mild		Sportsman	Mottram Rd	Moorhouse's Black Cat
ASHTON-U-LYNE	Caledonia	Warrington St	Robinson's Hatters / Dark	LANE ENDS	Travellers Call	Glossop Rd, Marple Br.	Robinson's Hatters
	Station	Warrington St	Guest Mild	LEVENSHULME	Kingsway	Moseley Rd	Holt Mild
BREDBURY	Arden Arms	Ashton Rd	Robinson's Hatters		Sidings	Broom La	Holt Mild
	Horsfield Arms	Ashton Rd	Robinson's Hatters	MANCHESTER	Castle Hotel	Oldham St	Robinson's Hatters & Dark
BRIDGEMONT	Dog & Partridge	Off A6, WhaleyBridge	Cains Dark Mild	CITY NORTH	Marble Arch	Rochdale Rd	Marble Uncut Amber
BURNAGE	Albion	Burnage La	Hydes Light		Smithfield Hotel	Swan St	Robinson's Dark / Guest
CHEADLE	Crown	High St	Hydes Mild	MANCHESTER	City Arms	Kennedy St	Tetley or Ansell's Mild
	Olde Star	High St	Hydes Light	CITY SOUTH	Grey Horse	Portland St	Hydes Mild
CHEADLE HULME	Cheadle Hulme	Station Rd	Holt Mild	MARPLE NORTH	Hatters	Church La	Robinson's Hatters
	Church Inn	Ravenoak Rd	Robinson's Hatters		Navigation	Stockport Rd	Robinson's Hatters
COMPSTALL	Andrew Arms	George St	Robinson's Hatters	MARPLE SOUTH	Ring o' Bells	Church La	Robinson's Hatters
	Northumberland Arms	Compstall Rd	Robinson's Hatters	MARPLE ROSEHILL	Railway	Stockport Rd, Rose Hill	Robinson's Hatters
DANE BANK	Dane Bank	Windmill La	Robinson's Hatters	MELLOR	Royal Oak	Longhurst La	Robinson's Hatters
DENTON	Lowes Arms	Hyde Rd	LAB Jet Amber	MOSS NOOK	Tatton Arms	Trenchard Dr	Robinson's Hatters
	Red Lion	Crown Point	Hydes Light	MOTTRAM	White Hart	Market St	Moorhouse's Black Cat
DENTON (HG)	Masons Arms	Stockport Rd	Robinson's Hatters	NEW MILLS	Masons Arms	High St	Robinson's Hatters
DIDSBURY	Fletcher Moss	William St	Hydes Dark Mild	OFFERTON	Emigration	Hall St	Robinson's Hatters
	Nelson	Barlow Moor Rd	M&B Mild		Victoria	Hall St	Guest Mild
EAST DIDSBURY	Gateway	Kingsway	Hydes Light	OFFERTON FOLD	Fingerpost	Hempshaw La	Robinson's Hatters
EDGELEY	Grapes	Castle St	Robinson's Hatters	PORTWOOD	Railway	Avenue St	Porter's Dark Mild / Guest
GATLEY	Horse & Farrier	Gatley Rd	Hydes Mild	REDDISH	Thatched Tavern	Stanhope St	Tetley Dark Mild
	Prince of Wales	Gatley Green	Hydes Mild	ROMILEY	Cow & Calf	School Brow	Robinson's Hatters
GATLEY SOUTH	High Grove	Silverdale Rd	Hydes Dark Mild		Friendship	Stockport Rd	Robinson's Hatters
GLOSSOP NORTH	Friendship	Arundel St	Robinson's Hatters	RUSHOLME	Osborne House	Victory St	Hydes Mild
	Star Inn	Norfolk St	Guest Mild	SALFORD	Crescent	Crescent	Guest Mild
GLOSSOP SOUTH	Old Glove Works	George St	Guest Mild	STALYBRIDGE	Station Buffet Bar	Rassbottom St	Guest Mild
GORTON	Plough	Hyde Rd	Robinson's Hatters		White House	Market St	Hydes Light
	Waggon & Horses	Hyde Rd	Holt Mild	STOCKPORT EAST	Arden Arms	Millgate	Robinson's Hatters
GREAT MOOR	Crown	Buxton Rd	Robinson's Hatters		Tiviot	Tiviot Dale	Robinson's Hatters
HAZEL GROVE	Royal Oak	Commercial Rd	Robinson's Hatters	STOCKPORT CENT.	Bakers Vaults	Market Place	Robinson's Hatters
NORTH	Three Tunnes	London Rd	Robinson's Hatters		Red Bull	Middle Hillgate	Robinson's Hatters
HAZEL GROVE	Grapes	London Rd	Robinson's Hatters	STOCKPORT WEST	Pineapple	Heaton La	Robinson's Hatters
SOUTH	Three Bears	Jacksons La	Robinson's Hatters		Swan with Two Necks	Princes St	Robinson's Hatters or Dark
HEALD GREEN	Griffin	Wilmslow Rd/Finney La	Holt Mild	STRINES	Royal Oak	Strines Rd	Robinson's Hatters
HEATON NORRIS E	Navigation	Lancashire Hill	Beartown Ambeardextrous	WHALEY BRIDGE	Goyt Inn	Bridge St	Tetley Dark Mild
HEATON NORRIS	Four Heaton's	Didsbury Rd	Hydes Light		Shepherds Arms	Old Rd	Banks's Original
WEST	Nursery	Green La	Hydes Mild	WITHINGTON	Victoria	Wilmslow Rd	Hydes Mild
HEAVILEY	Blossoms	Buxton Rd	Robinson's Hatters	WOODFORD	Davenport Arms	Chester Rd	Robinson's Hatters
				WYTHENSHAW	Airport Hotel	Ringway Rd	Robinson's Hatters

Protect your Pint and Pub. Join CAMRA.

10TH MACCLESFIELD BEER FEST

THIS JEWEL IN THE CROWN of CAMRA in the eastern part of Cheshire will take place on 7th & 8th May at the Rugby Club on Priory Lane, Macclesfield, with over 80 traditional beers plus real ciders and food.

As with all CAMRA-supported Beer Festivals, lined oversize glasses will be used, to ensure you get a full pint. Two live bands will be entertaining the throng.

It will be a festival of two halves; Evening is party time and admission is by ticket only, £10 from the Waters Green Tavern, the Macc Express office on Chestergate, Jones Jewellers on Chestergate, the Admiral Rodney, and Links Audi. The festival will be open 7-12 on the Friday and Saturday evenings. In contrast, the Saturday Lunchtime session features free admission. Open from 12-3, this is a quiet session with a relaxed atmosphere, and is aimed at Families, Licensees, CAMRA members and other Beer Lovers. Traditional Pub games will be available. Charities supported are East Cheshire Hospice, BGWS, and the Drop in Centre, Rossendale Trust.



Due to the number of pages devoted to mild this month, my ramble round Franconia and Munich is spiked once again. Just time for a Beer of the Month (foreign this time) and not Raucherator until May, but:

REUTBERG JOSEPHI BOCK (DRAUGHT) 7.9(ISH)% ABV
Brewed for the Festival of St Joseph in May, and available in bottles most of the year, its rarely seen on draught outside the Reutberg Monastery (in the hills, half way between Munich and the Alps where it only lasts a couple of weeks!) but the estimable Derek Bishop brought a couple of tubs over to the recent Walsall CAMRA Beer Festival. Very dark brown, though not black, huge rich chocolate and fruity overtones drying out to a thoroughly crisp and long-lasting dry finish. A tremendously fine Doppelbock, dryer than Salvator. Very fine.

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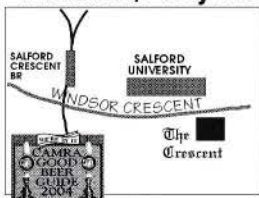
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Christmas Kiss, Humbug, Tyke, Thirsty Moon,**

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CAMRA CALLING!

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

Diary

APRIL 2004

Friday 16th – Stagger: Heaton Norris East – meet Railway, Wellington Rd North 7.30pm; Silver Jubilee, Belmont Way 8.30.

Thursday 22nd – Pub of the Month presentation to the Sidngs, Broom Lane, Levenshulme. From 8.00pm.

Saturday 24th – Sunday 25th – CAMRA AGM and Members' Weekend, Southport.

Monday 26th – Social: Jolly Sailor, Bramhall Lane, Davenport. From 9.00pm.

Saturday 8th May – Provisional trip to Copper Dragon Brewery, Skipton. Details from David Sharpe on 483 3708.

Thursday 13th – Branch Meeting: Blossoms, Buxton Road (A6), Heaviley (provisional venue – check with John Clarke on 477 1973). **Guest Speaker – Oliver Robinson from Robinson's Brewery to talk about re-branding exercise.** 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:

Monday 19th – Branch Meeting: Crown, Victoria St, Glossop. Starts 8.30pm.

Tuesday 4th May – Committee Meeting: Gardeners Arms, Denton. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 17th – Branch Meeting: Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar. Starts 8.30pm.

APRIL 2004

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:

Friday/Saturday 7th - 8th May Macclesfield Beer Festival Rugby Club Macclesfield (staff wanted!)

Saturday 8th May Social/Games Macclesfield Beer Festival Lunchtime Session

Monday 17th May Social Evening: Rose & Crown Allgreave

Saturday 22nd May Macclesfield Mild Meander Railway/ Dolphin/ Sun/ Porters/ Queens/ Waters Green

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

Wednesday 14th - Pub of the Season award at The Knott, Deansgate. Meet 7.30pm

Thursday 22nd - Timperley survey/social - Moss Trooper 8.00pm; Quarry Bank 9.00pm.

Thursday 6th May - Branch meeting at The Orange Tree, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm.

REGIONAL EVENT

Regional Meeting – Saturday 17 April: Hare & Hounds, Shude Hill, Manchester. Starts 12.30pm.

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA Planner



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DRINKING IN HISTORY

The Fleece at Bretforton in Worcestershire must be one of the most photographed pubs in Britain, an impossibly quaint, thatched, half-timbered inn that has appeared on countless calendars and chocolate boxes. It came as something of a shock to hear recently that it had been severely damaged by fire. Fortunately, it will be possible to repair it and restore it to its former glory, but this underlined just how vulnerable much of our pub heritage is.

The Fleece was lucky in being one of a tiny handful of pubs owned by the National Trust, who will ensure it is cared for properly. The National Trust is a very worthwhile organisation that does a fine job in preserving historic houses and unspoilt landscapes, but when it comes to protecting pubs things are not so simple. A non-functioning pub maintained purely as a museum piece would be of no more interest than a stuffed animal, but if a historic pub is going to be kept open as a business there will be an inevitable conflict between the demands of commerce and preservation.

One of the most valuable things that the Campaign for Real Ale has done is to create a National Inventory of historic, unspoilt pub interiors that are worthy of preservation. We are fortunate that the North-West is well represented, with examples ranging from the basic beerhouse such as the Circus Tavern in Manchester to the lavish, exuberant Edwardian decoration of the Philharmonic in Liverpool, but it is a sobering thought that nationwide, out of 60,000 pubs, there are only about 200 deemed worthy of inclusion, with maybe a few hundred more having been substantially altered, but still retaining some important historic features. When in an unfamiliar area, I make a point of visiting any pubs on the National Inventory if they are within striking distance, and I must say as an unabashed lover of pubs I have always been very impressed with what I have found.

Some may say that historic pubs are ultimately rather trivial compared to the glories of Tatton Park and Chatsworth, but they are a part of our heritage that is relevant to ordinary people in a way that stately homes are not, and, particularly at the humbler end of the scale, are often unique survivors of the domestic interiors of a bygone age. When drinking in a National Inventory pub you really are experiencing part of our history in the way it was designed to be used, which cannot be said of gawping at Old Masters on a guided tour. These are real-life businesses, though, not museum pieces, and there are inevitably pressures to knock a wall through here and install a new counter there to make them more suitable for modern patterns of trade. But their owners should think long and hard, as fashions in pub design can change very quickly, and in the long run preserving an intact historic interior is likely to do much more for a pub's trade than a few superficially appealing but destructive "improvements".

Given that the National Trust has more than three million members, perhaps there is scope for further co-operation with CAMRA to set up a joint organisation dedicated to preserving and promoting this very special aspect of our heritage. If only 1% of those National Trust members could be made to part with a tenner a year, it could really make a difference. And its key task must be to persuade pub owners that vandalism in the pursuit of a short-term profit will do nothing for their long-term reputation, and to expose the offenders to public condemnation.

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

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5 Years Ago
by Phil Levison **APRIL '99**

'BODDIES MILD AXED' was the headline. This followed Whitbread's announcement of the de-listing of Boddingtons Mild, whose quiet disappearance from many tied houses had been noted in national Good Beer Guides as long ago as 1991. Spokeswoman Stephanie O'Hara said the only surviving Whitbread cask mild was the contract-brewed Chesters. "They had to make the decision because demand had declined to such a level that it was compromising the ability to produce consistent quality", she had told *Opening Times*. This was the latest in a series of blows to cask mild in the north west. In the space of a few weeks, Burtonwood axed their cask mild, with remaining outlets being 'invited to switch to a keg version. The Greenalls, with a range of seven milds in its pubs, cut back to just one brand - Burton-brewed Greenalls Mild. Today both Chesters and Greenalls milds have also vanished from the region's bars. It's probably fortunate that the fate of mild is in the hands of our independent brewers who not only show commitment to the style, but also have no problems in either making it available to their pubs, or even actually selling it.

Rumours had been circulating the Greenalls were about to lose their independence, with both Whitbread and Scottish Courage tipped as potential bidders. Although it was once the country's largest regional brewer, it seemed to lose its way many years previously when it cut a swathe through the Midlands brewing industry, axing many local brews which were just becoming popular. It finally came up with a good premium beer, and then left brewing just when such beers seemed to have a bright future. Its tenanted and franchised operations were also disposed of, just when they were showing the most growth in the trade. The old Shambles pub, Sinclairs and the Old Wellington were due to re-open, and when the wraps came of the Old Wellington the previous month, it looked as if the claims of careful reconstruction were well-founded. It seemed that Sinclairs, though, had just been knocked down and was essentially a new structure, albeit copy of the original, and using many of the original internal fittings.

There was news of a new micro-brewery being set up on the Isle of Anglesey - it was actually the former Cambrinus Craft Brewery from Knowsley, near Liverpool, which had been dismantled and transferred to its new home by brewer-to-be Martyn Lewis and his team of helpers. Today, the Cambrinus Craft Brewery has been re-equipped and is once again in production.

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Mick Bowman has swapped the pumps of a fire engine for the beer pumps of a public house having taken over as licensee of the Rising Moon at Matley. In this new venture at the Robinson's house he is joined by his partner Deborah Legge.

"I'm a mechanical engineer by trade and until recently the North West area manager for a company that made fire engines, but over the past six months I have made the transition with Debbie to become tenant of the Rising Moon," he explained.

The couple's interest in the Matley pub has developed as a result of Debbie working there on a full time basis for the previous licensee while Mick was a part time barman. "Until the end of last year we hadn't actually planned to take on the tenancy, but when the position became available it was a perfect opportunity for us to spend more time together in the job that we love," said Mick.

Now in control of the popular local, the couple are well underway with the work of making their own mark on the pub. "We are investing in the cellar and will be extending the range of cask conditioned beer that we offer, work is also progressing to develop the kitchen," says Mick. "We have appointed a chef who will concentrate on preparing good quality pub food and regular specials while I look after the bar snacks."

On the social side of the pub's activities, the couple are now recruiting men to play alongside the ladies darts team and players are also needed for two pool teams to play in local leagues. Keen players are invited to get in touch with Mick or Debbie at the Rising Moon.

It is a case of all hands to the pump for Marjorie Conroy who has taken over as licensee of The Unity in Hyde, with the support of her partner Phil Faulkner.

This is the first time that Marjorie, a qualified nurse, has worked in the licensed trade, and so the Robinson's house is offering a real challenge. To add to her workload Marjorie is keeping on her job at the Alexandra Hospital while devoting the rest of her time to The Unity.

"I have wanted a business of my own for some time, but it was not until I met Phil, who has kept pubs in the past, that I saw this as my way in," she says. "This is definitely my project, but because Phil is now an interior designer, and has also spent time at catering college, I can call on his knowledge if I need to."

Marjorie's driving ambition is to build a reputation for the Croft Street pub as a relaxing, friendly local, where customers can also rely on a first class selection of home cooked traditional pub food. "I used to be regular here about 15 years ago and remember it as being the best place in the area to get a straight-forward pub meal," says Marjorie. "Since then The Unity has been extended, so I want to rebuild that reputation and make the most of the bigger building while retaining the atmosphere of a local pub, rather than trying to turn it into a restaurant." Marjorie, a self taught cook, will be looking after the catering at the Unity herself and describes her style of cooking as being simple and filling - the way her mother used to cook.

The Best O'Brass at 157 Manchester Road, Mossley, has changed from a Thwaites pub to Burtonwood (it is being run by the same licensee running the excellent Stamford Arms in Stalybridge) and has also re-opened their 'real' fireplace in recent weeks. The Rising Sun also at Mossley, just up the road, has done the same with their fireplace (a bit of local rivalry or as expected, it's cowed up in Mossley at this time of the year). The Tollemache also at Mossley, has changed licensees again, changing round a few times of late, in quick succession.

At the Packhorse in New Mills, a new accommodation block is well on with building. When finished, there will be accommodation for almost 30 people. Besides the new bedrooms, a new dining room extension is under way.

The Astley Arms (Little Astley) in Dukinfield, has had a facelift and has the new cask Boddingtons on sale as a permanent real ale.



At the Pineapple in Stalybridge, landlord Mark Mitchell is leaving the trade for other pastures while down the road at the Millpond, they now have John Willie Lees bitter on handpump.

The range at the Godley Hall Inn at Godley, Hyde is currently Boddingtons Cask, Robinson's Best Bitter, along with two guest beers from the Pubmaster list.

By the time you are reading this, Glossop Breweries will have their second beer in the pubs. At 4.3%, Fletchers Campaign Bitter will be followed in the Spring by a light summery brew, as yet unnamed and unbrewed. Two firkins of Shaws Best Bitter have been sent out to Ware, Mass, USA for a local beer festival out there. Could any other local brewery boast a delivery that far?

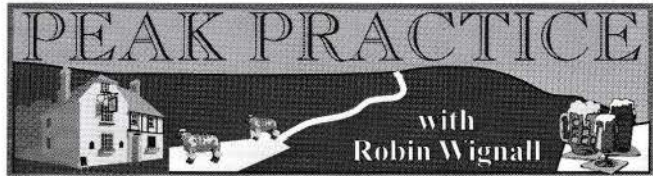
Perry and Dawn Roberts have their work cut out, for just six months after the birth of their daughter Grace, the couple have taken over as tenants of The Junction, Mottram.

"This is a big step for us both," says Dawn, who previously worked as a care assistant. "For some time we had wanted to start our own business so that we could spend more time together while bringing up Grace."

Originally the couple had been open minded in their search for a new vocation, but it was friends of Perry who spotted the potential for the couple to take over at the Robinson's house and urged them to move into The Junction.

"Perry's friends are locals at the pub and knew that as well as being a former football coach, he has also been a bar manager so they saw the opportunity for us to move into the licensed trade when the tenancy at The Junction became available," explained Dawn.

The couple are now settling in at the friendly local where many of the customers are already their friends, and Dawn and Perry are working hard to stamp their own distinctive characters on the operation. "We have a huge car park at the pub so we are now attracting more customers by encouraging truck and coach drivers leaving the Manchester area to pull off the road and enjoy our hospitality before driving into Derbyshire," says Dawn, who as a self taught cook, will be introducing a range of fresh, home cooked food, which she will be preparing and serving herself.



Elsewhere in this month's *Opening Times* readers will have noticed that Mild Challenge time is round again. CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester Branch supports the national campaign to promote mild as an enjoyable drink. Out in the Peak District of Derbyshire general trends are probably reflected in that mild is less available than it would have been a few years ago.

However there are strongholds where a good pint of mild can be found. Once again the Masons Arms in New Mills is on the Challenge with its Robinson's Hatters. Also returning are the Shepherds Arms and the Goyt in Whaley Bridge. Here readers can expect Banks's Original and Tetley Dark Mild respectively, both invariably well-kept. Joining them in the Challenge this year is the Dog & Partridge at Bridgemont, Just half a mile north of Whaley Bridge station, so you can get three stamps in a visit to Whaley. Here Cains Dark Mild provides a flavoursome addition.

These pubs will be visited by 'Challengers' completing the full list, and by many achieving the Mild Challenge Extra (36 pubs). But these and other 'fringe of the area' pubs are worth a visit even if you are only completing one card. Your support makes landlords' support of the Challenge worthwhile.

Mild is of course available throughout the year. Robinson's Hatters can be found at the Crossings in Furness Vale, a super locals' local next to the railway station. The Cock in Whaley Bridge, another good local, also has Hatters, as has the Board on the Chapel-en-le-Frith road out of Whaley Bridge. The Board is also a Chinese restaurant!

So a clear message emerges in that if you are out in the Peak District look out for cask conditioned mild. It can take some finding but will be well worth the effort.

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THE KNOTT, DEANSGATE, MANCHESTER

The Trafford & Hulme Branch Pub of the Season for Spring 2004 is the Knott on Deansgate, central Manchester.

In terms of Manchester's pub heritage, the Knott is almost brand new, having been constructed under a railway arch opposite Deansgate station no more than 10 or so years ago. Originally called 'Nowhere Bar' that, despite a number of name changes, is where the keg-only venue was headed until it was bought by John Henley, owner of Bar Fringe on Swan Street. Following the subsequent merger (and then split) of the business interests of John and the Marble Group, the pub is now a Marble Brewery tied house. Today the Knott is an interesting blend of the very modern and very traditional, an ethos that runs through from the décor and furnishings to the beers on offer and the excellent food offering. As a result it attracts an eclectic clientele ranging from beer lovers, city workers and media types, very different from the hordes thronging the nearby Deansgate Locks collection of 'style bars' and 'venues'.

The beer range is certainly one of the best in this part of town with four cask beers available, comprising two Marble beers (usually but not always Ginger Marble and Manchester Bitter) plus two guests, always from micros. To complement these there is a good range of foreign beers, both on draught and in bottle, and courtesy of Chorlton's Belgian Belly, the bottled range is becoming very interesting indeed. Two real ciders and perries complement the range.

The excellent food, from the open-plan kitchen is served from 12-8 every day and the bar has a late license, opening until midnight on Thursdays and 1.00am Fridays and Saturdays.

The Marble's Jan Whitehead and Vance De Becheval have taken a direct interest in the Knott's development but its current success is down to the dedicated hard work of enthusiastic manager Wayne McCoubrey and assistant manager Emma Hardman. Join us as we celebrate this success on Wednesday, April 14 from 7.30pm. All are welcome.



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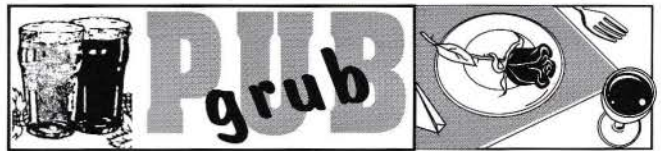
PUB NEWS

More news on the Crown, Bollington: it has been taken over by Karen Lawrence, who has sensibly moved in on a temporary tenancy agreement for now. There is a refurbishment plan under discussion with Avebury Taverns that she hopes will come to fruition later this year. Let us hope that Karen has more luck with Avebury than the previous licensees. The Crown has pool teams, Crown Bikers (on Tuesday night), occasional Karaoke and live music evenings all with the welcome of a real fire. The cask ales are Boddingtons and black Sheep, opening times are currently 4-11 Monday to Friday, 2-11 Saturday and 2-10.30 Sunday. Anyone who has heard that the Redway Tavern in Kerridge might yet re-open can think again. The JCBs moved in at the beginning of March and started to demolish the back of the pub, which was only built during the Eighties & Nineties.

Finally, also in Kerridge, the Bulls Head changes hands on 26th April. The same family has been running the pub for a number of generations but now Mick Dickens has decided to call it a day and move on - best of luck to him whatever he decides to do now. It is believed that Robinson's intend to refurbish the pub - further news next month.

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.



BAR CENTRO, TIB STREET, MANCHESTER

Bar Centro has undergone some changes in recent times, notably its takeover by the operators of the nearby Cord.

Now, Cord is one of those bars that's so trendy it makes your teeth peel (or at least that's the impression you might gain from the pages of *City Life* magazine) although it has always nodded in the direction of decent beer. Centro however was something of a mini-mecca, with a notable variety of good beers, both in cask and bottle. A terrible culture clash might have been in prospect but happily the transition has been almost seamless. There have been cosmetic changes but Centro still does the business where beer is concerned. When I called there were four handpumps in use (although nowadays they are tucked round the side of the bar rather than having central pride of place) selling Naish Cider, Boggart Angel Hill, Phoenix Money Town Mild (yes, mild! - and very good it was too), and a Cottage beer whose name I failed to note. There's a decent foreign range with some Belgian and American specialities and among the other draught offerings Hoegaarden, Budvar and a very tasty brew from Paulaner in Munich (highly recommended by Ed(2), by the way).

There are two floors, ground and basement, usually busy with a youngish crowd but still welcoming for old soaks such as your correspondent and food is usually available from noon to 6.30 (apart from Sundays). The menu (recently revamped) is split into two. There are a variety of fillings, which can be served in a sandwich with chips (£3.75) or on a jacket spud with salad (£4.00). These are pretty adventurous and include the likes of chicken, bacon and red pesto mayo; tuna puttanesca; hummus and roasted peppers and home-made meatballs with parmesan and rocket. There are others, too. You can a variety of side dishes for £2-£2.50 and apart from chips and wedges etc, these include marinated olives and basil, and oven roasted seasonal vegetables. The other half of the menu comprises mains at £5.75 and includes fettucine with red pesto, peppers, capers and olives; chicken thighs in orange, smoked bacon and mushroom sauce with basmati rice; courgette, almond and sweet potato bake topped with gruyere; mushroom, lemon and parmesan risotto; coley and scallop chowder, and Irish stew with soda bread.

I actually visited twice. On the first occasion I had the stew and was very impressed - a good bowl of thick, peppery stew laden with onions, carrots and extra tender chunks of lean meat. They'd run out of soda bread but the ciabatta replacement was more than acceptable. Highly impressed I decided on a return visit to try one of the sandwiches - chicken, bacon and red pesto may to be precise. Again it didn't disappoint - the chicken was moist, contrasting well with the extra crisp bacon and unctuous mayo. Good chips, too.

So, good ale, good food and a great atmosphere. Bar Centro has survived the transition well and remains an essential Northern Quarter visit. Highly recommended. By the way - food is served Sundays. There's a hearty breakfast served until 7.00pm and a £6.50 Sunday lunch with a choice of three roasts and a veggie alternative. JC.

PINBALL



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Licensees James & Debra Bollard had the Cheadle Hulme (Station Road, Cheadle Hulme) handed back to them on Monday 22 March after the refurbishment, and they reopened at 11.00 on Thursday 25th. Beers are Mild (£1.44!), Bitter (£1.51!) and seasonal (currently Thunderholt, £1.51) - pricey for Holt's, but then again, Cheadle Hulme already has the first £2-plus pint of Robinson's - and all were pretty good when *Opening Times* called, indeed the mild was excellent. There is also smooth mild and we noticed there's also a price for smooth bitter on the bar tariff.

The refurbishment itself is pretty impressive, and whilst the front of the pub is little changed the rear, and former restaurant, is very different. Meals are served up to 9.00pm Monday to Saturday, and to 7.00pm on Sundays. During this time the dining room is a non-smoking area. Once meal times have ended smoking is allowed in this area. It's generally much more modern than before but not so radical as to scare off all the previous regulars although we're not sure about the plasma TV screens for the video jukebox.

Our reporter was amused to listen to some of the "traditional" crowd commenting on the refurb. One bloke was commenting on the new prices, and harking fondly back to the Junction days at 50p per pint "even if it did come out like tater 'ash some Sundays"! All in all well worth a visit. Changes have already been made at the Rycroft Arms, (Turves Road, Cheadle Hulme); the pool table has been removed, as has the large TV projection screen. It appears that in the short time since it opened that these facilities have attracted customers that Hydes management do not want.

There has been a slight change to the beer range at the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport. The pump previously dedicated to Whim Ales has now changed to one dedicated to the products of Eastwood & Sanders, a very high quality micro based in Elland, West Yorkshire (Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA had a memorable trip there last year, being greeted on arrival by brewer Dave Sanders with the immortal words 'sorry lads, I've only got the 10 beers on for you'). This is a welcome change, especially as Whim beers will still feature on a guest basis from time to time. The Crown is currently being redecorated on a room by room basis - the rear 'no smoking' room is looking very smart. New reaches us that the previously keg-only Abbey Bar (St Petersgate, Stockport) has now installed real ale. We knew this was on the cards but understood the cask beer was likely to be John Smith's Bitter. However two handpumps have been spotted on the bar and an advert for Marston's Pedigree seen. Another report has the bar intending to sell beers from Three Rivers. This all came to our attention just as *Opening Times* was about to go to press- hopefully we will have a more definitive report next time.



As the second 'quickie' recipe, I've resurrected an old favourite from my Kings Arms days. If pre-cooked sausages are used, 10-15 minutes should see this dish presented mouth-wateringly on your table.

SOMERSET SAUSAGES

This will serve two people

INGREDIENTS

- 6 good quality pork sausages, either bought pre-cooked, or cooked in a medium oven (200F) for 15 minutes.
- 6 medium or 4 large leeks
- 1 medium onion
- 2 large apples
- 2 teaspoons tomato puree
- 2 teaspoons mild paprika
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped or crushed
- ½ pint cider
- seasoning and cooking oil

METHOD

1. Finely chop the onion; top and tail the leeks and slice into ¼ inch rings. Gently sweat the onion and the leeks in the oil in either a wok or large frying pan.
 2. Peel and core the apples, slice into ½ inch thick segments and add to the pan. Stir and fry for 2-3 minutes.
 3. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the garlic, paprika and lastly the tomato puree.
 4. On a gentle heat *slowly* ass the cider and stir in until a thin sauce is achieved.
 5. Finally add the sausages and gently heat through for 2-3 minutes.
- Note - if the sauce is a little thick it can be thinned with a little water.



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MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

I've managed to get out and about quite a lot this month!
BELGIUM ON THE MARCH

On one of my now regular visits to Chorlton, I dropped into the Lloyds on Wilbraham Road for a well-kept pint of Lees Brooklyn Best and then it was over the road to the Belgian Belly for essential supplies and a chat with the ever affable Jason Barker. Jason is a man with a vision. Tim Webb's *Good Beer Guide to Belgium & Holland* includes a round-up of UK outlets and describes Manchester as 'surprisingly slow to catch on' (a tad unfairly I always thought) but Jason is determined to set that right and turn the area into a centre of 'Belgian beer excellence'. To this end he has been negotiating supply deals with some of the City's better bars.

Three have been supplied to date. Bar Fringe has taken a whole raft of goodies including Westvleteren Abt (the world's best and rarest barley wine), Girardin Black Label Gueuze, Ranke Guldenberg and XX Bitter and Ellezelloise Hercule (a wonderful imperial stout), amongst others. The Knott has taken beers such as Roman Sloeber and Ename Blonde, and Achouffe Kwelchouffe. He's even got into one of my very favourite bars, the Temple, with Slog Pils (no heckling in the cheap seats, 'slag' is Flemish for cream), Echte Kriek and Bink Blond. More power to his elbow, say I.

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WHAT'S DOING IN THE CITY

I see that the Crown and Anchor in Exchange Square is selling both Pattersons and Thunderholt, the seasonal ales from Holts. It is the only Holts outlet to sell both at the same time. The pub also won the Century FM Radio Listeners award at the Best Bar None Awards held at The Lowry Hotel on March 11 - congratulations to all involved. Elsewhere, on Old Bank Street, the former Bar 5 is closed and boarded (anyone remember the days when it was the Old Bank Street Brewhouse, complete with on-site brewery?) and across the way the Colour Bar (previously the Rat & Parrot, a cask ale outlet at one time) is closed for what seems a never-ending refurbishment. The former Swan With Two Necks on Withy Grove has been reduced to rubble and in the Northern Quarter I hear of a surprising cask ale loss. The Burton Arms, Swan Street. Yes. When I visited late last year there were five handpumped cask ales. When I called in at the end of March the handpumps were still in place but no pumpclips were to be seen. I enquired if they had any cask ales and was told, pleasantly, that they no longer stocked cask ales but that they did next door (The Smithfield - to which I repaired in haste).

Dukes 92 is also without real ale, even the handpumps have gone. However, when I remarked on this to the barman, another chap behind the bar (presumably the manager) overheard and told me that they will be getting cask ale again in about 2 months. He said they are having the cellar renovated and are also creating a separate restaurant. I found myself drinking the draught Hoegaarden - which was very nice - but £3.30 a pint!

Not too far away, though, Cask on Liverpool Road is getting its act together on the beer front. The permanent cask ale is now John Smiths Magnet, a highly recommended, tasty brew, along with a guest. Some of the guests are sourced from John Smiths Cellarman's Reserve range, but only if they are interesting beers. Apart from this, the policy will be to feature a local micro each month. So, for April beers from Bazens' will feature, followed in May by those from Three Rivers. A very welcome development this, at one of the better new bars to open in recent years.

OUT & ABOUT

The former JD Wetherspoon house on Stockport Road, Longsight, the Sir Edwin Chadwick, is now Rebus 5 Indian Buffet Restaurant. Ah well, a brave experiment from JDW. Meanwhile, the Union (Burtonwood) on Higher Ardwick has been thoroughly refurbished of late and seems quite busy. Don't all rush down though, the place is still on keg beer. Building work at the former Old Abbey, Pencroft Way, off Lloyd St North in the University district would seem to suggest that it will be transformed into another Kro Bar. That would make it Kro3, the third Danish bar for this enterprising pub group. The Old Abbey was a Vaux house some years ago and appears to have been closed for the best part of 18 months. It is close to Burtonwood's Ducie which lies on Devas Street.

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POYNTON BRITISH LEGION

AN OASIS IN THE DESERT

WHEN WRITING ARTICLES for Opening Times about licensed premises which are good enough to be singled out for praise in its pages, one can be forgiven for assuming most of the time that it is a pub which receives the accolade.

It is however quite refreshing therefore to be able to sing the praises of a local club and an extremely good and well run one to boot. The club in question is Poynton British Legion which is situated in the centre of Poynton on Georges Road West by the main crossroads alongside the parish church.

When the real ales on offer are Boddingtons, Bass, Coniston Bluebird and a regularly changing guest beer from Flying Firkin, all on hand pump you will realise that here we have a club which is definitely a cut above many others. This range of beer considerably increases the variety of real ales in Poynton so come on you real ale drinkers of the area and do it justice.

The fact that real ale is on the bar and is popular is largely due to the enthusiasm of Paul Hession, the club Chairman and members of the Committee and Nick Williams, the club Steward. Such is the enthusiasm for real ale that a Beer Festival was held at the club from 12-14 March. This was supported on the Friday night by a large contingent of CAMRA members and the whole event was a huge success, with the beer being complemented by bread and cheese, and a range of free traditional pub games such as quoits and bagatelle. This time round the range of 10 cask beers was restricted to local micros, with Phoenix Arizona being the first to sell out and the final pint being drained by 7.00pm on the Sunday night. A further event is planned for September, when the beer range will be more widely sourced. More immediately, after the successful Real Ale Weekend the Legion propose holding a Real Ale Evening on the last Thursday of every month. The first such evening is to take place on Thursday 29th April. The club itself is spacious, comfortable and modern. You can get an idea of the size from the fact that apart from a large comfortable lounge and a even larger games area there is also a concert room and a bowling green outside. As well as games, other forms of entertainment are not forgotten either. Regular events include folk nights, with an annual Folk Festival at Easter, jazz nights, quizzes and a 1940's weekend.

Its popularity is beyond question, for the club has over 900 members, and for non-members the usual signing-in procedure applies. All in all this is a marvellous club with the added bonus of a good variety of real ale in friendly surroundings and is an example of just what a good club can achieve. TL

Getting there: The 191 Stockport to Middlewood bus virtually passes the door as do buses from Stockport to Macclesfield. Poynton railway station is just a short ten minute walk away. Club telephone number 01625 873120



LOCAL CAMRA AWARDS

Sheffield CAMRA branch chairman presents their Beer of the Festival award for Old Tom to Robinsons at the Arden Arms on 20 March (left), and (below) the licensees at the Royal Oak, Didsbury (Robert & Hazel Long), with their



Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award on Thursday 25 March.



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